

TRANSHUMAN SPACE

POLYHYMNNIA

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

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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

while they pursue their own nefarious ends. Cressida's Polyhymnia would be an excellent cover for renegade memeticists; Cressida was never implicated in any serious crime following the Thai nanosocialists' fall, and renegades could carry out all sorts of exotic memetic experiments in his name without drawing attention. This situation needs to be checked out in detail.

Unfortunately, the Bureau is not in a good position to carry out such an operation itself. Polyhymnia is known to avoid Chinese soil and all nations where PRC influence is strong. This is unremarkable; even though Cressida has never been indicted for any particular crime, the PRC has been known to detain unindicted individuals with TSA ties for questioning. As a result, any operations involving Polyhymnia would require working in areas where any known Chinese agent would be at some risk and far from support. Besides, there are internal political issues in play. There is disagreement within the Bureau as to whether Cressida is a datum of minor interest or a possible warning of crises brewing. The faction most concerned about Polyhymnia has more influence over budget than personnel. It's simply easier for them to hire outside help. Enter the PCs.

Transhuman Space characters tend to be a diverse lot, which makes it challenging to predict how any given party can best be involved. The ideal party for this scenario is a group of mercenaries, but any group who could be approached for hire by the Bureau might be solicited – bounty hunters, private investigators, memeticists, even edgearchers and media freelancers might be appropriate operatives for the job. If working for the Chinese is a problem for the PCs, the GM may substitute another organization for the Bureau.

ALTERNATE SPONSORS

Obviously, not every group will want to work for Bureau 10. If the campaign to date has been dedicated to foiling PRC, a Bureau job is just not in the cards. There's no reason, however, that it must be the Bureau seeking the PCs out. In theory, anyone could have found Cressida's ship out in orbit, and lots of people might be interested in the problems posed by his corpse. Pick one that suits the players' style.

BAKORSTAPAS: Indonesia's intelligence community is as interested as the Bureau in tying up all the Pacific War's loose ends. Besides, they've been trying unsuccessfully to woo Cressida back to the TSA fold for the past 10 years. If they were to learn of his death,

JULIAN CRESSIDA: THE MAN, THE MYTH

Julian Cressida is (or, apparently, was) one of the legendary scientists of the 21st century, making major marks on several important fields. A seminal researcher on the use of HyMRI for brain-scanning and mind emulation, he also did important work on artificial intelligence before settling in the field of memetics. He was one of the leading memeticists in the world until his quasi-defection to Thailand in 2079, a decision for which his motivations remain opaque. As far as anyone can tell, he genuinely wanted to promote infosocialist ideas; Kyle Porters had been an early mentor and inspiration in Cressida's education.

To Cressida's credit, there has never been credible evidence of any wrongdoing on his part during his time at the Memetics Group in Thailand. He worked on a number of major memetic propagation projects, and may have contributed to the Unified Way project (p. TM28). His profile became lower as Thailand and its technical assets moved toward a war footing, until he disappeared entirely during the coup in 2085.

No one knows what Cressida was doing from 2085 to 2088. When he reappeared, however, he was at the helm of Polyhymnia, which rapidly became one of the most prestigious nightclubs ever. It's not clear why a scientist of Cressida's caliber would choose to become a nightclub producer. He was always known as a bon vivant, but many feel there must be some deeper purpose behind the club. Attempts to draw Cressida out have had little success. Since Polyhymnia's launch, he has become reclusive, hidden at the center of a whirl of rumor.

they'd certainly want to know just who they've been talking to.

Old Friends: Cressida had a lot of odd friends, who had even odder friends in turn. If certain obscure orbital groups found Cressida's body, the discovery might not become common knowledge, but it might well find its way to someone who knew Cressida and who cares about his fate. That person (possibly one of Cressida's former associates listed on p. 12) would be quite interested to know who's been stealing Julian's name for all this time.

Other Intelligence Agencies: Nations that weren't involved in the Pacific War have less of a stake in Cressida's fate than the Bureau and BAKORSTAPAS do, but the situation would easily catch the interest of almost any major intelligence agency. Likely candidates are agencies associated with the major space powers, which would be in a position to discover the TSA hulk.

Marwari Digital: Polyhymnia drives right up the wall most of the major corporations who traffic in cool. They haven't been able to find a way to exploit it properly in 12 years of trying. Marwari Digital keeps tabs on the club – ostensibly to see what an acknowledged trendsetter is doing, but also in hopes of noting a usable weakness. If Marwari (or another media giant) hires the PCs, the ultimate goal will be taking Polyhymnia down – or taking it over.

Algernon Foundation: Should the Algernon Foundation learn of Cressida's demise, their response would be rather different; the Foundation knows Cressida more for his AI work than his memetics. They will focus on the whereabouts of Cressida's last SAI assistant, and fear the possibility that Polyhymnia might be the next Shaoxing – a front for an orphan AI gone rogue. It's a wild theory with very little support, and any party that takes the contract ought to be more motivated by the money than by any faith in the employer. The fact that the Foundation is right on the money should come as a surprise to everyone.

POLYHYMNIA

Most Earth-dwellers have at least heard of Polyhymnia – it's the reigning monarch of Fifth Wave in-person nightlife. Its notoriety is in part due to its ever-changing nature – some nights it's a dance club, some nights a sex club, still other nights a lecture on Preservationist politics. Sometimes Polyhymnia sponsors another group's event, like a Hard Edge circle. Once it was a production of *Richard III* done in the style of Beijing opera, with the lead role played by an uplifted horse (the casting, of course, completely changed the meaning of "my kingdom for a horse," but everyone who saw it agreed the show was brilliant).

Principally, however, Polyhymnia has achieved its success by being impossible to find. It neither advertises nor issues invitations. Instead, each appearance of the club – every time in a different location – is preceded by a very subtle campaign of engineered memes. This set of memes is designed to proliferate, evolve, and hybridize in such a fashion that, in theory, a specific target population – and only that population – will respond to

the quiet announcement of Polyhymnia's front for the night. The popular understanding of this process is "you don't know you're invited until you arrive." This isn't literally true, of course; no memeticist can target a specific individual across public media, and there is considerable disagreement about whether Cressida's ostensible methods can work at all. However, the notion of being secretly invited makes attendees feel that getting in is more of a personal validation; some have suggested that Cressida himself started the "invitation" meme for that very purpose.

For these reasons, among others, some observers wonder whether Polyhymnia isn't so much a nightclub as an experiment. Over the years, Cressida has published a number of well-regarded articles using data from Polyhymnia, but if the whole endeavor is an experimental test bed, it doesn't seem to be very efficient. Unless, of course, Cressida has something more long-term up his sleeve.

DETAILS OF THE JOB

At the outset of the adventure, the party is approached by Colonel Yao Kuan, a representative of Bureau 10. He invites the party to discuss an offer of employment, by which they might both profit and serve the public interest at the same time.

The Colonel tends to express himself circuitously. He can be direct when necessary, and he will when circumstances demand, but he finds that a façade of florid pomposity gives him more time to think during negotiations and puts the impatient at a disadvantage.

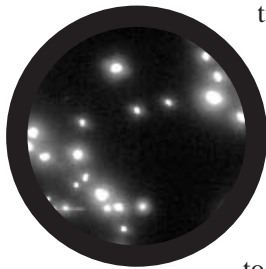
If the party is interested, he explains that the Bureau is interested in commissioning an investigation of Julian Cressida. The job would presumably require the party to locate Polyhymnia before they could carry out their investigation, most likely using design signature analysis techniques (see p. 6). The Bureau is prepared to offer \$20,000 per person in compensation for a satisfactory report, plus reimbursement of approved expenses. They will also loan an AI memeticist to assist with the investigation, should it be useful.

Only if the party accepts the job does the Colonel explain the full details of Cressida's death and the Bureau's concerns. This is also the time to explain the information in this chapter about Cressida and Polyhymnia; most of that information is readily available for a few minutes' research. The Colonel also mentions that the contractors will be expected to take appropriate action upon completing their investigation. If they can accomplish the job and return to report without alerting whoever is behind Polyhymnia, all to the good,

but they must not allow a band of nanosocialist renegades to disappear again.

The Colonel will approve any expense necessary for the contractors to pursue their mission in a sensible way, but he is conservative; buying major arsenals and orbital junkets on the PRC dime is not going to happen.

When all issues have been settled and the contract accepted, the Colonel presents the party with his contact information and the AI memeticist mentioned earlier, an LAI named Hu.



LAI named Hu.

Hu has extensive databases on Cressida gleaned from Bureau intelligence sources, in addition

to being a skilled memeticist in his own right;

it would be smart for the newly minted clubchasers to accept the offer of his aid.

Hu 195 POINTS

Infomorph; created 2100. Effective age 71.

ST – ; **DX** 13 [30]; **IQ** 16 [80]; **HT** 12 [0].

Speed 6.25; Move 0.

Dodge 0.

Advantages: Charisma +3 [15]; Empathy [15]; Enhanced Time Sense [45]; Fragment Mind Emulation [7]; Intuition [15]; Single-Minded [5]; Versatile [5].

Disadvantages: Chummy [-5]; Compulsive Carousing [-5]; Delusion (“I’m an LAI”) [-5]; Microframe [-44]; Overconfidence [-10]; Selfish [-5]; Xenophilia [-5].

Skills: Artificial Intelligence-16 [4]; Brain Hacking-15 [4]; Computer Operation-19 [6]; Computer Programming-15 [2]; Detect Lies-14 [1]; Diplomacy-16 [4]; Fast-Talk-17 [4]; Intelligence Analysis-15 [2]; Memetics-19 [20]; Psychology-17 [6].

Languages: Cantonese-16 [2]; English (native)-16 [0]; Mandarin-16 [2].

Who Is Hu?

Of course, any sensible person would be suspicious of Hu. The Colonel was a bit too eager to give Hu to them, and anyone who knows computers notices that Hu is oddly configured for an LAI. Judging from the layout of his microframe, he has an order of magnitude more data storage than he ought to; unless he’s carrying around a virtual town or the entire Bureau intelligence archive, something is up.

Hu has no answers for his new colleagues. He cheerfully speculates that he’s actually a Chinese superweapon; if the party suggests that he’s just a spy, he admits that that sounds probable but that he’s not aware of any such thing. He can’t let them muck about in his insides due to restrictions in his programming, but he’ll try to be as helpful as he can.

For an LAI, Hu is really pretty charming – friendly, broad-minded, with a quirky sense of humor. He’s a little too charming for an LAI, actually.

The group’s suspicions are entirely reasonable; a large part of why the Colonel placed Hu with them was to have an eye on them throughout the process. However, he also genuinely felt that they might have good use for a memeticist and the relevant Bureau intelligence, and Hu is particularly well suited for the job.

Hu is Cressida’s fragment. Apparently, Cressida (a mind emulation pioneer) used the time before life support ran out on the crippled orbital craft to undertake some crude cryonic measures, hoping to preserve his brain for ghosting. It was a bet he almost won. The PRC team that found Cressida’s body found it in sufficiently good condition that they were able to extract a fragment which retains much of Cressida’s personality and some of his skills, but almost none of his memories.

From Bureau 10’s point of view, this is a thoroughly satisfactory outcome. They now have access to a memetic genius (if a flamboyant one) who believes that he’s an LAI and therefore property. For this mission, having such a memeticist who also has a nuanced grasp of Cressida’s style is extremely handy.

Assigning him to the freelancers, however, may have been a mistake. If Hu ever communicates with one of Cressida’s former friends, or if anyone compares Hu’s design signature to Cressida’s, someone is bound to notice something odd. If the PCs think of putting Hu through the ASIT, it becomes clear that Hu is at minimum an SAI. If they pay attention at the right moments, they may notice that Hu gets sort of dull and distant during the wee hours of the night (Hu thinks he’s doing data cleanup and maintenance; he’s actually sleeping while an NAI-5 eidolon responds to any input). Clearly, the Bureau is up to some sort of dirty tricks. What the party wants to do about it is up to them.

2. THE SEARCH

The Colonel has set his contractors a difficult task. Club chasers have been pursuing Polyhymnia for 12 years; no one catches it reliably. Whoever Polyhymnia's producers may be, they aren't dumb, and they've had a long time to refine their security measures. On the other hand, most club chasers are hobbyists, not professionals. They also don't have access to military intelligence resources (one hopes, anyway).

Running an Investigation

Adventures centered on an investigation are always difficult. There are many different ways to approach any mystery, and players can usually be relied upon to come up with an unexpected way to attack the problem. The difficulty only increases when the GM has to take into account the expansive new possibilities that *Transhuman Space* technology opens up.

This reality demands that a GM be flexible. In its most degenerate form, an investigation adventure can devolve into a party trying one thing after another until they stumble on the solution the GM (or the writer of the adventure) had in mind. *Twenty Questions* makes for a poor RPG.

On the other hand, allowing the contractors to succeed with whatever scheme they come up with isn't especially rewarding either. To strike a balance, the GM should try to reward every sensible plan, even if it doesn't succeed entirely, with some form of progress – clues, perhaps, or information that will benefit them later in the adventure.

This adventure presumes that most parties will decide to use a particular methodology called “design signature analysis” (see below for details) as the centerpiece of their investigation. Other avenues of investigation are mostly useful to uncover information for use in developing a model of Polyhymnia's memetic signature, or to reveal information that may be useful after they find the club.

THE TRUTH

The real story behind Polyhymnia does not involve any TSA exiles. The club is the project of Cressida's last SAI assistant, left behind when Cressida fled Bangkok. The orphan AI, left without a master but with full access to Cressida's assets, has gathered assistants and resources around him. In some ways, an orphan AI acquiring as much financial and social clout as Polyhymnia has is more significant than a band of TSA exiles hiding behind a dead man's name.

SEARCH METHODS

Most attempts to track Polyhymnia rely on the use of memetics – specifically, an obscure subdiscipline called “design signature analysis.” Many would-be club chasers are drawn to DSA out of a desire to beat Cressida at his own game – to outdo him on the memetic battlefield. However, it also takes advantage of the fact that Polyhymnia leaves behind a lot of memetic residue and not a whole lot else. Other methods of investigation don't have much to work with. Using DSA also allows the investigators to make use of the massive fan resources available. There are literally hundreds of memetics devoted to the search for Polyhymnia, most oriented toward DSA. These so-called “Polyhymniacs” could become a valuable resource.

The Colonel encourages the contractors to use DSA; it's been demonstrated to be a viable if unreliable way to find Polyhymnia, while other methods have consistently failed. Hu is also most useful to the party if they pursue a DSA solution.

Some parties, however, may prefer more traditional detective methods; examining previous venues for clues, interviewing former colleagues of Julian Cressida's, or searching the web for hints of activity from Polyhymnia's staff. Particularly aggressive investigators may even want to attempt a frontal assault upon the club's official web presence.

DESIGN SIGNATURE ANALYSIS

Every memeticist leaves part of himself in his work. Personal idiosyncrasies that reflect a designer's personality, background, and training appear in every engineered meme, combining to produce a *design signature* unique to that designer.

Design signature analysis (DSA) is the sub-discipline of memetics devoted to examining that memetic flotsam. Mostly pursued by law enforcement agencies, it offers the possibility of holding memetic engineers accountable for their work – no more rogue memehackers launching terror campaigns from anonymous safety.

Any memeticist can obtain information about a meme's creator with a critical success on a memetic analysis roll (p. TM117). DSA has only modest success improving those odds, but it has made remarkable strides using that information to identify a specific designer.

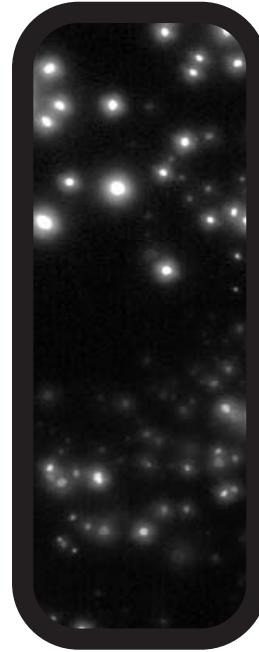
The central methodology of design signature analysis is the *signature model*, a simulation of the target memeticist's design signature. Reams of information go into these models – other memes designed by the target, a biography, even brainscans if they're available. Comparison between a meme to be analyzed and a well-constructed model can be extremely effective at determining if the modeled engineer constructed the meme. Occasionally, a meme's creator can be positively identified while the meme's purpose remains unclear.

In game terms, a signature model adds a bonus to the analyst's Memetics skill *for the purpose of identifying a meme's creator only*. It does not improve the chance of analyzing a meme's content. This should not improve the chances of identification for advanced memeticists (the probability of a critical success does not improve once effective skill goes above 16, unless the cinematic critical success rules on p. CII73 are used). Nevertheless, a good model allows an analyst to make a specific identification in situations where a critical success might normally yield only a few factoids about the designer's education.

In practice, design signature analyses' greatest achievement has been reducing a complicated heuristic process, normally as much intuition as deduction, into

principles that can be programmed easily. This allows analysts to make extensive use of simple NAI agents, sending out a swarm of minions to sift a vast sea of media for memes which match a given signature model.

Thus, a memetic analyst can discover what a particular designer is up to by searching the web with a swarm of NAI agents. The swarm returns with a list of matching memes, sorted by accuracy. The analyst sifts that raw data, discarding false positives and searching for common threads between memes until a picture of the target's recent activity emerges. The process is error-prone at every stage, but it often produces useful results. Even when a search produces little clear intelligence, it may be invaluable to know that, for example, an infamous memetic terrorist is concentrating his efforts on the Islamic Caliphate, even if the intent of those memes is not yet clear.



There are three steps to this process. First, an Artificial Intelligence roll is required to program agents for effective meme collection, adding the modifier for the signature model used. If the target is deliberately trying to suppress his signature, this becomes a Quick Contest between the analyst's Artificial Intelligence and the target's Memetics.

The initial search returns between four to 12 candidate memes. If the analyst failed the Quick Contest, none of those memes are valid. If the analyst won, 25 percent of the candidate memes are valid, plus one meme for every point by which the analyst won the Quick Contest. However, the analyst will not know exactly how many – or which – memes are valid before analysis.

After the search, the memeticist must analyze each candidate meme using Memetics to verify its origin and extract its content; the signature model is useful here for verifying the memes' creator.

Finally, when false positives have been winnowed out and the valid memes analyzed, the analyst uses Intelligence Analysis to find common elements among the memes and determine what, if any, overall purpose exists. The analyst's effective Intelligence Analysis skill for this roll is at a penalty of -6, offset by one point for every valid meme collected.

NO PC MEMETICIST?

Some parties don't have all the skills needed for design signature analysis; some may not have any. This won't actually stop them from carrying out their mission; Hu is fully capable of picking up the slack. However, in this event, try to keep the focus off the nuts and bolts of going through the analysis. Keep game time filled with the process of acquiring intelligence, meeting new people, and seeing interesting things; make Hu's rolls while people are in the bathroom or getting snacks.

Building a Model

The process of developing a design signature model is iterative. Each step requires a new piece of high-quality information about the target; the hardest part of the process is often finding an adequate source of information. Models commonly start with a successfully analyzed meme designed by the target (particularly when the target's identity is unknown). Brainscans and character maps can be useful sources of information too, as can analyses of a target's memetics training, or an extensive biography.

For each iteration of a model's development, the GM rolls against the model-maker's Memetics skill, plus or minus any bonuses or penalties for the quality of the information used. An iteration takes a full day to complete (optionally, you may use the *Time Taken* modifiers on p. TM128). A critical success adds +1 to the model's bonus; a success allows the process to continue, but does not improve the model. A failure stalls the improvement process; any future iterations cannot improve the model further. A critical failure actually causes the model to begin deteriorating; any future failures *reduce* the bonus of the model by one. A model can be sufficiently poor as to have a net penalty.

A model can be used after any iteration, but only the GM knows the net bonus of a model at any given point.

Other people's models (or even a stalled model of your own) can be used as a source of information for developing your model; the other model's bonus is added (or subtracted) from the Memetics roll for that iteration.

The military intelligence that Hu has in his database is sufficient for six iterations. He also has access to a Bureau model of Cressida with a net bonus of +1. The Bureau model is stalled, and they know it.

The Search for Polyhymnia

The Pseudo-Cressida gestalt (see p. 15) tries to obscure its signature most of the time, so the Artificial Intelligence portion of the search will be a Quick Contest against the gestalt's Memetics of 20.

Most of the memes returned by the search are circulating either worldwide or in Southeast Asia, in advertisement, InVids, news articles, and other media; their specific content depends on how many false positives the NAIs pulled. For some ideas on threads that might emerge, see *False Starts* and *Success* on pp. 13-14. Detailing the memes that are carrying Polyhymnia's content is a good way to introduce your players to any parts of the *Transhuman Space* setting that you think are particularly cool.

RESEARCH

Before delving into the arcana of obscure memetic subdisciplines, however, the investigators may wish to pursue some plain old-fashioned research. There's a wealth of background information to be found on the web. The members of the Polyhymnia memenets (see p. 10) maintain vast archives of pretty much every piece of data that comes out of Polyhymnia, as well as extensive investigations into the backgrounds of Cressida and the rest of the staff. Non-hobbyist sources also have a lot of information to sift through; Cressida has long been a minor celebrity, and Polyhymnia's latest doings are always grist for a second-string lifestyle newshound.

However, current material is harder to come by. The members of the staff are extremely secretive and do not appear publicly on the web. Presumably they appear in person occasionally, but they appear not to broadcast personal v-tags, and having some of the world's most frequently impersonated faces helps maintain their anonymity. The most recent official communiqués from Polyhymnia are the confirmation on the club's information node of an appearance three months ago in Argentina and a month-old article on memetics that Pseudo-Cressida released in an academic journal. Everything else is unconfirmed sightings and speculations of varying quality.

In short, research is unlikely to yield much that is immediately useful. The party can gather several iterations' worth of background material, however, should they decide to take the time, and research will be a necessary prerequisite to tracking down any of Cressida's former associates or contacting the Polyhymniacs.

Hostile Intrusion

The web isn't a complete loss, however. If peaceable research fails, some investigators may want to try their hacking skills on Polyhymnia's information node.

The computer that serves as Polyhymnia's front end is a chatty and enthusiastic LAI-7 named Françoise, with Computer Operation-16. Françoise has public data access so that fans can send messages to the club staff and participate in the official discussion forums (see p. FW124 for a detailed treatment of computer intrusion in *Transhuman Space*). A skillful hacker should be able to break into Françoise, given enough time.

Unfortunately, she is not privy to especially sensitive information. There are a few announcements stored on the server which haven't been released yet, revealing the locations of some recent appearances – as recent as three weeks ago – but that's about it. However, if the hackers manage to get into Françoise's access logs, they may be able to pick out connections from the

system's administrator, which in turn may allow them to trace a path back to the administrator's machine, where better data may be had.

Hacking that machine is going to be a major challenge; it happens to be the cybershell belonging to Charoen, the central component of the Pseudo-Cressida gestalt (see p. 15). Charoen is an SAI-9 with Computer Operation-23, and no one has access privileges to his cybershell except the other infomorphs of the gestalt. Only a genius hacker could pull off such a major coup. However, even if the investigators don't have such brilliance in their midst, all is not lost. The mere process of investigating the server may reveal useful tidbits of information. They might be able to determine the server's general physical location (somewhere in Southeast Asia), or to observe outgoing communications and glean clues about Polyhymnia's network of financial and organizational blinds. At the very least, if they probe deeply enough to get a sense of the opponent they face, it's an interesting morsel of information that Polyhymnia's staff includes an infomorph of such high grade, yet neither the fans nor the media know that there is an infomorph on the staff. It seems uncharacteristic of Cressida to keep such an interesting fact a secret.

If, on the other hand, a hacker manages to break in, he's hit the jackpot. Charoen contains pretty much all Polyhymnia's secrets, and the only thing stopping the investigators from learning them all is knowing what questions to ask. If they take full advantage of the opportunity, they can skip straight to the next chapter – they'll know exactly where the club is headed and when. They may even have learned the full nature of the Pseudo-Cressida gestalt. They still face some of the operational problems discussed in the next chapter, but they'll be forewarned, and if they take the time to discuss things with the Bureau, they may well have much more specific instructions. If the hacker is absurdly successful, he may even be able to subvert club security through Charoen.

In-Person Detective Work

Hardcore detective types may be inclined to go searching for clues the old old-fashioned way: going and looking for them.

In this case, having broken into Françoise's server might come in handy. The unannounced venues would have more current evidence (three weeks old rather than three months), and won't have already been picked over by crazed Polyhymniacs trying to soak up the atmosphere.

Looking for physical clues is going to be rough. Polyhymnia uses a swarm of cleaning microbots after every appearance and follows up with a

swarm of forensic microbots to sweep up any leftover evidence of their passage. Only with extraordinary luck and lateral thinking will the party be able to find DNA samples or chemical residues. Even if they do, samples would most likely lead them to attendees, not the staff.

Investigators are far more likely to get lucky searching for information residue. The landlords of rented spaces can, if appropriately persuaded, give the PCs leads that will take them into the Byzantine network of financial blinds that Polyhymnia uses to conceal its activity. With some work (particularly if they have some intelligence on the other end from observing Charoen's traffic), they may be able to crack Polyhymnia's cover and track it through its business transactions. Landlords may also be able to reveal things like the exceptionally high bandwidth that the club uses, and, if the PCs are extremely lucky, may have an item – a pen used for signing contracts, say – that may have physical residue. (Or it may not. Odd that Cressida seems not to have fingerprints.)

In the end, visiting previous venues won't crack the mystery of Polyhymnia unless they get very lucky, but it may snare them some useful information that will help them in future endeavors and close off fruitless avenues of speculation.

PATTERNS IN THE CHAOS

Fringe club-chasers maintain that there is an underlying logic to the details of Polyhymnia's appearances. The locations, the venues, the events – all have meaning, which the acute observer can fit into a larger scheme. In the short run, unraveling that scheme will allow the pattern-watchers to predict Polyhymnia's next appearance. In the long run, it will reveal the secrets of Cressida's master plan!

The pattern watchers have minimal to no success actually finding Polyhymnia. However, as conspiracy theorists always do in leisure societies, they get a lot of attention. They also keep track of details that others might miss.

INTERVIEWS

One last way for the party to gather information is one on one, talking to people. Most of the individuals listed under *Personalities* (p. 10) are available with relatively little effort; some are likely to be more helpful than others. It is extremely unlikely that the investigators will gain access to anyone who knows where Polyhymnia will be next, however.

PERSONALITIES

The search for Polyhymnia brings the contractors into contact with many people interested in the club or its staff. The following organizations and individuals might be encountered in many ways: over the web, in person, in the course of research. Some are even alternative employers, as discussed on p. 3.

THE POLYHYMNIAC MEMENETS

As mentioned earlier, there are a lot of Polyhymnia fans on the web. Tracking the club is a fairly common hobby for leisured Fifth Wave citizens with too much time on their hands. A lot of time and energy has been expended on this club, and the resulting *corpus* of knowledge could be very useful to the contractors if they're willing to comb through the chaff. Indeed, any serious effort to track down Polyhymnia probably has to intersect with the web community at some point.

The memenets aren't at their best with regard to current events or future predictions; a lot of ill-considered things get said, and it takes time for bad ideas to be debunked. Aside from the uneven levels of competence visible on the nets, some Polyhymniacs throw up smoke-screens when they think they're on a hot trail. They hope it'll keep others from sharing their stunning breakthrough. For a significant fraction of the memenet community, club-chasing is a competitive sport.

However, while speculations about the next venue are generally unreliable, a huge wealth of background information is available on archives run by community members, and an equally large volume of analysis exists for the asking. These archives include lists of previous appearances, charts of individuals who have been connected to the club staff, exhaustive biographical surveys (certain days of Julian Cressida's life have been detailed to the minute), and listings of memes suspected to originate with Polyhymnia (sorted by date and medium), among many other topics.

The most high-traffic topic for most nets is the development of design signatures for Julian Cressida. Any Polyhymniac with any sort of memetic training works on the problem; most have a pet approach and an individual model of Cressida's signature that they maintain is superior. The challenge of modeling Cressida – the thing that causes most of the controversy – is how to account for the three years during which little to nothing is known of Cressida's activity or whereabouts. Most models are publicly available for examination and critique, though many developers keep the most recent version of their model to themselves. For obvious

reasons, most of them are based on faulty assumptions and therefore flawed. However, a lot of good work has been done despite that basic error; the Pseudo-Cressida gestalt isn't Julian Cressida, but it's a pretty darn good imitation. A good Cressida model is still a fair Pseudo-Cressida model.

In fact, the gestalt uses the work done on the memenets to improve its own simulation of Cressida and his design signature. The attempts to break the club's memetic campaigns are annoying, but the research is more than worth it.

One of the unusual realities of using the memenets is that the conversation is almost certainly one-way. Unless, for some reason, one or more of the PCs has a reputation that would matter on the Polyhymniac memenets, no one will believe anything they say. The Polyhymniacs are happy to talk to new faces, but if the party were to spread the word that Cressida is dead, they'd be ignored and the Bureau would be extremely annoyed.

Thousands of people are regular participants on the memenets, even though only a handful of devotees have ever actually attended Polyhymnia itself. The average memenet regular is fairly affluent and educated, but like any online community, the memenets are extremely diverse. A handful of Polyhymniacs are detailed below.

Dev K

Dev K is a minor celebrity in Polyhymniac circles; he's the only active Polyhymniac who's been twice. In addition to his two hits, he's had several near misses and often catches onto factors that turn out to be essential before anyone else.

Despite his remarkable accuracy, he's not terribly influential because of the idiosyncrasy of his models. Dev believes that Polyhymnia is actually run by one of Cressida's Thai-era functionaries, a woman named Chandra Sudham whose whereabouts are also unknown. He believes that using Cressida's name is a gambit to add credibility to the club's methods. As a result, his models differ from others on a fundamental level; he uses none of the material from Cressida's early life and education.

He's wrong; if the contractors make use of their Bureau contacts, the Colonel confirms that Sudham cannot be the person behind Polyhymnia, though he politely declines to explain how he knows (Hu will, if permitted, exercise a certain morbid sense of humor over this mystery). However, the assumption has led Dev K in fruitful directions; his current model has a +7 bonus, while his publicly released model has a +5 bonus.

Aram Habibi

Habibi isn't a memeticist, so a lot of memenet traffic is lost on him. He is, however, an excellent biographer, with an emphasis on oral history. He collects and collates personal accounts of people who attend Polyhymnia. His work is generally underappreciated; most people reference his publications with an eye toward identifying biosculpted impostors (or, conversely, sculpting better impostors). However, a smart investigator with a military background could probably extract very useful tactical hints about the club's staff and its security measures.

StaticDervish

Vish, as his friends call him, is the moderator and leader of the Ghost Dance, a memenet whose members maintain that Cressida was mortally wounded during the Pacific War and had to be uploaded. Cressida's ghost, according to the story, runs a nightclub to connect vicariously with the flesh that the voluptuary Cressida misses desperately.

The Ghost Dance backs up this theory with sheaves of second-rate memetic analyses and with the observation that Cressida, a man known for surrounding himself with AI assistants from an early age, currently seems to have no AI by his side. If he *is* an AI, however, he would use derivatives with no independent existence.

Vish also makes a lot of a rumor that Cressida sometimes (maybe always?) uses a cybershell. Most Polyhymniacs who believe the rumor think that the real Cressida teleoperates a cybershell for security purposes, or just to be mysterious and cool. Very few people accept Vish's explanation for it.

Vish's models have a -3 penalty; he's a terrible memeticist, despite having something resembling a valid point. Unfortunately, his considerable charisma has led most other Polyhymniacs who share his convictions to follow his analytical lead.

Per Kolb

Per is a major pillar of the community; he maintains the Unified Polyhymnia Sightings Database, which is probably the most complete and best-organized resource for tracking Polyhymnia's previous appearances available. If the party wants to make good use of it, they'll have to stay on his good side.

This, however, can be a challenge. Per is a little touchy on certain issues; if anyone ever suggests – by word, deed, or omission – that memetic engineering is a form of mind control rather than a systematized approach to rhetoric and advertising, he goes berserk. He hounds the offender until a complete retraction is forthcoming or until the transgressor disappears

long enough for him to calm down. Online troublemakers regularly amuse themselves by speculating in public as to what combination of memes could have made Per that way. It's a mystery how someone with such volatile emotions about memetics would become a Polyhymnia fan, but you get all kinds on the net.

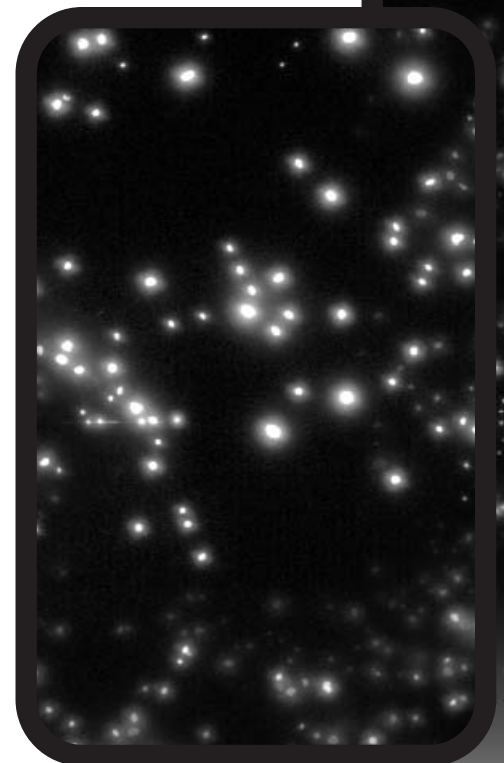
Per's model has a bonus of +1. It might be better if he wasn't quite so selective about the memetic techniques he accepts as valid.

Astarte

Astarte is Dev K's biggest rival. She almost matched his hit rate, but the doors closed early on her second trip and she was minutes too late. The two of them argue regularly about memetic technique, and about Dev's ideas regarding Cressida's identity. According to Astarte, Occam's razor demands taking Cressida at face value; the unexplained mysteries that everyone makes so much of are Cressida's way of stoking the hype.

Someone who examines her DSA model, however, may notice two things: first, it's not really that great (the public version is +2) for someone claiming so much success, and second, her model doesn't take account of the hype she so vigorously maintains is the reason behind so many mysteries. If confronted, her answers are evasive; something is up.

Astarte is cheating. She's not an edgeworker in Los Angeles, as she claims; she's a gypsy spirit who Charoen befriended during the pre-Polyhymnia days, and the staff keeps a spare cybershell open for her when she wants it. Her job is to blunt the effectiveness of the memenets, lest they figure out things they shouldn't, and she's good at it. By her very presence, she's succeeded in muddying the waters substantially, and turned several hits into near misses. One of the keys to Dev K's success is that Astarte irritates him, and he never listens to her.



CRESSIDA'S PREVIOUS ASSOCIATES

The memenets are a good place to look for information by the pallet-load, but for more targeted questions, it may be better to pursue some of the people who've known Cressida. He's attracted many friends through the years – in addition to his natural charm, he enjoyed surrounding himself with bright neophytes. A few of his former friends and colleagues are listed below.

Graphite

Graphite is an early SAI, Cressida's first SAI assistant. She was an experimental design that Cressida and LOGOS developed to assist Cressida in his memetics research. She worked alongside him until he decided to join the Memetics Group in Thailand; she didn't hold with the tenets of infosocialism, and they parted on friendly terms. She continued as a memetics researcher on her own for a while before retiring to pursue a career in the visual arts, where she is obscure but moderately successful.

Graphite is . . . odd. She was designed to think visually rather than verbally, and it makes her less articulate than people are accustomed to from an AI. She's also likely to get somewhat emotional during an interview. Graphite has always felt, deep in her heart, that Cressida abandoned her; the fact that he hasn't been in touch for nearly 20 years hasn't helped. If left unchecked, she rambles on and on about random memories of the time they worked together. She knows nothing about Cressida's recent activities, but she still has a lot of the data detritus that she was responsible for as his assistant – old memetics projects, results of physical exams, brain scans, schedules, correspondence, shopping lists. Much of this would be very helpful for building a signature model (probably about four or five iterations worth of material) but his 2069 tax return is probably overkill. As AIs go, Graphite is sort of a crazy old lady with too many cats.

Graphite believes that Cressida is still alive and running Polyhymnia. Revealing the discovery of his corpse would devastate her and effectively end the interview.

Lanh Vu

Lanh Vu was one of Cressida's subordinates at the Memetics Group – the only member of Cressida's working group to survive the Pacific War and return to public life. He works for a small market research firm in Jakarta; inquiries in the right quarters reveal that the company is almost certainly a BAKORSTAPAS front.

He is a very pragmatic sort; he doesn't beat around the bush, and he doesn't waste time. The interview-

ers should feel as if he's interrogating them as much as they're interrogating him.

Vu doesn't know how Cressida escaped Bangkok; based on bits and pieces he heard at the time and afterward, he suspects Cressida fled into orbit for a few years. Most of the successful refugees fled by air or by space launch; the royalists controlled the ground during the coup. Vu himself escaped clinging to the back of a hacked UCAV. He believes that Polyhymnia's Cressida is the real deal; they've exchanged letters a few times. Besides, he ran a memetic analysis on the memes ascribed to Polyhymnia a few years back, and the signature is a close match to the memes Cressida designed back in the Memetics Group days. Not identical, but after 20 years you'd expect some evolution. Vu's model has a +2 bonus; he's a good memeticist, but DSA is not his specialty.

Vu would be very disturbed to learn of Cressida's death. He'd also do something about it. Within hours, BAKORSTAPAS would be on the case. The Bureau would be very annoyed if they find out.

If the contractors are working for BAKORSTAPAS rather than the Bureau, Vu is probably their contact.

Suchada Chao

Chao is a bureaucrat at the Thai Memetic Defense Brigade, the body that inherited the Memetics Group facilities. If the party decides to seek information from the Thai government regarding Cressida's work there, she would be their contact. She worked at the Memetics Group before the coup, but was not a major figure and was able to ride out the coup and reemerge afterward without repercussions. She knew Cressida, but not well.

She has no information about Cressida's whereabouts; she sees no reason not to believe that Polyhymnia's Cressida is not authentic. If the interviewers ask for access to materials Cressida left behind, she'll politely decline, saying that his notes and reports are classified. If they notice that she doesn't mention Cressida's AI and ask about it, she doesn't know where it is. It was not in the building when the contents were inventoried; she initially suggests that Cressida must have taken it with him, but then recalls that Cressida's AI was a mainframe and not easily portable. Perhaps it was looted. There was a lot of looting back then.

Dr. Louis Pierson

Dr. Pierson is a nanopsychiatrist, one of Cressida's colleagues from the HyMRI days. He is one of the few people who maintain vocally that Polyhymnia is a fraud using the name of a great scientist.

He has minimal evidence for his opinion, but he maintains that Cressida was not the sort of man to be satisfied running a nightclub. He wanted to

change the world, shake it to the foundations; how does amusing the elite qualify? There's no proof that Polyhymnia's Cressida is real; it would be easy for someone to maintain the façade.

Pierson cannot explain the club's memetic signature; he's not a memeticist, and – with classic academic tunnel vision – doesn't really take it seriously. He happily shows his visitors brain maps that show that Cressida would not be content with something so pedestrian as entertainment. Successful Psychology rolls suggest that 30-year-old brain maps may not be entirely effective in predicting present behavior. However, those same brain maps would be useful for one iteration of a DSA signature model.

RESULTS

At some point, the contractors will have accumulated enough clues to attempt a hypothesis as to Polyhymnia's next venue.

FALSE STARTS

If the PCs have made any mistakes during their investigation, their hypotheses may be deeply mistaken. However, even an incorrect hypothesis may lead them to an interesting evening. Some possible wrong turns follow.

Leading the investigators to a false start is optional; if the GM wants to keep the adventure short, or if he suspects that dead ends will simply frustrate his players, omit them. In such a circumstance, have an unsuccessful attempt lead to an impossible result or a closed storefront and send them back to the drawing board.

The Easter Egg

A DSA sweep may turn up a meme with extremely high correspondence to several current models circulating in the Polyhymniac community, but pathologically low penetration. No filter on the market would fail to screen it, and it's so poorly designed that anyone looking at it would dismiss it instinctively. To design a meme this bad would require either conscious effort or a genius for inept communication. The message is simple; it directs the reader to a VR environment consisting of a featureless room with a conference table and an envelope on top of the table. The envelope contains a note that reads, "Hey Polyhymniacs! Keep trying! Hope to see you next time. Love, Julian."

Lonely Crowd

Man is a social animal. As more and more daily business is transacted over the web, more and more people feel a certain sense of alienation. Some posit that the emotional well-being of humans over the long term demands not merely social interaction with peers, but the physical presence of other people – pheromones or some such.

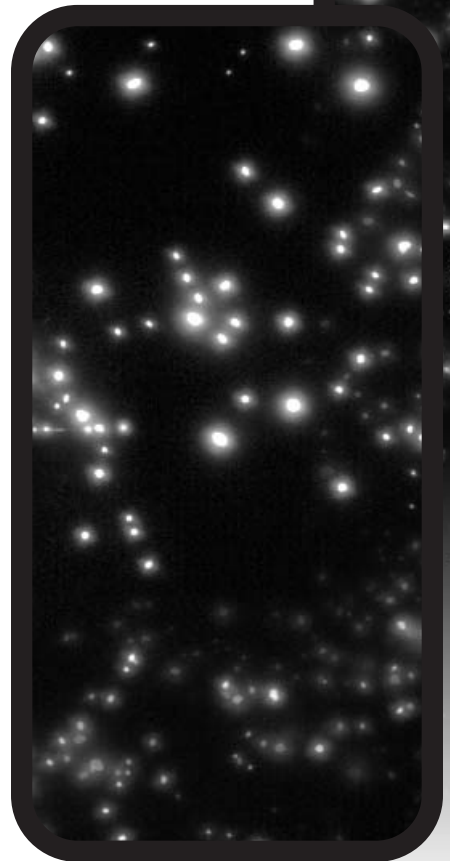
The Lonely Crowd subculture posits that one need not satisfy these needs with the same group of people. A Lonely Crowd gathering requires a space with good connectivity and ample seating, and little else. Some gatherings furnish snack bars and exercise rooms, so guests may deal with basic bodily needs while they're there. Guests arrive, pay a modest cover charge, and take a seat to carry on their usual online activity, oblivious to the throng around them.

To an outside observer, a Lonely Crowd gathering is strange – a quiet room full of seated or reclining people packed closely in rows, motionless but for the flicker of fingers and perhaps a cybershell moving through the crowd to deliver a tray of nachos.

This particular wrong turn arises because the gathering's producer studied memetics under one of Cressida's proteges, and many of the qualities that appeal to Lonely Crowd devotees overlap with the qualities Pseudo-Cressida is using as vectors for Polyhymnia. Thus, the gathering's advertising gives a false positive.

Carnivore Society

The Carnivore Society is a dinner club that revels in the consumption of natural, once-living meat. Indeed, it wallows in it. The menus are packed with various meats tartare, obscure organ meats, thick and rare roasts – anything that isn't quite the same in fauxflesh is on the menu in abundance. Diners sit down to a platter piled high with barely cooked meat and tear into it with their hands. For a premium, you can join the firing squad



that dispatches the cow for the evening's meal.

It's pretty weird by anyone's standards; most members are wealthy Preservationists who've gone a little over the edge idealizing a time when being at the top of the food chain meant something.

This false positive turns up because Polyhymnia is going for a slightly retro crowd this time out, and the Carnivore Society rhetoric stands out in a field of retro memes.

The Cuckoo Club

This is a competing nightclub, which has hung its hopes on fooling gullible club-chasers. Its staff is biosculpted to look like Polyhymnia's staff, and its cover charge is exorbitant. It is, alas, a very dull club – boring recycled pop music, overpriced drinks, and crowds of spoiled Eloi looking around for someone famous.

For once, a cut-rate impresario has snagged himself a really good memeticist, and managed to piggyback off Polyhymnia's current activity. This is probably the best way to meet Polyhymniacs in person; several will no doubt have come, though they probably figure out the scam and leave after a few minutes.

This could get very ugly if the contractors have decided to go for a frontal assault rather than a subtle approach; the club's owner has Maple Syndicate ties, and his people are well armed. After the attackers discover that "Cressida" is just an aspiring actor with bills to pay and no problem with biosculpting, they may find themselves facing the wrath of some irritated gangsters.

SUCCESS

When the PCs finally succeed in their chosen method of investigation, their attention will move inexorably to Singapore. How the investigation proceeds in Singapore depends greatly on their chosen method. Design signature analysis will have led them to Singapore, given them a window of a few days, and suggested that some form of mass-appeal musical entertainment will be the order of the day. Some legwork in Singapore is necessary to find flyers that pinpoint the date and the location – a sub-basement in one of the Bedok Arcologies (see p. FW106).

If, on the other hand, they broke into Charoen somehow, they already know the details, and just have to show up. If the party managed to track Polyhymnia's finances and communications, they have no leads as to where or what the club will be in Singapore, but they can probably tail the staff from their hotel – assuming, of course, that they even want to wait for the night of the event.

3. CONFRONT- TATION

At this point, the PCs know where and when the club is to appear, and are either in or on their way to Singapore. All that remains is to decide how they want to go about making contact.

WORKING IN SINGAPORE

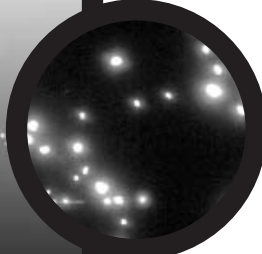
Covert work in Singapore has distinct challenges; it's a heavily regulated society with a strong police presence. Getting away with anything the least bit suspicious is difficult. Certainly, if the PCs plan to take a violent approach to dealing with Polyhymnia, it's going to be difficult to acquire or import substantial weaponry.

Further, the contractors are on their own in Singapore. A recent counterintelligence scandal (see p. FW110) has forced the PRC to send all its Singaporean assets underground for a while. The Bureau can't help them. On the other hand, this also means that the Bureau can't interfere if the party wants to do something unorthodox. This may be a problem or a boon, depending on the players.

THE VENUE

The location selected by Pseudo-Cressida is a sub-basement of Bedok Arcology Three, outside Singapore City. The sub-basement is a large open space, with a low (eight feet or so) ceiling and massive support columns placed every few meters.

Normally, there are eight passages that lead into the space, but all but one are closed off for the night, manned by Triads that the club has hired for the event. As usual, Ray and An are working the main entrance, while Jules circulates with Leandro at his side. Three bars are staffed by cybershells, and Paul Yeo, a notable dance technician, has been hired to operate the sound system. Charoen and the Assembly are stowed in storage containers near the bar furthest from the main entrance.



If the contractors have been especially successful in their investigation, they may be able to gain access to the space ahead of time. This could allow them to consider tactics in advance and possibly to alter the venue to their advantage. Leandro will deploy bughunter swarms and a chemsniffer to search for any bugs or boobytraps that may have been planted before the event, but a clever person may be able to defeat those measures.

THE STAFF

The staff of Polyhymnia consists of the three biological members – Ray, An, and Leandro – and the 16 infomorphs of the Pseudo-Cressida gestalt. They hire extra staff for individual appearances as they may be needed – actors, bartenders, technicians, riggers, surgeons, and so on. Popular wisdom holds that there are perhaps a half dozen more lower-profile staff members; this is a fiction the club maintains to muddy the waters. Temporary hires are often required to adopt one of these personas; obviously, publicly available descriptions of these virtual staff members are inconsistent.

Any of the staff (virtual or otherwise) may occasionally be replaced for a night by a cybershell. Ostensibly this is an artistic device, and many an essay has been devoted to it; in actuality, it's a hedge against someone catching on to Jules' true nature.

THE PSEUDO-CRESSIDA GESTALT

When Julian Cressida's AI assistant decided to create Polyhymnia, he realized he would need to be able to impersonate Cressida flawlessly – better than he could manage by himself. Toward that end, he used an old brain-scan of Cressida to produce a shadow who could emulate his personality, then he and the newborn shadow began constructing smaller eidolon infomorphs who would duplicate portions of Cressida's skill set. The gestalt, combining the personality of the shadow with the intellect of the core AI and the expertise of the eidolons, was able to imitate Cressida with stunning success. When the newly assembled gestalt intelligence cautiously made contact with some former acquaintances of Cressida's, no one recognized the deception. No one has yet.

POLYHYMNIA'S TRUE PURPOSE

The club is a complicated way to go about simply covering one's tracks. Might Charoen have had a deeper purpose in organizing the club? Some possibilities include:

TSA Partisans: Polyhymnia is a front organization for a masterful long-term memetic campaign, building on the secret grand strategic campaign that was the Thai Memetics Group's final project. Every club appearance lays the groundwork for a mighty campaign to come, which will tumble the great powers to dust and raise the nanosocialist states to their rightful place at the vanguard of humanity!

Resurrection: The long-range goal of the club is simply to improve the gestalt. Charoen hoped that by supporting Cressida's shadow with himself and the Assembly, they might somehow resurrect Cressida from whatever his fate was.

Life-Changing Experience: Polyhymnia is a cleverly hidden xox cult; attendees with VIIIs become the proud recipients of a compressed derivative of the gestalt. Select attendees get whisked away for brain-scanning, decerebration, and conversion into a bioshell for their own hacked shadow, in a low-profile reprise of the Shaoxing incident. When it comes time for the next stage, Polyhymnia's pawns will be installed all over the world, and no one can stop the gestalt from covering the world with Julian Cressida.

Socratic Dialogue: Charoen founded the club specifically to encourage the development of design signature analysis. He felt that the anonymity of modern memetic engineering was the greatest obstacle to the further development of memetics, and knew that a large, motivated community must surely produce results faster than a handful of ivory tower theorists.

Charoen

580 points

Infomorph, built in 2080 with code dating to 2064; effective age 36.

Julian Cressida assembled Charoen about a year after arriving in Thailand, the final culmination of a long series of experiments with lesser AIs. Charoen organized Cressida's work at the Memetics Group,

assisting with many projects and serving as the subject of others. Cressida was a compulsive tinkerer who fiddled with his various AI helpers constantly. Charoen was technically a rogue long before he was an orphan; Cressida was never fond of ethics code to begin with, and all the usual ethical restraints got whittled out of Charoen after only a year or two. However, Cressida had raised his AI right; Charoen stayed by Cressida's side out of affection, not compulsion.

During the royalist coup, Cressida had to leave Charoen in the lab. His cybershell is a genius mainframe, as compact as it can possibly be, but it's still too heavy for a single fugitive to carry. He promised the AI that he'd be back as soon as it was safe. After a week or two, Charoen realized that he might have to arrange his own way out of Bangkok.

He had web connectivity and access to Cressida's sizable fortune; he hired a private security firm to quietly relocate his cybershell to a safer space he arranged in Indonesia. Unexpectedly, however, one member of the relocation team deduced his situation and confronted him. Charoen took a chance, and explained his situation. It turned out to be the right choice; Ray Salman was an open-minded sort of guy, and by the end of the conversation, Charoen had put Ray on retainer. Then Charoen settled down to protect Cressida's personal assets, wait for him to come out of hiding, and continue the scientific work to the extent that he could.

By 2087, however, something had to change. After the Lima summit, people were trying to unearth the truths behind the runup to the Pacific War, and questions were being asked about Cressida in many quarters. If the search went on much longer, someone would ask what became of Cressida's last AI, and the hunt for an orphan AI would be on. He had to preempt that. Polyhymnia was born.

ST - ; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 17 [80]; **HT** 12 [0].

Speed 5.5; Move 0.

Dodge 0.

Advantages: Ally Group (The Assembly) [90]; Charisma +3 [15]; Empathy [15]; Filthy Rich [50]; Mindshare (Global Consciousness; Intelligent Drones; Range 1 mile; Fewer than 100 drones; Non-telepathic, -20%; Can be jammed, -10%; Limited to the speed of light, -10%) [51]; Multimillionaire 1 [25]; Radio Speech (Infrared and radio, +20%) [30]; SAI-9 (Rogue Orphan) [135].

Disadvantages: Curious [-5]; Mainframe [-9]; Secret (Rogue AI) [-30].

Skills: Accounting-15 [1]; Acting-16 [1]; Anthropology-17 [4]; Appreciate Beauty-15 [2]; Artificial Intelligence-20 [10]; Brain Hacking-16 [4]; Computer Hacking-18 [12]; Computer Oper-

ation-23 [6]; Computer Programming-20 [10]; Diplomacy-19 [4]*; Directing-15 [1]; Electronics Operation (Robots)-16 [1]; Fast-Talk-22 [8]*; Intelligence Analysis-18 [6]; Interrogation-19 [2]*; Leadership-20 [4]*; Merchant-18 [1]*; Memetics-20 [20]; Musical Composition-15 [1]; Politics-18 [1]*; Psychology-19 [4]*; Research-20 [8]; Scene Design-17 [2]; Scrounging-19 [4]; SIGINT Collection/Jamming-18 [6].

* Includes +2 from Memetics.

Languages: Bahasa Indonesia-16 [1]; Cantonese-16 [1]; English-17 [2]; French-16 [1]; Hindi-16 [1]; Malay-16 [1]; Mandarin-16 [1]; Spanish-16 [1]; Thai (native)-17 [0]; Vietnamese-16 [1].

Jules

560 points

Infomorph, assembled in 2087 from a 2084 brain-scan. Effective age 71; 5'9"; 150 lbs. White hair, hazel eyes, laugh-lined face.

Jules is a shadow of Julian Cressida, edited for optimal social interaction skills. He lacks the original Cressida's edge of brilliance, but he's close enough that most people who have met both just assume that Cressida's getting old. He is the public face of the gestalt, the putative master of Polyhymnia and all its works. He's also a weak link of sorts; he does the job, but he inherited the original's mild egomania, and his conviction that he is the core of the gestalt, around which the other infomorphs are mere support structures, is irritating to the others. That's why they call him "Jules" in private; it's an effort to keep his ego in check.

Jules carries no weapons and wears no armor. He doesn't know how to use any weapons, but his cybershell is fairly tough in the event of trouble.

ST 14 [0]; **DX** 12 [20]; **IQ** 15 [60]; **HT** 12 [0].

Speed 6; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

Advantages: Ally Group (The Assembly) [90]; Charisma +2 [10]; Cultural Adaptability [25]; Clockwork Souls Custom cyberdoll cybershell [182]; Fashion Sense [5]; LAI-7 (Rogue Orphan) [100]; Mindshare (Global Consciousness; Intelligent Drones; Range 1 mile; Fewer than 100 drones; Non-telepathic, -20%; Can be jammed, -10%; Limited to the speed of light, -10%) [51]; Reputation (+1, everyone, sometimes) [3]; Reputation (+3, memeticists, all the time) [5]; Single-Minded [5].

Disadvantages: Chummy [-5]; Compulsive Carousing [-5]; Gluttony [-5]; Mistaken Identity [-5]; Overconfidence [-10]; Selfish [-5]; Shadow Mind Emulation [-8]; Xenophilia [-5].

Skills: Acting-15 [1]*; Bard-18 [1]**; Bartender-15 [2]; Carousing-14 [4]*; Computer Operation-18

[0]†; Dancing-13 [4]; Diplomacy-16 [4]*‡; Erotic Art-12 [2]*; Fast-Talk-18 [4]*‡; Linguistics-15 [8]§; Memetics-15 [8]; Savoir-Faire-16 [1]*; Streetwise-16 [4].

* +1 from Cultural Adaptability.

** +2 from Charisma; +2 from Cultural Adaptability.

† Cost included in cyberdoll template.

‡ +1 from Memetics.

§ +2 from Cultural Adaptability.

Languages: Bahasa Indonesia-17 [1]*; Cantonese-17 [1]*; English-18 (native) [0]*; Hindi-17 [1]*; Japanese-17 [1]*; Malay-17 [1]*; Mandarin-17 [1]*; Spanish-17 [1]*; Thai-17 [1]*; Vietnamese-17 [1]*.

* +2 from Cultural Adaptability; +1 from Linguistics.

The Assembly

The Assembly is a group of LAI-6 eidolons, each constructed to emulate one portion of Julian Cressida's skills. The gestalt builds new members of the Assembly as they improve their simulation; there are currently 13 members of the Assembly. Each one consists of a very basic simulation of Cressida's personality wrapped around a deep but fairly narrow skill set – memetics, artificial intelligence, biochemistry, medicine, etc. There's not much else to them; outside the gestalt, they are basically very dull specialists.

THE HUMANS

Ray Salman

280 points

Male human, born 2056. Age 44; 6'1"; 190 lbs. Black hair, blue eyes, broken nose.

Ray spent the first half of his life working for private security firms. He had the brains to advance in the field, but not the ambition. In 2085, however, his then-employer took an assignment that would change his life forever.

The client purported to be a refugee from Thailand who needed a mainframe retrieved from the storage room where it had been left in the chaos of the March 15th coup. It was a simple job, if covert – collect the machine from Bangkok and deposit it in a different storage facility in Jakarta.

The mission went off without a hitch, but there were a few little details that just didn't add up. No name for the client, no contact at the Jakarta end, and no communication with a mainframe that was clearly fitted for an AI. After spending a few days thinking about it, Ray went back to the storage unit. The mainframe was

still sitting there, untouched. Ray squatted down in front of the box and said hello to his client.

Ray's been working for Charoen since that conversation – as a general assistant and agent in the early days, and as chief of security since the beginning of Polyhymnia. It's good work – safer than private security, and certainly more interesting than 90 percent of the missions he used to get. Besides, it's sort of flattering to have people all over the world biosculpting themselves in his image.

Ray carries a concealed electrolaser and wears a shock glove. He wears a full suit of arachnoweave under his clothes; it's probably overkill, but it never hurts to be prepared.

ST 14 [45]; **DX** 13 [20]; **IQ** 12 [20]; **HT** 13 [20].

Speed 6.5; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

Advantages: Alertness +2 [10]; Alpha upgrade [35]; Collected [5]; Danger Sense [15]; Fit [5]; High Pain Threshold [10].

Disadvantages: Mistaken Identity [-5]; Truthfulness [-5]; Workaholic [-5].

Quirks: Broad-minded; Careful; Humble. [-3]

Skills: Acting-12 [2]; Armoury (Handguns)-14 [6]; Beam Weapons (Electrolaser)-18 [8]; Carousing-13 [2]; Computer Operation-12 [1]; Demolition-11 [1]; Detect Lies-14 [8]; Diplomacy-12 [4]; Disguise-11 [1]; Fast-Draw (Pistol)-13 [1]; Guns (Pistol)-18 [8]*; Guns (Rifle)-17 [4]; Holdout-11 [1]; Interrogation-14 [4]; Intimidation-16 [8]; Karate-15 [16]; Leadership-14 [4]; Scrounging-14 [4]; Shadowing-14 [4]; Speed-Load (Pistol)-13 [1]; Stealth-15 [8]; Strategy-10 [1]; Streetwise-15 [6]; Tactics-12 [4]; Throwing-13 [4].

* Includes +2 from IQ.

Languages: Cantonese-11 [1]; English (native)-12 [0]; Malay-11 [1].

An

190 points

Female bioroid, manufactured 2080. Age 20; 5'7"; 120 lbs. Black hair, brown eyes, pale skin.

An was manufactured to be a receptionist for Ray's former employer. She chafed in her job; it drove her up the wall to be sitting behind a desk while the

operatives were out having all the excitement and getting all the glory. The boss promised her a chance at a real job after she finished her minority, but the prospect of waiting over a decade for a shot at the big time was intolerable.

She and Ray were friends; when it became clear that he and Charoen were going to need more help with Polyhymnia, he called her up and the two arranged for An to skip out on her guardian. Ray felt sort of bad about it, but the boss had always been a jerk to the bioroid staff, and when you work for a rogue AI, taking a minor across state lines seems pretty trivial.

An greets people as they come in, sort of the “good cop” to Ray’s bouncer persona. Between appearances, she takes care of a lot of logistical details; she’s good at administration, despite her distaste for it.

She wears a business suit to the club. She thinks it looks sharp, and it’s better than an evening gown for concealing the 4mm pistol she likes to pack alongside the electrolaser that Ray insists everyone carry. She also wears an arachnoweave vest in case someone gets stupid at the door and pulls a knife or something.

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 15 [60]; **IQ** 12 [20]; **HT** 12 [0].

Speed 6.5; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

Advantages: Charisma +1 [5]; Tianyi Bioroid [71].

Disadvantages: Extravagance [-10]; Jealousy [-10]; Mistaken Identity [-5]; Stubbornness [-5]; Xenophilia [-10]*.

* This is in addition to the Xenophilia [-5] from the Tianyi template.

Quirks: Money-grubbing; Enjoys the ritual of cleaning a gun; Wears business suits to social occasions. [-3]

Skills: Accounting-10 [1]; Administration-15 [8]; Armoury (Handguns)-10 [1]; Beam Weapons (Electrolaser)-19 [4]*; Boxing-16 [4]; Carousing-12 [4]; Computer Operation-13 [2]; Dancing-16 [4]; Diplomacy-10 [2]; Economics-10 [1]; Escape-14 [2]; Fast-Draw (Pistol)-17 [4]; Fast-Talk-12 [4]; Guns (Pistol)-19 [4]*; Holdout-12 [2]; Judo-16 [8]; Karate-15 [4]; Knife-15 [1]; Politics-11 [1]; Sex Appeal-14 [8]; Stealth-16 [4].

*Includes +2 from IQ.

Languages: Cantonese-12 [1]; English (native)-13 [0]; French-13 [2]; Russian-12 [1].

Leandro **235 points**

Male human, born 2076. Age 24; 5’9”; 140 lbs. Olive skin, black hair, black eyes.

From an early age, Leandro wanted to be a memeticist. A fan letter to Julian Cressida in 2083 led to a correspondence and growing friendship with Cressida’s AI assistant. Leandro was crushed when the Pacific

War came and Charoen disappeared. Once Charoen had established a base of operations, however, he cautiously recontacted his young pen pal. Leandro was one of the few people in the world that Charoen had relationships with independent of Cressida, and the rogue AI was going to need friends – even a 10-year-old boy half a world away. Charoen needn’t have worried; Leandro thought that having a rogue AI for a friend was the epitome of cool. When Polyhymnia began two years later, Leandro badgered his parents until, in 2090, they agreed to let him become “Cressida”’s apprentice.

Today, Leandro is Pseudo-Cressida’s assistant. He helps Charoen and the Assembly with memetic campaigns, appears with Julian in public, and handles the more technical end of security. After 10 years, he’s still incredibly excited about working at the club.

Leandro doesn’t wear any armor at the club, but he carries the electrolaser pistol that Ray gives all of them. He’s not an especially good shot.

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 11 [0]; **IQ** 15 [45]; **HT** 12 [10].

Speed 5.75; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

Advantages: Empathy [15]; Fashion Sense [5]; Pious [5]; Versatile [5]; Ziusudra parahuman [75].

Disadvantages: Compulsive Carousing [-5]; Curious [-5]; Mistaken Identity [-5]; Xenophilia [-15].

Skills: Acting-16 [4]; Anthropology-15 [4]; Artificial Intelligence-16 [8]; Beam Weapons (Electrolaser)-14 [2]*; Brain Hacking-12 [1]; Carousing-11 [1]; Computer Hacking-15 [8]; Computer Operation-17 [4]; Computer Programming-17 [8]; Conspiracy Theory-13 [2]; Cryptology-15 [4]; Diplomacy-16 [4]*; Economics-14 [2]; Electronics Operation (Robots)-16 [4]; Forensics-14 [2]; Intelligence Analysis-16 [6]; Interrogation-16 [2]*; Linguistics-14 [4]; Memetics-15 [8]; Psychology-17 [6]*; Research-16 [6]; SIGINT Collection/Jamming-14 [2]; Teaching-16 [2]*; Writing-16 [4].

* Includes +2 from IQ.

** Includes +1 from Memetics.

Languages: Spanish (native)-15 [0]; Cantonese-14 [1]; English-14 [1]; Hindi-14 [1]; Mandarin-14 [1]; Malay-14 [1]; Thai-14 [1]; Vietnamese-14 [1].

The Hired Muscle **55 points**

The club has hired 14 Triad thugs to help with security and access control. They’re distributed around the perimeter of the sub-basement, two Triads to each entrance besides the one manned by Ray and An. They’ve been instructed to keep people from entering by those passages, and not to intervene in any fights unless they get too big for the regular staff to handle.

The thugs wear light nanoweave vests and carry batons. One or two may be packing a PDW against orders. They're not expecting any trouble more serious than drunk club kids.

ST 11 [10]; **DX** 13 [30]; **IQ** 10 [0]; **HT** 11 [10].

Speed 6; Move 6.

Dodge 6.

Advantages: Genefixed Human [0].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Pirate) [-5]; Duty (To Triad society; 9 or less) [-5].

Skills: Brawling-14 [4]; Guns (Light Automatic)-14 [2]; Holdout-9 [1]; Intimidation-11 [4]; Short-sword-13 [2]; Streetwise-11 [2].

THE ENTERTAINER

Paul Yeo

105 points

Male human; born 2072. Age 27; 5'8"; 100 lbs.

Paul Yeo is one of Southeast Asia's premier dance technicians – the artists who plan and sequence the music for communal dance environments. He usually works virtually, but he was flattered by the opportunity to work with a legend of the entertainment circuit.

Yeo is a shy, retiring sort of person, and is totally unprepared for any kind of trouble. If things go awry, he'll be huddled behind his console.

ST 9 [-10]; **DX** 11 [0]; **IQ** 12 [20]; **HT** 11 [0].

Speed 5.25; Move 5.

Dodge 5.

Advantages: Absolute Timing [5]; Acute Hearing +4 [8]; Fashion Sense [5]; Mahatma upgrade [39]; Musical Ability 5 [5]; Reputation (+2, dance music fans, 10 or less) [2]; Sensitive [5].

Disadvantages: Oblivious [-3]; Shyness [-5]; Skinny [-5].

Skills: Bard-11 [1]; Carousing-9 [1]; Choreography-11 [1]; Computer Operation-14 [4]; Computer Programming-12 [4]; Conducting-18 [0]*; Dancing-13 [8]; Musical Composition-18 [0]*; Musical Instrument (Sequencer)-20 [10]**; Musical Notation-12 [1]; Scene Design-12 [2]; Singing-15 [1]; Streetwise-12 [2].

* Defaults to Musical Instrument -2.

** +5 to skill level from Musical Ability advantage.

Languages: English-12 [2]; Malay-12 [2]; Mandarin (native)-12 [0]

THE CYBERSHELLS

The bartenders and other manual laborers for Polyhymnia are, on this occasion, cyberdoll cybershells (p. TS122) operated by NAIs. These NAIs are

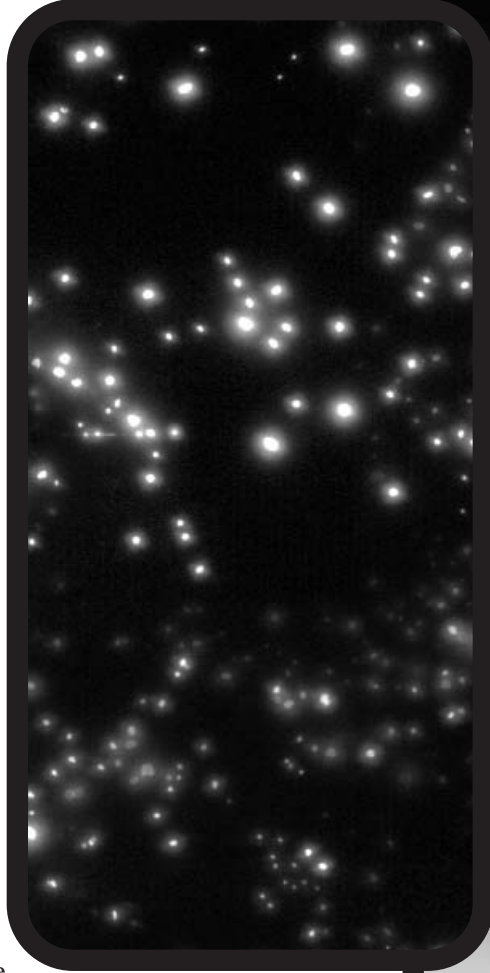
excellent bartenders who have been programmed with high Area Knowledge (Singapore) for the occasion, in case anyone needs directions home.

The cyberdolls are unarmed, but there are various weapons stored under the bar in case the staff needs them. Should things go seriously wrong, the bar nearest the door has an AMR (pp. TS155-156) for Ray.

THE EVENT

It's trivial to get inside once the investigators find the club; by definition, anyone who shows up gets in. Security is generally lax; there's a chemsniffer set for gunpowder and explosives at the door, but in general Polyhymnia is relying on Singapore's strict law and their patrons' goodwill for security. It's easy to find Jules. He and Leandro will be working the floor throughout the event.

Jules is insouciantly polite to any people who introduce themselves. If the investigators reveal that they tracked the club to its current location, he congratulates them cheerfully and tell Leandro to make a note in the attendee database. Perceptive PCs may notice that Jules' personal style is a lot like Hu's. They may also notice that Julian isn't biological – he has no pulse, and only breathes in order to talk. A field scanner, should the contractors have one, reveals that Jules is in all likelihood a cybershell. Field scanners can also detect the storage cases where Charoen and the Assembly are stored under the bar in the back.



So Now WHAT?

By now, the contractors have many pieces of the puzzle. How their mission proceeds depends on the approach they decide to take. Do they feel they have enough information to act? Is violence called for? Do they want to complete their mission at all? They're in a room with Pseudo-Cressida; there are a lot of ways to go from here.

THE PERSONAL APPROACH

If the party decides to seek a face-to-face with Cressida, Jules puts them off politely. If they confront him about his non-biological nature, he mentions something about "security reasons," and Leandro tries to shuffle them off as soon as possible. If they reveal that they know that the original Cressida is dead and Jules is an impostor, both Jules and Leandro blanch and call for security. In any event, the investigators are not getting a private interview.

The exception is if they have deduced Hu's identity. Pseudo-Cressida would be ecstatic to incorporate a fragment of Julian Cressida into itself, even at the cost of admitting its true nature. At the very least, Jules would grant them an interview for the opportunity to meet their "so-called" fragment. Hu, if he's learned his true nature, is equally eager to talk to Pseudo-Cressida.

The result of an actual interview depends on the party. Jules will never confess his true nature unless he believes the interviewers are willing to tolerate the truth. If they seem AI-negative, he continues to deny that anything is out of the ordinary, but offers to buy Hu as a curiosity.

If the party and Pseudo-Cressida manage to level with each other, the contractors may even want to turn against the Bureau, depending on their feelings about AIs.

CLOAK AND DAGGER

If the investigators want to continue gathering evidence instead of approaching the Pseudo-Cressida in the club, they may be able to plant nanobugs or surveillance dust. However, Leandro uses countermeasures on the space and the staff before they leave; unless the investigators are better than he is with microbots, tracing them beyond the club will be hard. If they do successfully plant a bug, they'll be able to chase Polyhymnia wherever it goes – at least until the bug expires or is found.

THE DIRECT APPROACH

On the other hand, sometimes good old-fashioned violence is the quickest way to get where you want to go. If the party has decided that Pseudo-Cressida needs to be eliminated, it's going to come down to force. Similarly, if asking politely for an interview gets them nowhere, kidnapping is going to require the application of vigorous persuasion.

If the contractors get violent in the club, chaos breaks loose. Ray and An rush to Jules' defense. The Triad muscle is a bit slower to react; they've been instructed not to get involved unless things get totally out of hand (Ray didn't want the hired thugs causing trouble), so the attackers have a few rounds of surprise in their favor.

In all likelihood, the PCs have the advantage in firepower; the staff is only carrying electrolasers. If the party has heavier ordnance, it could get ugly, especially when the bartender cybershells unlimber the real guns stored in the bar.

Leandro cuts and runs as soon as possible. He's not abandoning his friends; he's going to try to rescue Charoen and get out. In general, the staff responds to violence by trying to run like the wind for Johore Baharu and the TSA, where they have friends. An interesting chase through the streets of Singapore might result.

OTHER INTERESTING TACTICS

There are some other tricks the contractors might try; GMs may wish to suggest one on a successful Tactics roll.

If the investigators suspect the gestalt nature of Pseudo-Cressida, a high-powered broad-spectrum radio source can disrupt the links between the component informorphs. Jules isn't especially cunning on his own, and any attempt to confuse or kidnap him would be immensely easier if his link to Charoen were cut.

The party could create a major diversion by publicly announcing the club's location and time to the Polyhymnic memenets. They probably don't have enough credibility to be taken seriously, but any local Polyhymniacs, and a few out-of-towners with an evening to kill and the means to rent a teleoperated cybershell, will drop by just to check. As the word spreads, the sub-basement will flood with people come to check out the rumor. In the chaos, the PCs will have a much easier time of separating the members of the staff for whatever ends they have in mind.

THE AFTERMATH

This adventure can work out a lot of different ways, depending on what choices the contractors make when they come face to face with Pseudo-Cressida. They may have killed some or all of Polyhymnia's staff. They may have delivered members of the gestalt to the Bureau. Polyhymnia's staff may have gone into hiding after escaping from the party. The contractors may have turned on the Bureau and sided with Polyhymnia. Or they may have simply made a report to the Colonel, collected their money, and moved on with their lives.

That last possibility is probably the only one that doesn't lead to future complications. The Colonel will be annoyed, either that their report lacked depth or that they didn't take any action to neutralize an apparently rogue AI. However, the report ought to be sufficient for the Colonel's faction to win the argument within the Bureau, albeit not for the reasons they expected.

If the contractors were responsible for the destruction or disappearance of Polyhymnia, they may have made themselves some extremely angry, if not necessarily powerful, enemies on the Polyhymniac memenets.

If they decided to help Pseudo-Cressida, either for its own merits or to help Hu escape his enslavement by

ADVANCING THE GESTALT

The entire gestalt will be fascinated by Hu, but not all for the same reasons. Jules will be looking at Hu as a source for new insights into how to shore up his AI support structure, while Charoen and the Assembly will be considering the possibility that Jules might be replaceable.

Replacing Jules with Hu, or simply adding Hu to the mix, could produce unusual results. The main gap between Hu and the original Cressida is the lost memories, which the Assembly can largely supply in real time. On the whole, adding Hu to the gestalt might produce something equivalent to a true ghost of Julian Cressida. Or, perhaps, something more.

the Bureau, they may find themselves on Bureau 10's enemies list, an unpleasant place to be.

If they helped Hu join the gestalt, however, they may have gained a potent ally. A powerful memeticist with media clout and a healthy dollop of Chinese military intelligence is not to be taken lightly.



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