

MISSION BRIEFING Mission 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.

The mission begins with Beta (chief science officer), Delta (robot scout), and the student sitting in a briefing room at the Neuropolis Center for Disease Control (NCDC). The NCDC is located at the On-line Reconstructor Base (ORB). A confidential message comes in from Dr. Xu at Neuropolis General Hospital. A young patient named Jeremy, who appears to have smallpox, puzzles Dr. Xu. This patient mystifies Dr. Xu because smallpox is a deadly infectious disease that was eradicated long ago. She is also worried about the spread of this disease and the reaction of the public once they find out that smallpox may have returned. She is especially worried about the reaction of the Areloch, a troublesome, survivalist group with an excessive fear of disease. Dr. Xu asks the Reconstructors to help investigate this mystery of how a disease which is suppose to have been eliminated has returned. Could it be bioterrorists?

The student is asked whether he or she wants to accompany Delta to Jeremy's apartment to look for clues on where he may have contracted the disease or go with Beta to the lab to determine if Jeremy does, indeed, have smallpox.

At the apartment, the student searches for the following clues in any order:

1. The passport of Jeremy's father, which indicates that he recently traveled to the Congo in Central Africa.
2. An e-mail from Jeremy to his mother describing the vacation he took with his father in the Congo which suggests Jeremy had been in contact with monkeys during the trip.
3. A PDA (hand-held device) with a NCDC travel alert for people visiting Central Africa which provides instructions on how to avoid contracting several diseases in the region including monkeypox, a disease similar to smallpox.
4. An electronic newspaper with an article describing groups who might be trying to get the smallpox virus to use against Neuropolis for bioterrorism.
5. An electronic album with vacation pictures of the Congo which provides no clues, but is just a fun object.

After the student finishes the search, he/she is prompted by Delta to compose an e-mail to Alpha, Leader of the Reconstructors, on what has been found. The e-mail is in the form of an interactive quiz.

At the lab, Beta is sitting at an electron microscope workstation. Suddenly, robspiders appear and steal information from the microscope's computer. The player tries to disable the spiders by clicking on them; however, several manage to escape. Beta tells the student that a virus is causing Jeremy's illness. The student is asked to review the following viral information on the computer while she tries to find the escaped robspiders:

1. An interactive diagram on the structure of a virus.
2. An interactive movie on the reproduction of viruses.

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Beta returns to the lab, having failed to catch the robospiders. She instructs the student to look at the viruses isolated from Jeremy's blisters through the electron microscope. The student is able to focus the microscope. Beta remarks that the viruses appear similar to the ones that cause smallpox and prompts the student to send Alpha an email reporting what has been learned thus far in the lab. The email is designed as a check for understanding.

The student and Delta meet with Alpha in the NCDC briefing room. Alpha has reviewed both of the email reports and needs the student's opinion on the course of action taken by Dr. Xu. He tells the student that Dr. Xu has quarantined the hospital and asks the student to draw a conclusion on whether this is a good decision based on what was learned from the apartment and the lab.

Suddenly, a news alert comes in on the briefing room's monitor. An angry mob of Areloch has appeared outside Neuropolis General Hospital. The news that a child has a contagious and unidentified pox has leaked to the media. Sedapa, a reporter for Cyber News Network (CyNN) is on the scene and interviews the Areloch's leader. The Areloch are convinced that the cities are the breeding ground for disease and that this mystery pox may lead to widespread deaths. Sedapa concludes the interview and signs off.

Later in the ORB lab, Beta reports that she has confirmed that Jeremy does not have smallpox by using DNA tests. She is still not certain which pox he has. Delta suggests that the disease could be monkeypox. To help get at the bottom of this mystery, Beta interviewed Mr. Kumar, Jeremy's father, for clues as to why he didn't become ill. The student reviews the interview, which reveals that Mr. Kumar had cowpox in childhood. Suddenly a robospider appears. The student dissects the spider to retrieve the information stolen from the ORB computers in the lab. The information is on Dr. Edward Jenner, who in 1796 discovered how to prevent people from getting smallpox by making them immune to it with a vaccine made with cowpox viruses. Additionally, there is an interactive animation on how the smallpox vaccine was made.

Alpha enters the lab to speak to Beta. She tells Alpha that Jeremy doesn't have smallpox and that they have uncovered a possible reason why Mr. Kumar didn't get Jeremy's pox disease. Beta asks the student to tell Alpha the reason. The student should conclude that Mr. Kumar's childhood case of cowpox could have made him immune to the mystery pox. Finally, Alpha asks the student what he/she recommends that the Reconstructors do next to solve the mystery and offers the student several scenarios on how to proceed. No matter which scenario is chosen, Alpha tells the student the pros and cons of that choice.

Three months later, Sedapa interviews Alpha. Vaccinating all of Jeremy's contacts has halted the monkeypox epidemic. And Jeremy has recovered. The episode ends with the Reconstructors taking a much-deserved break at the theme park, Roboland.