



# WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS

## BOKKEN FAMILY

Walking away from the large windows overlooking the ocean, the beauty of her gilded cage still struck Satomi. She guessed that his wife was jealous. The isolation she feels in Sammu-shi hurts. She recalls a time only months ago where she was staying in high-end apartments in Shinjuku, surrounded by bright lights and vibrant AROs. She can also remember a time before that working some of the tougher parts of town before being befriended by Yoriko. But for the last two months, her employer has kept her away from Neo-Tokyo.

She heads toward her workout room, holding her daughter in her arms. When she gets there, she sets the newborn in her bassinet and begins to work through her forms, lost in her thoughts. The last year has brought a lot of change since leaving the employ of Yoriko Asakura. Now she “works” for one of the executives for Komatsu Limited officially as a nanny, but really, she started this job in a more reclined position as Nobuo’s mistress. In the beginning, it was all sunshine and rainbows. He always said that she was his girl back when she was working at Hotel Pasha in Shinjuku. She had heard rumors of him having a temper, but she hadn’t seen it ... then.

Now she had seen it several times over the last month, but last night was the final straw. He had driven out to see her and his daughter, but right away, Satomi saw that he was in a foul mood. When he arrived, he asked for a massage, but when the baby started to fuss, he lost it and threw Satomi to the ground. That started a huge argument where he was angry about how she wasn’t raising the child right and she was pissed at being stuck out here. Nobuo lost it and beat her, telling her that he would kill her and dump her in Tokyo Bay with the other trash. Once he had worn himself out and as he was going to leave, he said offhand that he was going to need to pick up his daughter in a week as there was some family PR event that he and his wife would be attending next weekend.

She could smell that her time in the lap of luxury was coming to an end. Even though this wasn’t the first time he had beat her, she just felt that he was beginning to make plans. She didn’t even need to take the beating because she knew that she could kill him, but then what life would her daughter have? No, she needed to find a better way. One that didn’t end up with her dead or in prison. Her decision made, she set down her bokken. Luckily, this morning the cook and maid had not shown up yet, so she still had some privacy with the help of a white noise generator.

“Asakura-san, I need your help. As you predicted, things have gone sour, and I need to go to ground with my daughter. I have hidden some funds in an old account from when I worked with you. They can help raise her if I don’t make it. Please help me.”

## CREDITS

**Writing:** Aaron Dykstra  
**Conversion:** Hjal Nelson  
**Design:** Matt “Tater Tot Tuesday” Heerd  
**Proofing:** Aaron Dykstra, Hjal Nelson

**Shadowrun Missions Developer:** Danny Oliver  
**Shadowrun Line Developer:** Jason M. Hardy  
**Art Direction:** Ian King





# WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS

## INTRODUCTION

SRM 10-03: *When the Bough Breaks* is a *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign adventure. Full information on the *Shadowrun Missions* living campaign is available at [shadowruntabletop.com/Missions](http://shadowruntabletop.com/Missions) and includes a guide to creating Missions characters and a regularly updated FAQ. All maps, player handouts, and other playing aids are found at the end of this document.

## PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

SRM 10-03: *When the Bough Breaks* is intended for use with *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition*, and all character and rules information refer to the fifth edition of the *Shadowrun* rules.

## ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

SRM 10-03: *When the Bough Breaks* 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.

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 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 10-03: *When the Bough Breaks* (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.





# WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS

## 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). Standard rules such as success tests, glitches, critical successes, and other common mechanics are described in SR5 and are not repeated in this adventure.

Please keep in mind when preparing for the adventure, that the PCs will not necessarily be comprised of a balanced party. It's entirely possible that the party will be made up entirely of 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 that 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. To adjust the power level of an NPC, refer to **Helps and Hindrances** (p. 378, SR5). Take the player characters' abilities into consideration when assessing the NPCs in this adventure and modify them accordingly.



# WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS

## 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 larger 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 missions will have roughly 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 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. 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



# WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS

## 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-

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.

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 methods increase with the size and power of the weapons they mean to import.

With all the changes enacted over the last decade by Emperor Yasuhito, opportunities are opening for those willing to run one of the most secure sprawls in the world. The streets of Neo-Tokyo are not friendly to amateurs, but for professionals who know how to engage with subtlety and read the perfect moment to fully open the throttle before melting back into obscurity, there is ample nuyen to be shared. In the toughest sprawls, legends are born, and the seat of the empire makes a strong case for being the toughest of them all.

## PAPERWORK

After running a *Shadowrun Missions* adventure, there are several important pieces of paperwork that need to be filled out.

The first is to make certain to distribute a copy of the adventure's **Debriefing Log** to each player. As the GM, please make certain to fill this out and sign off on it for each character. In the interests of time, you may have each player fill out the sections, with appropriate values that you give them. Please consider the PCs actions in the scenario when providing Reputation modifiers, per those rules (p. 372, SR5).

The second is to make sure that all players have updated their character's **Mission Calendar**. PCs are allowed to go on one run per week. The calendar is used to track the char-



# WHEN THE BOUGH BREAKS

## 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.