“Call me Mr. Johnson. I’m like a fixer for the corps. I know everybody who’s anybody from suit-and-tie boardroom predators to bottom-feeder street-level scavengers. I know the best sprawl sites for scoring new talent, exchanging goods without interruption or hiding out from the hit men on your tail. I like to ensure that the people I hire can execute a well-planned black ops job and keep their faces from being splashed all over the screamsheets. My files on you say that you’re right for what I have in mind. Interested?”

Mr. Johnson’s Little Black Book provides dozens of locations and contacts for both Shadowrun gamemasters and players. For the gamemaster, it includes a wealth of simple adventure ideas and street encounters that can be randomly chosen and run. It also features detailed advice on setting up and handling shadowruns, negotiating with shadowrunners and optional rules for low and high-level campaigns, reputation, prejudice and more. For use with Shadowrun, Third Edition. 
MR. JOHNSON'S
LITTLE BLACK BOOK

FANPRO

Sample file

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Mr. Johnson’s Little Black Book is a gamemaster companion for Shadowrun, Third Edition. Though many parts of it will be of interest to players, the primary purpose of this book is to provide gamemasters with suggestions and tools for making their own Shadowrun games and campaigns more interesting. The only section of this book that players should not read is the On the Run chapter—you wouldn’t want to spoil the excitement by reading an adventure’s plot in advance now, would you?

This book aims to fill the gap left by two out-of-print rulebooks created during the first and second editions of the game. The first was Sprawl Sites, which provided an array of location archetypes with maps, random sprawl encounter charts and contact/archetype listings (for Shadowrun, First Edition). The second was the Contacts book included with the gamemaster’s screen for Shadowrun, Second Edition. Though there is some overlap, the material in Mr. Johnson’s Little Black Book is entirely new. Gamemasters may also find the gamemaster section of the Shadowrun Companion and the descriptions of daily life in the 2060s given in Sprawl Survival Guide useful for bringing their game worlds to life.

Mr. Johnson’s Little Black Book starts off with Anatomy of a Shadowrun, which guides the gamemaster through the standard process of hiring the runners to commit a crime, step-by-step. It also provides a ton of gamemaster advice for handling other elements of a Shadowrun campaign, including character creation, incorporating deckers and creating a dynamic and fluid setting. This is the where you’ll find the bulk of practical advice in the book; we suggest that all Shadowrun gamemasters read through it carefully.

The second chapter, It’s Who You Know, delves into contacts. Over sixty different contacts are detailed, from all walks of life. The contacts are grouped together by type (corporate security, media, underworld, magical, etc.), with attributes, skills, gear and plot hooks listed for each. The first three contacts in each category are expansions of a single contact archetype—rather than include a generic Mr. Johnson, for example, we have a corporate headhunter, Mr. Fix-It and a mixed-up middle manager. Each contact includes a short write-up explaining who the contact is and how they might interact with player characters. This same chapter also includes suggestions for giving each of your NPCs a “gimmick” to make them notable.

Where It’s At is devoted to locations. Over forty distinct places are described, broken down by category (bars, city streets, laboratories, etc.). Rather than generic archetypes, each location is given specific details, but they can easily be placed in just about any locale or even modified slightly to be a separate and distinct place. A quick neighborhood generation system is also provided, allowing a gamemaster to roll up a quick location on the fly, as well as a list of location gimmicks for giving each locale that unique feel.

The next chapter, On the Run, features a dozen short adventure plots for gamemasters who need to put together a quick run with no preparation time. A section of short random encounters follows, for gamemasters who need a short and quick scenario to throw at some characters in the midst of a run, or between runs. A system for randomly generating shadowruns on the fly is also included.

Wrapping up the book, Game Information, starts off with rules and guidelines for running low-level or high-powered Shadowrun campaigns, including alternate character creation systems. This is followed by sections on using reputation (both street cred and notoriety) and prejudice (expanding from racism based on metatype to include numerous other factors). The book wraps up with rules and advice for quickly resolving decking runs and vehicle combat so that they are faster and less complicated.
Gamemastering any roleplaying game can be a challenging task. While Shadowrun sourcebooks aim to provide gamemasters a host of events, characters, locations and plot hooks, putting these ideas together along with some of your own design is not always easy. The Shadowrun Companion offers advice on how to create and run enjoyable games, but there are many issues still unexplored, ranging from portraying a believable Mr. Johnson to effectively incorporating decking and rigging without the other players feeling bored or cheated. In this chapter, we attempt to walk through the entire process of running a Shadowrun game/campaign, step-by-step. This advice is designed to help both experienced gamemasters and newbies create memorable games, and to assist in satisfactorily juggling and resolving the most common problems that can occur.

THE SETUP

Let’s be frank: gamemastering is a tough job. Not only must you have ideas and be able to adjust things on the fly, but you must be a good facilitator and administer to your player’s needs. If you don’t already have a group of players, you must first find or assemble one. You must determine what sort of game the group will play, referee your players’ character generation, incorporate the characters into the game, give each character equal time and so forth. If you don’t coordinate effectively, you can quickly be overwhelmed; if your players grow frustrated, no one will enjoy the time they spend playing. Careful consideration of the following advice, however, can nip many potential problems in the bud.

THE STYLE OF GAME

The first step when designing a campaign is to decide the style of the game. You should get the players’ input before forming too many ideas, so that they’re interested and invested in the setting and the campaign. The more you tailor the game to incorporate your players’ wishes, the more it will satisfy them. Additional advice in this vein can be found on pp. 103–4 of the Shadowrun Companion, in case more help or inspiration is needed.

Setting

The game’s style is partially predicated on its primary setting, or home base. Your chosen setting will determine what important figures are present and the extent of their influ-