

ECLIPSE PHASE



A JUMPCHAIN CYOA MODULE



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The Age of Transhumanity

Welcome to the universe of Eclipse Phase. Things are a little bit different here than what you might be used to. EP is a (mostly) hard science fiction setting where transhumanity is just starting to expand beyond the solar system after largely abandoning Earth.

The incredible feats that technology can perform in this time are cast into stark outline by the horrors it has been put to.

As usual, your account has been credited with **1,000cp** to spend as you will.

You don't have to spend all your points in the main jump – you can hold some of your cp to spend in Module 1: Firewall and Module 2: Gatecrashing if you like. It's up to you.

- Text this colour is flavour text. You can skip it, but it contains information about the universe you may wish to know.
- Text this colour contains information relevant to your jumpchain build. If you require clarification on something, check the Notes section at the very end, which contains some clarifications and more detail about some things.

The Story So Far...

10 years ago, Earth was lost in a war with a group of ASIs known as the TITANs (not to be confused with Titan, the moon of Saturn, or Titanians, who live there), using terrifying and advanced technology. Among the most horrific weapons used was a multi-vector virus known as 'the exurgent virus', a lingering threat which can convert regular people into exurgents, who then work towards the TITANs' inscrutable goals...or turn into monsters, or both. The TITANs went quiet about a year after the war started, but by then Earth was already a ruin.

Earth itself is quarantined with a perimeter of killsats against both intruders and escapees, though nobody is taking credit for placing them there. What became of the TITANs is unknown, though their war machines, nanoswarms and exurgents linger in many places throughout the system. Fear of their return – of a second Fall - has moulded the development of transhumanity's society, politics and defence.

Despite this crippling, transhuman society has used hints and advances reverse-engineered from TITAN technology to advance to the point they are now.

The majority of refugees used a process called 'egocasting' to digitally scan their minds and broadcast it to off-world colonies run by the hyper-corporations, while others were accepted by different habitats located throughout the solar system.

For the most part, the hypercorps use this glut of surplus manpower to produce almost cost-free labour for terraforming Mars, constructing aerostats on Venus and building more habitats. Nearly all hypercorps work together under a group called the Planetary Consortium, like the UN with teeth.

After the bulk of Earth's survivors shifted to inhabiting the solar system, the first Pandora Gate was discovered on the eponymous moon of Saturn, followed by four more scattered about the solar system. They allow wormholes to be made to a wider network of gates on exoplanets throughout the galaxy, though who made them, and why, remain unknown. It should be noted that the only aliens we have contacted – the Factors, who arrived in the solar system by starship – continually warn against using the Gate network – a warning most of transhumanity has so far ignored.

It is widely believed that the TITANs made the five solar system gates, and the popular theory is they then left the solar system through them. There has yet to be proven contact with extra-terrestrial intelligence through the gates, though the ruins of other extrasolar civilisations on Gate-linked worlds are abundant.

Many people – scientists, sociologists and laypeople – are worried about what this means for the future of transhumanity.

What Is Transhumanity? And Other Things You Should Probably Know

“Transhumanity” is the nebulous identity of society in Eclipse Phase. It includes:

- Humans – in all their forms: natural, artificial, uploaded to simulation or housed in artificial bodies.
- Uplifts – Animals of several species we have modified for human-like intelligence and function.
- Artificially Generated Intelligences (AGIs) – Digital intelligences that either arose spontaneously from sufficiently complex programs or were designed for sentience/sapience from the ground up, sometimes mimicking the human/uplift mind, sometimes with entirely novel neural architecture.

Some places or social clades have biases against the latter two, but it is generally agreed throughout the Solar System that a transhuman mind – the *ego* – remains a human being no matter if the consciousness is in a biological body, a mechanical one, stored active or inactive on a computer server, or some combination of them all.

Not-Transhumans include:

- An “AI” is a simple artificial intelligence that might seem as smart as a transhuman but is not capable of learning or developing outside its original parameters. This includes muses, device AIs, autopilots, autonomous weapons, mesh helpware, secretary automatons, service AIs, feral artificials and more.
- Alien intelligences, of which the Factors are the only sapient ones known, are not considered a part of transhumanity, nor are Exurgents, which despite being formerly transhuman, follow an unknown and alien agenda, if their minds remain intact enough for sapience.
- Seed AIs, which are artificial super intelligences (ASIs) capable of self-improvement on an exponential level, capable of going far beyond any transhuman intelligence. Seed AIs are prohibited by all governments, as they were the basis of the TITANs.
- Exhumans cross the border of the definition. They used to be transhuman but usually have augmented and edited their morphs and egos into inhuman “superior” forms, but often exist on the edge of transhuman society rather than being entirely separate from it. Exhumans usually specialise in a type of superiority of form – using evolutionary algorithms or augmentations to become apex predators, superminds, or becoming parasites within transhuman society itself.

“Ego” Vs. “Morph”

Your *ego* is your mind, personality, memories and consciousness. In Eclipse Phase, the ego can be copied digitally, allowing it to be scanned and sent from place to place like any other data. It can be copied without errors, digitally edited or stored, upgraded with software, and then installed in different bodies or VR simulations. It can even be broadcast to a distance habitat or spacecraft (egocasting), which is the preferred method of travel.

Because your ego is digital, the memories and experiences that you have can be copied and pasted into an “Experience Playback” or XP, a snippet of experience that includes the input from the senses, surface thoughts, physical sensations, and emotions.

XP as a media form or art is a huge industry, with XP movies supplanting most traditional cinematography.

A *morph* is a body, either biological (biomorph) or mechanical (synthmorph), but often a mix of both. The difference between a ‘robot’ and a ‘synthmorph’ is largely whether it’s got a cyberbrain sophisticated enough to hold a transhuman ego in it. Morphs can range from fully-natural humans, to creatures made from alien genomes and cybernetics, to swarms of microbots that rely on cloud computing to house a transhuman mind, to wholly digital simulated bodies (infomorphs).

Sleeving is the process of wearing or being installed in a morph. An ego is sleeved in a morph. Sleeving into unusual morphs is at least a bit stressful for most people, which gets worse the further the morph is from their normal form, so most people tend to remain in a morph that abides by the standard humanoid model – two legs, two arms, torso & head – but many different ones are available.

The Mesh

Is this age’s internet. It’s designed from the ground up to be wireless so people can use it on the move. Nearly all items are mesh-compatible, from flashlights to fabbers to bots to public surveillance sensors (spimes). Total control of your home and personal devices is a thought-click away for someone with mesh inserts, including augmented-reality overlays. Most transhumans are connected to the mesh constantly, some even streaming their memories and experiences in real-time ‘lifelogs’. Often, only important systems are isolated from the mesh. Wifi signals saturate most transhuman habitats and most conveniences or emergency help is a mere signal away, but out on the surfaces of planets and moons or in deep space, becoming isolated and cut off from help is very likely. Social networks have become highly important, with reputation metrics which evaluate your social standing. In some polities, this Rep rating can determine your quality of life and access to goods and services, while other government systems use it to conduct real-time governance polling or even social control of their citizens.

Because of the Mesh’s saturation, nearly everybody has a Muse in their mesh inserts – an AI personality who manages things like your devices’ settings, your online profiles, your network security settings, and all the boring stuff like your finances, user accounts, filtering and auto-replying to correspondence, mesh searches etc. Each Muse is tailored to their owner’s wishes and has built up a vast database of their preferences, so often Muses will handle things without their owners even needing to ask, or fix problems before their owners are aware of them in the first place.

Egocasting, Forking and Dying In Eclipse Phase

Eclipse Phase is the kind of setting where being “alive” or “dead” is not a binary state. There are transhumans who “live” entirely on the Mesh, having never technically been born, and there are those who transfer their minds between robotic bodies after their first biological body was ‘killed’ – yet only extremist bioconservatives would declare them to be “dead” or “just a program”. Even for the meat-sacks, ‘murder’ as we understand it is often merely considered a property offense and ego-deletion is the truly abhorrent crime. Throughout the system people pay ‘backup insurance’ for their egos, and on death are restored from backup, almost to the minute of death, which sometimes makes last wills and deceased estates very complicated.

Given the slow speed of spacecraft, the preferred method of travel is simply to “egocast” the mind to the new location – which transfers the ego in digital form to an encrypted radio transceiver’s buffer, then broadcasts it to a new location, where the ego is then resleeved into a new body.

The ubiquity of egocasting and forking technology combined with the threats you face means we’ll run on a slightly different set of rules regarding ‘death’ here.

The original “You” has your out-of-jump powers, and is the only one that matters for the purposes of chain continuity. That said...

Egocasting & Travel via Pandora Gates

Egocasting is technically “copying your ego from your body to a computer, deleting the original, and broadcasting the copy to a new location”. Since this mode of travel is so common (and starships take ages to get anywhere), **egocasting does not count as death** for the purposes of continuing your chain or getting sent home.

The “you” that arrives at your destination will have all your perks, powers, soul and jumpchain continuity, even if you were technically dead for a few seconds and the digital mind-state was a bunch of radio photons until it reached its destination. Your original body usually remains on ice until you egocast back to it, so you’ll have to make do with a locally-produced morph until then. Since the method of travelling via Pandora Gates is canonically unknown, they will also work on the same principle – **travelling via Gate will not end your chain** either.

Forking

Forking and backing up can create perfect copies of your ego (memories, skills, personality, consciousness) to be sleeved in a new body or VR, but forks won’t have out-of-jump supernatural powers or a soul or anything like that.

The death of non-“you” forks does not affect your chain.

The Exurgent Virus

During your stay here, you may encounter the Exurgent Virus in one of its many forms. It may be encountered as a biological nanovirus, as a digital (computer) virus, as a nanoplague, or transmitted as a “basilisk hack” – an audio-visual signal that can ‘hack’ a transhuman brain through its sensory inputs.

In addition to the multiple infection vectors, there are numerous different strains of the virus, each with different effects, ranging from the physically hideous (Uzumaki, where coiling tendrils of flesh grow from a biomorph uncontrollably) to the insidious (Mindstealer, which alters the ego of the victim with no outward effect). One seemingly-beneficial strain exists: Watts-McLeod strain, which can give those infected async powers, but at the cost of their mental health.

Because of the slight relaxation of the “dying” rule, if you are successfully infected by the exurgent virus during this jump, that morph and/or ego is considered “dead” – body transformed into something different or your ego overwritten into something alien. A jumper or even one their forks that is infected by the exurgent virus could become something terrible indeed with all that power and knowledge.

This applies to all strains – even ‘harmless’ or ‘benevolent’ strains like Watts-McLeod.

The rules applying to Egocasting and the Exurgent Virus only apply during your stay here. They are revoked once your jump here is over. The rules regarding Forking remains in force (per the Forking perk, below).