

NEO-TOKYO DRIFT

SHINJUKU NIGHTS: THE BALLAD OF AKITSU

Akitsu looked around at the towering walls of steel, glass, and neon around him and took a deep breath of the damp air as the last few droplets of the night's rain settled on every surface. A large crowd had gathered to see the race, and it was being turned into an impromptu street party. The sharp hissing buzz of "faze-hop" music could be heard woven through the shouts of partygoers and the echoing refrain of bikers blipping their throttles.

As the moment of the race approached, the noise of the crowd around him faded into the background and his hand lovingly stroked the access panel on his Honda, springing the door and letting out a soft hiss of dry air. With a last look around and a small smile, he winked at Kabuto, his troll teammate, and slipped into the cushioning bucket seat. He pulled the door closed with one hand, his other reaching out for the thin cable snaking out of the dashboard of the car, clicking it into place in the port just behind his right ear. Reality *changed*.

With the stretch of his muscles, Akitsu's engine purred to life, the modifications made to the throttle body and intakes working in beautiful synchronicity with the stock engine. Perhaps the mods he had made to this ride weren't as comprehensive as he would have preferred, but this was going to be *fun*. He stretched his legs a little, rolling forward a few centimeters, testing his brakes. Opening his eyes at last, his headlights came on, spearing through the mist which was all that remained of the rains. His sensors lit up the night, showing him all of his surroundings as his commlink chirped to life, "... toward the end of the course." He heard a soft drawling voice say. That would be Seishin, his mage, "I'll handle that one. But if there are more ..."

"I'll keep an eye open," Kabuto rumbled through the comm. Akitsu saw the hulking troll's figure slip away from the main crowd, undoubtedly already using his vision enhancements to scan the first kilometer or so of the street race course ahead. He had complete faith in his team and trusted them to do their jobs.

"I'll keep my eyes open along the route as well," he chimed in over the secure channel. "But Seishin, you think I might be able to get a little supernatural backup?" A woman in iridescent kimono, an affectation even among the Yakuza, was motioning the cars into place. Akitsu stepped forward, rolling himself into line with where the woman indicated he should begin. A small, high-powered car slipped up next to him, and he felt a rush of excitement course through him, revving his engine nearly to the redline before he calmed himself. The loud sound drew a ragged cheer from the crowd as they began to gather near the starting line to watch the beginning of the race. Frag, if he didn't love to race, and his competitor was reputed to be one of the best! He might be truly at home in the skies, but he would show her just how fast a dragonfly can be.

The woman stood between the front fenders of the cars, arm raised, and all attention focused on her, conversation falling to a murmur. She paused a moment, then dropped her arm. Instantly, the world slowed around Akitsu, and all outside concerns melted away as he felt the fuel and air scream through his body, feeding him and driving him forward. His tires screeched at the wet pavement for a moment, then suddenly bit, gaining traction, and he was streaking down the street, gathering more speed with every meter. His engine whined and he shifted his gears, preferring to let the electrical engine handle the starting torque before kicking the petrol engine into full use for the long haul. He felt the wind tearing past him and noticed the towering buildings to either side almost as an afterthought. Beside him, the other car kept pace. Despite his bravado, he was impressed with her start.

The street turned gently and both cars hugged the corner, engines buzzing madly as they fully powered their internal combustion portions and accelerated once again, tires hissing through

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the witness of the night. Out of sight of the starting line, Akitsu noticed that the other car shimmied for a moment, and he wondered if something had interfered with the other driver. That instant, his tires hit a slightly slippery spot, and for a fraction of a second lost a portion of their traction, forcing him to slip slightly out of the line he was taking around the corner. He shifted his weight, bringing more power onto the wheels that hadn't lost their grip and grabbing onto the tarmac again, stopping the skid as soon as it began. Shrugging off the setback, he stretched his legs, more concerned now with outright speed than any maneuvering. Shifting, drafting, and cutting each other off would come later on in the corners. Right now, he and his opponent were too evenly matched.

Just then, something smacked into his windshield, and alarms went off in Akitsu's mind. His cabin had been compromised! Still accelerating, though rapidly approaching his top speed, he spun his mind through his diagnostics, checking his meat body. It seemed to be okay, and he hadn't felt any pain, so he was probably unhurt. He'd be fragged if that hadn't been a sniper shot, though! A second later, a blossom of flame came from the top of a nearby building. Even as wrapped up in the race as he was, his sensors couldn't help but register the sudden intense heat and light and draw his attention for a moment. His opponent used that distraction to gain half a car-length on him and veered close, forcing him to slip to his left to avoid trading paint. He grinned again. Oh yes, this *was* going to be fun!

INTRODUCTION

SRM 09-04 Neo-Tokyo Drift is a *Shadowrun* Missions living campaign adventure. Full information on the *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign is available at <http://www.shadowruntabletop.com/Missions> and includes a guide to creating Missions characters and a regularly updated FAQ. All maps, player hand-outs, and other playing aids are found at the end of this document.

Each scene outlines the most likely sequence of events, as well as how to handle unexpected twists and turns that inevitably crop up. Each one contains the following subsections, providing gamemasters with all the information necessary to run it.

Scan This provides a quick synopsis of the scene's action, allowing you to get a feel for the encounter at a glance.

Tell It to Them Straight is written to be read aloud to the players, describing what their characters experience upon entering the scene. You should feel free to modify the narrative as much as desired to suit the group and the situation, since the characters may arrive at the scene by different means or under different circumstances than the text assumes.

Behind the Scenes covers the bulk of the scene, describing what's happening, what the non-player characters are doing, how they will react to the player characters' actions and so forth. It also covers the setting of the encounter, going over environmental conditions and other properties of the location as well as providing any descriptions of important items.

Pushing the Envelope looks at ways to make the encounter more challenging for experienced or powerful characters and other ways you can add some "extra spice" to the scene. This subsection should usually only be used for home games, or games where time is not

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

SRM 09-04 Neo-Tokyo Drift is intended for use with either *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition* or *Shadowrun, Sixth World*, and all character and rules information refer to the those editions of the *Shadowrun* rules

ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

SRM 09-04 Neo-Tokyo Drift consists of several scenes. These scenes form the basis of the adventure, which should be completed in approximately four hours. If you are running short on time, you should streamline each and be a little more generous with clues, target numbers, and other requirements to aid in guiding the players through the adventure.

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a factor. At most convention and Open Play events, gamemasters should omit this information. It adds to the scene but does not contain important information.

Debugging offers solutions to potential problems that may crop up during the encounter. While it's impossible to foresee everything that a group of player characters might do, this section tries to anticipate common problems and other suggestions for dealing with them.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Gamemastering is more of an art than a science, and every gamemaster does things a bit differently. Use your own style when it comes to preparing and running the adventure and do whatever you feel is best to provide the best *Shadowrun* game you can for your players. *Shadowrun Missions* adventures are designed to run in a standard four-hour convention time slot.

Please keep this in mind when running the adventure. You should leave at least 15–20 minutes at the end of the time slot to complete any necessary paperwork and pass out the players' **Debriefing Logs**. (Make sure that you have enough copies of the **Debriefing Log** for this adventure to give one copy to each player after running the adventure.) This section offers some guidelines you may find useful in preparing to run *SRM 09-04: Neo-Tokyo Drift* (or any *Shadowrun Missions* adventure).

STEP 1: READ THE ADVENTURE

Carefully read the adventure from beginning to end. Get a feel for the overall plot and what happens in each scene. That way, if something different happens, you won't be caught off guard and you can adapt things smoothly.

STEP 2: TAKE NOTES

Take notes for yourself while reading through the adventure that you can refer to later on. Possible things to note include major plot points (so you can see them all at a glance), the names of various non-player characters, possible problems you notice, situations where you think a particular character can shine and other things you'll want to keep in mind while running the adventure.

STEP 3: KNOW THE CHARACTERS

Prior to the start of the adventure, examine the PCs' record sheets and **Debriefing Logs** for your reference and have basic information about their important abilities handy so you can refer to it during play. Also go over the characters and keep their previous events listed on the **Debriefing Logs** in mind when determining non-player character actions in various scenes if such a dynamic has been included.

STEP 4: DON'T PANIC!

Gamemastering involves juggling a lot of different things. Sometimes you drop the ball and forget something, or you just make a mistake. It happens, don't worry about it. Nobody is perfect all of the time and everybody makes mistakes. Just pick up from there and move on. Your players will understand and forget about it once you get back into the action.

STEP 5: CHALLENGE THE PLAYERS

Gamemasters should challenge the players but should not generally overwhelm them. This is not to say that games cannot be deadly. If the characters die through their own actions and repercussions of those actions, then so be it. But the idea is to challenge the players and their characters, not to overwhelm them. If the enemies and challenges are too light for the characters present, then increase them. On the other hand, if the characters are badly out-matched by the enemies, then tone them down. Make things difficult but not impossible.

GENERAL ADVENTURE RULES

Shadowrun Missions adventures use the rules presented in *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition* (SR5) and *Shadowrun, Sixth World* (SR6). Standard rules such as success tests, glitches, critical successes, and other common mechanics are described in SR5 and SR6 and are not repeated in this adventure.

Please keep in mind when preparing for the adventure, that the PCs will not necessarily comprise a balanced party. It's entirely possible that the party will be made up entirely of

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technomancers or back-to-nature shamans. If the characters run into a brick wall because of such complications, show flexibility and use your best judgment in how you lead them back to the plot.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Non-player characters (NPCs) are essential to any adventure. They are the allies, antagonists, and background characters in the adventure who interact with the player characters. NPCs in this adventure have already been created and can be found throughout the adventure.

Minor NPCs are found in the individual scene that they appear in, and generally have a brief write up, noting only their important skills and the gear they are carrying.

Major NPCs can be found in the *Cast of Shadows* at the end of the adventure and have more detailed write ups, and include most of the skills and the gear they have access to.

The NPCs in this adventure should generally stand up to the average player character but may need some adjustment to suit a particular group of characters, especially a more experienced and powerful group. The scenes and NPC descriptions offer tips on adjusting the NPCs to suit the abilities of the characters in your group. Take the player characters' abilities into consideration when assessing the NPCs in this adventure and modify them accordingly.

MISSION DIFFICULTY

GMs are encouraged to use their own judgment and to adjust the difficulty of the encounter to consider the abilities of the players. If the players have no magical support, replace magical defenses with mundane ones. If the players are weak on combat, reduce the number of enemies by one or two. Conversely, if they're steam-rolling the opposition, add one or two enemies to the fight. Missions should be difficult and something of a challenge but should not be insurmountable.

A simple method for adjusting difficulty is to simply increase the dice pools and Professional Ratings of the enemies. A simple +1 or +2 to all combat and defense tests gives enemies a minor boost in power, while a +3 or 4 will make them truly formidable. Adding to their Professional Rating will give them a larg-

er group Edge pool to draw from, and gamemasters are encouraged to use this Edge when logical.

Often a combat scene will tell you if it's supposed to be challenging or is simply there to serve as filler or a minor obstacle that the players should steamroll through. When possible, use this as a guide to know when to tweak the enemies and encounters. If it doesn't say, assume the scene should present a challenge to the power levels of the players.

A NOTE ON LOOT AND LOOTING

Gamemasters should be careful what they allow players access to, because they can and will try to steal everything not nailed down (and even then, they often have pry bars and claw hammers to deal with those nails). *Shadowrun Missions* operate under the assumption that two players who have run the same amount of resources available to them (give or take some negotiation and a little bit of minor loot fenced), so when players are able to steal and fence a lot of gear or are able to get their hands on high-priced vehicles, cyberdecks, or foci, it can unbalance the game and make it unfair to players who didn't have the opportunity to get those items. Gamemasters should avoid letting the players get into a position to do high-value looting whenever possible.

NEO-TOKYO, PROGRESS AND TRADITION

Neo-Tokyo is widely considered the business capital of the world. Vast economic wealth fuels cutting edge research and development which have shaped a city that rivals any other in terms of technological wonder. Robot vendors are more prevalent than flesh and blood ones and drones are used for even the most basic tasks. AR spam often crowds out the meat world completely, catering to a baffling breadth of 'moe', the mania that surrounds obsession with anime, aidoru culture, and every single fad that passes through the country.

The newest trends in fashion, business, and technology belie a culture steeped in tradition and old-world ideals. Japanese ethnocentrism is firmly entrenched and makes its appearance routinely in dealings with gaijin or the

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SYSTEMS IN NEO-TOKYO

Rules changes and clarifications to *Shadowrun* mechanics specific to Neo-Tokyo *Missions* can be found in the *Shadowrun Missions* FAQ, however some of the key items are noted here:

NOISE

Due to the intense amount of Matrix traffic and AR Spam that pollute the streets of Neo-Toyko, the average level of Noise in the sprawl is 2. Commercial zones and other areas can often suffer from Noise Ratings as high as 5. Assume a Noise Rating of 2 in all locations unless otherwise noted in the scene.

GUN AVAILABILITY

In Neo-Tokyo, the legality classification of all firearms and heavy weapons is changed to Forbidden and licenses cannot be created for them. The exceptions are weapons categorized as firearms that can never be armed with ammunition that causes physical damage. While police, military, and corporate security can be granted special licenses, there are no exceptions for Player Characters.

SOCIAL MODIFIERS

Social norms in Japan are quite different than they are in western cultures. The idea of “face” or *giri* predicates specific behaviors to ensure that there is no dishonor or shame. *Shadowrunners* who consistently insult the honor of their employers will find them-

metahumans that many Japanese still see as a disgrace to their society. Only recently have reforms been enacted to grant human rights to Japan’s metahuman population and it will take generations to erase the prejudices that have festered for decades.

Perhaps it is that whole-hearted embrace of tradition that has led the city to insist on employing a metropolitan police force rather than contract a private security firm such as Lone Star. The Neo-Tokyo Metropolitan Police are a source of pride for the citizens. Highly trained and well-equipped, the NTMP is fiercely loyal to the metroplex and the Japanese Imperial State, rather than to corporate interests. They make extensive use of drones and POLNET, their communications and surveillance system, rivals the capability of any megacorporation.

selves out of work. Foremost, refusing to appear before Tanaka-san (the Japanese version of Mr. Johnson) is an insult. It is therefore assumed that all members of the team are present when any offers are made. Payment offered is per person at the table, and anyone who is not present will not receive payment.

Sometimes, a Tanaka-san will fall prey to the prejudices they grew up with. They may refuse to speak to a particular metatype, focusing only on the metatype they are comfortable speaking with (an awkward situation if the slighted metatype is the team’s face). Major NPCs will have their prejudices included in their descriptions. For every prejudice that a character triggers, GMs should impose a -1 dicepool penalty on opposed social rolls, up to -2 per character and no more than a total penalty of -6 for the entire party.

Finally, when negotiating with Tanaka-san, demanding a higher payout is an egregious insult. In Japanese business dealings, the offer is presumed to be the best offer that can possibly be made and asking for more implies that there is a level of dishonesty at play. Rather than ask for additional payment outright, a suave negotiator placates their employer, subtly bringing up their own concerns by ensuring they understand that their employer has already considered them. This is only a thematic change; the mechanical system for negotiating higher payment is exactly the same. In play, rather than a successful Negotiation test increasing the initial offer, the GM records the result and Tanaka-san offers the additional amount as a “bonus” for exceeding expectations.

Beat cops operate out of bee-hive shaped police stations in each ward and every pair of officers is tailed by a surveillance drone. Mages patrol astrally while watcher spirits observe from crucial vantage points, reporting suspicious magical activity to awakened dispatchers. When the situation calls for it, high threat response teams are heavily armed and operate on a policy of ‘shoot first then arrest survivors.’

In Japan, privately owned firearms are forbidden. Only the police, military, and megacorporate security forces are licensed to carry firearms. Anyone caught with a firearm can expect to be arrested on the spot. Further, guns are harder to acquire. While smugglers and arms dealers do what they can to supply ‘enthusiasts’ with the firepower they want, the obstacles they face are formidable and the complexity of their

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MOSHI MOSHI!

Throughout the *Shadowrun Missions* Neo-Tokyo arc, there will be plenty of Japanese words, names, and organizations that may seem challenging to pronounce. Before you are overwhelmed by the thought of having to figure out how to say each word you find, remember that Japanese doesn't use the English alphabet and when you find these transliterations, the best bet is to simply read it like it's spelled. The letter "a" is generally pronounced "ah" as in the word "awesome," the letter "e" is "eh" as in the word "enter," the "i" is a hard "ee" sound as in the word "ink," "o" is a hard "oh" such as "omit," and the letter "u" is an "ooh" such as "dude."

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

In Japan, the surname comes before the given name. Thus, Bob Smith would be referenced as Smith Bob. The Japanese do not have middle names. However, when using English or other Western languages, Japanese people often give their name in the Western order—that is, given name first and surname last. For the purposes of writing and to minimize confusion between Japanese names and Western names, names will be presented in the Western style except in dialogue or narrative expressly meant to be conveyed to the players, where the name will be presented in whichever method makes the most sense for the voice being used.

WHAT'S IN A TITLE?

Of course, titles like Mr. and Ms. are Western titles and not universally used in Japanese culture. Instead, titles are appended to the surname and are not gender specific. The title "san" is the most common, being a standard translation for Mr., Ms., and Mrs. It is added to the end of the surname with a dash. For example, Mr. Tanaka becomes Tanaka-san (which is incidentally the Japanese term for Mr. Johnson).

Sama is the formal version of san and is used when speaking to someone of higher rank or station, or when you wish to accord someone respect. Note that it can also be used ironically.

Both of these titles are applied to Western names in various situations, such as Smith-san. However, in many business circles, especially when dealing with foreigners, Japanese people will use Mr. and Ms.

There are other titles as well, offering a range terms

that denote relative station, familiarity, or even how cute something is.

WHAT DID YOU SAY?

If you'd like to make use of various Japanese words and slang to bring the setting to life, the following list is intended to give you a very brief start.

Aidoru: Literally "idol," it refers to the culture of manufacturing young stars and starlets that are admired for their cuteness.

Bosozuki: A street samurai.

Domo arigato: Thank you.

Gaijin: A foreigner, often used as a derogatory term but is not explicitly so.

Giri: Honor or obligation.

Goi: Cool! Wow! Impressive! Amazing! Derived from old word "sugoi" with the same meaning.

Hai: Yes.

Katagi: A non-Yakuza person, used by Yakuza to refer to outsiders.

Kawaii: Lovable, cute, or adorable.

Kawaruhito: Literally, "changed person," metahuman.

Kobun: Member of a Yakuza clan or gumi.

Konnichiwa: Hello!

Kyodai: "Older-brother" a term of respect from a subordinate Yakuza member to their superior.

Moe: A strong affection towards characters in anime, manga, video games, or pop culture.

Moshi moshi!: Hello! (usually associated with answering a call on your commlink)

Mushi: Computer glitch.

Nemawashi: Legwork, laying the groundwork.

Omae: Friend.

Oyabun: Head of a Yakuza clan or gumi.

Samurai: Mercenary or muscle for hire. Implies honor code.

Sarariman: A corporate employee. From a mispronunciation of salaryman.

Shatei: "Younger-brother" a term used by senior Yakuza members when speaking to their subordinates.

So ka: I understand. I get it. Derived from Japanese.

Yak: Yakuza. Either a clan member or a clan itself.

Tanaka-san: Japanese equivalent of Mr. Johnson.

Yokai: A catch-all word to describe any Awakened critter or spirit.