

Uncommon Scents *Episode Two: Synopsis*



This synopsis is provided as an overview for TEACHERS. We advise teachers NOT to hand this out to the students prior to playing the adventure since much of the suspense will be eliminated.

It is the year 2256, fourteen years after a plague killed millions and caused the collapse of civilization. Protecting the environment is an important part of the Reconstructors' attempt to restore and maintain public health. The player is a member of the Neuropolis Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), which is under jurisdiction of Alpha, the Reconstructors' leader.

RECONSTRUCTORS HEADQUARTERS

The second episode starts back at the Reconstructors headquarter, where the player speaks with Alpha to get a short recap of what happened so far and what the new challenges are. Alpha asks the player to investigate Daryz's case at her apartment and, since Daryz is an art student, at the local art institute.

THE APARTMENT

The player meets JoVyn, Daryz's roommate, who is very indifferent and doesn't want conversation, but she allows the player to search the apartment for clues. Between dirty clothes, food containers, and other rubble that is lying around, the player finds an exam showing that Daryz's work in the abstract painting class has been slipping of late.

Neuropolis mail

The player can also examine the mail from the City of Neuropolis Department for Health and Human Services. This "mail cube" gives information about hazardous household waste, including the meaning of warning signs, what the labels say, and how to use, store, and dispose of it safely. At the end, the player is challenged to match warning signs to different categories and explanations, and to sort trash interactively based on a product's ability to vaporize.

Daryz's room

Inside Daryz's room the player discovers ten different hazardous household products. He/she is asked to help Daryz with storing the hazardous products safely by sorting them based on their ingredients (acetone, benzene, difluoroethane, or toluene). The player is reminded of the two chemicals that were present in Daryz's blood (difluoroethane and toluene), and the question is raised if and how these products could have ended up in Daryz's blood.

Using a code that is written on a wall in the living area, the player is able to open a callbox and listen to a message asking Daryz to take part in "dusting tonight".

THE ART INSTITUTE

Classroom

In the art institute, the player can enter the room that is used for the abstract painting class. Inside, one of Daryz's classmates lets the player know that he is very worried about her losing interest in her paintings. A look at Daryz's art portfolio substantiates this suspicion.

A look into Daryz's computer reveals that she had emailed a friend about the possible connection between "huffing" and memory loss after she had failed on a memory test. This memory test is embedded in an informational website about inhalant abuse. The player can open the link to this page, try the memory test and read all the background information on inhalants. Also, the player is asked to prove his/her knowledge by correcting false statements about inhalants.



Finally, the player discovers a can of computer duster (main ingredient: difluoroethane), in one of the desk drawers.

Computer lab

In the computer lab, the player can access two informational resources about organic solvents at the workplace that have been set up by the institute's administration after some students had complained about headaches and breathing problems when working with paints.

The first is a computer that takes the player to a psychological test called the Stroop test, which measures selective attention. The player gets to try the test him-/herself, interpret the test results and compares them to the results of painters who have been exposed to organic solvents at their workplace. The comparison reveals that these painters have problems with their selective attention, because organic solvents can destroy the thalamus and the striatum, two brain parts that are important for selective attention.

The second resource is a wall display. After clicking it, a maze-type game opens that challenges the player to find sources of organic solvents and gives an overview on how to protect themselves from exposure to these solvents.

Hallway

In the hallway, the player can interview another student, who turns out to be a former friend of Daryz's. She admits that she and Daryz had been involved with people who abused inhalants. While she managed to stay away from it, Daryz couldn't resist. She shows the player a short video clip that she had recorded at a party, showing that Daryz accepted an offer to use inhalants.

The student also shows the player a training program on what to do when somebody tries to get you to do something risky. The program introduces four categories of possible reactions (refuse, explain, avoid, leave) and challenges the player to sort different statements into one of these categories.

Report to Alpha

After finishing this exercise, Alpha emails the player and asks him/her to file a report on the investigation. He needs to know what indicates that Daryz has memory problems, what might have made Daryz ill, and why do we suspect that Daryz uses inhalants. When the player correctly answers these questions, Alpha congratulates him/her on the good work and says that the player is just one step away from a promotion to a NEPA special agent.

</END OF EPISODE TWO>

