

# THE YEAR IS 2053

***Watch your back. Shoot straight. Conserve ammo. And never, ever, cut a deal with a dragon.***

***—Street proverb***

**T**he world is changed, some say Awakened.

A lull in the flow of mystical energies subsided, and magic returned to the world. Elves, dwarfs, orks, and trolls assumed their true form, throwing off their human guise. Creatures of the wild changed, too, becoming things of myth and legend. Modern society fights on, despite the odds, in an effort to assimilate the ways of magic into a technological world.

The decades that followed the Awakening were years of turmoil, panic, and chaos, as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse seemed to race across the Earth. Primitive cultures that had never lost touch with their mystical past began to use magic against the great nations that had suppressed them for so long. The vast, global telecommunications network collapsed under an assault by a mysterious computer virus. Nuclear missiles were launched, but failed to detonate. Dragons soared into the skies. Epidemics and famine ravaged the world's populations. Clashes between newly Awakened races and the rest of humanity became common. All central authority crumbled and the world began to spiral down into a black abyss.

But man and his kin are hearty animals. Out of the devastation and anarchy, order slowly reemerged. Cybertechnology eradicated the last vestiges of the computer virus and replaced the old telecommunications network with what became known as the Matrix. New nation-states of Amerindians, elves, orks, and dwarfs were formed. Metroplexes, vast city-states, sprawled over the the landscape. Central governments were replaced by megacorporations that had become a law unto themselves. People who accepted their sovereignty were protected. The outcasts, dissidents, and rebels were exploited and abused, continuing a condition that has existed between the weak and the powerful since time began.



Technology, too, has changed people. No longer only flesh, many have turned to the artificial enhancements of cyberware to make themselves more than human. Stronger, smarter, faster is the human of today.

In the world of 2053, the metroplexes are monsters casting long shadows. And it's in the cracks between the giant corporate structures that shadowrunners find their home. When the megacorps want a job done but they don't want to dirty their hands, it's a shadowrun they need, and they turn to the runners who are the only ones who can do it. Though a shadowrunner's existence is not listed in any governmental or corporate database, the demand for his or her services is high. She might be a decker, sliding like a whisper through the visualized databases of giant corporations, spiriting away the only thing of real value—information. Or perhaps he is a street samurai, an enforcer for hire whose combat skills and reflexes make him the ultimate urban predator. Or perhaps he or she is a magician, possessing an ancient gift, the ability to wield and shape the magical energies that now surround the Earth.

And that's exactly the kind of firepower you'll need if you get hired to make a **Shadowrun**...

## THE WORLD OF SHADOWRUN

The world of **Shadowrun**, known to denizens of the new age as the Sixth World, is a place of magic and high technology, a landscape of danger and mystery, a maze of noble sentiments and double-crosses. Those who play stand on the edge, in the shadow of adventure.

Welcome.

**Shadowrun** is a roleplaying game designed for two to eight players. Unlike most such games, however, it is open-ended, with no time limit, specified number of turns to play, or single goal to reach that ends the game. And unlike most games, there is no winner and no loser. The object is to have fun with the exercise of imagination. When this happens, everybody wins.

For those who have roleplaying game experience, some of the following will be familiar. Those readers may want to skip ahead to **Game Concepts**, p. 30, or turn to **And So It Came To Pass...** and delve into the history and background of the world of **Shadowrun**.

For those new to roleplaying, the following is an introduction. It may not answer all questions or even provide much enlightenment because the roleplaying game is more easily learned from experienced players than a book. So, absorb what you can, then seek out others who are already familiar with **Shadowrun** so you can learn from them by experiencing it.

## WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

A good question, but not an easy one to answer. Everyone has read a book or seen a movie where the lead character does something that the reader or viewer finds so utterly *wrong* that he or she wants to yell out and warn them. But whether the reader calls out or not, it makes no difference. No matter what we say, the character will do what the plot demands; we're just along for the ride.

The situation in a roleplaying game is very different. When roleplaying, the players control their characters' actions and respond to the events of the plot. If the player does not want the character to go through the door, the character will not. If the player thinks the character can talk him or herself out of a tight situation rather than resorting to that trusty pistol, he can talk away. The script, or plot, of a roleplaying game is flexible, always changing based on the decisions the players make as characters.

The person controlling the story is called the gamemaster. His or her job is to keep track of what is supposed to happen when, describe events as they occur so that the players (as characters) can react to them, keep track of other characters in the game (referred to as non-player characters), and resolve attempts to take action using the game system. The gamemaster describes the world as the characters see it, functioning as their eyes, ears, and other senses. Gamemastering is not an easy task, but the thrill of creating an adventure that engages the other players, tests both the players' gaming skills and the characters' skills in the game world, and captures the players' imaginations makes it worthwhile. FASA publishes game supplements and adventures to help this process along, but good gamemasters always adapt the game universe to suit their own style.

Stories (the adventures) provide the overall plot, a general outline for what might happen at certain times in reaction to other events. The story is no more concrete than that until the players become involved, however. Then, the adventure becomes a story as involving and dramatic as that great movie you saw last week, or that great book you stayed up all night to finish. In some ways it's even better, because *you* helped create it.

## GETTING STARTED

That's the basic concept. The specifics follow, divided into broad sections covering each aspect of the game. The opening short story, **Plus Ça Change**, provides atmosphere and a taste of the language and style of **Shadowrun**. The next chapter talks about how the **Shadowrun** world came to be. The rules for how to play the game begin with **Game Concepts**, p. 30.

Welcome to the Sixth World, chummer. It's going to be a heck of a ride.