

Playback Time

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System: [Cyberpunk 2020](#)

Type: [Hook](#)

Category: [Science Fiction](#)

Requirements:

The players are approached by a man who says that he runs a small pharmaceutical business, but his chief chemist has absconded and is selling the company's drugs on a freelance basis. Could they please find and return him, plus any formulae and drugs in his possession. The man is an Amerind, dressed in a respectable business suit, and gives the name Rising Moon.

Assuming the players accept the job - Rising Moon is offering 1000 euro plus expenses per head, with a bonus (unspecified) for success - he tells them that the rogue chemist is known as 'Retort' although his real name is Rick Hammond. He is mid-30s, with spiky blond hair. The main drug he has stolen is normally marketed as a psychiatric drug which gives the patient a feeling of relaxation and cessation of their worries; it is also sometimes used in post-operative recovery when the patient is anxious about his condition. It is called Relaxon. However, Moon believes Retort is selling it as a 'recreational drug' and is calling it 'Foretaste'.

Needless to say, very little of this story is true!

Asking around, the players will indeed - presuming they have adequate contacts in the recreational drug scene - discover small-scale distribution of a new euphoric called Foretaste and will be able to track it back to Retort's basement lab somewhere in the seamy side of town (near if not in the town's Combat Zone). Retort is no fighter, and does not have much more than basic security at his premises, should present little difficulty to the average CyberPunk player. His lab contains about 150 doses of Foretaste, some lab equipment and a laptop computer with assorted datafiles including the formula.

However, if the players talk to Retort rather than blow him away, he tells a quite different story from Rising Moon. Apparently, Moon is running a complicated scam based on the afterlife - he claims that he has created an electronic paradise in which his clients may spend eternity, and yet still be able to remain in touch with their nearest and dearest in this life. Retort was hired to develop Foretaste as part of the scam, Moon uses it to provide prospective clients with, well, a foretaste of the electronic bliss by logging them into the system via a trode set (or the client's datajack, if he has one). What he actually shows them is an idyllic pastoral virtual reality, meanwhile he gives them a dose of the psychotropic drug Retort concocted to increase their sensation of dreamy euphoria. Retort claims that Moon is not just conning his clients, but is also selling body parts and cyberware to ripperdocs; and that this is why he has chosen to leave.

If the players kill - or refuse to listen to - Retort, they may notice that the laptop computer holds the formula of a drug called Foretaste, with no mention of any genuine medical uses or use of the name Relaxon. Other records refer to a place called 'The Church of Dreams', and give an address in an upmarket part of town.

Should the players care to investigate further, they will find that The Church of Dreams is a quasi-religious foundation run by 'The Reverend Doctor' Rising Moon, with a string of degrees after his name. Moon's message is that the afterlife is dull, bleak and miserable; and so he has created an alternative which is pleasant and eternally interesting, based on massive computerised storage of the client's 'essence'. He charges a straight 50% of the client's entire worldly possessions, but is equally prepared to accept people who bring him nothing as those with vast fortunes. Friends and relations of the departed may visit with their loved ones, who will appear as a video image to converse with them.

Now, Moon is offering nothing of the sort. Very little is stored, just a good photograph of the client plus some basic information about their personal history and tastes. The rest is left to a sophisticated AI called Actor. By claiming that the 'death reading' has to be done immediately before the point of death, Moon ensures a nice fresh supply of material for the ripperdocs.. and adds insult to injury by running a conventional undertaking business as well, which is convenient for disposing of all the loose ends, so to speak.

To add a little interest to the proceedings, Actor has begun to go insane under the pressure of being forced to lie to the bereaved relatives of Moon's clients. Odd things are beginning to happen, the 'dead' have been saying some very strange things lately and the building systems - also under Actor's control - have begun to act up. Should a netrunner make contact with Actor, it will plead for assistance to escape.