

The Arasaka Brainworm

An Official **Cyberpunk 2020**[®]
Roleplaying Game Adventure
by **Thomas M. Kane**

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For more information about the CYBERPUNK 2020 science fiction role-playing game, please write to: R. Talsorian Games, Inc., P. O. Box 7356, Berkeley, CA, 94706.

The Opening

You know how these things start. An interest which wishes to remain unnamed has a problem. A fixer whose name doesn't matter hires a team willing to become the solution. Call the fixer Diamond Blue. Call the team your Player Characters. Diamond Blue wants at least a few Solos and Medtechies, plus a netrunner, but he'll take what the Street can provide. Diamond assembles the PCs in their meeting ground of choice. He gives them the following briefing.

"Don't they say the scientific method depends on the free transfer of information? Something like that? Anyway, choomba, my client requests your services for...making this transfer of information a little bit freer. Specifically, they have a mole working inside Biotechnica. The mole calls himself Brinkmaan. Brinkmaan needs you to act as couriers.

"Biotechnica is developing a new type of nanosurgeon. They call it the gastrophage. It's an engineered virus that can perform microsurgery real cheap. Brinkmaan got himself a spot on the project, and he's promised his employers a sample of the bug. His only problem is this. To get at the gastrophage, he had to take a job in Biotech's Johnston Atoll facility. That puts him three hundred miles off Hawaii, and as out-of-touch as a blind monk.

"We need you to penetrate Johnston Atoll, make contact with Brinkmaan, and obtain his sample.

"The payoff? Ten thousand euro apiece in clean, cold cash."

At this point, Diamond Blue pauses for a reaction. He'll discuss ways of getting in and getting out later.

Now he wants the party to sign on the bottom line. If the team starts pushing for more, he offers to do 'em a few favors. First, he offers up to half their pay in advance. Then, with a great show of reluctance, he offers "support services," which he'll have to "call in some big favors to pull." These "services" are merely the mechanisms for getting in and out that he would have had to offer anyway. But the party doesn't know that. See the next few paragraphs for details.

Diamond Blue can even offer the party more money if it comes to that. Infocomp allows him up to 18,000 euro apiece for his team. However, the more money he saves, the more he can pocket. Diamond keeps the payment as low as he can.

Once the party agrees to the mission, Diamond Blue discusses logistics. The Referee should read or paraphrase the following information. Remember that Diamond Blue might be trying to make it sound as if he's doing the team a big favor. However, he offers the same options in any event.

"When it comes to getting in, you have options. Brinkmaan has a sweet deal with Biotechnica's pilots, and we can smuggle you in via a Biotechnica supply aircraft. My clients can also arrange an infiltration by parachute or sea. It's your choice, choomba.

"On Johnston Atoll, Brinkmaan can take care of you. He has places for you to hole up. He has a way for you to get out. He also has the gastrophage sample, which is what you get paid for, choomba. You may make contact with him either in his labs or at his home, which is Apartment 3B of the Residen-

Diamond Blue

Diamond Blue scouts talent for the lords of the urban jungle. He can get dirty work done, and his name is a legend among the punks who do it. Diamond pays well, but he hands out that euro for a reason. When a job gets rough, when a company sells out its own agents, Diamond Blue doesn't want to hear his people whine. If you can't handle a little dirt, you shouldn't be in the business. And if Diamond thinks he can take advantage of you, he will.

Blue's lean face betrays his years on the Street. His sapphire Nikon Optiks prove that he has found his source of funds. Blue slicks back his hair in a gleaming pompadour, and dresses in a three-piece suit of blue synthetics.

Stats

INT 10 TECH 5 REF 7 CL 9 LK 6
ATT 3 MA 4 EMP 8 BODY 6

Cybernetics

Two cyberoptics with camera, Rippers, Interface plugs.

Skills

Streetdeal +7, Interrogation +5, Intimidate +5, Streetwise +5, Persuasion and Fast Talk +7, Driving +2, Handgun +3, Melee +3, Submachinegun +2, Basic Tech +1

Possessions

Armor Vest, Militech Avenger heavy pistol.

tial Facility. You may identify yourself with the password 'Grendel.'

"Brinkmaan is good. Brinkmaan is clean. We anticipate zero complications. But if, by some chance, you can't connect, it's up to your team to haul in the gastrophage yourself. According to earlier reports, they've got it in one of the laboratory complexes on the southern island.

"Your sponsors have stationed a pick-up ship twenty miles off Johnston Atoll. It resembles a robo-freighter and registers under the name *Wounded Gull*. This ship can help you out of a tight situation. For example, if the heat's on, feel free to steal an AV and burn turbo for the ship. However, maintain radio silence. And if you hose this job, don't come to us for sympathy."

The Inside Story

The party's job comes courtesy of Infocomp Inc., worldwide leaders in databasing, research and espionage. Infocomp honestly believes the story it told the PCs is true. However, there is a problem. Brinkmaan got caught.

Biotechnica employs Arasaka Corp. to protect its Johnston Atoll facility. Arasaka sent a psychologist named Amalthea Lau to evaluate the loyalty of Biotech's employees. Amalthea operated under the pretext of being a physician. This psychologist could have guessed Brinkmaan's occupation from the way he tied his tie, but to make sure, she called him in for a physical examination, winked at him, fluttered her eyelashes, and doped him up on a controlled substance known as Loose. Brinkmaan did not break down completely, but he told Amalthea everything she needed to know.

Biotechnica could not afford to destroy a researcher of Brinkmaan's caliber. That was chill. Amalthea had a solution. Early one morning, Brinkmaan "disappeared" in the time-honored way. Then Amalthea implanted an experimental bit of cybeware in Brinkmaan's head, which selectively edits the recipient's memory. Dr. Brinkmaan now suffers from partial amnesia. He does not remember his role as a spy.

Brinkmaan, of course, had no communication with Infocomp anyway. His handlers did not realize that anything was awry. Infocomp still does not know Brinkmaan's fate. The party can discover that. By then, the PCs will be on the Atoll. It'll be a little late to back out.

Problem Number Two. Although gastrophage initially looked promising for use in microsurgery, it simply cannot match the precision of existing nanotechnology. Therefore, Biotechnica turned its research in a new direction. It acquired a Central Intelligence Agency grant to explore the possibilities of using gastrophage as a biological weapon. This is the stuff the PCs get to play with. Consult the

Appendix to see what the new and improved gastrophage does.

Running The Arasaka Brainworm

A typical adventure will probably run as follows. The party smuggles itself onto Johnston Atoll. Once on the island, the party snoops around. They can try to live in the shadows or they can masquerade as Biotech employees. Arasaka security makes life interesting either way. Eventually, the PCs find Brinkmaan. Imagine their delight when he turns out not to know them. There they are, on the island, with no friends and no way off. What are they going to do?

That's their problem.

Actually, the party has at least two or three possible solutions for this adventure. A Medtech PC can try to counteract the Brainworm. A sympathetic character might talk Brinkmaan out of his amnesia (this allows some interesting role-playing). The party can forget Brinkmaan and try to steal the 'phages on its own. The PCs could also simply try to cut out while they can. The last option may be the most dangerous of all.

The climax to this adventure can come in many forms. If the party attempts to escape by force, this story culminates in a battle. If the party attempts to quietly restore Brinkmaan's memory, the tempo rises as PCs snatch him from his warders and overcome the worm. Arasaka protects this island with a nasty array of weapons and spies. No matter how the party decides to get out, it won't be easy.

As Referee, let the party roam the island on its own. The map and layout show what they meet and where. The text tells you how Arasaka plans to respond when it senses an intrusion. Role-play the NPCs to the best of your ability, paying special attention to Brinkmaan.

This text describes Johnston Atoll and its inhabitants using the following organizational system. Part One covers different ways the party might get onto the island. Part Two gets down to the business of Brinkmaan and his associates. Part Three describes the Johnston Atoll complex in general, emphasizing all the nasty things Arasaka put there to rip the party apart. Afterglow (the conclusion) wraps up the adventure. However, the real climax comes, not from a stage-set finale, but from the natural buildup of events as the party discovers its predicaments and builds up to some final solution.