



Sample file



ERIC  WILLIAMS II

BATTLE OF MANHATTAN

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Warehouse #40, Hong Kong docks

"We needed to leave half an hour ago! What is the hold-up!?" Chang Li asked oh so politely for the third time in five minutes. Captain Han of the independent trading vessel *Water Blossom* let out another breath through clenched teeth, trying to keep his anger in check. Keelhauling wasn't a Chinese maritime tradition, but it was one Han was giving serious thought to. Had Li not agreed to pay five million nuyen for transportation out of Hong Kong (and paid half up front), Han would have ordered his crew to prepare the ropes hours ago.

Turning to face the former Wuxing employee, Han took in one more deep breath before speaking. "With all due respect, had you not insisted that we take along certain, what did you call them, 'priceless items,' we would have been well on our way by now." He waved his hand in the direction of his crew as they continued to load cargo crates. "This delay is putting my crew and ship in jeopardy. So I would respectfully suggest you be quiet and let us finish!"

Li opened his mouth, about to say something, but was unable to find his voice for several seconds before finally stammering out "Fine, Captain. But remember that I am the one paying you for this so-called service." Turning on his heel, Li stormed toward the back offices.

Han hadn't realized it, but his hand had drifted to the heavy pistol strapped to his leg. He could have easily shot Li, taken the two-and-a-half-million deposit, and been done with it. But as much as he hated to admit it, he needed the full amount and the job itself. Lately, his luck had turned against him and his reputation had suffered because of it. No, if there were going to be any future work, he had to complete this job.

Still, it would have been an easy shot ...

Without warning, the warehouse's main doors exploded in a crash of thunder and shriek of twisting metal. The echo in the warehouse was deafening as metal shards and bits of building material shot through the loading area. An unearthly smoke billowed through where the doors once stood and an elven figure dressed in wujen attire levitated through. Wind billowed at his ornate robe as lightning illuminated his eyes and leaped from outstretched fingertips. The bolts struck several of Han's crew, leaving charred circles in their chests as they fell to the floor. Through the smoke, several more figures darted in and quickly spread out. Their urban-camo fatigues

sported a diamond-shaped unit patch on the shoulders with the number "58" on it. These mercenaries, while not perfectly synchronized in their movements, made up for any lack of unit precision with their assault rifles, gunning anyone who attempted escape.

Thunder crashed and lightning lit up the warehouse as Han dove for cover behind an empty cargo crate. The flimsy plastic container would offer little protection, but at least he had a few precious seconds behind concealment to act. "How in the seven hells did they get past my security?" he wondered as he drew his old Predator I pistol. In quick succession, Han put two shots into a nearby mercenary. Many thought he was crazy for relying on such an old weapon, but Han knew its aim was true. For almost twenty-five years it had been at his side and never failed. That streak continued as heavy rounds found gaps in the mercenary's armor. One struck just between the ballistic plates near the right shoulder, the other square in the neck. The hired soldier was dead before he hit the ground. Before Han found another target, a voice louder than anything he had heard before overrode the noise of battle and echoed through the warehouse uttering just one word: "Stop!"

Everyone in the warehouse complied, but Han took a moment to assess the situation. Most of his men were dead and the only mercenary down was the one he'd just shot. Worse, the mage, his robe and long snow-white beard still drifting in some kind of personal wind, was unharmed and still hovering nearby. But now he was looking directly at the smuggler captain.

The dead silence permeating the warehouse was broken by the sound of slow and deliberate footsteps. Through the thinning smoke, two figures calmly walked in. One was a large female troll; her dark skin and hairstyle reminded Han of many trips to Africa over the past several years. Buzzing around her was a pair of Sikorsky combat drones. Walking just a step in front of her was an Asian human male dressed in a long coat, tailored business suit, and very expensive shoes. He looked to be in his early to mid-forties, but carried himself with the weight, presence, and power of someone much older. The echo of his shoes was the only sound in the warehouse as he walked. One of the mercenaries approached and held out his arm to the man in the suit as he smoothly removed his coat, all without breaking stride. Suddenly, recognition set in and Han felt his blood run cold.



"Captain Han. I do not wish to see any more bloodshed tonight," the man in the suit said without preamble. "You and your crew are not the reason we are here. You just had the unfortunate luck of being in our way. Now, I give you my word that if you and the rest of your crew stand down, you will not be harmed nor will any retribution be taken. We understand this was just business."

Han knew he had no choice. Even without the mercenaries, there was no way he could win this fight. Standing up from behind the crate, Han laid down his Predator and held his hands up. The rest of his men, those who managed to find weapons, followed suit. The mage floated gently to the ground as the mercenaries closed ranks around the man in the suit. The female troll simply crossed her arms and observed, saying nothing as her drones hovered around her.

Without a word, two mercenaries headed toward the office. From inside, Li cried out like a pig being led to the slaughter. The former salaryman thrashed impotently in the mercenary's grips before they threw him to the ground in front of the man in the business suit. Li continued to sob pathetic cries for mercy.

Disgusted at the display before him, the man in the business suit looked down at Li and hissed, "Get up." With shaky legs, Li complied and managed to stand as tears streamed down his flushed face.

"Mr. Li. You should not have run, but then you should not have done a great many things. But that is not my concern at the moment. Now, I give you a choice. Come with us quietly, cooperate, and you will be shown some dignity before meeting your fate. Do not, and it will be most painful for you."

Li's face reddened further but he hung his head in submission. The man in the suit nodded and turned to face Captain Han. "I am a man of my word, Captain. As I have said, you and your crew will face no further harm this night. We shall go, but you will relinquish all the items you have already loaded on board and the money you have already been paid. I am sorry, but it was not Mr. Li's to give in the first place. I would also suggest that before you take another job, make sure the man who hired you is not wanted by the Red Drag ..."

Acting out of stupidity born of desperation, Li grabbed a machine pistol from a mercenary's unsecured holster and pointed it at the man in the suit's back. In a blur of motion, the man in the suit spun around as a crack from the pistol reported. In the first half of a heartbeat, the man in the suit then grabbed and twisted the machine pistol so it was now pointing in the opposite direction with Li's finger caught in the trigger guard. In the second half of the heartbeat, Li screamed in pain as the man in the suit ripped the machine pistol (and Li's finger) away and delivered a series of finger blows to Li's body in rapid succession. The former salaryman fell to the ground quivering, eyes wide in great pain and unable to speak; but he was still alive.

The man in the suit looked calmly at the machine pistol in his hand and then at the mercenary who'd lost it. Before the mercenary could speak, the man in the suit turned the weapon in his hands and put a bullet between the mercenary's eyes. Tossing the pistol aside as if disgusted with its presence, the man in the suit motioned for the rest of the mercenaries to

bring Li. As he slipped back into his jacket, the man in the suit looked to Captain Han and simply said "Remember my words, Captain" as he and his people walked out.

As soon as they were out of sight, Captain Han fell to his knees and just stared at the dead mercenary.

Outside the warehouse, William Xian watched as the mercenaries of the Fifty-Eighth Battle Brigade loaded Li into a van and departed. The retrieval had gone better than expected and the mercenaries had performed adequately if not perfectly. He hoped that tonight's example would motivate them toward future improvement. Still, his master would be pleased regardless. And hopefully if anyone wished to try to steal from Wuxing, they would think twice. But deep down he knew "One" would be called to go after yet another "Mr. Li."

On the digital display of his contact lenses, Xian saw comments from both Master Wu the mage and Zarah the technomancer. Wu was already complaining of headaches and wanted to leave immediately, while Zarah reported that all security footage within the surrounding area had been dealt with and not even the Resonance could find it. Looking at the chronometer display, he agreed with Wu. Their task was complete; it was time to rest.

Their private limo rolled around from behind one of the various cargo containers and Zarah growled. Over his display William saw the message: "She's here. And she hijacked *my* limo." That comment was all that Xian needed to know. As the limo glided to a halt a mere five meters from the trio, its back door opened and an immaculate-looking human woman with porcelain-smooth features and the latest Chinese business attire stepped out. Xian knew that behind the top-of-the-line smartglasses was a gleam of smug satisfaction. Zarah took exceptional pride in her abilities, and commandeering the limo was a direct insult to her. But then, that was Lin's style.

"Did you have to kill one of my men?" Lin asked in way of greeting.

"He got sloppy. And the last time I checked, the members of the Fifty-Eighth were beholden to the Red Dragon Society, not you personally. Why are you here, Lin?"

Lin moved from the limo and ran a finger over Xian's expensive silk tie. "We'll discuss the mercenaries later, handsome. But to answer your question, I'm here on behalf of the Master. It's been decided that One is going on a little trip; Manhattan to be exact.

"Why?"

"Why? Because the master wishes it, that's why. I'm just delivering the message on his behalf because he's attending to other matters. All you need to know is that your flight leaves from our private airport in ... three hours. Data packets regarding your task have been prepared and will be waiting for you on the plane. You should know that this little adventure is not to be taken lightly. Our Master has placed a high importance on it. So if any of you has something that needs to be done before you leave, better do it now. Because you now have only two hours and fifty-nine minutes."



INTRODUCTION

The Battle of Manhattan is the third of the *Boardroom Backstabs* series of adventures for both *Shadowrun, Twentieth Anniversary Edition* and *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition*. *The Battle of Manhattan* gives players the opportunity to experience the intrigue, espionage, and combat of the megacorporations' struggle for supremacy. The megacorporations will use any weapon, any tactic, and any person they think might give them an edge.

The Battle of Manhattan is an adaptable adventure; gamemasters can easily adjust it to suit the skills of their team, whether they are novices or seasoned pros. The adventure centers on the conflict between two megacorporations: AAA-rated Wuxing and AA-rated Prometheus Engineering. Recently, the Wuxing board of directors decided that the time had come to expand their North American operations and the best way to accomplish this was to enact a hostile takeover of Prometheus. To help facilitate the takeover, Wuxing turned to long-time associates in the Triads to act as a front to recruit shadowrunners and oversee operations that will eventually allow Wuxing to absorb Prometheus. This leads to a series of events that culminates in a knock-down, drag-out showdown in the streets of Manhattan.

Players should stop reading now. The rest of *Battle of Manhattan* is for gamemasters only. It lays out the plots, characters, and secrets the gamemaster will use in creating the group's adventure. Reading beyond this point could spoil a player's experience and diminish enjoyment of the adventure.

PREPARING THE ADVENTURE

The Battle of Manhattan can be run with either the anniversary edition of *Shadowrun, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (SR4A)* rulebook or *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition (SR5)*. However, many of the characters and gear presented are drawn from additional core *SR4A* and *SR5* supplements. While this adventure follows the core rules found in both editions, incorporating these supplements gives a gamemaster the chance to try some of the optional rules they contain.

This adventure takes the shadowrunners from Seattle (though the gamemaster can choose another starting point) to the island of Manhattan in New York. Initially, the runners are hired to assist Wuxing with their hostile takeover of Prometheus Engineering, but eventually Prometheus will make them a counter-offer to try to hire the runners for a few missions of their own. After a series of encounters, the fighting moves out of the shadows and becomes full-blown warfare on the streets. Gamemasters can opt to make this information available to their players in advance or as the player characters research the city or interact with the various factions. Gamemasters can also find useful information on the Wuxing megacorporation in the *Corporate Guide*, while detailed information on Prometheus Engineering and the island of Manhattan can be found in the e-book supplement *The Rotten Apple: Manhattan* as well as the Fifth Edition book *Stolen Souls*.

ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

In *The Battle of Manhattan*, Wuxing arranges through their Triad associates (specifically the Red Dragon Society) for a specific set of objectives to be accomplished by shadowrunners on the corporate island of Manhattan. The gamemaster has the freedom to run all four objectives or choose only those objectives best suited to the group; they may also wish to add new, original objectives to expand this adventure into a full campaign set in an exotic locale.

MAIN SECTIONS

This book is organized into sections to assist you in bringing the adventure to your table:

- **Preparing to Play:** A plot synopsis, necessary background information, and other useful details and data.
- **Adventure Scenes:** The adventure itself, broken down into individual scenes.
- **Legwork:** Summaries of information and data the player characters might find during their research.
- **Cast of Shadows:** Profiles of the primary NPCs with whom the player characters will interact during the adventure.

ADVENTURE SCENES

The adventure itself plays out over a series of sequential scenes. Each scene contains some, or all, of the following subsections:

- **Scan This:** A brief summary of the events in the scene.
- **Tell It To Them Straight:** A text selection that can be read directly to the players or paraphrased when the player characters reach specific points in the scene.
- **Hooks:** Descriptions of ways that characters might be encouraged to play a scene.
- **Behind the Scenes:** The mechanics behind each scene, including NPC motivations and any secrets or special instructions.
- **Subplots:** Secondary adventures—or red herrings—that offer avenues for gamemasters to make the adventure less linear for players.
- **Pushing the Envelope:** Suggestions for gamemasters on altering the scene to challenge more experienced players or more powerful player characters.
- **Debugging:** Suggestions for getting the adventure back on track if the player characters' actions derail it.
- **Places of Interest:** Locations featured in the scene, including descriptions and ratings for security systems and Matrix systems.
- **Grunts and Moving Targets:** NPCs in that particular scene. NPCs that are featured in multiple scenes are found in the *Cast of Shadows*.



NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Non-player characters (NPCs) are the key to bringing any adventure to life. NPCs include the allies, enemies, and contacts with whom the player characters will interact during the mission. Important NPCs have relevant profiles, including stats, in the *Grunts and Moving Targets* section for each scene. Major NPCs who appear in multiple scenes are listed in the *Cast of Shadows* section at the end of this book. Gamemasters can and should tweak the NPCs to make them more or less challenging opponents (see **Prime Runners**, p. 284, *SR4A*, or p. 385, *SR5*). NPCs in groups benefit from Group Edge (p. 281, *SR4A*, or p. 380, *SR5*), while individual NPCs in this adventure possess their own Edge stat to use.

BACKGROUND

"In the practical art of war, the best thing of all is to take the enemy's country whole and intact; to shatter and destroy it is not so good. So, too, it is better to recapture an army entire than to destroy it." —Sun Tzu

In late 2076, many of the world's megacorporations are smack in the middle of one crisis or another. Aztechnology is rebuilding from its war with Amazonia and attacks that damaged much of its food production capabilities. Horizon supported the losing side of that war and the outcome dealt it a serious blow, as has the fallout from the technomancer massacre in Las Vegas. Ares is still reeling from various

The Battle of Manhattan is an adventure designed for *Shadowrun, Fifth Edition* and *Shadowrun, Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, and is the third in the *Boardroom Backstabs* series of adventures. Listed below are suggestions that will help make the adventure run more smoothly.

STEP ONE: READ THE ADVENTURE

Read through the adventure before you introduce it to your group. Being familiar with the entire story lets you see how each part leads to the next. Knowing what's coming down the line helps you adapt when your players (inevitably) come up with something not in the adventure.

STEP TWO: ASSESS THE ADVENTURE

Rarely does a gamemaster run an adventure exactly the way it's written. Some may want to make it more challenging for their players while others may adjust it for specialized teams (such as all mages). Others may switch out some of the NPCs for characters the players are familiar with in their games to create a more unified universe for their runs. You know your players. Assessing the adventure lets you to customize it and make it more enjoyable to the players or fit your own gamemastering style.

STEP THREE: KNOW THE CHARACTERS

You should have complete information on each of the player characters prior to running the adventure so you can assess their individual (and group) skills, contacts, and abilities. If a scene calls for them to fly a plane through the Rockies, and none of them have a Pilot Aircraft skill, you may need to tweak the scene so they'll still have a chance at success. If a character is sidelined for parts of the story due to lack of abilities or skills, the gamemaster should consider adding scenes that play to the character's strengths.

GAMEMASTERING THE ADVENTURE

STEP FOUR: TAKE NOTES

Written notes keep things organized. Notes to remind you where to distribute a handout or listing details you should emphasize make it easier to present the adventure smoothly and effectively. Just as important is taking notes during the adventure, including the things the players do and say, and the choices they make. This is useful in awarding Karma and handling contacts at the conclusion of the adventure. Perhaps more importantly, as you play through a series of adventures, the choices made in one game will affect the players' options—and the consequences they face—in the next. No doubt players will make choices they regret, and running in the shadows means there's a good chance those bad decisions will come back to haunt them later.

STEP FIVE: DON'T LET THE DICE RUN THE GAME

Dice rolls are used to determine the outcomes of events in a roleplaying game. However, sometimes the dice fall in such a way that they interfere with the story. As gamemaster, you have the authority—and sometimes the responsibility—to tweak the dice to enhance the story. As a rule of thumb, a gamemaster shouldn't fudge the die rolls to hurt player characters, but occasionally might tweak the roll to help them out (softening the roll from "death" to "serious injury" for example) or to help the story recover from a catastrophic run of luck and continue on.

STEP SIX: DON'T PANIC!

You will make mistakes. *Everyone* makes mistakes. You may forget a rule, misread a scene, or forget an important clue. Don't worry. The reason you're there is to have fun, and fun is far more important than a flawless performance. When you or the players make a mistake, do your best to straighten things out and keep moving forward.

