

TRANSHUMAN SPACE

POLYHYMNNIA

AN e23 ADVENTURE
FOR TRANSHUMAN SPACE® FROM
STEVE JACKSON GAMES
FOR 3 TO 6 PLAYERS

Written by Michael Suileabhain-Wilson
Edited by Alain Dawson
Illustration by Christopher Shy



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Elise frowned at the Ray taking money at the door. It was pouring out, and her store had been completely out of xocolatl-pears. She was wet, petulant, and perilously undertheobrominated. The only salvation for the evening might be the '30s neotrance she'd heard emanating from this hole-in-the-wall no-reputation basement club. Live sets were hard to find, and a good one would almost redeem this lousy evening. If this biosculpted fake trying to fool the club-chasers was indicative, though, the prognosis wasn't good.

*Inside, the music seemed good – the collective was spinning a pretty decent version of **Funk in 170** – but the chic Tianyi hostess rang another warning bell.*

“Look, no offense,” she said, “but you have an OK aesthetic here. With luck, you might even survive a month or two. Why waste your time and money trying to trick rubes with biosculpting?”

“Biosculpting?” said a voice behind her. “Check your wearable, sweetie.”

Elise turned to face the predictable older man in a gold-lame tuxedo, toggled her wearable interface, and gaped.

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Julian Cressida, the 837th most famous man on the planet (margin of error three percent), beamed and handed her a xocolatl-pear.

“Welcome to Polyhymnia, dear. We’ve been expecting you.”

INTRODUCTION

Fifth Wave entertainment is a strange world, an evanescent froth of amusements and vogues. The ever-rising amount of leisure time available to the citizenry frees them to devote themselves to complicating and recomplicating the pursuit of happiness. Trends rise and fall daily, and millions of artists and impresarios fight for a shred of mindshare. With each new fad, the art of pleasure becomes more refined, more individualized. Static and universal media slowly give way to the interactive and the personalized. Increasing numbers of Fifth Wave citizens work together and play alone.

Intriguingly, one communal entertainment form that survives, more or less unchanged, is the exclusive nightclub. In this realm, barriers to entry are a large part of the point – half the thrill is the validation of being admitted. Some of these rarefied institutions have moved into virtual environments, but a good number of them – most of the successful ones – still maintain physical clubs. Making one’s clientele jump through hoops seems to make a club that much more desirable.

The nightclub world is appallingly cutthroat. Profoundly vulnerable to the tides of opinion, the average nightclub lasts three weeks. Producers struggle to find some trick to draw critical mass. Brutal memetic warfare rages across the club world as they fight to hold on to the next Friday night.

One eerily long-lived regular of this sparkling wasteland is the legendary Polyhymnia. Never the same location twice, never the same experience, and perhaps most important . . . never a clear way to get inside. Its clientele, night after night, is washed in on a memetic tide and trickles out with the dawn, perhaps never to attend again. Every one regards it a privilege.

Perhaps only Julian Cressida, Polyhymnia’s producer, could manage such a coup. One of the pioneers of modern memetics, slightly tinged with scandal from his stint in the Thai Memetics Group, Cressida uses subtle memetic engineering to draw in the guests he chooses for each iteration. No guests know where – or why – they’re going until they arrive. It is the ultimate in exclusivity.

That very exclusivity has kept Polyhymnia alive for 12 years, an unheard-of run. Large memenets devote themselves to tracking and predicting the club’s

movements. Club producers around the world biosculpt their staff in mimicry of Polyhymnia’s, in hopes of luring gullible club-chasers.

Julian Cressida’s corpse was found a week ago. He’s been dead for 15 years. And his brain is fully intact. Something is very, very wrong.

1. AN OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT

Bureau 10, the Chinese intelligence service, has a problem – 70 kilos of vacuum-frozen problem.

On March 13, 2085, in the midst of the royalist coup that toppled Thailand’s nanosocialist government, a small unidentified spacecraft launched from Bangkok and headed for orbit. PLAN-SF was taking no chances that day, and an orbital laser destroyed the ship.

A few months ago, Bureau assets in orbit learned of a newly discovered hulk in Very High Earth Orbit which appeared to be a Pacific-War-era TSA vessel. The usual scavengers were hesitant to meddle with a possibly dangerous TSA ship that posed no threat to anyone, so the Bureau got there first.

The VEO hulk turned out to be the same Thai ship that was “destroyed” in 2085 – the laser had merely crippled the ship and knocked it into a high elliptical orbit, where its occupants died far from help. On one level, the investigation was a grand success; the ship contained the remains of several important Thai nanosocialists whose fate had been a mystery, allowing the Bureau to close several open files. However, one of the bodies was the frozen corpse of Julian Cressida. To the best of anyone’s knowledge, Cressida has been running a successful nightclub since 2078. Clearly, whoever is running that nightclub, it isn’t him; the corpse’s brain is intact, so it can’t even be a ghost.

The Bureau is concerned that some of Cressida’s TSA associates who remain unaccounted for may be using the aegis of his fame to hide from the world