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ACTION CHECK

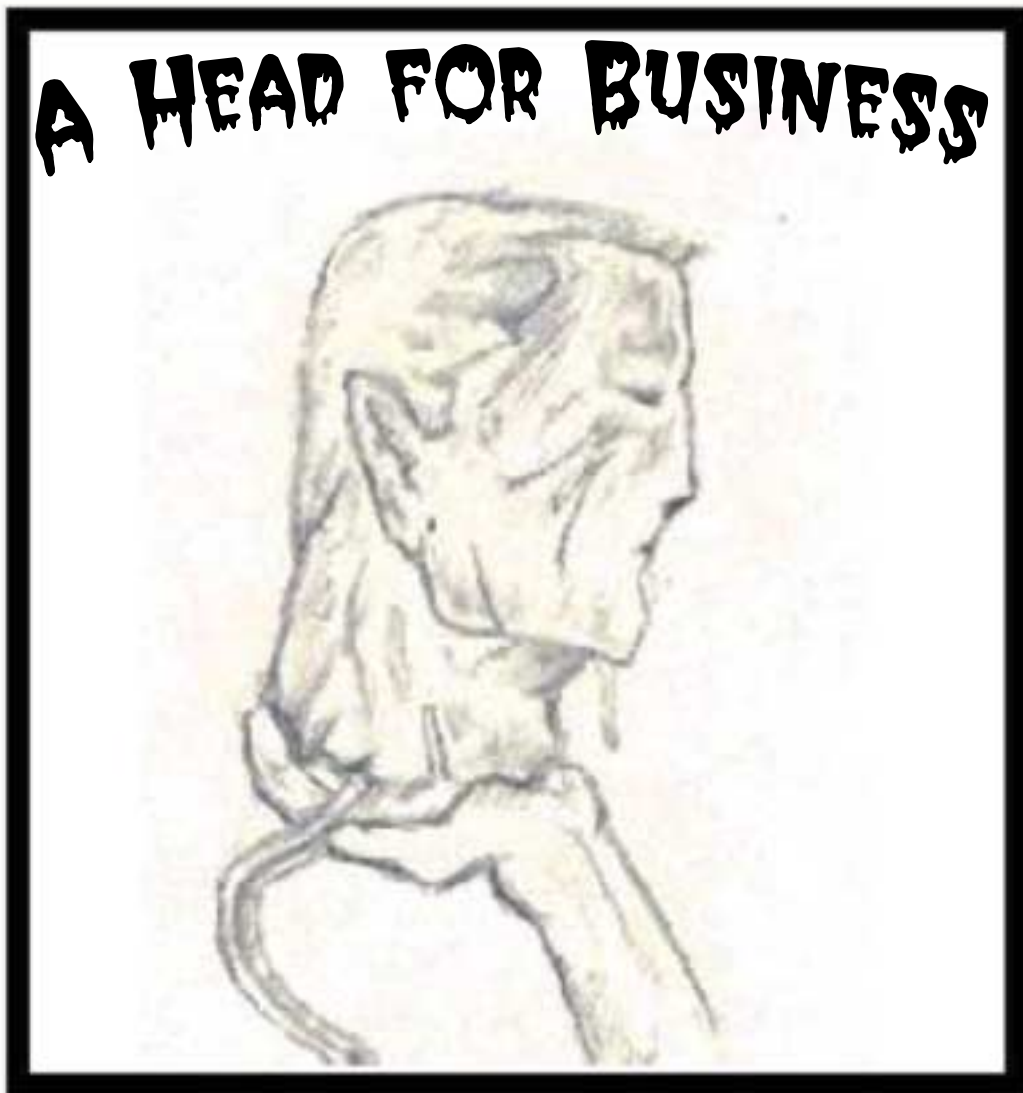
ONLINE MAGAZINE

STAR*DRIVE

GAMMA WORLD

DARK•MATTER

A HEAD FOR BUSINESS



A Dark Matter Adventure Reprint
From the Pages of Dungeon Adventures
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A HEAD FOR BUSINESS

BY JD WIKER

The sandmen cometh

Original cartography by Diesel

Before moving into the RPG industry, JD spent several years at St. Sylvester's Church, where he worked as a consultant.

"A Head for Business" is an ALTERNITY® adventure for the DARK*MATTER® Campaign Setting. It is designed for six 3rd-level Hoffmann Institute agents, and the group should include at least one Tech Op and one Diplomat hero.

Background

Amid all the plots and conspiracies and paranormal goings-on, work goes on for the ordinary people -- the ones who never suspect just how close to annihilation or enslavement the human race is. When one of these people stumbles into the web of secrets surrounding the multitude of international (and interstellar) conspiracies, they can wreak untold havoc with their fear, anger, and greed.

Eighteen months ago, a small-time hustler named Kaoru Ogura secretly witnessed a battle between Hoffmann Institute agents and the mysterious alien-controlled sandmen. After the Hoffmann agents departed, Ogura scurried out of his hiding place to grab a couple of the sandmen's intriguing "dart pistols," hoping to turn a quick buck. To his disappointment, the weapons crumbled in his hands, disassembled at a molecular level by the same nanites that were at that moment disintegrating the dead sandmen.

Not to be denied, Ogura turned his attention to the dissolving sandmen. He tried to stop the dissolution process, losing body after body to the implacable nanites. Finally, he got lucky with some chemicals and refrigeration, and he managed to save one part of the last sandman: its head.

Hurrying home with his prize tucked in a cooler, Ogura labored to find a way to communicate with the head without it dissolving further. After a couple false starts, he rigged a synthesizer to translate impulses from the head into speech. He explained to the head who he was and what he had done. It asked him why. Ogura showed it a drawing of the "dart pistol" that had dissolved.

"Tell me how to make these."

Adventure Summary

After sandmen board a commercial airliner and kill several people while looking for Kaoru Ogura, the Hoffmann Institute assigns the heroes to find out why. They journey to his warehouse in Portland, Oregon, where -- after satisfying himself that the heroes are not sandmen -- Ogura negotiates with them for protection. The negotiations are cut short when sandmen arrive to kill him.

Ogura agrees to accompany the heroes to a Hoffmann Institute safehouse and insists on travelling by train. As the train is leaving the station, though, several sandmen arrive on the boarding platform and give chase. On their way to a Hoffmann

Institute safehouse, the heroes discover that Ogura has been making money by selling copies of sandmen needler pistols -- from a design supplied to him by a preserved sandman head.

Then, in a tunnel in the Rocky Mountains, the train comes to a sudden stop. Sandmen trigger an avalanche in front of the train and use the resulting confusion to make one last grasp for their quarry.

The Head

The sandman head Ogura has preserved is a badly decomposed head and nothing more. The head shows signs of the chemical bath that Ogura gave it to prevent its destruction by the nanites. The features are indistinct, but glossy, as though someone had shellacked it.

That the head belongs to a sandman is easily determined by anyone who knows what a sandman is, although the Gamemaster might require that the heroes make a successful Awareness-*perception* check to recognize it in its current state. The obvious signs are a set of small, thin wires coming out of the head's neck, one of which has a connector for a computer cable. (The cable is in the bottom of the cooler.) Slightly less apparent are the narrow, silvery lines running through the flesh, like arteries filled with mercury.

The head is cool to the touch. Ogura, knowing nothing of sandmen, never considered that it might be a bad idea to handle the head and does so on a regular basis.

The head is always conscious but cannot speak unless it is connected to Ogura's computer. It can hear quite plainly, despite Ogura's belief that his computer is the only means of communicating with it. Its eyes function normally, and it can smell and taste after a fashion. Obviously, though, it cannot move of its own accord.

Scene 1: Investigate Flight 315

Yesterday afternoon, everyone in the heroes' city watched in dread as police SWAT teams responded to a terrorist threat at the airport. According to the police, two of the passengers waited until everyone was aboard Pan Am Flight 315, then produced handguns and began executing passengers. They never issued any demands and ignored attempts at contact.

For three long hours, every local television was tuned to the crisis, and then it was suddenly over, with SWAT teams hauling the dead terrorists and their victims out onto the runway. The surviving passengers were herded out the other side of the aircraft by FBI agents, hustled onto buses, and taken to safety. Some of the passengers appeared on television later that night to talk about their harrowing experience and tearfully hug their families for the cameras. By the next morning, the airport had resumed its normal schedules, as though nothing had ever happened.

The Briefing

Like nearly everyone else in the city, the heroes know only about the events at the airport from the news coverage. But early the next morning, they receive a call from their superior, Field Director Jim Doyle, to gather for a briefing.

Doyle begins by showing the heroes a clip taken from the evening news -- an interview with a man who had been aboard the plane when the terrorists began shooting hostages. "They seemed just like anybody else until they stood up and started shooting," says the man on the screen, identified as Mark Gaines, an electronics salesman. "I was sure I was going to die." The report goes on to indicate that seven people died in the incident: five passengers and two terrorists. The names of the passengers haven't been released yet; the FBI is waiting until they inform the families.

Once the heroes have reviewed the newscast, read or paraphrase the following:

Doyle pauses the tape and shakes his head. "We found out this morning that this man, Gaines, is actually an FBI agent-and he was never aboard Flight 315. In fact, if our information is correct, he arrived by helicopter just after the SWAT teams went in. Now what does this all tell us?"

Doyle pauses again, giving the heroes a chance to put it all together.

"It tells us that whatever happened aboard that jet yesterday, the FBI doesn't want anybody to know. Otherwise they would have let a real passenger talk to the press. They've released only about half of the passengers; the other half are still being detained at the airport in this storage hangar."

Doyle shows the heroes an aerial photograph of the airport and points to a building circled in red. Show the players Handout #1, then read or paraphrase the following:

“Vehicles have been moving in and out since yesterday, and the official story is that the passengers are being released in small groups. But they’re not showing up at home, or anywhere else, which means they’re probably still here.”
 After a moment, Doyle continues. “The Hoffmann Institute wants to know a couple of things, and since this is our city, we’ve been assigned to find the answers.
 “First: What really happened aboard Flight 315?
 “Second: Why were some passengers released and some detained?
 “Third: Seven bodies were taken off the plane. Who were they?
 “Fourth, and last: What’s going on inside this hangar? Why is the FBI still there?”
 Doyle places a large box full of files, printouts, and videotape on the conference table. “This is everything we have on Flight 315, the news coverage, the FBI operation, and so on. Let’s order some take-out and see if we can’t find all the answers in here.”

Research

Field Director Doyle suggests a few different courses of research:

- Reviewing the news footage of the terrorist attack;
- Examining the airline records for information on the passengers;
- Interviewing the passengers who have already been released;
- Looking for connections with known conspiracy figures, paranormal events, and Stranger activities.

The heroes can split up these tasks however they like, but Doyle points out that time is of the essence: “We don’t know how long the FBI is going to stay in that hangar, so we can’t afford to put all of our efforts into investigating any one lead.”

Each of these four tasks is considered a complex skill check, as detailed below. Skill checks can be attempted once each hour. If any given task accumulates 3 or more failures, that avenue of investigation becomes closed-the FBI takes notice, witnesses refuse to speak, evidence becomes damaged, and so on.

Supporting Cast

Kaoru Ogura, Arms Dealer

Level 6 Diplomat (Tech Op)

STR	6	[-1]	Int	14	[+2]
DEX	9	[0]	WIL	11	[+1]
CON	8		PER	12	

Durability: 8/8/4/4 Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

Move: sprint 14, run 10, walk 4 #Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2

Perks: Good Luck, High Tech

Flaws: Criminal Record, Obsessed, Rampant Paranoia

Attacks

Unarmed	3/1/0*	d4-is/d4s/d4+ls	LI/O
9mm pistol	10/5/2**	d4+1w/d4+2w/d4m	HI/O
Needler pistol	10/5/2**	special	special

* +d4 base die

** -1 step bonus (sights with laser aiming dots)

Defenses

Armor: none

Skills

Stamina [8]; Modern [9]-pistol [10]; Stealth [9]-*hide* [10]; Vehicle Operation [9]-*land* [10]; Business [14]-*illicit* [16]; Knowledge [14]-*computer operation* [15], *deduce* [15], *language (Japanese)* [16]; System Operation [14]-*communications* [16], *sensors* [16]; Technical Science [14]-*juryrig* [17], *repair* [16], *knowledge* [16]; Awareness [11]-*perception* [12]; Investigate [11]-*search* [12]; Street Smart [11]-*criminal elements* [13]; Deception [12]-*bluff* [14]; Interaction [12]-*bargain* [14].

Kaoru Ogura is a man with a tiger by the tail. Although he has captured a sandman head and is using it to make more money than he has ever seen, just possessing it makes him a major target for competitors, police, the loan sharks who gave him his start – and, of course, the sandmen. He’s convinced that everyone wants to take it from him, and he guards it with a fanaticism bordering on madness.

Ogura began his career in Japan as a small time street hustler repairing and modifying firearms for youth gangs, all the while seeking ways to turn his small talents into big money. He borrowed money from the Yakuza, at first to finance ambitious schemes, then to buy food. When Ogura finally got lucky enough to make money on one of his weapon modifications, the Yakuza took his money and his design and put him on a freighter to America, where he wouldn’t be tempted to ask them for another loan (and they wouldn’t be tempted to kill him).

Once Ogura picked up the language, the United States was really no different than Japan. He met people who needed weapons, and they paid him to get them. He made enough to afford a place no one else wanted and modified it to fit his needs. Of course, it looks like a junk collection, but Ogura didn’t get it to impress the ladies. He lives and works there every day, and now that he has the sandman head, it has become his personal fortress against an attack by the sandman’s associates.

The News Coverage

Examining the videotapes of news coverage requires the Awareness-perception skill. Supporting skills include Creativity *film* and Knowledge-*computer operation*.

1 success: An hour before the SWAT teams went into the aircraft, the news crews were herded out of the airport so as not to allow the terrorists to see what was going on outside.

2 successes: In one of the frequent zoom-in shots of the aircraft, movement in the windows can be clearly seen. Details are impossible to make out, however.

3 successes: Capturing images from the videotape and enhancing them turns up one shot in which some sort of small projectile bounces off the inside of one of the jet’s windows. Nothing clearer can be obtained.

4 successes: In the shots of the aftermath of the SWAT assault, the police pull the bodies out of the airplane, already wrapped in plastic body bags. In the background, a large white panel truck heading toward the line of hostages escaping out the other side of the plane suddenly changes course and heads toward the body bags instead. Though there is some sort of writing on the side of the vehicle—a short word or acronym—the angle of the camera and the extreme distance make it impossible to read, even with video captures and enhanced zooms.

Airline Records

Examining the stack of airline records requires the Investigate-research skill; Investigate-*track* and Computer Science-*hacking* can both act as supporting skills.

1 success: Pan Am Flight 315 was bound for Tokyo—a direct flight with no stops.

2 successes: The heroes have a complete list of all the passengers, when their tickets were purchased, and by whom. Several were from out of state, and a few were from out of the country. Many were purchased in Japan, and at least three-quarters of the passengers had Japanese names.

3 successes: The flight was full, with four different people waiting on stand-by for a seat to open up. Only one person on stand-by got on the flight.

4 successes: The one person who didn’t show up to claim his seat on the plane was Hiro Ngai (pronounced “Hero Y”). Ngai’s ticket was purchased online by Kaoru Ogura, from an address in Tokyo. Also, several hours after the police and FBI had finished examining the jet, it was flown away by Pan Am personnel for cosmetic repairs to the cabin. Airport personnel who saw the interior of the jet said, “It was riddled with bullets. All of the windows had to be replaced before it was flight-worthy again.”

Interviewing Passengers

Interviewing the passengers who have already been released requires the skill *Interaction-interview*, with *Deception-bribe* and *Knowledge-language (Japanese)* as supporting skills.

1 success: The passengers already released all had seats in the back of the plane. Most of the action-the terrorists, then the SWAT teams-took place in the first-class section of the jet. The terrorists only occasionally poked their heads into the economy-class cabin. “We had no idea anything was wrong until we heard the screams from the first-class cabin.”

2 successes: The terrorists appeared to be very nervous; they were sweating profusely. They were looking for someone whose description they didn’t have. They kept calling out a name-too far away to be heard clearly-and shooting someone when they didn’t get the answer they wanted. “They kept calling out the same name, and then there would be a low noise, like a gun with a silencer, followed by more screaming.”

3 successes: When the SWAT team boarded the plane, they came in from under the floor, through the luggage compartment. Then the rear emergency exit opened, and SWAT troops began dragging people off the plane, onto an air cushion, and into the storage hangar. “They made us all kneel on the floor with our hands on our heads until they had verified who we were. A man wearing an *FBI* badge seemed to be coordinating this part of the operation.”

4 successes: The FBI were primarily interested in two types of information: what the passengers saw before the SWAT team, and what they saw after the SWAT team. “All we could really say was that we had gotten a glimpse of the terrorists before the shooting started. After that, we were all just too concerned with getting off the airplane. They seemed satisfied with that.”

5 successes: There were officials present at the debriefing who weren’t *FBI* or police. They seemed more like medical personnel, but they were primarily interested in examining the dead passengers and the terrorists. “They didn’t start examining the injured until well after they had packed up the dead in these strange glass coffins they removed from inside a large white truck. The letters on the side of the truck read *CDC*.”

6 successes: “I don’t think they noticed me, but I heard them very clearly. The *CDC* man said that the bodies showed no signs of infection, and the *FBI* man seemed relieved. He said, ‘If we are very lucky, we won’t have to sterilize everyone.’ He said it as if it were a bad thing, to make certain we were not infected.”

Connections

If the heroes wish to draw connections between the research they have already done and information the Hoffmann Institute has about other cases, the appropriate skill is *Investigate-research*, with *Investigate-track* and *Knowledge-deduce* as supporting skills.

They can accumulate no more successes with this complex skill check than the highest number of successes in any of the other three complex skill checks they have performed. This number is not based on cumulative successes between two or more complex skill checks-just a single task.

2 successes: *FBI* agents were already at the airport, although apparently not for any sort of anti-terrorist mission. They were in place as part of a surveillance operation.

4 successes: The name “Kaoru Ogura” shows up in Hoffmann Institute records as an arms dealer suspected of trafficking in blackmarket alien-technology weapons, including items reputedly stolen from the Agency for Foreign Technology. He is currently under surveillance by the Hoffmann Institute at his warehouse/office in Portland, Oregon.

5 successes: Imitations of sandman needler pistols, modified to carry lethal toxins instead of sandman morphotoxin, have been trickling into the black market for the last year. Ogura is one of several people suspected of dealing in them.

Conclusions

From the information they have gathered, the heroes can ascertain that two sandmen boarded Pan Am Flight 315, waited until the plane had pulled away from the terminal, and began looking for someone. Then SWAT teams arrived and killed the sandmen, bagged the bodies of the dead passengers, and passed two of the bagged bodies off as the dead terrorists. Passengers in first class, where the sandmen were, would have most likely seen the sandmen’s bodies dissolving after death, which would explain why the *FBI* wanted to cover up the real story. Apparently the Center for Disease Control is also involved, and they tested the dead passengers for signs of sandman nanite infection. They are probably still testing the survivors, which would explain why they have not yet released any of the passengers.

Born Chiba City, Japan
Naturalized US citizen:1999
Languages: Japanese, English
Skills: weapon repair/modification, vehicle repair/modification, engineering
Raised in orphanage: 1974-1990

Aliases: None known

Series of minor arrests for possession of stolen property, vandalism, failure to produce identification, 1989-94; sentenced to a total of 18 months in correctional facilities;
Possible Yakuza involvement, 1993-1998;
Suspected firearms trafficking, 1992-present;
Suspected exotic weaponry trafficking, 1999-present.

Current Status

Currently under surveillance by Portland office of Hoffmann Institute pending further evidence in black market needler pistol trafficking (Agent in Charge: Samuel Takimashi).

The Airport

While their research answers most of the questions, the heroes still do not know for certain what is happening inside the airport storage hangar. If the heroes wish to investigate the storage hangar at the airport, Field Director Doyle suggests going between the hours of 1 A.m. and 4 A.M., when the airport is less busy. Doyle advises the heroes to get in and get out as quickly as possible, and to avoid confrontations -- a firefight will only make their job more difficult.

Doyle also cautions them to have a good cover story ready in case they are caught; the Hoffmann Institute will back them up with whatever they arrange. If none of the heroes has an appropriate background (say, as an FBI agent), then posing as FAA inspectors, insurance adjusters, or even just airport maintenance personnel would all be viable options.

Getting into the airport will be much easier than it was the day of the terrorist attack. There is still a considerable law enforcement presence at the airport, and everyone is alert. Consequently, carrying weapons into the airport or poking around in restricted areas will be much more difficult than normal. The thorough searches of the police (they are scanning everyone who passes through the X-ray machines) gain a -1 step bonus to find concealed weapons. Similarly, uses of Personality skills to gain the trust of airport personnel suffer a +1 step penalty.

Going into the airport during daylight hours makes things even trickier, adding an additional +/-1 step to the activities described above.

Unless the heroes have a cover story that is so good they can simply drive up to the storage hangar (Gamemaster's discretion, though heroes can bounce ideas off Doyle first), they will probably have to enter through the terminal, the access gate, or over the security fence. The first requires a Manipulation-*lockpick* skill check; the second requires Deception-*bluff* and the last requires Athletics-*climb*, followed by a Stealth-*sneak* check.

A hero who fails one of these finds him or herself surrounded by d4+2 police officers in d6+1 rounds. If the hero is caught with a weapon or rolls a Critical Failure on a Personality-based skill check with the airport personnel, the officers will be supported by d4 FBI agents. (For the police, use the Ordinary Law Enforcer template in Chapter 6: Supporting Cast, in the *Gamemaster Guide*. For FBI, use the Good Law Enforcer template.)

The Storage Hangar

The storage hangar is located just off the runway, about half a kilometer away from the main terminal. At this hour there aren't many flights, but there are still plenty of planes moving from hangar to hangar, maintenance vehicles driving around, and so forth. Awareness checks based on hearing suffer a +1 step penalty which, in the heroes' favor, applies to the opposition as well.

By the time the heroes arrive at the storage hangar, the remaining passengers have been debriefed and sent on their way. (Some who got a good look at the terrorists aboard the airplane--and specifically, what happened to their bodies after they were shot--have been more thoroughly debriefed than the others and now are extremely unclear on what they really saw.)

The FBI agents who were on the scene have almost completely cleared out, and the CDC operatives are just finishing loading the corpses of the dead passengers aboard their panel van.

The CDC panel van, parked inside the hangar, is the real point of interest here. At present, only a single CDC agent is in the van, sitting behind the wheel while he waits for the last corpse to be loaded. (Treat the agent as a Good Law Enforcer.) The heroes have 3 minutes before three more CDC agents arrive with the last biological containment capsule. During that time, the heroes must either distract or dispose of the driver, open the rear door of the van, get a good look around, and depart.

The rear of the van is refrigerated and contains four biological containment capsules (2meter-long containers that look like Plexiglas coffins) with room for two more. Each capsule contains the nude, frozen corpse of an oriental man in his mid-20s (but of otherwise wildly varying appearances), each of whom has a bullet wound in the forehead (as ordered by the CDC, to ensure that none of them underwent nanite transformation). The only identification on the men or the capsules are barcodes on the outside of each capsule.

Each man also has a smaller, pinprick wound, slightly discolored, where he was originally wounded by the needler pistols of the sandman “terrorists.” Noticing the second wound requires an Awareness- *perception* check with a +2 step penalty, +1 if the heroes open the capsule first (which requires a Security-*devices* skill check at a +1 step penalty). Assuming the heroes take a corpse out of a capsule, a successful Medical Science-*forensics* skill check reveals that the gunshot was the fatal wound; the victims were probably unconscious when they were killed. (Remember to apply the Medical Science situational modifiers from the Player’s *Handbook, Chapter 4: Skills*, to this check, especially if the heroes try to perform a quick autopsy before the CDC agents return.)

After 3 minutes, the CDC agents return with the final capsule. Unless the heroes try to stop them, the CDC loads and secures the last capsule, locks the van, and drives away. However, being a little twitchy due to the nature of this situation, if they discover anyone inside the van, they open fire and ask questions later. Hopefully, the heroes are long gone before that happens. But if a fight does develop, d4+1 FBI agents arrive within d4+1 rounds from the hangar beside this one (where they are dismantling their debriefing operation).

If the heroes are careful and don’t attract attention, they can leave pretty much however they like. If the airport authorities have been alerted to trouble, the heroes must either barrel past security or pull off a Deception-*bluff* check at a +2 step penalty to get clear.

Once their mission is over, the heroes must return to the office to meet with Field Director Doyle, unless things went badly at the airport, in which case Doyle has set up an alternate location at which to meet them.

Scene 2: The Arms Dealer

Field Director Doyle tells the heroes that the next step in the investigation is to check out the arms dealer, Kaoru Ogura. He arranges for a flight to Portland (from a different airport), and briefs the heroes on the way. Either show the following to the players, or read it to them as Doyle:

Doyle tells you that he’s been in contact with Agent Takimashi, and that the surveillance team reports that Ogura is still in Portland, in his warehouse home.

“Takimashi’s people can place Ogura at his warehouse residence all day yesterday and today. They say that right after the terrorist incident hit the national news, Ogura ran home and locked the doors and hasn’t come out since. Even money says he thinks they’re after him, whether they are or not.”

According to Takimashi, surveillance on Ogura isn’t turning up anything conclusive. Twice over the past 3 months, Ogura has sold imitation needler pistols to clients, one of whom turned over his high-tech weapon to Takimashi’s people after some earnest “persuading.” Although Ogura certainly possesses the skills to construct needler pistols himself, it’s far more likely that he is simply selling them for someone else.

“Everything in Ogura’s file says ‘smalltime loser.’ He doesn’t have the connections to buy the schematics from someone else, and there’s no way he could’ve analyzed a real one and reproduced it—it dissolves when the sandman does. At best, he could’ve found someone else’s copy and is copying that. But that still leaves us with someone else out there who knows how to build sandman needler pistols—and that’s whom the Hoffmann Institute wants.”

Meeting Ogura

When the heroes arrive in Portland, Agent Takimashi is waiting for them at the airport. He tells them that he can get the heroes into Ogura’s place, if they move quickly.

“Ogura apparently had set up a buy with some would-be bank robbers. Portland PD picked them up yesterday for a different job, and they tried to offer up Ogura in exchange for their freedom. Our man on the inside alerted us, but Ogura doesn’t know they won’t be keeping their appointment.”

Takimashi’s suggestion is that the heroes pose as the buyers and keep their meeting with Ogura in 2 hours. Unfortunately, that doesn’t give the heroes much time to prepare. “But since all you really need to do is get inside and talk to him about the Pan Am thing,” he says, “it shouldn’t be a problem.”

Field Director Doyle supports the plan. Read or paraphrase the following:

“Even if it turns out this guy’s not the needler connection, if the sandmen are after him, he might know something about them. If we don’t take this opportunity, we’ll have a tougher situation on our hands: breaking into a paranoid arms dealer’s warehouse while sandmen are after him and getting his cooperation before the sandmen figure out where he is.”

If the heroes follow this plan, Takimashi can provide them with enough details about Ogura’s would-be customers -- names, history with Ogura, details of the deal, and so on -- that they should be able to get inside. Doyle provides a briefcase full of flash money (\$10,000, enough for four imitation needler pistols) and provides directions to the neighborhood where Ogura’s warehouse is located.

If any of the heroes choose not to go to the meeting, they can join Doyle in the surveillance center Takimashi has set up in an old office building nearby. Another Hoffmann agent there, Rick Verner, is watching the outside of Ogura’s building on a bank of video monitors, but as Takimashi explains, he’s never been able to install any cameras inside; Ogura’s too paranoid.

Ogura’s Warehouse

Ogura’s home is an old brick factory with boarded-up windows and a rusted fire escape that’s no longer completely connected to the building. (It sways when anyone puts weight on it. Ogura doesn’t mind because he figures if there is a fire, all the ammunition in the building will blow long before he can reach safety.)

The only visible entrance that isn’t bricked or boarded over is an old appliance repair shop, with a steel cage over the front window, a reinforced door (Durability 6, Toughness Good), and a big “CLOSED” sign in the window. There is a button next to the door, though, and when the heroes press it, they can hear a distant buzzer from inside the building.

A moment later, a voice from the other side of the door says, “Who is it? Stand in front of the peephole where I can see you!” The voice has a Japanese accent.

The heroes can talk to Ogura all they want through the door, but he won’t let them in unless he can see them and they claim to be the buyers he’s expecting. If the heroes use this ruse, they can attempt a Deception-*bluff* check with a -1 step bonus. Any other pretense, and the heroes must attempt an Interaction or Deception skill with a +2 step penalty. Only one hero should make this check. If the attempt succeeds, Ogura buzzes them in. If the attempt fails, the hero must either spend a Last Resort point to convert the failure to an Ordinary success or break through the door, which won’t incline Ogura to trust them.

Ogura’s Tests

Once the heroes get inside, the heroes find themselves in an entryway leading to a dark green curtain. They also see that they haven’t been talking with Ogura directly but to an intercom attached to the door -- along with a video camera. His voice comes over the speaker again as they enter: “Close the door. Then put all of your weapons, cellphones, and electronic equipment on the floor.”

Ogura has a few defenses to protect himself from hostile visitors -- and to determine if his guests are “inorganics.” The first is an airport metal detector, located just a few meters inside the door. Beyond it is a curtain that obscures the rest of the hallway. Assuming they disarm themselves, Ogura tells them: “Now, one at a time, go through the curtain. No tricks! I’m watching you!”

If the heroes attempt to carry any metal objects through the detector, there is a loud beeping noise, and Ogura’s angry voice comes over the speaker again: “You don’t need guns here! You want guns! I got lots of guns! You keep playing around, I’ll show you how they work!” Ogura doesn’t let them go any farther until he’s satisfied they aren’t bringing weapons inside.

On the other side of the curtain is a staircase leading up, and at the top, the heroes can see another intercom. Ogura’s voice urges them up. “And you better be who you say you are -- cause if not, this’ll fry you inside!” Ogura is referring to his microwave emitter, which he’s set up to zap sandmen trying to get inside. What he doesn’t admit is that it doesn’t work; he

hasn't had time to wire it properly. It does emit an ominously loud click and buzz whenever someone gets halfway up the steps. Once past that, the heroes can see another door beside the intercom; it buzzes as the heroes approach.

Past the door at the top of the stairs is Ogura's workshop: a dusty hodgepodge of electronic parts, tools, and assorted junk. From somewhere comes the sound of a steady electronic whine and persistent pinging, almost drowned out by country and western music. After a moment the sounds get louder, as though a door had opened, and a diminutive man peeks nervously at the heroes from behind a table covered with car batteries.

"You're here to buy? You're not the police? Not associated with the police?"

Ogura

Kaoru Ogura is willing to believe that the heroes aren't sandmen, especially now that he's seen them up close, but he still has to be convinced that they're not trying to set him up -- either to arrest or kill him. Again, an Interaction or Deception check is called for if the heroes intend to pass themselves off as buyers. If they succeed, Ogura takes their money, gives them four needler pistols, and tells them to get out.

On the other hand, if the heroes admit that they're not Ogura's customers, he's willing to listen to what they have to say but from the safety of his "office," a small, cluttered room loaded with computer equipment, emergency rations, a cot, and a small refrigerator. Ogura keeps the door closed while he talks.

The heroes can try nearly any tack they desire, but Ogura is interested only in his own future welfare: "I want a Corvette! And a house in Malibu! And I want to win the ... the ... Indiana State Lottery! You fix it so I get what I want, I'll tell you whatever you want to know!" Ogura rabidly rationalizes that he deserves everything he wants, and he's fairly intractable. He refuses to budge until the heroes have verified that they can get him what he's demanding.

If the heroes don't at least try to bargain with him, he won't come out. One of the heroes needs to attempt an Interaction-*bargain* skill check, but without proof that they "deliver the goods," the check suffers a +3 step penalty. While these negotiations are going on, however, more guests arrive at Ogura's door.

Uninvited Guests

Unknown to either Ogura or the Hoffmann Institute agents surveilling him, a group of sandmen have been staking out the warehouse as well. They were actually under the impression that he had escaped them earlier by getting off Pan Am Flight 315 before it left the gate, and they have been looking for him there. But on the chance that Ogura slipped out of their dragnet, they have had three sandmen waiting here for him to return. When the heroes arrived and spoke to Ogura through the intercom, the sandmen picked up the conversation on a parabolic microphone and learned that he was already home.

While the heroes have been haggling with Ogura, the sandmen have been in contact with the other sandmen looking for him, and they are now prepared to approach the building and eliminate Ogura. Their orders are to eliminate Ogura's "buyers" as well.

The sandmen take a few moments to prepare, arming themselves with silenced pistols and two stun grenades each, in addition to their needler pistols. (See the "Sandmen Weapons" sidebar for weapon statistics.) They don't want to take anything more destructive because they know that Ogura is an arms dealer, and his warehouse will be loaded with explosives -- they're not interested in vaporizing themselves if they don't have to. Similarly, they need to verify that Ogura is dead, so they can't simply blow up the entire building. One of the sandmen also carries a police-band radio, to which he is connected directly. (More on that below.)

Once they are armed, the sandmen simply leave their office and cross the street to Ogura's warehouse, where two of them stand watch while the third reshapes his body to force his finger into the peephole. (As he does this, that camera goes black on Ogura's monitors, but Ogura notices only if he has locked himself inside his "office.") He then begins feeling around inside the door for a way to open it. After 4 rounds, he locates the button that controls the door from the inside, and he presses it. One round later, he and his companions enter the warehouse.

During this time, heroes watching outside the warehouse see three men in dark suits approach the door. With a successful Awareness-perception check at a +3 step penalty, the hero can actually see the sandman push his finger into the peephole (though the hero can only guess what that means). Heroes outside are free to confront the sandmen or otherwise react, but remember that the heroes inside will have left their cellular phones on the floor along with the rest of their gear; calling them on their cellphones is not an option.

If they are not intercepted, the sandmen close the door behind them and move down the hall, stopping just short of the metal detector. They take a moment to examine it before the first of them passes through, setting off the detector. (Upstairs, an alarm sounds in Ogura's workshop, and if he wasn't already aware of the sandmen, he is now.) The sandmen then hurry

through the curtain and begin running upstairs (ignoring the harsh buzzing noise on the stairs, since it isn't affecting them in any way), planning to catch Ogura before he leaves by a possible second exit.

As soon as Ogura realizes that sandmen are inside the building, he attempts to bargain with the heroes to save his life. The heroes can make another Interaction-*bargain* skill check, this time with a -3 step bonus; Ogura is desperate. All he wants now is to be taken to a safehouse, where the "inorganics" can't get him. But he's not so desperate that he's not thinking; he promises the heroes whatever they ask but plans to weasel out of delivering if he survives the sandman attack.

If the bargaining session results in a Critical Failure, Ogura locks himself in his office and hopes for the best. If the *bargain* check fails, Ogura dickers with the heroes until the sandmen arrive. If the check succeeds, though, Ogura tells the heroes that there are two 7.62mm assault rifles under one of the floorboards; he points it out, then locks himself in the office.

The sandmen arrive at Ogura's workshop 2 rounds after they set off the metal detector. One of them watches the stairs, while the other two enter the workshop and begin looking for Ogura, largely ignoring the heroes unless, of course, the heroes attack them or are visibly armed. If Ogura is still in the workshop at this point, he runs for the office.

When the sandmen are killed or rendered unconscious, they begin dissolving immediately. Everything, including their weapons and gear, is gone within 1 round. Ogura, if he's there to see it, only glances at the spectacle of the dissolving sandmen. (After all, he's seen it before, and he already has a souvenir of the experience.)

If the sandman watching the stairs is still alive 4 rounds after shots are fired, he intercepts a police dispatcher call to investigate the shots fired at Ogura's warehouse. The heroes can attempt an Awareness-*perception* check to notice this. The sandman, physically plugged into the police-band radio, begins speaking with the dispatcher's voice: "All units, vicinity of Racine and 25th: shots fired. Proceed with caution; SWAT unit available for backup." Then the sandman responds, in the voice of a policeman: "Roger, dispatch. This is Unit 23 responding. ETA two minutes. Over." In addition to being sufficiently eerie, this tells the heroes that they don't have long before the police arrive.

If Ogura still hasn't agreed to go with the heroes, the heroes can attempt one more Interaction-*bargain* check with him. If Ogura knows that police are on their way, the heroes gain another -1 step bonus to the check. Only on a Critical Failure will Ogura decide to remain. Otherwise, the better the success, the more cooperative Ogura will be; at some point, however, it occurs to him to lose the heroes and strike out on his own.

Once Ogura agrees to go with the heroes, he wants to take along only two items: his laptop computer and his plastic Igloo cooler. He guards both items as though they were made of gold. The computer, he says, is too expensive to leave behind, and the cooler contains all of his dirty laundry. If anyone wants to take a look, he tells them in no uncertain terms how badly it smells. ("That's why I have to keep it in an airtight cooler.")

Scene 3: Getting Away with Ogura

Assuming the heroes manage to get Ogura out of his warehouse before the police arrive -- and they don't simply overpower him and take away his computer and cooler -- Field Director Doyle tells them that he can arrange a safehouse. Unfortunately, the closest unoccupied one is in Idaho.

Ogura is happy to go to a safehouse in Idaho ("People speak English in Idaho, right?"), but he absolutely refuses to travel there in an aircraft. "The inorganics have a satellite that shoots bursts of EMP! They use it to shoot airplanes out of the sky! Just last year, they shot down a jet over Florida! Everybody on board was killed!" He has a similar objection to automobiles. "Don't you read the newspapers? Even if the inorganics couldn't just fry the electronics and crash the car, the number of fatalities from auto accidents is unacceptable!"

Ogura suggests taking a train to Idaho. Doyle doesn't have any objection to this; the heroes won't have to pass through a metal detector, so they can take their weapons along, making it easier to defend Ogura if things turn sour. They can also purchase tickets without having to show identification.

Doyle does not feel that Ogura's logic is entirely sound, but he's not going to argue about it if means they'll lose Ogura. He just wants to make sure that once the heroes get to the safehouse, they can question the arms dealer at their leisure.

Doyle makes a telephone call, and the tickets are waiting for the heroes when they arrive at the train station. Their compartments, in the sleeper section, are spread over three cars, but the heroes board the train and settle in with no problem. They can split up into the two-passenger compartments however they like, and although Ogura is keen to have a compartment to himself, he doesn't put up an argument if the heroes assign him a "roommate."

The train leaves the station shortly after the heroes arrive. As it is pulling out, each hero can attempt an Awareness-*perception* check, with a -1 step bonus if they specifically stated they were watching out the windows. On a successful check, they see four men in dark suits arrive on the boarding platform, just a few moments too late to catch the train. On an Amazing check, the hero sees the men jump onto the tracks and chase the train until it leaves them behind.

Ogura's Secret

With not much else to do aboard the train, the heroes might decide to try to learn as much about the arms dealer as possible, especially what's in the cooler. Ogura isn't interested in talking, but unless the heroes are particularly lax in their security, he can't exactly get away from them.

Polite conversation with Ogura doesn't get the heroes anywhere; he's extremely evasive, and has had a lot of practice keeping his big secret. The heroes could simply overpower Ogura and take away his computer and cooler, of course, or they could try drugging him. Psionic heroes might choose to read his mind. One way or another, the heroes can use this time to discover that Ogura has a sandman's head in his cooler and a program on his computer that allows him to speak with it. There are three main methods of discovering Ogura's secrets. The results of each method are discussed below:

Interrogating Ogura

Using Investigate-*interrogate* to pry Ogura's secret out of him is a complex skill check, and the heroes can attempt it only if they physically restrain him. (Otherwise, he hides in the bathroom, claiming to be ill.) The attempt requires 5 successes, and Ogura's +1 Will resistance modifier applies to each check. Checks can be attempted once each hour.

3 failures: Ogura clams up and tries to escape at the first opportunity.

1 success: Ogura discovered that the inorganics were trying to find him, so he purchased a ticket on Pan Am Flight 315 to see what they would do if they knew (or thought they knew) where he was. When he found out, he holed up in his warehouse, waiting for the heat to die down.

2 successes: Ogura makes the needler pistols himself, from a design provided for him by an inorganic. The plans are in a password-protected file on his laptop, but he won't give the heroes the password. Some of the components are volatile, and he keeps them in this lead-lined cooler. (Any hero who makes a successful Knowledge-deduce check can see that Ogura is not strong enough to pick up a leadlined container that large.)

3 successes: Ogura has a complete list of all of the people to whom he's sold needler pistols. The list is in another password-protected file on his computer. Again, he won't surrender the password, though he might make a copy of the file for the heroes.

4 successes: The cooler actually contains the remains of the inorganic who gave Ogura the schematics for the pistols. The remains are highly contagious, though, and opening the cooler without proper biohazard gear would be suicidal.

5 successes: The remains in the cooler aren't dangerous at all, and Ogura can demonstrate how to communicate with the head by connecting it to the computer and starting up a specific program. (See "Talking To the Head" below.)

The Computer

Ogura's computer uses Microsoft Windows 2000, and the default language is Japanese (which heroes can change with a successful Knowledge-*computer operation* check). A successful Knowledge-*computer operation* skill check discovers a program on the desktop, labelled simply "Talk." The program is password-protected, but Ogura isn't the brightest computer user in the world: The password is "Kaoru." If the heroes don't guess it, a successful Computer Science-*hacking* skill check discovers it.

When the program starts, it displays a wire-frame graphic of a human head spinning in place. (The spinning stops when the computer is connected to the sandman head.) The command menu includes "Text" (allowing communication via the keyboard, rather than through the microphone and speakers); "Save" (allowing the user to keep information from the head as a file); and "Print" (allowing the user to print information instead of saving it). The program is really no more complex than that. Communicating with the head requires only that the head be connected to the computer's serial port; until it is, an error message reads "Device not found."

The Cooler

The cooler is a completely ordinary plastic cooler, with buttons on the sides that release the lid, allowing it to swivel open. It is not radioactive, cold, hot, or otherwise indicative in any fashion that it contains anything other than what Ogura says.

Inside the cooler, the sandman's head rests in a Styrofoam mold. Initially, it appears to be a badly-painted mannequin's head. Then it opens its eyes and looks at anyone who is looking at it.

Talking to the Head

Once the head is connected to the computer and the proper program is started, the heroes can communicate with the head. Initially, it merely looks at the heroes. If they say nothing, it closes its eyes and pretends to be inert. But as soon as they ask it a question, the head responds. Its mouth doesn't move, though -- it communicates entirely through the microphone and speaker on the computer.

The head is mostly curious about who is speaking to it. If the heroes admit they are with the Hoffmann Institute, the head feigns ignorance of the group. And unless they refer to it as a sandman, it claims to be a discarded piece of technology: "I was an experiment to create a lifelike robot. I remember being in a laboratory, then 'waking up' in Ogura's workshop. I do not know who my creators were."

Only by indicating that they know the head is all that remains of a sandman will the heroes be able to communicate openly with it. The head gets right to the point: "What do you want?"

If they haven't really thought about it, they might want to consult with Doyle. His suggestion is that they don't talk to the head at all; sandmen are known to be very persuasive. Instead, Doyle recommends that they turn the head over to the Institute when they reach the safehouse. He'll be waiting there to collect it. (Unknown to either Doyle or the heroes, though, the sandmen are using a cellular telephone interceptor to search for cellular conversations that mention Ogura, the sandmen, or the Hoffmann Institute, and they tune in on the conversation.)

The head happily tells them the story of its association with Ogura -- how the arms dealer discovered it in the process of dissolution and managed to hit just the right combination of chemicals to halt the process: "I was involved in a battle, and I believe I was killed. But then I restarted in Ogura's workshop, and he was asking me how to create needler pistols." The head reluctantly agreed to give Ogura the schematics, which Ogura transferred to the computer. Since then, Ogura has been pressing it for more information about technological wonders he can sell, but the head, unfortunately, doesn't have any other information: "I am only the equivalent of a footsoldier."

If the heroes ask the head about the sandmen, it pretends that it can't remember. "Ogura's chemical bath didn't stop the nanites before they dissolved large portions of my processing unit." Similarly, the head claims to remember little of the sandmen, aside from its last mission.

Getting the head to really "open up" will be extremely difficult, because what the head really wants is to be destroyed -- to prevent any more information about the sandmen from falling into the hands of humans -- and so physical torture means nothing to it. The only thing it really fears is being immersed in water (something Ogura has never thought of). If the heroes immerse it in water while it is connected to the computer, the resulting electrical reaction destroys the computer's processor.

The head itself is interested in how it can turn this new situation to its advantage. It wants to be returned to the sandmen or, at the very least, destroyed. If it can convince the heroes to do either, it promises them a great deal -- though, like Ogura, it has no intention of actually making good on its promises.

Eventually, the heroes should realize that the head, while a fascinating curiosity, isn't going to voluntarily deliver any big secrets about the sandmen to them. In time, they might be able to use Computer Science-*hacking* to download the contents of its memory to a computer, but the project could take months, if not years.

The Sandmen Return

If the heroes remain aboard the train long enough, it enters the Cascades, the part of the Rocky Mountain range that runs through Oregon. Aside from marching up and down the train aisles, being generally watchful and alert, there isn't much to do except talk to the head, eat, and look at the passing scenery. The heroes can explore the train, but they're not going to find anything aboard more fascinating than the contents of Ogura's cooler.

The sandmen, meanwhile, have been trying to intercept and board the train, with no luck. After several failed attempts, they have finally decided to throw caution to the wind and simply stop the train, locate Ogura, and kill anyone who gets in their way. Of course, if the heroes have already disembarked from the train, the Gamemaster can either ignore this final encounter or adapt it to fit the circumstances.

As the train is passing through a tunnel, the sandmen use explosives to trigger an avalanche. When the locomotive emerges from the tunnel, it is suddenly buried in a thousand tons of snow and felled trees. But because the avalanche came from above the tunnel opening, the train is not derailed but merely stopped, albeit violently.

Each hero aboard the train needs to make a successful Acrobatics-*fall* check to avoid being hurt in the impact. (If the hero can first make a successful Awareness-*intuition* check, he or she gains a -1 step bonus on the Acrobatics-*fall* check.) On a Critical Failure, the hero suffers d8+2 mortal damage; on a failure, the damage is d6+2m. On an Ordinary success, the hero suffers d4+1m; on a Good success, the damage is d6+2w; and on an Amazing success, the damage is d4+1w.

Armor applies normally to reduce the damage. If the hero is seated (as most heroes in compartments will be), downgrade the damage (mortal to wound, wound to stun). If the player has specifically stated that her hero is secured, downgrade the damage twice (mortal to stun, wound to no damage).

Immediately after the train comes to its sudden stop, the lights in the cars go out, and emergency lighting comes on. (Remember, most of the train is still in the tunnel.) The heroes begin hearing the screams of wounded passengers, and the aisles begin filling with people shouting for help or just wondering what's happened.

If Ogura was conscious up until this point, he isn't now. He lies on the floor, eyes closed. If the heroes haven't yet taken the cooler or computer away from him, he is still hanging onto them for dear life. A hero who makes a successful Knowledge *first aid* check can determine that Ogura is only feigning unconsciousness. (He's looking for a chance to escape the heroes.)

The other thing the heroes might notice is the approach of the sandmen from the other end of the tunnel. Let each hero attempt an Awareness-*perception* check; if the roll is successful, they see several figures hurrying their way, silhouetted in the light from the end of the tunnel. They will reach the last car of the train in 2 rounds.

Showdown on the Oregon Express

The sandmen are here to kill Ogura, and this time, they intend to make certain he's dead. Four sandmen board the train and begin moving toward the front, killing any adult male with Japanese features, attacking anyone carrying a weapon, and using their needler pistols on everyone else. Meanwhile, another four sandmen follow their progress from either side of the train, two to a side, performing essentially the same procedure with anyone who has disembarked in the tunnel.

Each sandman is armed with a Franchi SPAS-12 shotgun with an under-slung flashlight. (See the "Sandmen Weapons" sidebar for details.) They can clearly see everyone in the tunnel, but the heroes can also see them, and given the sounds of the shots, the heroes can also make a fair guess what's going on.

The sandmen take 2 rounds to clear each car, assuming they don't meet the heroes in the car. When they do encounter the heroes, the sandmen change tactics slightly: Two sandmen from outside the train (one from each side) move ahead to board the car from the front. This puts four sandmen at the rear of the car, two at the front, and two outside.

If the sandmen manage to kill Ogura, they change their objective to locating the head. Once they have it, they leave the tunnel and depart. They also depart if at least one of them personally witnesses the head's destruction and conveys that information to the others. Also, if the sandmen lose three or more of their number, they withdraw to the tunnel entrance, where they wait for survivors of the accident to emerge, then gun them down.

The heroes are definitely cornered in the tunnel, since digging out of the other end without heavy digging equipment requires at least a day's work.

The heroes suffer another disadvantage: Cellular phones can only communicate with other cellular phones inside the tunnel -- the phone signals do not reach outside the tunnel.

The sandmen are not interested in any negotiation that does not put Ogura and the head in their hands.

To make matters worse, should Ogura ever be left alone, he tries to escape. His simplistic plan is to try to take the head, or at least his computer, and climb under the train, where he hopes to hide while he crawls all the way to the back of the train. Once he gets there, he makes a run for it (unless, of course, he sees other passengers being shot by sandmen waiting outside). On the off chance the heroes actually lose track of Ogura long enough for him to pull this off, the heroes have a hard time finding him again -- his natural good luck leads him right to an access road, a parked car, and freedom. (The Gamemaster might want to leave Ogura's fate open; he could make an amusing recurring character, as a small-time hustler who keeps becoming embroiled in secret plots and conspiracies and running afoul of the Hoffmann Institute.)

The battle ends when the heroes either dispatch or lose the sandmen. If the heroes have suffered mortal wounds, they can find a mostly unharmed doctor aboard the train who can stabilize them before emergency teams arrive. Once outside the tunnel, the heroes can also contact the Hoffmann Institute, apprising them of the situation. Field Director Doyle arranges to pick them up as soon as possible.

Debriefing

After the heroes have returned to the Portland office, Doyle gets the heroes' accounts of what happened after he last saw them. If the heroes managed to capture the sandman head or the computer, he's thrilled with their success (unless they lost agents in the process). Capturing a "live" sandman -- even if it's just the head -- is a major coup for the Hoffmann Institute, and they can use it to learn a great deal about the *étoile* (the sandmen's creators).

Doyle is less thrilled with custody of Kaoru Ogura but considers it at least a partial victory.

Achievement Points

Award the heroes 1 achievement point if they managed to capture Ogura, or 2 achievement points if they retrieved his computer (with or without Ogura). If the heroes brought back the sandman head, regardless of whether they also secured Ogura and his computer, each hero should receive 3 achievement points. Also, ask the players which of them they feel did the best roleplaying. Award that hero 1 achievement point.

Sandmen Weapons

The weapons carried by the sandmen in Scenes 2 and 3 are described in the *DARK*MATTER Arms & Equipment Guide*, but the essentials are included below:

Silenced Pistol: Skill Modern-*pistol*; Acc 0; Md F; Range 6/12/40; *Type HI/O*; Damage d4w/d4+1w/d4-1m; Actions 3; Clip \$; Hide +1; Mass 1 kg; Availability: Military; Cost \$1,300+.

Stun Grenade: Skill Athletics-*throw*; Acc +1; Md F; Range per STR, *Type U/G*; Damage: d4s/d6s/d6+2s; Actions 2; Clip n/a; Hide +3; Mass 0.5 kg; Availability: Controlled; Cost \$100.

These are “flash-bang” grenades that explode with a loud noise and a magnesium flash. Targets within 2 meters suffer Amazing damage. Those within 2-6 meters suffer Good damage. Those within 6-10 meters suffer Ordinary Damage.

Anyone who detects the stun grenade before it detonates can attempt a Dexterity feat check at a +3 step penalty to turn away before the flash. With a Marginal result, the hero is blinded, taking a +3 step penalty to subsequent actions for d4+1 rounds. On an Ordinary result, all actions requiring sight are at a +2 step penalty. A Good result reduces the penalty to +1 step, and an Amazing result eliminates the penalty altogether.

Franchi SPAS-12 Shotgun: Skill Modern-*rifle*; Acc 0; Md F; Range 6/12/30; *Type HI/O*; Damage d4w/d6w/d4m; Actions 2; Clip 8; Hide n/a; Mass 3 kg; Availability Common; Cost \$500.

Sandman Needler Gun: Skill Modern-*pistol*; Acc 0; Md F; Range 2/6/12; *Type special*; Damage special; Actions 4; Clip 20; Hide +3; Mass 1 kg; Availability Restricted; Cost \$1,500 (sedative-loaded version).

More common than *the version* that fires darts coated with morphotoxin (see Chapter 8: Xenofoms in the *DARK*MATTER* Campaign Setting) is a version of the sandman needler pistol that fires needles loaded with sedatives. Anyone wounded by a needle must make a Constitution feat check to fight off the effects of the sedative (a +2 step penalty to all action checks and actions). An Ordinary success reduces the penalty by 1 step, while a Good or Amazing success negates the penalty.

Sandman Game Data

STR	10	(2d6+3)	INT	10	(2d6+3)
DEX	9	(2d6+2)	WIL	7	(2d6)
CON	11	(2d6+4)	PER	8	(2d6+1)
Durability: 11 / 11 /6 /6			Action Check: 14+/13/6/3		
Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4			#Actions: 2		
Reaction Score: Ordinary /2			Last Resorts: 1		

Attacks

Unarmed	14/7/3	d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s	LI/O
Melee weapon	10/5/2	varies	varies
Ranged weapon	13/6/3	varies	varies

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. melee attacks
 -1 step bonus to CON feat checks made to resist toxins

Skills Armor Operation* [10]; Athletics [10]; Melee* [10]; Unarmed [10]-*brawl* [14]; Modern [9]-*pistol* [13]; Vehicle [9]-*land* [10]; Stamina [11]-*blood music*** [12]; Computer* [10]-*hacking* [12], *hardware* [12], *programming* [14]; Knowledge [10]-*language*

(English) [13]; Security [10]-*devices* [12]; System Operation* [10]; Tactics [10]; Technical [10] - *juryrig* [13], *repair* [12]; Awareness [7]; Culture [8]; Interaction [8]-*charm* [10].

* The sandman's fusion ability grants a -1 step bonus to the use of this skill.

** The sandman's *blood music* skill is fully detailed in the *DARK*MATTER* Campaign Setting, Chapter 8: Xenofoms.

The typical sandman stands about 1.8 meters tall and weighs about 90 kilograms. The superficial similarity between humans and these nanite-corrupted humans allows sandmen to pass for humans. Only close inspection reveals some major differences. Veins of metal are interwoven with flesh and blood, and sandman hair often displays a metallic sheen, like hair that has been poorly dyed. Unlike humans who have undergone surgery to install an artificial limb, a sandman's form looks completely natural-the synthesis of flesh and biomechanics appears seamless.

Sandmen are nearly immune to poisons of all kinds. However, they are susceptible to electrical damage and short-circuiting due to immersion in liquid. If a sandman becomes submerged in a conducting solution (water, acid, or liquid hydrogen, for example), it must make a successful *Stamina--endurance* check each round of immersion or suffer d4s damage. On a Critical Failure, the sandman suffers d4w damage instead. Note that complete immersion is required to cause this damage; merely splashing water on a sandman has no effect.

The sandmen also possess the ability to reshape their bodies. This mimics the effect of the *Biokinesis-morph* psionic skill; treat sandmen as if they possessed all morph rank benefits through rank 7, though no skill check is required. In addition, they can fuse with inorganic objects, actually becoming one with the object. Among other effects, this grants the sandmen a -1 step bonus to Armor Operation, Melee Weapons, Computer Science, and System Operation skill checks when fused with such an object. Minor reshaping (including fusing with handheld objects) requires a single round, while major reshaping (including deforming to pass through narrow openings) requires d4+1 rounds.

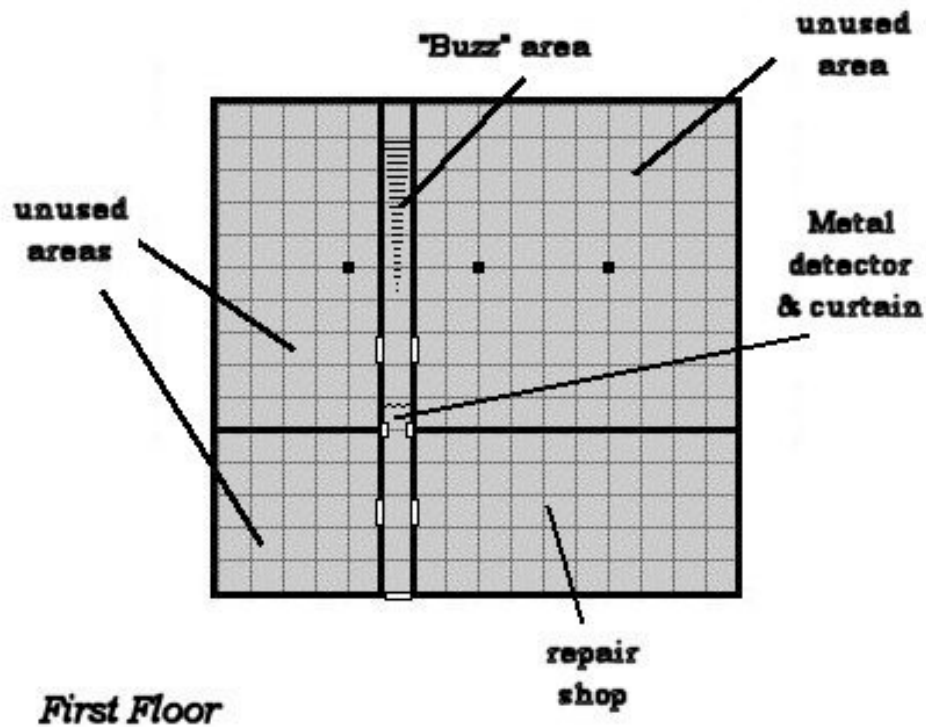
Due to a modification to their vocal chords, sandmen can incorporate low-frequency radio waves in their voices. This hypnotic quality grants them a -3 step bonus to the use of any Interaction specialty skills. This even allows them to affect characters with Hostile attitudes. They ignore the +2 step penalty when using Interaction skills against humans.

Sandmen cannot fuse with organic materials such as wood or leather; attempting to do so disrupts the sandman's own organic systems (which attempt to feed nutrients to the dead organic matter through veins), inflicting d4-2s damage. Also, a sandman cannot fuse with objects covered in a film of water or oil.

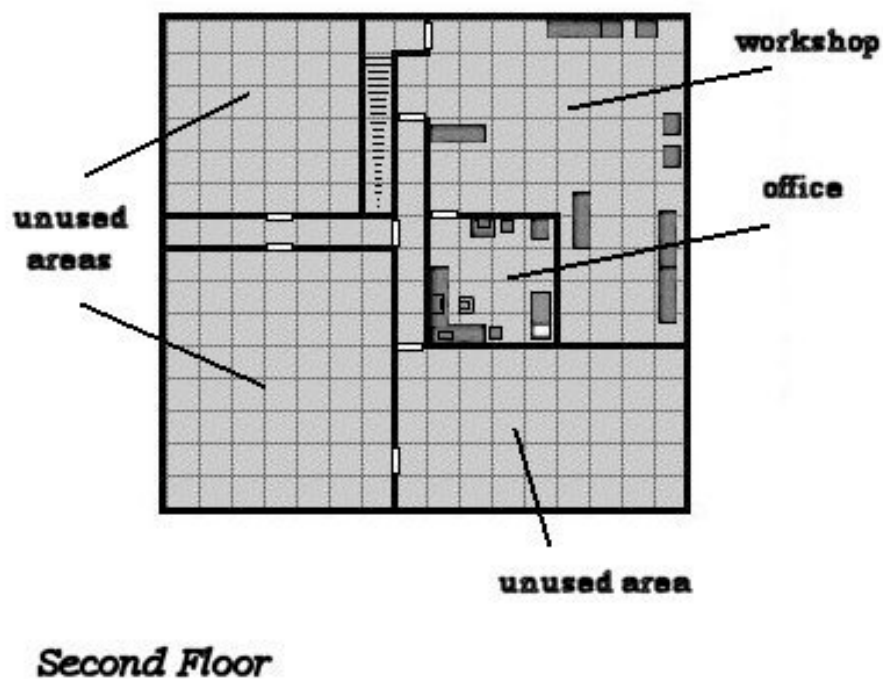


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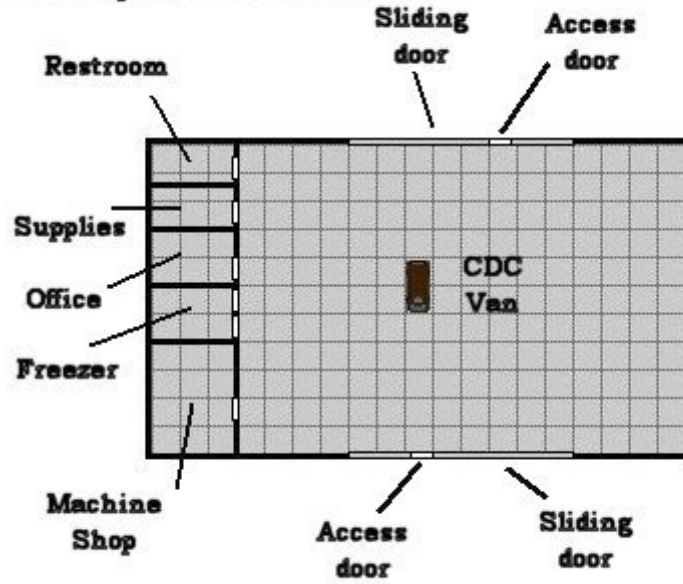
**OGURA'S
WAREHOUSE**
one square = 3 meters



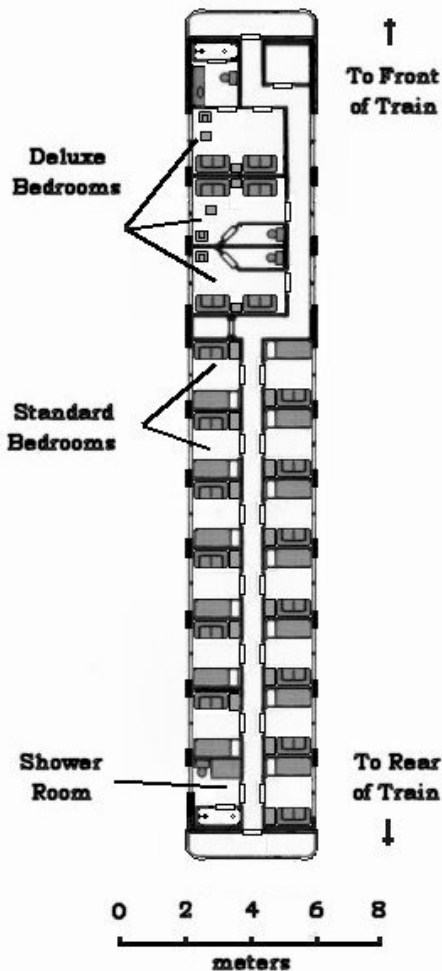
**OGURA'S
WAREHOUSE**
one square = 3 meters



STORAGE HANGAR
one square = 6 meters



OREGON EXPRESS
Detail of Sleeper Car



OREGON EXPRESS
Train Wreck

