

Ma
RCISSIST

n^ar^cissist™

CRASH FREE

This is a work of fiction. The Continuum cautions that the existence of a multiverse is merely fantasy. This game, "Narcissist: Crash Free", exists for the sole purpose of examining the follies of those who would disrupt causality, in order to prepare to defend against their ultimately futile attempts.

The universe is. Let's all treat it with respect.

—Anonymous,

Envoy, Continuum Game Project
Scribal Librarian at the NYC Public Library
AD 1954 - 2106

Aetherco/Dreamcatcher have produced N^aRCISSIST under the editorial guidance of the Scribes Fraternity. Please accept this work as nothing more than an idle pastime.

—The Authors.

Aetherco



Dreamcatcher Multimedia, Inc.

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1999

TO ALL WHO READ THESE WORDS, MY MOST SORROWED GREETINGS, MY HEAVIEST APOLOGY.

All of you, I do not know who you are, but I fear that I have created you. Not in the manner of an august and sapient god, nor in the manner of a kind and loving father, but as a careless stranger who opens the wrong lock of a dam, and unleashes the torrent that drowns the multitude. With such wisdom and foresight have I made your world. But it is only just that you should live your lives without ignorance. This is how you came to be.

Do not thank me. I only wanted to see what would become of my family. A small future of the things I knew. But I took the step, and found myself so far away.

It was a lovely, rainy night, in an open forest. The storm lasted hours when I arrived, and mud ran so happily around, under my toes. It was there I first saw a sign. A small person, with snowlike skin; in a moment she ran into the dark. I thought it was a northern child, lost in the storm. My search only led me to a town I barely recognized. The changes over time were plain. I nearly danced again, for my success.

I found a public room, and the custom had not changed much, so soon I was at table, with two students of the school there at Bant. What I took as Bant. I may never know now, and I may never wish to know who they are, what they did when they left with my stories and evidence of my accomplishment.

I spent the next two days among the people there, and it became more evident as the hours passed on, both awake and sleepless in the bed, that the citizens were becoming more aware of me, staring and then pointing. I asked politely but nervous smiles hid a growing terror at my questions.

Upon the sunrise of the third day, the Kings came before me and explained something I knew only how to argue with. The world was not the same, unmade at many turns until my methods had been tried and perfected. I refused their pleas and demands at first, refused the supplicants, refused the angry few, and threw aside my notes of this place, and made for my own time.

There was no going back. Things I had never seen, eggs of heaven, were in my way. My town was not there, not there the morning before I left it, only a field remained, and more supplicants, and a terrible curse.

I have, in my many years since, sought for my old places, my wife and own family, sought to discard all the mad lands I had rushed vainly into. I have sent countless people down the paths of the Royal Road and beyond, and still send more, with only hope, and always less of that. But now you are here, too, all of you in your generations, and I cannot help you anymore than my vanished Bant. But I am responsible for your being, as I am for Bant's not being. For all this I can only send you word of my shame and powerless sorrow.

I am not the person you think I am. You think me a shadow, like yourself, but I was not a shadow. Perhaps I am now.

I am sorry for your existence. I am sorry for all your sufferings in their years.

—*Betne of aBant*
First King of Yrnē
writing from 17342 BC

trans. to Modern English by
Prince Orayne Talanthus
loyal subject of
Khar Tembedh of Taydar
Twelfth King of Yrnē

Delivered this last day of December, AD 1999.
Swarm Prime.

N^aRCISSIST™ v.0.7

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Dedications

Chris would like to dedicate this version of N^aRCISSIST to Holly Riegenbach, in the hopes this will help give Sarah the chance to meet the man; and to Calas, who, ever the true time traveller, is already coming up with great stuff for the final version...

Barbara "dedicates this book to my Guardian Angel, trusting that he knows I'm only fooling, and that there will be no misunderstanding when I get home."

David Would like to dedicate this book to the memory of Jack Fooden (1938-1999). May the next world you've crashed into be the one of your dreams.



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AET 2000

I: Introduction

History is Rape

You're an infant. And you're being exposed on the hillside of someone else's idea of time. Your feet are nailed to the Earth, and if you're still there after a lifetime, you will die.

Here's something you won't read every day: Time travel was invented by Betne Rebu, a scientist from a human civilization so at peace with itself, we would scarcely recognize or understand it. It was introduced to our universe by him many thousands of years ago. He shared its reality with the people of the city-states of a then-fertile north Africa. These nations, collectively known as Yrnë, used his gift extensively. None suspected the price tag attached to this new freedom.

Something went wrong with Betne's mission here, horrifically wrong. Not many centuries to either side of his arrival, his gift becomes a prison. So tremendous is the power of travelling time, that a form of life arose adapted solely to its use. Like all places in nature, life swells to fill a niche. This imprisoning lifeform calls itself the Continuum.

Yrnë exists only because the Continuum could not exist without her— from Yrnë springs the source of time travel itself. It must allow Yrnë to be, though it need not leave her in peace. Betne cannot return home, because the Continuum has befuddled his path— and has made unique threats to him, and all the people of Yrnë.

We'd like to say this has nothing to do with race. In a way it doesn't, but not in an important way. It's about who's descended from who. The telling point is that the descendants of Yrnë are held hostage by the Continuum. Take a quick look through the Continuum's precious history, and see for yourself.

Some people who feel angry about the past argue that history is full of lies. This is a coward's turn, or a leveller's threadbare excuse. History is bursting with sick truth.

Go and see for yourself.

Let's just call the Continuum the Swarm from here on. It's all it really is. A swarm of minds acting to reinforce a single, steady-state view of a changeless, nightmarish timeline.

The Swarm are 'people' working to build an end to humanity. And working really hard, and succeeding. Not a nasty, messy end to humanity with the ends of worms, no: a clean, sanitary end with soulless things and a hive

mind. *Humanity does not make it to the stars, here.* Not ever. It let itself be infested with a hostile, self-serving mass of a trillion forms, spanning all time and all space.

This truth ruins most crashers' view of the night sky. And of sunsets.

So why stay. Why entertain— and be entertained by— doom? Don't sit there muldered by a thousand dusty conspiracy theories. And don't act like this has nothing to do with you.

*Do Something.
Get us out.*

Save us.

The Argument

If you could travel time, wouldn't the massive injustices of history you witnessed, piling on year after year, century on century, millennia long, wouldn't they start to trouble you? Even reaching into your sleep?

How could you possibly ignore the suffering, the screams, and live with yourself? Could you shrug these blood-drenched humans away, and still claim to be one yourself?

The Swarm has all the power and force and organization. They enjoy the fruits of the civilizations they tend, as many times as they can stand enjoying its sameness. They do *nothing* to better the eternal horrors of history, claiming it to be impossible to even try to alter events. They dispose of their souls in the process, killing and eating and birthing as their fixed destinies demand. They often lose their sanity in the process, too.

Sometimes we have nothing left but our wits. But when we go insane, at least it's not from obscene quantities of boredom or angst or ennui. When we die, we know we fought for something.

And when we do survive, and when we do save people from the sword and the flame, we go to worlds and lands unsuspected since man was born, and we can live forever.

But we begin life as dirt.

Artisans

One day, you wake up. You've been kidnapped. You feel like some clay a kid was squeezing, and then left in the bathroom sink with the water on. You're not alone. There are other kidnap victims there. And one guy who welcomes you to the chance of infinite power... if you'll just do a few little things for him...

You begin with one foot in the grave, and a heavy shove from your artisan, the person that made you. Yes, made you. The ability to travel time has been... *reinterpreted* heavily since Betne arrived. You're just a retooled machine. You were not born: You were *built*.

We are **crashers**. The Swarm call us 'narcissists', branding us the idiots of the universe, the selfish jerks, taunting us with being weak as flowers. They think we're called crashers because we're crashing their posh party. Most of us use the word because that's what trying to escape them feels like. But some of us want to just crash the whole rotten hulk of this unjust world down on their damned heads.

Some artisans are okay people. Some are just lonely. But most have some crummy agenda they need you for, or you wouldn't be a crasher. And they *are* better at time travel than you are, and can keep you guessing, keep you scared.

Like they say, you don't pick your family.

Trust and Belief

If you survive, and can gather your wits, you'll know your artisan has one thing right: You can't escape this hell alone. If you survive, you'll have to decide what tack to take to crash free, what Philosophy of time and dimensional travel you choose to follow.

Who do you trust with your existence? The Swarm will *never* let you live, because in *their* Philosophy there is *only* Them and Their Universe. Have a good one.

But crashers with the same Philosophy *can* work together. Your goals are the same. There is comfort and morale in fighting beside friends. And there is strength in numbers. Or at least survival and escape.

Many of you will have to infiltrate the Swarm and its infrastructure to have any chance of crashing free of

them for good. The rest will have to hide or escape from it as you seek a way out. But all of you need to make sense of this senseless world, and clinging to your beliefs is all that saves some crashers from simple annihilation.

Corners

Your corner is where you live in order to hide from the world, to hide from the Swarm. Most crashers call their places cribs (or creches or cells, etc.) but 'corner' is a safer word to use out in public. The Swarm uses that word, and they always listen twice.

Your artisan's crib will be your first corner, but once you're free of him, you'll have to form your own, or find a place of shelter. Nothing is more pitiful and dangerous than travelling time alone. Sooner or later you'll trespass on the wrong piece of spacetime, and you'll be destroyed.

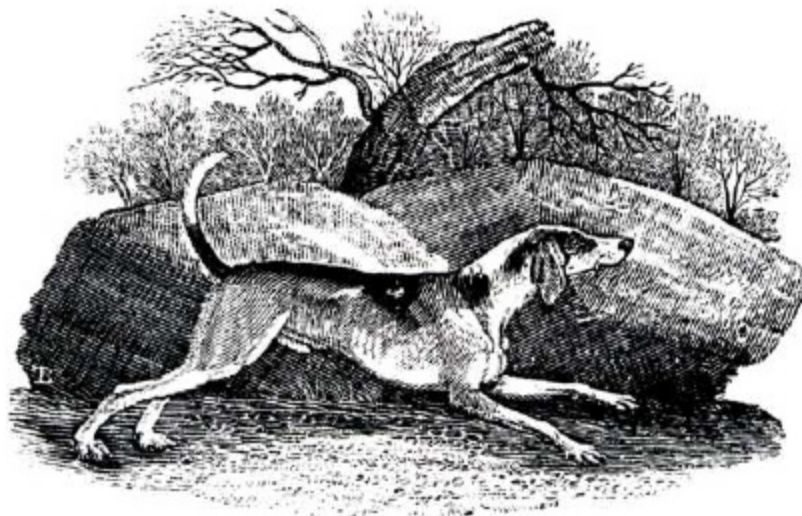
They Will Come to Kill You

Make no idle mistake, gamer. This is not a game to *us*. And it is certainly not a game to the Swarm, though they'd like you to 'play' it like one. Slip up as a crasher, let on to the wrong body what you are, hitch up with the wrong 'friend', goof around with crashing like it's a toy, and you will reap the whirlwind.

'Swarm' isn't just a metaphor, or some catchy term for insect-like behavior. It's what they look like when they come to kill you.

They will be a blur of confusion, before and ahead of you. They will threaten like good movie, push you like you're drunk, trip you like a clown, descend on you like hornets and tear you up like screws into wood. They will enjoy your murder.

And so many of them will have the faces of people you called friend.



II: Glossary

Travelling time, space and crashing to new universes creates a need for terminology. Like most slang, we keep it simple, recognizable and discreet.

Etymologies are not given, as history is often irrelevant.

As/As Not

The point during an instance of frag beyond which natural paradoxes cannot resolve themselves, but create new pockets of spacetime, or paths to other universes.

The as/as not creates both frag and crash points, and are almost always covered with agents of the Swarm trying to stop both.

Box n.

1. Any universe from which there is no apparent means of crashing out of. One of many traps set by the Swarm to prevent or discourage escape from their universe.

2. The name of a specific universe after which this kind of trap is called, but which in fact has narrow means of egress. (Or we would never have heard of it, right?)

Caste n.

The social status of a crasher as seen from Yrnë.

Chain n.

(Also similar names, ie String, Cluster, Web, Ring, etc.) A string of closely linked paraverses. Specific chains that are well-explored have proper names, like any country, continent or planet (ie the Mallory Chain, the Eldritch Expanse, etc.) that either describes the chain, its discoverer, or the king or prince that rules it.

Chrony n.

Among spanners, a fellow spanner one considers a close friend.

Corner n.

A homestead or equivalent establishment where crashers of a particular locality can be themselves without leveller (or Swarm) scrutiny. Essentially, a local safe house or home base for crashers.

This term is also used by the Swarm for their many nests.

Crash v.

To pass beyond the dimensional bounds of conventional spacetime into a pocket or parallel universe.

Crash Point n.

A place and time with an as/as not that can be used to reach a pocket. When enough crash points are coordinated properly, they can become a Gate (see) and reach a paraverse (see).

Crasher n.

One who can travel time, and thereby into pocket and parallel universes, at will. Contrast *spanner* and *leveller*.

Dim, Dimensional n.

Someone from or of another universe, often oblivious to the existence of crashing. Primarily used when referring to a visitor from a universe other than the one one is in, excepting oneself and one's travelling companions.

Down, Downward adv.

Towards the past from one's current place in spacetime. Pastward. Normally capitalized to differentiate it from a mere direction in space. Compare *Up* and *Level*.

Dreamtime

The transdimensional 'space' where communication via dreams take place. (Thereby being the proof of other universes that even the Swarm cannot completely deny.)

Echo n.

An apparently 'elder' version of oneself, that may merely be a trap laid by the Swarm. See *elder*.

Elder, Elder Self n.

The later, older self in a gemini incident (see), that has experienced the incident before. Contrast *echo*.

Exalted n.

Master spanner(s) of the Swarm that guide the war against Yrnë and oversee all matters against crashers. They take their instructions directly from the Singularity, and are, for all intents and purposes, no longer human.

Extra n.

The dimensional that is your personal parallel in the universe you are visiting.

Frag, Fragmentation

1. n. the state of inconsistency within a universe, corrected at the as/not by proper application of sentient force. A byproduct of crashing.

2. v. to frag. To use sentient force to cause such inconsistency.

Fraternity n.

One of the many secret guilds of the Swarm that police spanner actions. The three that impact crashers the most are:

- The Foxhorn* - a paramilitary wing of the Swarm whose purpose is to seek out and physically kill crashers. The Foxhorn has been deeply infiltrated by crashers, and the intrigues therein are often more deadly than being openly hunted by them.

- The Dreamers* - these watch over the communications of the Swarm in the Dreamtime, and are our most sympathetic contacts in the Swarm, as they accept the possibility of other universes.

- The Quicker* - this elite corps not only targets crash

points to eliminate, but seizes and kidnaps crashers for transportation to facilities of the Singularity in the depths of space and time. Their most deadly operatives will even follow crashers to other worlds, to eliminate any threat to the Swarm, or its web of lies.

Frune, Froon v. [froon]

To find out by asking questions. This is distinct from other forms of information, and gathering information. Frooning implies the knowledge of others, with its consequences, and the advertising that you are aware of certain events. This is also distinct from merely asking, which is just the expression of the desire for information. Frooning emphasizes sentient force applied to the discovery of information from other sentience.

Futory n.

The equivalent of history, only in reference to 'the future'; prophecy. Detailed information of unfolding events, often essential to determine good crash points.

Gate n.

A coordination of at least ten (10) crash points (see) leading directly to a stable paraverse (see). Also called by similar names (ie Portal, Hole, Passage, etc.) Gates themselves do not have an as/as not.

Gemini Incident n.

An event where a spanner or crasher apparently meets himself. The Swarm treats such incidents with strict rules of conduct, primarily governed by their second maxim, 'Respect your elders, they know more than you'. Not to be confused with the Gemini Wars, the spacetime of which is known for its frequency of gemini incidents.

Gemini Wars

An area of spacetime, approx. 5850 - 4200 BC, within the Hegemony that are heavy with crash points, gaining access to which results in vast, pitched battles.

The Hegemony n. [heh'gem'oh'nee]

The human cultures (called by the Swarm 'the Societies') that exist after the time of Yrnë, from which the Singularity ultimately derives. The Swarm carefully tends to the human societies of the Hegemony to ensure the existence of the Singularity.

Interregnum n. [in'ter'reg'num]

The spacetime between Yrnë and the Hegemony, 13557 - 12969 BC. A time of extreme chaos and frag, and unstable crash points.

Junior, Junior self n.

The earlier, younger self in a gemini incident (see above), that has not experienced the incident before.

Level n.

The 'present' as currently occupied or described. The ordinary passage of time from past to future.



Chapter II: Glossary

Leveller n.

A person unaware of spanning or crashing, and unable to do either. An ordinary human.

Levelry n.

The equivalent of history, only in reference to 'the present'; news.

The Maxims n. pl.

The set of five axioms the Swarm follows to maintain their grip on this universe. These are so rigidly followed, that many crashers play the Swarm against its own dogma in order to find ways to crash free.

Mnemelos Scale n. [nem'e'los]

The set of three coordinates to determine ease of reaching a universe, from a given point in spacetime of the one you're in. These coordinates are *proximity*, *thrust* and *drift*. (See pg. 40.)

Nanotech n.

Robotics miniaturized to the extreme of possibility. Specifically, part of the tech that allows for time travel at will by the Swarm.

Narcissist n.

A crasher; the term of disparagement most frequently used by the Swarm to characterize attempts to escape this universe as wholly selfish. It is the title of this game, since the Swarm has required this of the publishers.

Paraverse, Parallel Universe n.

A stable universe that can be reached through a Gate (see). Contrast *pocket*.

Philosophy n.

The general mode of attack a crasher takes to escape the Swarm universe. (See ppg. 42-43.)

Pocket

1. n. A pocket universe: A universe too small and/or unstable to exist long; considered by most Philosophies to be created from the energy released at an as/as not.
2. v. To create a pocket universe and enter it at once.

Sentient Force n.

Deliberate act of will, usually in reference to its application in ensuing events, or attempting to change them to create frag or crash. (I.e., sentient force creates the as/as not.)

The Singularity n.

The mass-mind civilization that derives from the Hegemony, and controls the spacetime of this universe on all sides of Yrnë. (You're soaking in it.) Called by the Swarm 'the Inheritors'.

Span

1. n. The distance of spacetime a spanner can travel safely without rest.

2. n. A length of time, used especially of the entire duration of a person, object or civilization.

3. v. to span. The act of travelling through time at will.

Spanner n.

One who can span time at will but doesn't believe in other universes; usually a pejorative among crashers. (One colloquial British leveller meaning is 'd—head'.) Contrast *crasher* and *leveller*, above.

The Swarm n.

1. The spanners who believe and support the Singularity, when referred to as a whole. (They refer to themselves by the more benevolent term 'Continuum'.)

2. An attack by these spanners, usually fatal to or fragging out the victim.

Up, Upward adv.

Towards the future from one's current place in spacetime. Futureward. Normally capitalized to differentiate it from a mere direction in space. Compare *Down* and *Level*.

"What time is it?"

This phrase, or likely variants, is the main signal Swarm spanners use to identify one another. The proper response is to repeat the phrase verbatim when asked. Levellers will act confused or annoyed; fellow spanners will expect to lead or be led to a safe area where matters privy to spanners can be discussed without leveller scrutiny. Crashers tend to play along or play dumb, and stay on their guard.

Yet, The Yet n.

The Required Future. Spanners comes across direct information of events that they have not experienced, but will. This is referred to as 'the Yet' to distinguish it from other, especially linear, definitions of a 'future' or 'past'. Crashers, of course, know they have the option to change events, but are always careful while here in the Swarm universe.

Young Gemini

Any gemini incidents (see above) that occur before a crasher (or spanner) learns to span. Leveller encounters with elder (crasher) selves, nearly always unrecognized for what they are until much later.

Yrnë n. [eer'nay]

The realm of ancient kings and gods where time travel was invented, and humanity's only secure refuge in this universe. Called 'Antedesertium' by the Swarm. Flourishes 18122 - 13557 BC.

III: Game Mechanics

Required Materials

To play *N^oRCISSIST*, you will need the following items:

- This Book.
- One (1) ten-sided die.
- Copies of Crash & Span Cards and Character Sheets.
- Pencils.
- A watch with a second hand/display.

Character Creation

Starting Off

All starting characters are new to the truth of time travel, spanning, crashing, and the threat of the Swarm. They have become crashers only recently, within 1d10 x 30 days before. Anything they learn about their new lives must come from their artisan, relying on him for their every move. Following is the process involved in creating a *N^oRCISSIST* character.

Concept & Background

Most important in the character creation process is the character *concept*. The whys and wherefores of the character's life. Who are they? How did they get to be chosen as a crasher— did they witness a time travel event, or were they abducted without so much as an explanation? Many of the details that describe the character's life need to be filled in. Before the rules and numbers are applied, it's important to flesh out a character's background and vital statistics. On the *N^oRCISSIST* character sheet you will find spaces for all the pertinent background information; name, date of birth, age (which, for a crasher, will eventually conflict with their original date of birth, see Span Sheet, ppg. 34-35), and the rest. Note what vital statistics need to be recorded there. Additionally, the character's background should be fleshed out further to include their family, friends, likes, dislikes, hobbies, and other interests. Both the player and GM should be involved in the character's origin, to keep their abilities balanced and to allow the GM to blend the character's "life" into other story elements.

You may want to roleplay out your character's entry into the crasher life with your GM. This will help define your character (and his artisan) and answer questions about their background before you begin to play as a group. Some details about your character's leveller life that should be filled in include:

- Your age.
- Your occupation.
- Significant or traumatic events in your past.
- Who your level family and friends are.
- How were you introduced to crashing.
- The goals and habits you had before you learned time travel was a reality.

Details about your character's new status as a novice crasher should include:

- Your native locality and where & when your corner is.
- Who your artisan is and your relationship with them.
- Your current motivations, likes, and dislikes.

Attributes & Skills

Attributes and *skills* are what define a character's abilities. There are three attributes that every being in *N^oRCISSIST* inherently possesses. These are Body, Mind, and Quick. Attributes are an amalgamation of the traits they represent, their ratings represent general ability and potential. By acquiring skills, a character hones his potential in a specific direction. For example, a player creating an athletic character with a high Body rating might choose to give him skill in strength training or running to make him stronger or faster, respectively. Following is a definition of each attribute. The human average for each of these is a 3. The known human maximum for these attributes is 7. A character with any attribute of zero is dead or non-functioning.

Body

The physical state of being. Representing general athletic conditioning, muscular coordination, health, and resistance to disease and injury.

- Body 1: Someone afflicted by disease or infirm, barely able to move, either extremely obese or rail thin.
An infant.
- Body 2: Below average, out of shape, usually pudgy or skinny. A young child or senior.
- Body 3: Average, healthy adult.
- Body 4: Above average adult, athletic.
- Body 5: Very athletic, healthy, strong resistance to disease.
A professional athlete.
- Body 6: Extremely good condition, excellent diet and constant exercise. Very strong.
- Body 7: Peak physical condition. World champion athlete.
Michael Jordan or Arnold Schwarzenegger in their prime.

Mind

A combination of mental acuity, ability to reason, clarity of thought, hand-eye coordination, and perception.

- Mind 1: A very young child, a functionally retarded adult.
IQ 60-80
- Mind 2: A pre-teen child (10-12), a dim-witted adult.
IQ 80-100
- Mind 3: An average adult. IQ 100-120
- Mind 4: A smarter than average adult, a child prodigy. IQ 120-140
- Mind 5: Very smart, quick on the uptake, excellent memory. IQ 140-160
- Mind 6: The proverbial "rocket scientist". A genius.
IQ 160-180
- Mind 7: One of the top geniuses of their time.
Stephen Hawking or Galileo. IQ 180-200+

Memory and Mind

At a superhuman Mind of 8 or greater, a character automatically gains the Benefit **Photographic Memory** [see pg. 9]

Quick

A sense of timing, insight, and inner focus. Sometimes referred to as "Chi" in Asian cultures. The ability vital to the mastery of spanning.

- Quick 1: Very poor reflexes, insensate much of the time.
- Quick 2: Below average.
- Quick 3: Average adult.
- Quick 4: Faster than average, good timing.
- Quick 5: Fast reactions, usually aware of time and themselves, very focused.
- Quick 6: Very fast, moves gracefully, much inner focus and strength.
- Quick 7: Legendary speed, Billy the Kid or Bruce Lee. Amazing powers of concentration.

Perception and Quick

For most humans, a Quick rating of 7 is the highest possible. But the rare few who have surpassed this have a unique perspective of the flow of time. Time seems to slow down as one's perception and sense of timing increases, and acts of extreme coordination and rapidity become possible. Those with a Quick of 10 or higher are capable of superhuman grace and speed. Crashers who manage to attain a Quick of 10 or higher gain a sensitivity to arrivals and departures of spanners and crashers. Called **Shift Sight**, it allows the character to tell within six seconds before and/or after of a span in or out, within a hundred yard radius. They can also tell which direction (Up, Down or Level) from or towards the spanner is travelling, if they actually see the traveller vanish. Shift Sight does not allow a crasher to determine who is spanning, nor the precise point in spacetime they are coming from or going to.

Skills

Skills are learned abilities. They are acquired during character creation as well as during the course of the game. All skills are based on one of the three attributes, from which their base skill rating is taken. While a character may have only three attributes, he may have any number of skills. For each skill possessed, a character has both a skill *rating* and a *title*. The skill rating is used to

Skill Title Rating Table

None	= Use appropriate ability at a -2 modifier for default, if applicable.
Novice	= Ability Rating
Apprentice	= Ability Rating+1
Journeyman	= Ability Rating+2
Master	= Ability Rating+3
Grandmaster	= Additional cumulative +1 each level Grandmaster increase (ex: +4, +5, etc).

determine the base chance of success when an action is attempted [see Resolving Actions, pg. 10]. The rating number represents a combination of skill and raw ability. The character's title in a skill is a measure of experience and comes into play when determining the difficulty of an action in respect to a character's experience, during competition between characters using the same or similar skills, and when learning and improving skills. A skill's rating and title are abbreviated as the first letter of the title followed by the rating. For example, a Journeyman skill with a rating of 6 would be abbreviated to J6.

Character Points

Once a character concept is established, attributes, skills, and details relating to the game mechanics need to be added. You have 30 *character points* to allocate to your character's initial Span, attributes and skills. The cost per attribute and skill are as follows:

Span (maximum starting Span is 1.0)

0.1 Span point = 1 character point (see table pg. 19)

Attributes (human averages are 3)

1 Body point = 1 character point

1 Mind point = 1 character point

1 Quick point = 2 character points

Skills (see Skill List ppg. 11-13)

Novice title skill = 0.5 character point

(1 char point purchases 2 skills at Novice rank)

Apprentice title skill = 1 character point

Journeyman title skill = 2 character points

Master rank title = 3 character points

(A character may not begin the game with a title of Grandmaster in any skill.)

Benefits

Benefits are rare and valuable abilities. Some are inherent, some can be learned, and others may come and go during the course of the game. All N^RCISSIST player characters may choose two free benefits during character creation. Up to two more benefits may be purchased with character points. The third benefit costs 2 points, and the fourth costs 4.

Ambidextrous

The character can use either hand with near-equal proficiency. Use of a character's "off" hand results in a -1 modifier (see Resolving Actions, pg. 10).

Aptitude (type of skill)

This benefit is taken for a general type of skill (ex: melee weapons, driving, languages, etc.), never a specialized area (see Skill List, pg. 11-13). Halve the time index of any skill of this type and check off two success clocks when making a successful roll with it (see Experience &

Learning, pg. 14). The need for a teacher is also waived (as long as there is a way for the character to acquire information on their own).

Connections (in native locality)

The character knows "people in high places". The player and GM must agree on a leveler NPC in a powerful position that is friends with the character. This friendship originates from before the character became a crasher, and must come from their native locality.

Contortionist/ Double Jointed

+3 to Body for any die rolls related to physical flexibility.

Extraordinary Beauty

People (usually of the opposite sex, or at least those that would be attracted to a member of the character's sex) find the character captivating and are more likely to help the character, or just be friendly in general. This makes the character very memorable and recognizable, and often subject to unwanted romantic advances.

Fame (in native locality)

The character is well-known and generally liked in their locality. They could be a famous entertainer, politician, or just someone in the public eye. People will often act positively towards a famous person, though maintaining a private life can be difficult at times.

Internal Clock

The character naturally has an accurate sense of what time it is. It may be necessary for the character to make a Quick roll to determine exact increments within a minute. If the character is disoriented somehow (knocked unconscious, goes into shock, etc.) he must re-establish the correct time for this ability to work again.

Lucid Dreamer

The character naturally has the skill Dreaming (see pg. 36) at the Apprentice rank. This is a natural ability, not a skill; if you want the character to have the Dreaming skill, it should be purchased as such. If the character wishes to increase this skill (when taken as a benefit), he must first seek out formal training and spend time equal to half the amount needed to attain the title of Apprentice. Successes made from Dreaming rolls from this benefit are not recorded for the advancement of this skill until it is learned as such. (See Experience, p. 14)

Lucky

Once per game session, the player may re-roll any one die roll, and accept the results from either roll.

Math Wiz

The character can perform complicated mathematical equations in their head at a rapid rate. The character already possesses the skill Mathematics at Apprentice rank if not purchased during character creation, and if purchased, its cost is reduced by 1 character point.

Perceptive

+2 to Mind for for any rolls related to perception.

Photographic Memory (see also pg. 8)

The character has a total recall of past events or information experienced. For particularly complex events/information, or ones in the character's distant past, a Mind roll may be called for by the GM. Any such rolls are made with a +3 to Mind. A character with Photographic Memory may use this ability in lieu of keeping a physical Spanning diary, though the player must still record any spans he wants his character to remember (see Span card, ppg. 34-35).

Psychic Potential

The character has the potential to control psychic powers¹; a Mind rating of 7 or higher is necessary for these powers to become controllable. To determine what abilities the character has the potential to control, roll 1d10 and consult the chart below.

Roll:

1	Clairvoyance
2-3	Telepathy
4-5	Levitation
6-7	Telekenisis
8-9	Pyrokenisis
10	Roll twice

Sharp Reflexes

+2 to Quick for purposes of reading the Quick/Combat Bout Table (see Timing, pg. 14)

Sense of Direction

The character has an innate sense of direction. With a successful Quick roll, the character can tell what direction they are facing (North, South, East, or West). A +2 Quick modifier applies to this roll.

Speed Reader

The character is able to read and comprehend written information as quickly as they can turn the page. Reduce the time index by one-half any skill which involves reading as a large part of its training. Halve any research time involving written information as well.

Tough

The character takes 1 less IP (see Damage & Impairment, ppg. 15-16) from wounds inflicting Bruise damage.

Wealthy (in native locality)

The character possessed great monetary wealth as a leveler. Roll 5d100, multiply them together to represent your level wealth in native currency equivalent to a dollar amount

¹These powers are detailed in C^oN^tIⁿU^m ppg. 114-116, and also in in the final version of N^oR^eCⁱS^sI^sT (v.1, Summer 2000).

Resolving Actions

Rating Scores & Titles

For every ability a character has, there is a corresponding rating *score*, and, in the case of skills, a *title*. The score measures the raw level of ability and likelihood of success while the title reflects actual experience. The title of a skill does not denote any formal title held by the character, only their level of experience. The titles are, in order from lowest to highest: *Novice*, *Apprentice*, *Journeyman*, *Master*, *Grandmaster*.

The Novice title denotes a general familiarity with the skill, and an understanding of its most basic uses. At Apprentice, the character has gone beyond the basics and understands a specific area of the skill and has a good working knowledge of it. At Journeyman the character is considered to have a professional level of competency. At Master the character is thoroughly experienced and considered an authority on their skill.

The Grandmaster title comes after a lifetime of using a particular skill and denotes incredible devotion and study of a skill. If a character attempts to perform an action for a skill they don't have, they may default to a roll of the base ability with a -2 modifier, so long as there are no prerequisites to using the skill. All skills have another factor, called a *time index*, which defines how long it takes to learn a skill, this is explained further in the section titled Experience & Learning, pg. 14.

Taking Actions

When a character attempts an action, the GM may ask the player to roll a 10 sided die (d10) to determine the success of the attempted action. Subtract the number rolled from the attribute or skill rating rolled against to determine the result. If the result is positive, the action is successful. If the result is a negative number, the action fails. A result of zero is a positive result. Furthermore, a roll of one (1) is *always* a success. This is the basic rule for determining the outcome of almost any action in N^oRCISSIST. Everything else is a permutation of this rule.

Modifiers

Whenever the text refers to a modifier, it directly affects the rating of the attribute or skill so modified. For example, a -3 modifier would lower a rating score by three points, and a +1 modifier would raise a rating score by one point for purposes of determining the outcome of the affected roll. Therefore, a positive modifier is good, a negative bad.

Special Rolls

Victories, Blunders, & Jinxes

On occasion, we are all capable of great feats of skill, luck, or even stupidity. For your characters this is true as well. To reflect the rare moment of prowess or

embarrassment, there are a few special die rolls that can occur in N^oRCISSIST. When the outcome of the die is a one (1), the die should be immediately re-rolled. If this second roll turns out to be a one as well, the roll is a *victory*. A victory is an outstanding success, pushing the character's abilities to their utmost, or an instant of extreme luck. Splitting an arrow already in the bull's-eye, or falling out of an airplane and landing unharmed are examples of victories.

When the die roll equals a ten (10), even if the roll was a success, re-roll the die. If the result of the re-roll again equals ten, the action is a failure, and the roll is a *blunder*. Blunders are the worst, most embarrassing mistakes imaginable. Literally shooting oneself in the foot is a blunder.

There are also moments for a crasher, where malicious intent, not chance has to do with their failure. If the die roll equals the exact number of their ability rating (i.e.; the challenge result is a zero [0]), re-roll the die. If the result of the re-roll is again the ability rating rolled for, the result is a *jinx*. Jinx rolls are the result of unseen interference from the Swarm, or even crashers who are following an opposing agenda. For their own reasons, usually in the course of mending their idea of causality, a spanner or crasher has applied sentient force to insure the character's failure. Such failures can sometimes seem odd or even impossible, as they often involve the use of advanced technology or elaborate planning. GMs and players alike may want to take note when jinxes occur, as the reason may surface as an important element in the character's Yet.

Types of Actions

There are three basic types of actions a character can attempt. *Simple actions*, those which automatically succeed. *Uncontested actions*, those that call for a die roll to determine success. And *competitive actions*, when two or more characters attempt the same action using the same or similar abilities. Most everyday actions could be considered simple actions, those which require no great effort and do not require any roll of the dice. Also, if a character's skill title exceeds the difficulty of the action by two titles or greater, it is considered a simple action. An uncontested action requires a roll of the die to determine success.

Competitive actions are the most complicated. A competitive action takes place when two or more characters are simultaneously attempting the same action against the same target (or each other, as in combat), using the same or similar skills. All characters involved roll according to their appropriate skill. The one with the highest result succeeds, all others fail. In the case of a tie, the character with the higher title wins, if both titles are the same the one with the higher ability rating succeeds. If all tying factors are equal, none of the characters succeed that attempt.

Action Difficulty Modifier Table

Action 2 or more titles below character's title:	Automatic Success
1 title below:	+1
Same title:	0
1 title higher:	-1
2 titles higher:	-2

Apply an additional -1 for every title higher than the character's.

Examples: -3, -4, -5, etc...

An unskilled attempt at any action is considered to be 1 step below Novice, and the GM is the final arbiter of whether an unskilled character has any chance of succeeding at a particular action.

Sample Uncontested Actions and Their Difficulties

Area Knowledge: finding the local supermarket:
Novice

Mathematics: complex trajectory calculations for a
space shuttle launch: Master

Firearms: hitting an immobile, man-sized target at 10
yards: Apprentice

Driving: jumping a car over a bridge as it's opening:
Journeyman

Medicine: stopping the bleeding from a 3IP gunshot
wound: Journeyman

Stealth: following someone down a busy street without
them noticing: Apprentice

Athletics: climbing a chain-link fence: Novice

Swindle: convincing that little old lady from Pasadena
that, yes, this *is* the perfect car for her:
Journeyman

Security: disabling a car alarm, circa 1995: Apprentice

Computer: hacking NORAD's mainframe: Master

Projectile Weapon: shooting an apple off your son's
head with an arrow: Master

Art: painting a realistic depiction of a scene from
memory: Journeyman

Survival: knowing which plants are poisonous to eat:
Apprentice

Skill Titles & Superiority in Competitive Actions

Aside from breaking ties in competitive actions, if the character's title in the competitive action is two or more levels superior— (ie; Master is two levels higher than Apprentice—) than his opponent's, regardless of the respective rating scores, the character automatically succeeds. This is called *Superiority*. A die roll is still made, to insure the degree of success. If the roll would have failed normally, the minimal amount of success is obtained. If a blunder or jinx is rolled, the action fails and is handled as such, and the blundering character's opponent automatically succeeds in their action.

Skill List

The following is a list of some of the skills available to N*RCISSIST characters. Skills are broken down into categories based on the attribute they derive from. To find a skill's Rating, use the Skill Title Rating Table. Each skill listed is a general category. A specialty must be chosen for each skill. A skill in one category may be purchased during character creation multiple times for multiple specialties, or study in a separate area may be undertaken. The character's full skill rating and title only applies for the specific ability or knowledge pertaining to their specialty; for all other uses of the skill, the character is considered to be of Novice title. For example, Jane has the skill Drive (Car) at Journeyman title. If she were to drive any other sort of automobile (racecar, truck, etc.), she would use the Drive skill as a Novice. If she wanted to learn how to drive a truck, she would need to begin learning starting from the Novice title, as opposed to having to learn the skill all over again, since the Novice level of ability assumes a basic familiarity with all similar vehicles.

Body Based Skills

Athletics

Time Index:
30 days/ 20 days

Description:

Either a sports-based discipline or a general athletic endeavor.

Example Specializations:

Running, Strength Training, Running, Football, Swimming, Climbing, Gymnastics

Notes:

Strength Training

This acts as a multiplier for the amount of weight a character may move or lift. To find a character's weight maximum, multiply their Body rating by 30. This is the amount they may lift in pounds as a simple action. On a successful Body roll they may lift up to 60 times their Body in pounds. If a character has Athletics (Strength Training), the following multipliers apply instead: Novice x30/x60, Appr. x40/x80, Journ. x50/x100, Master x60/x120.

Running

This acts as a multiplier for movement speed on a successful roll (only if character is doing nothing but running for an entire combat bout or more, see pg. 22). At Novice x0, App. x2, Journ. x3, Master x4.

Melee Weapon

Time Index:

30 days/ 20 days

Description:

Fighting techniques of a weapon or class of weapons.

Example Specializations:

Rapier, Knife, Nunchaku, Whip, Club, Axe, Quarterstaves

Thrown Weapon

Time Index:

30 days/ 15 days

Description:

Techniques of thrown weapons, especially those designed for such a purpose.

Example Specializations:

Shuriken, Throwing Knife, Grenade, Shoe

Toughness

Time Index:

60 days/ 30 days

Description:

The ability to resist damage, disease, extremes of temperature, or torture.

Notes:

Use this skill's rating to resist shock and bleeding, and instead of Body when determining the amount of IP a character can take.

Unarmed Combat

Time Index:

60 days/ 30 days

Description:

Proficiency in a bare hand fighting skill.

Example Specializations:

Kung-Fu, Karate, Boxing, Savate, Wrestling, Judo, Aikido, Kickboxing

Mind Based Skills

Anthropology

Time Index:

40 days/ 20 days

Description:

The study of human beings in relation to distribution, origin, classification, and relationship of races, physical character, environmental and social relations, and culture.

Example Specializations:

Mongol Tribes, Ancient Egyptians, Celts, Saxons, Picts, Samoans, 20th Century Japan

Bureaucracy

Time Index:

60 days/ 20 days*

Description:

How to operate and move within a bureaucratic system.

Example Specializations:

Small Town Politics, Fighting City Hall, Bribery, Police Politics, Corporate Politics

Notes:

This skill does not change much from era to era, however, Locality Knowledge is important for it's effective use. There is usually no more effective way to "study" this skill than by its actual use, that is, being active within a bureaucratic system.

Computer

Time Index:

20 days/ 15 days

Description:

The ability to use computers and computer programs.

Example Specializations:

Programming, Internet, Graphics, Printing, Computer Security/Hacking

Etiquette

Time Index:

30 days/15 days

Description:

The social dos and don'ts of a culture, especially in a particular era.

Example Specializations:

Ancient Greek, English Royalty, Samoan, Early Inheritor, Late Inheritor, 18th century Lower Class French

Finance

Time Index:

60 days/ 30 days

Description:

Knowledge of financial systems and the the flow of money in a society.

Example Specializations:

Stock Trading, Money Laundering, Financial Analysis

Firearms

Time Index:

30 days/ 20 days

Description:

Familiarity with the "small arms" class of firearms and accuracy in firing them.

Example Specializations:

Shotguns, Pistols, Assault Rifles, SMG's, Hunting Rifles

History

Time Index:

30 days/20 days

Description:

Knowledge of the recorded past of a culture, place, event, or subject matter.

Example Specializations:

Ancient Civilizations, American South, Inca Civilization, Civil Wars, Cars

Investigation

Time Index:

90 days/ 30 days

Description:

The process of systematic inquiry and examination of facts to solve a question or find that which is hidden or purposely obscured.

Example Specialties:

Forensics, Criminal Investigation, Narcotics, Homicide, Organized Crime

Language

Time Index:

60 days/ 30 days

Description:

The ability to speak and write a language (if written)

Example Specializations:

English, Japanese, Greek, Farsi, Yiddish, Latin, Old English, Celtic, Russian.

Notes:

The level of fluency in a language is as follows:

Novice: Limited conversational skill

Apprentice: Conversational

Journeyman: Fluent, little or no accent

Master+: Eloquent, speaks like a native

The amount of time a character spends speaking a language in everyday use counts towards study time.

Law

Time Index:

180 days/ 60 days

Prerequisites:

Specialized Training, access to law libraries

Description:

The laws of a culture or country, usually with regards to a specific century.

Example Specializations:

US Tax Laws, Corporate law, Entertainment, Copyright

Locality Knowledge

Time Index:

60 days/ 30 days

Description:

Intimate familiarity with a place and time. A mix of local geography, history, politics, and folklore for a specific place in a specific range of years, which can vary from place to place, though usually within about 50 years and limited to one town or city, or group of small villages. Can also apply to detailed knowledge of specific areas of other universes.

Example Specializations:

Late 20th Century Los Angeles, 10 B.C.-40 B.C. Rome, Victorian London

Notes:

The amount of time a character spends in a locality in day-to-day (such as it is for a spanner) living should be considered "study" of this skill and count toward its advancement in addition to any time spent pursuing its study.

Medicine

Time Index:

200 days/ 90 days

Prerequisites:

Specialized training, access to medical facilities and libraries

Description:

Knowledge of injuries and diseases and methods of healing them.

Example Specializations:

Surgery, Emergency Medical Technician, Veterinary Medicine, Dentistry, Forensic Pathology, Chirurgery

Notes:

This example of the medical arts assumes a character learning late 20th century western medicinal techniques.

Observation

Time Index:

90 days/ 20 days

Description:

Observing one's surroundings with an eye for detail. The ability to notice and remember details.

Example Specializations:

Tactical Targets, Forensic Details, Artistic Details

Projectile Weapon

Time Index:

130 days/ 20 days

Description:

Proficiency in the use of (non-firearm) projectile weapons.

Example Specializations:

Bow, Crossbow, Sling, Slingshot

Science

Time Index:

180 days/ 90 days

Prerequisites:

Special training, access to laboratories, equipment and scientific libraries related to area of study

Description:

The study of a scientific discipline.

Example Specializations:

Biology, Metallurgy, Chemistry, Genetics, Astrophysics, Botany

Notes:

The study of science and the scientific method varies greatly with era, mainly due to leveller societal pressures and mores. Also, it is built upon the recorded discoveries of the past. The listing for this skill is based on late 20th century study.

Security

Time Index:

90 days/ 30 days

Description:

Techniques involved in theft and burglary, and their prevention.

Example Specializations:

Safecracking, Breaking and Entering, Alarm Systems, Bank Security Measures, Locksmithing/picking

Survival

Time Index:

60 days/ 30 days

Prerequisites:

Most of this study must be done "in the field", that is, living in the type of terrain one is learning to survive in, or a reasonable simulation.

Description:

Knowledge of how to subsist in a wilderness environment.

Example Specializations:

Desert, Forest, Arctic, Hunting, Poisonous Flora and Fauna, Tracking

Teaching

Time Index:

90 days/ 25 days

Description:

The ability to pass on knowledge to others in an engaging and effective way.

Example Specializations:

Young Children, High School, Adult, Specific Skills

Notes:

A successful use of this skill will halve the time index if teaching a skill to another character. The teacher must be at least two titles above the student in the skill being taught, and the difficulty title of the roll is the title the skill is being worked toward (ie: an apprentice in Biology is being trained to Journeyman title, therefore, the difficulty is at Journeyman). A blunder on this roll doubles the time taken.

Quick Based Skills

Art

Time Index:

200 days/ 60 days

Description:

The ability to communicate through an artistic medium. Both the ability to wield a craft and to express oneself through that medium.

Example Specializations:

Painting/Drawing, Sculpture, Film Making, Origami, Glassblowing, Cooking, Writing, Performance, Musical Instrument

Dreaming

See pg. 36.

Drive

Time Index:

varies per vehicle type

Cars/Trucks: 30 days/ 15 days

Boats: 30 days/ 15 days

Aircraft: 90 days/ 60 days

Description:

The ability to operate a vehicle.

Example Specializations:

Car, Truck, Speedboat, Helicopter, Fighter Jet, 16-Wheeler, Freighter/Tanker, Steamboat.

Hypnosis

Time Index:

90 days/ 20 days

Description:

The ability to induce a state of hypnosis and manipulate a person in this state.

[See also pg. 115.]

Example Specializations:

Party Tricks, Hypnotherapy, Seduction, Suggestion

Notes:

Someone in a hypnotic state is highly suggestible, but will not do something blatantly harmful to themselves or directly against their nature. Hypnosis will not work on a subject that is consciously resisting.

Stealth

Time Index:

90 days/ 20 days

Description:

The art of remaining unseen, moving without sound, and hiding. Also useful in finding what is hidden and hiding objects.

Example Specializations:

Stalking (following without being noticed), Hiding, Evasion, Forest Terrain, City Terrain

Swindle

Time Index:

120 days/ 30 days

Description:

The ability to lie convincingly.

Example Specializations:

Confidence Scams, Sales, Fast Talk

Other

Acumen

Time Index:

Variable

Description:

A professional, business, or leisure skill. A catch-all for any heretofore undefined skill.

Example Specializations:

Printing, Carpentry, Car Repair, Farming

Notes:

May be based on Body, Mind, or Quick.

Locality Skills

Locality skills are the sets of skills necessary for survival in a particular time. They are possessed by most adults in any society. Your character will have these skills at no cost at Novice title (with the exception of their native language, which is known at Journeyman). Should you want to increase these during character creation, they are considered one title lower for purposes of character point cost. Following is a list of Locality skills for late 20th century adults. For descriptions, see the Skill List.

Drive (Car)

Athletics (sport of choice, ex: football, baseball, swimming, etc.)

Area knowledge (native locality)

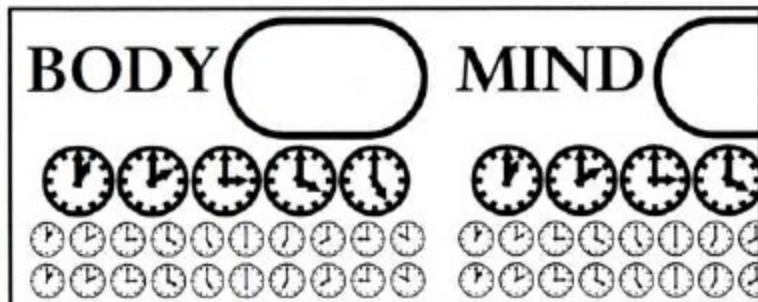
Native Language (at Journeyman)

Acumen (job skill)

Acumen (hobby skill)

Experience & Learning

Throughout our lives, we collect experiences and knowledge, and the more we do something, the better we are at it. Likewise, this applies to your character. The more a skill or attribute is used, the better your character gets at that skill. On your character sheet, underneath every attribute and skill listed, there are a row of clock faces. These are for players to keep track of a character's successes and study time. Every time a successful roll is made with an attribute or skill (not including automatic successes), players should fill in one of these clocks with a pencil mark. In the case of a success in a skill roll, mark one of the small clocks underneath both the



skill *and* the attribute it is based on. In the case of an attribute success, mark one of the small clocks under the attribute. When all of the small clocks under an attribute are marked, erase all of the marks on the small clocks for that attribute and mark one of the large clocks. When all of the large clocks are marked, that attribute goes up one rating point. When an attribute goes up (or down, for that matter) remember to adjust all skill ratings appropriately. In addition, whenever a character spans, you may roll against his Quick score, if successful, fill in a small clock under the Quick attribute. GM's may wish to restrict the amount of such rolls per game session if they feel a player is using Span frivolously in an effort to raise their Quick by abusing this rule. The maximum rating to which an attribute may be raised in a leveller character in this manner is 7. For skills, you will notice the clocks on the character sheet are divided by the letters N, A, J, and M. Each of these letters corresponds to the first letter of a skill's title. When the marked off clocks reach the letter representing the title above the character's current title in that skill, erase all the marks under that skill and raise its title to the next highest and increase its rating score by one. When a victory is rolled, mark off two clocks instead of one.

Every skill has a rating called a *time index*. This represents the time necessary for a character to study and improve a skill outside of use during game play. The time index lists two amounts of time, separated by a slash (ie: x days /y days). The first amount is the study time needed to learn a skill at its novice level. The second is the amount of time needed to check off one clock under that skill. When spending time studying, add up all of the time spent and add it to the character's age. Time spent studying is not usually roleplayed, and either takes place between game sessions or when a character needs to span out of a situation briefly to increase their skills. The time index listed assumes intensive, daily study, with little or no time spent on other pursuits. It is recommended that

N	○○○○○○○○○○○○	A	○○○○○○○○○○○○	J	○○○○○○○○○○○○	M	○○○○○○○○○○○○
B/M/Q							
N	○○○○○○○○○○○○	A	○○○○○○○○○○○○	J	○○○○○○○○○○○○	M	○○○○○○○○○○○○

characters keep a low profile during these times, as they may be vulnerable to frag attempts. It is also recommended that these periods be kept track of in one's span book.

GMs wishing to create a time index for new skills are advised to determine the amount of time (usually *years*) they feel are necessary to achieve Master title in the new skill and divide this amount, based on the advancement system, as if a character were only studying levelly.

Studying also assumes the character has a teacher guiding their study. The teacher must be at least one title higher than their student. It may be difficult to find teachers for skills archaic to certain eras. For example, not too many people know much about ancient Samoan etiquette in 20th century America, and even fewer offer classes in it. There's also the matter of the cost of training and materials, and the possibility such training is restricted knowledge in a particular era (for example, Green Beret training in the late 1900's U.S., or Wiccan practices in Salem c. 1692).

Increasing Span can only happen when you can convince someone to increase your powers. See *Increasing Span*, pg. 20.

Combat

Physical combat, as it occurs in *N*RCISSIST*, is settled as any other action, and the normal skill resolution system applies for actions taken in a combat situation. There are some unique circumstances faced in combat; these are discussed below.

Timing

As far as level time is concerned, events happen sequentially. Under normal circumstances, character's actions happen in the order players declare them. For purposes of combat, or when the exact timing of events needs to be carefully played out, actions can be broken down into *combat bouts*. A bout is a ten (10) second window of time, broken down into five (5) *stages* of two (2) seconds each. A character's Quick score is a measure of how many of these combat stages are available for him to act in. The Quick/Combat Bout Table shows in which combat stages of each bout a character acts, given their Quick rating. At the beginning of a combat stage, the GM should turn to each character acting in that stage, in order from lowest Quick to highest, and ask them to declare their actions for that stage. The GM should allow around five seconds for the player to decide upon an action, those who hesitate longer than this lose their action that stage, and are only able to defend themselves if attacked. The one with the highest Quick resolves his action first, the rest following in order from highest to lowest Quick. In the case of ties, a competitive Quick roll determines who acts first (or simultaneously, in the case of a tie in the roll).

If you have an action in one stage and wish to wait until a subsequent stage to use it, you may do so. Every stage thereafter, you may act using your held action before anyone who would normally act in that stage as if you had the highest quick in the stage. If there are other characters using held actions in the

Quick/ Combat Bout Table:

	stage #1	stage #2	stage #3	stage #4	stage #5
Quick 1 to 2	no	no	yes	no	no
Quick 3 to 4	no	yes	no	yes	no
Quick 5 to 6	yes	no	yes	no	yes
Quick 7 to 8	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
Quick 9 to 10*	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

*In case of a Quick higher than 10, return to the top of the chart after 10 is reached to determine when the additional actions are. That character gets multiple actions on those stages. Repeat as necessary.

same stage, the order of those actions are resolved as usual for those with held actions; however, they still may act before any characters without held actions. You may not "save" held actions. For example, if you are holding an action from stage 1 of a combat bout, and you wait until stage 5 to use it, even though you would normally act on stages 3 and 5, you do not get 3 actions in stage 5. If you are holding your action and take any actions at all, including dodging a ranged or melee attack, or moving, the action is used. Holding your action may be combined with aiming at a target, as long as you are firing on the same target with your held action.

Movement

A character may walk up to 2 feet in a combat stage and still perform another action. Should a character want to do nothing but run for a stage, he may move up to 2 x Body (or appropriate skill) rating in feet. If he wishes to do nothing but run for the entire bout, he may keep moving at this speed for all remaining stages in the bout, and may continue to move in all consecutive stages, regardless of Quick, until he stops.

Ranged & Melee Combat

Whether an attack is made from a distance or hand-to-hand defines the type of attack it is. Ranged attacks, those made with a weapon capable of striking from a distance, require an uncontested action roll to be made by the attacker only. A successful result means a hit is scored, and the number of the result decides the amount of damage dealt, according to the weapon used (see Damage & Impairment, ppg. 15-16). Certain factors may increase the difficulty of the action, but the one roll is all that need be made. If a character is aware they are being attacked, they may attempt to dodge only if they have an action in the same stage as the attacker, before the attacker. To dodge, the dodging character may roll against their Quick. A positive result is subtracted from the attacker's rating, a negative result is added as a bonus to the attacker's rating.

In a melee combat, the attacker declares their action for the turn to be an attack towards the defender (along with any specific details). If the defending character is able to take an action in the stage they are being attacked, they may choose to counterattack as their roll in the competitive action, even if they would normally take their action later that stage. If they choose to counterattack, then that is their action for the stage. A character may always defend themselves from a melee attack, by trying to avoid the attack, even if they have already acted or normally have no action available that stage, providing they are aware of the attack. Each roll made in a melee combat does

not necessarily represent a single blow; between skilled combatants it can mean a short exchange of moves and countermoves. Both the attacker and defender roll as per attempting a competitive action (assuming the defender is aware of the attack and wishes to fight back). The winner gets their attack or counter-attack through, or avoids being hit.

Damage & Impairment

N*RCISSIST measures damage to a character in *impairment points* (IP). When a character suffers damage, he gains a number of IP equal to the damage rating of the attack striking him. For each IP gained, a one point negative modifier is applied to every attribute and skill rating possessed, including Quick for purposes of reading the Quick/Combat Stage Table and Body for calculating running speed. (Example: Joe takes 2 IP from a knife wound. Until his wound heals, he will have a -2 modifier applied to all his ratings. Additionally, his Quick is considered 2 points lower, bringing it from a 5 to a 3. So instead of three actions a combat bout, he now only gets two.) This modifier goes into effect the moment the IP are taken. When a character has taken impairment points equal to his Body (or Toughness skill) rating, he is rendered unconscious. If a character suffers IP equal to triple his Body (or Toughness), he dies. Wounds aren't the only way to incur IP. Fatigue, illness, and exhaustion are examples of other forms of impairment. Wounds are usually the most serious examples.

Under optimal circumstances, a character outranking an attempted action or opponent's title automatically succeeds in his action; this is not always the case when wounded. Every IP taken *raises* the number of titles needed for seniority. For example, a character who is a Melee Weapon(Fencing) Master could automatically beat a fencing opponent of apprentice or novice title. If he were wounded for 1 IP, he would only be able to automatically beat an opponent of novice title until his impairment were healed.

Bruise damage vs. Lethal Damage

There are two types of damage a character can suffer. One is *bruise damage*, the other is *lethal damage*. Bruise damage is caused by blunt trauma, asphyxiation, or fatigue. Lethal damage is caused by anything that cuts or punctures the skin and/or internal organs, breaks bones, or causes burns or nervous system damage. It takes longer to heal from and often requires medical attention.

Shock

Merriam-Webster defines shock as "a state of profound depression of the vital processes of the body that is characterized by pallor, rapid but weak pulse, rapid and shallow respiration, reduced total blood volume, and low blood pressure and that is caused usu. by severe esp. crushing injuries, hemorrhage, burns, or major surgery". Some common symptoms of shock are nausea, dizziness, and fainting. These rules are a simplified example of the effects of shock in a combat situation. They are for game purposes only. If you wish to add a greater level of detail to your N*RCISSIST game, GMs are encouraged to research the specific effects of shock and injury.

When a character suffers from a lethal wound of 2 IP or more, or a bruise wound of 3IP or more, he must make a roll against his Body rating to avoid going into shock at the end of

the current combat bout. A failure means the character is in shock for 1d10 bouts. A Blunder on this roll means the character falls comatose (this condition lasts 1d10 days, and can be reduced by dividing the number of days by the result of a successful Dreaming roll; only one roll may be attempted to reduce this amount of time, and a negative result is *multiplied* by the number of days). A triumph or grace roll, on the other hand, not only prevents the shock, but stops the effects of bleeding from that wound, if any.

If a character enters a state of shock, he is unable to attempt any further actions until he stabilizes. He remains immobile, and unable to stand, speak, or span.

Bleeding

When a character takes lethal damage from a cutting or puncture wound, he may continue to bleed after the initial wound. Lethal damage is also more difficult to heal from. Wounds should be kept track of separately on the character sheet, noting how much IP are sustained and whether the wound is bruise or lethal damage. Bleeding from multiple wounds is kept track of separately.

When a character suffers 2 or more IP of cutting wounds, he must roll against Body. Failure on this roll means he will bleed afterwards, furthering his impairment. Left unchecked (i.e., without some sort of medical attention) the character will eventually bleed to death. A character that is bleeding suffers an additional 1 lethal IP at stage #5 of the combat bout the wound was received *per lethal wound* of 2 IP or more, and again for every other bout thereafter, until the bleeding is stopped. To stop the bleeding requires a successful medical skill roll (Doctor, Paramedic, etc..) or default. A roll must be made for each wound causing bleeding, and at least 2 full combat bouts must be spent attending to the character. Even if the bleeding is not completely stopped by this roll, it still may be slowed to 1 IP every 4 combat bouts as long as the result is not a blunder.

Wound Severity Table

Amount of IP taken from a single wound

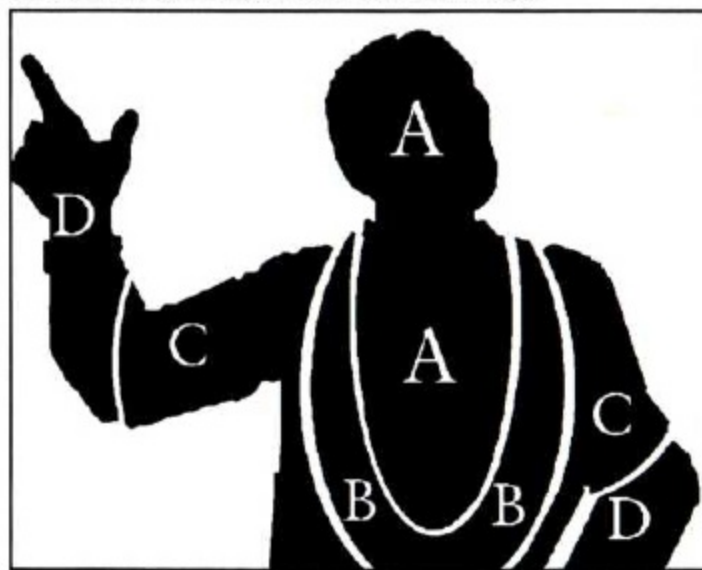
- | | |
|--------|---|
| 1 IP | Minor wound: blow to the midsection, minor sprain or cut. |
| 2 IP | Serious Wound: non-vital cut or gunshot, a powerful blow to the face. |
| 3-4 IP | Severe Wound: non-fatal gunshot, falling 20 feet. This amount of damage will knock an average adult (Body 3) unconscious. |
| 5 IP | Critical Wound: near a powerful explosion, large-caliber weapon hit. A wound of this magnitude usually causes permanent damage such as loss of limb, appearance, or faculties. |
| 6-8 IP | Extreme Wound: riddled with bullets, covered in napalm (per combat bout), rolled over by tank |
| 9+ IP | Deadly Wound: LAW rocket to the face, etc. This sort of wound is enough to kill an average adult instantly... and messily. |

Determining Damage & Hit Location

All weapons and potential sources of damage have four damage ratings, laid out like so: D/C/B/A. Depending on the result of the roll, a successful hit will inflict one of these damage codes. Subtract the number rolled from the skill rating, as per normal action resolution, then compare the number with the weapon damage chart below. The damage rating for an unarmed attack is as follows (round down); A=Body (or skill) rating, B=3/4 of A, C=1/2 of A, D=1/4 of A. All unarmed damage is considered Bruise damage. Round down to calculate all fractions. See the diagram below for approximate hit locations according to the damage code.

Result	Damage Code
0-2	D
3-4	C
5-7	B
8-10+	A

For example, Agent Sculder's pistols damage rating is 1/2/3/4. His Firearms skill is at J7. He is making a Master rated shot (-1 modifier), so his modified skill rating for this shot is 6. He fires and rolls a 2. That means the outcome of the challenge roll is 4 (6-2=4). Comparing this to the chart, we see that Sculder's shot does a C result of 2 IP to his target.



For damage from sources other than attacks, the GM should assign the potentially damaging situation a damage rating, and make a roll for it as if it were attacking the character with a skill rating of 10. The GM need also determine if such damage is lethal or bruise.

For example, Cynthia falls off of a ledge, the GM rules the fall as having a damage rating of 2/3/4/5, the GM rolls a 6, for a C result on the damage chart (10-6=4), and assigns Cynthia 3 bruise IP. Cynthia needs to roll for shock now. Poor Cynthia.

Victories, Blunders & Jinxes in Combat

An attacker rolling a Victory doubles the damage rating of the A damage code for that attack (if damage was the intention). Otherwise, a spectacular (and usually dramatic) success occurs as usual. A Blunder or Jinx in combat should mean that the character is particularly disabled, perhaps losing their footing or having their weapon misfire or break. Very possibly, they wound themselves.

Spanning into and out of a Level Combat

It is possible to Span Up, Down, and Levelly during a combat bout. If doing this to gain advantage against a leveller, one must keep in mind the fourth Maxim. Of course, simply killing your opponent insures they never tell of what they saw. Against a fellow spanner, this kind of maneuver is tantamount to time combat, and any more than one such span per any spanners in a level combat against one or more spanners immediately becomes a time combat and is subject to such rules (see Time Combat, ppg. 26-33).

Going Up

If you wish to span up into a specific stage of combat in the bout you are spanning from, a Quick roll must be made. On a successful roll, you enter the intended stage of the bout desired, in the location you wish. If the roll is unsuccessful, you span into the first phase of the next bout after the one desired, in the location and facing the direction wished for.

Going Down

Spanning down into a combat bout you're already involved in might cause you Frag, and may even get you into a Time Combat with yourself. (See Time Combat, ppg. 26-33 and the consequences of upsetting your junior self, ppg. 24-25.) If a better prepared you is what is called for, it is possible, though dangerous, to slipshank a Gemini encounter into the fray (see, pg. 24) and have an elder self appear to help. This course of action is considered highly risky, as the elder self has a 10% chance of being an echo (see pg. 24), and will turn against you in the fight.

Healing

Bruise Damage

A character naturally recovers IP from bruise damage through rest. A character resting for one full minute after the damage is incurred will recover 1 of the IPs from their total bruise damage. If unconscious, the character will regain 1 bruise IP per hour of rest until conscious again. The remainder of the bruise damage is recovered at a rate of 1 IP per day of rest (non-strenuous activity).

Lethal Damage

Lethal wounds over 1 IP need medical attention to heal properly. In the case of most cutting and impaling wounds, stitches are required, if not surgery. If the wounds are not kept clean and bandaged, infection may occur as well. Lethal wounds of 1 IP are recovered without medical attention other than cleaning and bandaging. With late 20th century or higher medical technology, IP due to Lethal wounds are recovered at a rate of 1 IP per week of rest, if given proper medical attention. If no, or minimal attention is received, IP return at a rate of 1

per 2 weeks of rest, the wounds are more likely to re-open, and infection is likelier to occur.

Weapons

The following is a list of commonly found weapons and their game statistics. This is far from an exhaustive list, rather it is a broad overview of the various types of weapons and the damage they inflict. GM's are encouraged to further research this area, and modify these statistics to personalize your game with specific weapons. Many comprehensive books have been written on the subject for just such purposes. All damage from a weapon is lethal unless otherwise noted.

Ranged Weapons

Abbreviation key: Ammo: ammunition, RoF: rate of fire (how many times a character may fire in one combat stage), SMG: submachine gun, LMG, light Machine gun, HMG, heavy machine gun, Con: Concealment rating (apply to perception rolls as a modifier to notice if an attempt to carry the weapon concealed is made)

Name	Ammo	RoF	Con	D/C/B/A	Notes
Derringer	2	1	-4	1/1/2/3	
Revolver	6	1	-2	1/2/3/4	
Semi-Auto	15	2	-2	1/2/3/4	1
Heavy Pistol	12	1	0	2/4/6/8	
Hunt. Rifle	8	1	N/A	2/4/6/9	
Shotgun	8	1	+2	1/3/5/7	2
Shotgun (solid slugs)				2/5/7/10	
SMG	30	3	0	1/3/4/6	1,3
Assault Rifle	40	5	N/A	2/3/5/7	1,3
LMG	100+	10	N/A	2/4/6/8	1,3,4
HMG	100+	10	N/A	3/5/7/10	1,3,4
Longbow	1	1	N/A	1/2/4/6	
Crossbow	1	1	N/A	1/2/5/7	5
Blunderbuss	1	1	N/A	1/2/3/4	5,6
Sling	1	1	-6	1/1/1/3	5
Taser	2	1	-2	-special-	9

Melee Weapons

Abbreviation key: U: unarmed damage total

Name	Dam	Con	Length	Notes
Knife	U+1	-4	6"-12"	
Sword (small)	U+2	-1	15"-36"	
Sword (med.)	U+3	N/A	36"-60"	
Sword (large)	U+4	N/A	60"-84"	4,8
Club	U+1	N/A	24"-36"	7
Staff	U+1	N/A	48"-72"	7
Spear	U+3	N/A	60"-96"	
Polearm	U+4	N/A	72"-120"	4,8

1=Will jam on a roll of 0

2=Shotgun, shot is one level less difficult (ie: challenging becomes average) at 20 feet away or closer.

3=Every shot after the first is at a cumulative -1 modifier due to recoil without a successful Body (strength related) challenge is made or the weapon is fired from a stationary mount.

4=Heavy, user must have Body (modified for strength purposes) of 5+, or use weapon with a mount (bipod, tripod, etc.) if a gun.

5=Takes 1 full combat stage to reload.

6=Inaccurate, -1 to skill rating.

7=Damage from weapon is Bruise damage.

8=Slow melee weapon, -1 to Quick for purposes of reading the Quick/Combat Bout Table while using this weapon.

9=Does no normal damage, target, if hit, is immobilized for 2d10 hours

Chapter IV: Time Travel and Crashing Free

Span

The Swarm's power of travelling time at will is called Span, or Spanning. Crasher characters in *N^oRCISSIST* begin with a watered-down version of this power.

In the game, it is expressed as a number from zero (0) on up. Crashers tend to begin with fractional Span (i.e. 0.1, 0.2, etc.) Characters all have a Span rating, but so do all things throughout spacetime.

Anything that cannot traverse time has a Span of Zero. People who cannot traverse time are called Levellers, since by their nature they are forced to remain in the unfolding present of the universe in which they were born.

Fractional Span. All Swarm spanners have a Span of 1 or higher, but crashers don't begin with the Swarm's material advantages. Use the chart on the opposite page to determine the distance able to Span.

Teleportation In Space Only. These are called 'level spans' since time is not effectively being travelled. Spanning space alone costs no Span, and therefore can be done as often as a crasher likes. Note, however, the limitations to distance in the table at right.

While teleportation seems incredibly powerful, spanning time actually entails spanning vast amounts of space, too, since the earth, solar system and galaxy are moving all the time. But to put things in perspective, crashers tiny little jumps are child's play to the legions of the Swarm. Don't get a swelled head, or you'll find it lobbed off quick.

Remember that the Swarm is always watching to ensure that 1) their timeline doesn't change and 2) levellers never find out the truth. Your vanishing in the midst of a gaping crowd is the surest ticket to oblivion, and don't expect your crasher pals to acknowledge your existence after putting them all into unnecessary jeopardy.

Method and Means of Spanning

Spanning is achieved through the Swarm's sky-road (see pg. 41). It is always available to use, at will, by crashers to the limits of their abilities. But its functions are deeply untrustworthy, and reports of crashers who arrive from a journey altered in body or mind are too numerous to ignore. Even if Yrnëan beliefs in spanning's erosion of the soul are mere superstition, travellers should always beware dematerialization... Imagine trusting your body and mind to be uploaded and downloaded from the internet. Spanning is not much different.



Spending and Recording Span

Spending Span occurs every time a character travels time, whether a year, a day, or merely a second. This is recorded throughout the game on the character's Spanning Card. An explanation of how to use it, and a copy of the cards themselves is on ppg. 34-35.

Every time a character travels time, no matter how briefly or innocuously, the player should note it on that character's Spanning Card. The Swarm forces their minions to keep careful records of their every movement, but most crasher corners are less stringent. It should be noted, however, that those who keep good discipline in recording their Spans tend to survive longer, since they don't Frag themselves or anyone they know. It also allows them to infiltrate the Swarm more easily, or pass as a "loyal Continuum spanner".

How Well Were You Redesigned?

Crashers are born from ordinary human beings. Levellers who are going about their lives, unsuspecting that a time traveller is waiting nearby, with a device that will alter them into a shoddy cyborg.

When an artisan decides to press levellers into service, he usually selects for special gifts or talents. He may or may not be aware of any defects in his chosen people—whether mental, physical, or social shortcomings—and he may not even care. In most cases, an artisan looks for the best bodies for the job he wants done, and sometimes he even plans ahead far enough to give his pressed people decent spanning tech. But more often than not, he's had to rely on broken-down, stolen, or second-hand 'invitation kits' to make his minions. Sometimes attempts to create a crasher fails altogether, and the victim dissolves on the table. Your results may vary...

Be careful. Many new crashers are considered cannon fodder, or simply disposable. Certainly the Swarm sees us all that way. For better or worse, many fellow crashers have a similar attitude.

Span 0.1 - 0.3 Blinkers.

Most blinkers can't travel meaningful amounts of time, and therefore only 0.3s have any chance of making crash points. But they are masters of spanning to within a nanosecond of when and where they left, since it is all they know.

Because they are so attuned to such narrow spans, blinkers are masters of dodging cuts, punches and bullets. They can span in and out of their clothes within the same millisecond (hence their name) leaving the leveller who attacked them in wonder at their

invulnerability (even as it leaves holes in said clothes). Since these 'blinks' are based on precision Level spans, blinkers can do this any number of times.

Much as blind or deaf people find compensation by the heightening of another sense, blinkers gain the benefit Internal Clock in addition to the ones they receive and purchase during character creation.

Span 0.4 - 0.6 Darters.

Their main characteristic is extreme caution.

They have several other nicknames besides "darters" because they aren't able to span with their clothes—or anything else but their birthday suits. This naturally limits the likely activities these crashers can participate in, but it does ingrain a sense of caution that crashers starting at higher Spans would do well to learn from. This caution gives them the Stealth Skill at Journeyman rating, in addition to the skills they purchase during character creation.

Span 0.7 - 0.9 Mockers.

Nicknamed for an ancient rebellion when levellers seized spanning tech, "mockers" have the means to travel time and space well enough to pass as Swarm spanners. Those of 0.8 and 0.9 skill can span sufficiently well to actually travel back farther in time after every day of rest.

Mockers are legendary for having just enough Span to band together and defy their oppressive artisan—though it may take time for them to realize this, and figure out how to escape him.

For how a crasher can increase his Span, see pg. 20.

Span	Time traversable without rest	Space traversable in one span	Weight able to transport	Nickname
0	n/a	n/a	n/a	leveller
0.1	negligible	negligible	negligible	blinker
0.2	negligible	negligible	negligible	blinker
0.3	3 seconds	negligible	negligible	blinker
0.4	32 secs	negligible	negligible	darter
0.5	5 mins, 24 secs	half an inch	negligible	darter
0.6	52 mins, 12 secs	6 inches	negligible	darter
0.7	8 hours, 42 mins	5 feet, 3 in.	0.1 oz	mocker
0.8	3 days, 15 hrs	52 feet, 10 in.	1.6 oz	mocker
0.9	36 days, 12 hrs	528 feet	1 pound	mocker
1	1 year	1 mile	10 pounds	
2	10 years	10 miles	100 pounds	
3	100 years	100 miles	1000 pounds	
4	1000 years	1000 miles	10000 lbs [5 tons]	
5	10000 years	10000 miles	100,000 lbs [50 tons]	

This Graph is for game purposes only.

As a look at the rules and table will show, starting off as a Span 0.4 darter seriously sucks. We recommend players start with either a 0.3 or 0.6, anticipating swift improvement.

But many crasher artisans deliberately press people into service with scuzzy span tech to keep them in thrall. GMs interested in running a cruel (but realistic) NARCISIST campaign could make all players start out as 0.4s—enough to create the crash points their disreputable artisan needs to fulfill his plans, but not enough to really escape him.

Burn Out.

Either through faulty technology, poor reconstruction, or Swarm interference, your reengineered body will burn out sooner or later. To simulate this, the GM may call for each player to roll 1d10 for burn out, once every game session:

1	You can no longer Span. Span = 0. Hello, leveller.
2	One or more limbs flatten to near 2-dimensionality
3 - 5	You suffer a stroke, but survive: -2 Body [min. 1]; -1 Quick [min. 1]
6 - 8	You develop what is diagnosed as Alzheimer's, but deterioration is much more rapid: -1 Mind for every 10 days of Age that pass.
9	Magnetic objects embed themselves in your flesh and cannot be removed
0	You explode in a million pieces. The Swarm arrive instantly and clean up the mess.
<p>Naturally the GM decides the details of any variables (i.e. damage from magnets, which limb gets how flat, etc.) Additionally, results of 2 - 9 require an additional roll with every subsequent Span. Any blunder and the crasher burns up in the ionosphere.</p>	

These checks occur until you get to at least Span 1. Crashers (except turned Swarm spanners) who begin the game at Span 1 must reach Span 2 before they no longer must roll for burn out.

Regaining Span is done by resting for one day for each point of Span a character has. A "day of rest" is defined as one 24-hour period of regular (level) activity with no use of Span, which includes at least one eight-hour period of uninterrupted sleep.

For purposes of this version of N⁴RCISSIST (v.0.5), Span is not regained incrementally, but all at once at the end of the required rest period.

Travelling Beyond One's Span is a highly risky gamble, resulting in exhaustion or death. A roll against Quick is made whenever a crasher tries to exceed his remaining or allotted Span. Fractional Spans make the temptation to try very great, but the penalty of failure is near certain death.

Span 0.1 blinkers cannot even try to Span time, and so are relatively safe. A 0.2 blinker can try to travel as much as 3 seconds in time, but take a -1 modifier to his Quick for every second that he attempts to travel.

Other fractional-Span crashers take a -1 modifier to their Quick for every multiple of their 'Time Traversable Without Rest' and fraction thereof that they attempt to travel beyond their Spans. (Thus -1 for a Span 0.6 trying to travel 54 minutes, -2 for a Span 0.8 trying to travel 7 days, -3 for a Span 1 trying to travel 3 years and 3 days, and so on. See table, pg. 19.) The same applies for attempts to exceed one's Space Traversable.

Any failure results in the crasher missing his target. Since the earth, system and galaxy are hurtling through the universe at thousands of miles an hour, a small misstep results in sudden death in or near space.

Any success results in the crasher reaching his target date and place, but **utterly** exhausted: He has no Span, may not even attempt to Span levelly again until rested, and must rest ten days to recover. And only on a Victory roll (1) will he avoid the following further complications:

Any other successful result requires he **roll again thrice**, once each against Body, Mind and Quick.

A) Failure of the Body check, and he goes into shock [ppg. 15-16].

B) Failure of Mind, and he goes at least partially insane.

C) Failure of Quick, and the crasher lands with relative safety on earth, but in a place and moment of the GM's choosing. The crasher will not know he's hit the wrong target unless he discovers his mistake, or if a friendly crasher tells him.

Increasing Span can only be accomplished by bargaining with those who have access to superior spanning technology, or somehow stealing it for yourself. Since tinkering with your own nanotech without proper training is directly equivalent to doing major surgery on yourself *sans* training *and* anesthetic, most crashers depend on performing services for the boon of better Span. See esp. pg. 39, regarding the Merchant Caste of Yrnë.

Age, Your Internal Clock. Age is still a very real factor in a crasher's life. A crasher still ages normally, as the body only knows time in one direction. It's important to record the passing of time by your internal clock, and in the game, space for this is provided on your Spanning Cards. While recording Age during the game— especially Time Combat— is essential, it's usually only necessary to do a final tally of a character's Age at the end of each game session.

Note that after many sessions, the aging character may find it difficult to explain his change in appearance if he revisits a place looking noticeably older than he should.

Age-thwarting technologies are, of course, out there in the future, and in other universes.

In fact, with an infinity of universes to visit, conquer, or save from disaster, there is no reason— if you can but discover the means— that you can't live forever.

Frag

Every pocket you enter from in the Swarm universe will earn you a point of Frag. The only reason Frag is experienced is because the Swarm adamantly refuse the possibility of a multiverse, and refuse any change to their domain. The ceaseless toil they undertake is to “repair” changes (i.e. crash points) we make, so that what they perceive as paradoxes and “blatant violation of causality” are solved to their liking, not yours.

In the game, Frag is expressed as a number from zero to ten (0 - 10). Characters all have a Frag rating, but so do all things in the Swarm universe.

Most universes don't suffer frag, because in *most* universes any paradoxes easily lead to pockets or a Gate to another universe. Not here. Another stellar reason to crash the hell free.

Paradox is essentially the two or more irreconcilable events that occur at an as/as not (crash point). It's what gets the Swarm's dander up. It's easily explained by the existence of multiple paraverses, but don't try telling them that. It can occur deliberately, accidentally, or even naturally.

Deliberate paradox is the application of thought and action (the Swarm's hallowed “sentient force”) to bring about a crash point. It's fun, you should try it. Just be ready for the consequences (see ppg. 22-23).

Accidental paradox is the lack of applied thought to the need to avoid Frag. Essentially, you did something stupid like double back on your timeline, or change something without ever knowing. The Swarm have the hours and the will to keep track of all this, so just be basically careful when you pop around time.

Natural paradox means that even *Nature* creates warps in spacetime, like black holes, and even light particles are sometimes in two places at the same time. So what we do isn't mystery magic by any stretch.

What Frag Feels Like

Deja vu, partial amnesia, nausea, can all be symptoms of Frag. A crasher is never in doubt as to what his Frag rating is, though the cause can be obscured by viciously clever opponents.

Beyond Frag 7 your existence is even more dependent on the kindness of strangers: You're little better than a phantom, and the Swarm's fragging have left your molecules bouncing every which way. See chart at right for more gory details.

Getting Frag

Whenever a paradox is allowed to double back into a universe, it begins to Frag someone. This is what the Swarm does: Use our own attempts to escape as causal weapons against us. This often forces us to play their ugly game of Tag, and try to frag them back; hence the occurrence of Time Combat (ppg. 26-33).

Curing Frag

This can be brutally difficult, since when you have Frag, either you fix it, or the Swarm will keep “fixing” you. Once the paradox is contained/explained, the point(s) of Frag is removed.

Put simply, **the causality has to make sense**. Therefore you must either:

- 1) Create a crash point at every as/as not that caused your frag, coordinate them in a Gate and crash through it or
- 2) Fight the minions of the Swarm in Time Combat and set the Frag back on them.

Ever-clever crashers have devised myriad ways to pass frag around groups of friends, attach frag to inanimate objects, and other tricks. But eventually it boils down to the two options above: Freedom or Suicide.

The Yet

The Yet is a spanner's Required Future— incidents that must take place for him to avoid paradox and heal Frag. Individual members of the Swarm spend ceaseless efforts performing acts they know “must” happen— having long ago given up the will to question what they are doing and why.

Crashers of various philosophies will sometimes record events they believe are in their Yet: For instance, even the most bold crasher would think twice before shrugging off their elder's apparent appearance at his own birth— especially if he's the delivering surgeon. But most try to leave these seeming ‘Yets’ to their echoes.

Most just try to leave, period.

Effect of Frag Chart

Rating	Effect
0	No Frag, no problem.
1	Minor fragmentation; probably easily dealt with.
2	Serious fragmentation; they're starting to get to you.
3	At this Rating and above, even the Swarm lets its fragged minion be destroyed, if it can't find a way to help itself.
4	The victim becomes slightly disoriented in most moments of stress. -2 to all rolls involving Quick.
5	At this Rating and above, a Swarm minion will be actively attacked by its own kind.
6	The victim is very disoriented, most of the time, and probably should not be out in public. -4 to all rolls involving Quick, -2 to all rolls involving Mind.
7	The victim probably can't easily tell when or where he is, and his memory is seriously impaired.
8+	The character can no longer be played in this version of N ^o RCISSIST (v.0.5). But the character still exists, and the cultures of Yrnë, along with other crasher mores, have means of keeping those critically fragged extant— and even useful.

How to Crash

The Swarm insists that they can catch every one of us, claiming that the very power of time travel allows them foreknowledge of our actions and therefore the power to stop our actions. In fact, this is simply a proof that what we say is right: See something you don't like, go back and change it.

Most crashers agree that paraverses are the norm. This is because an attempt to alter the 'timeline' cannot account for the mass and the patterns of mass generated by the new set of circumstances— unless an entire additional universe is assumed.

Some nutcases feel they must defeat the Swarm on their own ground, save the people they lost, etc.— you know, the 'Kill Hitler in the womb' types. This is suicide, and if your artisan is one of these people, our pity goes out to you. Try to get away from that psycho before he gets you annihilated. If you're one of these psychos yourself, have fun trying. But most agree you'll have much better success (and fun) alternating history by building a bridge out of here first.

How to Build a Crash Point

Study the events of a moment you want to alter at a distance. Then Span Down, go over and change them. You will probably see your elder self in this moment, but you might not: Bear in mind, you're out to *change* the event. This *will not frag you*, since you know the Swarm will put everything back the way it was. So when you 'measure' an event, you see the Swarm's outcome. Then you move in to make your own.

To do this properly, you must make the change *and instantly Span Down*. This will create an as/as not that you haven't experienced. As long as this crash point is only known to you, it's yours alone to spend— Note it down on your Crash Card, but be careful who you tell of its existence! Anyone who learns of the precise whenabouts of a crash point can attempt to use (or destroy) it!

If you don't Span Down, and remain Level, you enter the pocket, and spend the crash point. Spanning Up into a pocket may not work, since the means of spanning doesn't exist in a pocket. But by the time you realize you failed, you'll have waited long enough to find yourself in the pocket anyway...

Since the Swarm *is* out to frag you, entering the pocket (by Staying Level) will give you a point of frag, since you're slammed into two realities and back again, and part of you really is wedged in that pocket. This tends to minimize pocket abuse, like going for endless amounts of duplicate cash ("pocket money"), and so on. Frag like this is always difficult to erase, so use discretion.

How to Spend Your Crash Points

If there was no interference from the Swarm, it would always be as easy as this:

1) Jump in the Pocket

This is what happens when you jump in a pocket and experience it directly. You can perform all the wise-ass tricks listed on ppg. 24-25. But once spent on a pocket, the crash point is gone.

2) Harvest a Gate

This is utilizing the energy of a set of crash points at their nexus. This nexus is independent of any as/as not— in layman's terms a Gate can be anywhere at all. *But it's usually found at a point equidistant in space and time from the crash points that built it.* Smart crashers plan out Gate placement well before they build the crash points to open it. (Treat Harvesting a Gate like Time Combat for determining whether a crash point has been spent already, or is available for the Gate: Whichever Action is performed first, gets the crash point [see Who Goes First I A Time Travel Game? pg. 27].)

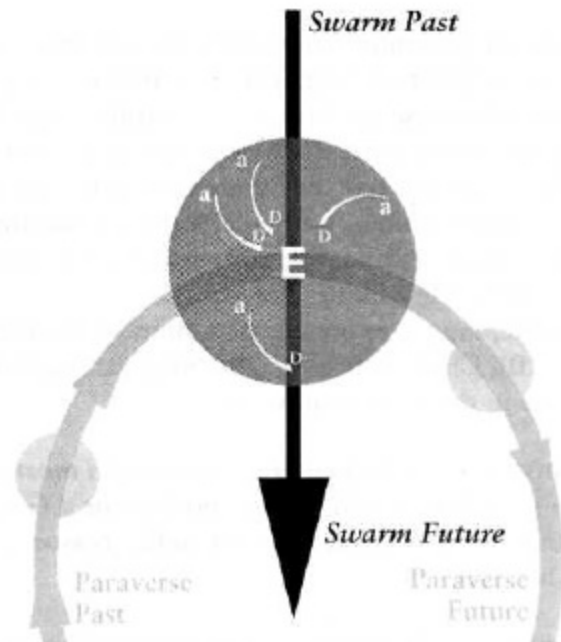
What a Pocket is Like.

A Pocket exists as a parallel path to the universe from which it derives, and ultimately collapses back into. When you make a pocket, instead of mere light particles being thrown off their quantum tracks, entire blocks of mass are pulled away, maintaining a cohesion that mirrors events in the mother universe. This is temporary, since either the Swarm alters events back, or you dissipate away in the pocket, as per the table on pg. 44.

What passing a Gate is Like

The Gate itself is invisible. There are no wheels of fire, no clouds fast-forwarding nearby. When the crash is to a markedly different landscape, the Gate is sometimes visible at one precise angle. (Some characters with Telepathy or Clairvoyance may be able to sense its presence.) But most crashes happen in places and times that are identical in both universes. People and things from the paraverse cannot enter the universe you're departing, since it is not usually possible to return through a Gate; most are one-way trips. You need only stand at the right place at the right time, and over you go, vanishing from here and appearing there silently.

Each paraverse is a vast area of space and time, so try to make certain that wherever you're going is a habitable area. Nothing is worse than passing through a Gate and seeing a parallel Earth thousands of miles away... (See pg. 44.)



A simplified model of a Gate.

As the paraverse's events and timeline intersect with Swarm Prime's, the differences between them becomes increasingly shallow. The crash points you spend remove these last few barriers.

The only question then becomes *Where is the Gate?*

Crashing the Multiverse

The earliest practice most crashers get is blindly “altering events” for their artisans.

The authors wanted to find some way to disguise this truth from players, and keep it for a GM’s section, but there’s just no way. GMs that want to start their players out blind should make them play with just a character sheet and no access to the book! This is what the worst artisans do anyway: Restrict their victims’ access to knowledge, truth, and freedom.

Can I or Can’t I Alter Events?

Most crashers “in the know” realize that if you can remember a set of events that you deliberately changed, there must be some reason. In the terms of physics, the mass has to come from somewhere. If you buy a teapot and take it home, and then go back in time, and destroy the teapot before you have a chance to buy it, and can recall both, then the circumstances must allow both. There must be a universe where you buy a teapot, and another where you prevent yourself (or an extra, actually) from getting it. If the timeline(s) were just a big zipper you could flex around, with matter being rearranged through causality, you’d forget you made a change, and possibly even forget that time travel is a reality— little details like that. Fortunately, the multiverse makes sense.

This is why we call it *alternating* events, not *altering* events. ‘Alternate history’ is complete sentence.

So if you do have an inkling to save someone, or make right something that once went wrong— go for it. The unsuspecting people of the world you are about to save may thank you, and wonder how you did it— or be oblivious that they were ever in danger. But be prepared to bear the burden that this victory is always at the price of an ugly foreknowledge of disaster on a paraverse. Don’t get lost in the infinite verses, trying to fix the all. You can’t save infinity.

But yeah, save who you can.

Alternating Advice

Interventions in the histories of paraverses is called *alternating history*. It is a very active and exciting lifestyle. It is *not* for amateurs. Amateurs get dead.

Some look ahead to their years as a Pressed or Turned crasher as a grim blessing, like eating your spinach. Others decide to dare the multiverse from the moment they hear about it, no matter the odds.

Neither attitude is very smart. You can work like a dog for other crashers, pay your dues, and get royally screwed. You can meet with some early success crashing free, only to find you’ve landed in a Box.

The survivors are the ones who take a little, fgive a little, and learn a lot.

If A Tree Crashes In The Forest...

Frankly, crashing goes on all the time, and the Swarm is not always aware of it. These would be the little changes of trees on a hillside, or scaring some bunnies out their burrow instead of letting them sleep. The Swarm often takes a confused and sloppy approach to changing things “back” if no human is involved. But crash points are created anyway, and many lonely (and easily surveyable) spots in the wilderness are favorite Gate nexii.

And, one verse’s wilderness is much like its paraverse: Far away from civilization. Bring a horse or car, or hiking equipment, and something to read...

The problems arise when you have to rescue your friend from a Swarm shakedown in the middle of a crowd or city. The fewer leveller witnesses, the less likely the Swarm is to try to take you down.

Expanded Mnemelos Scale

Acquiring Maps to the Verses

How does one get these useful ‘Mnemelos Scale’ pointers to other verses? Early in the game, crashers may just find them, or even try to buy them off of adventurers who have them to sell. Swapping records of verses with other crashers is a common practice, since only experience can verify the validity of a set of directions. But be careful: many explorers and the multiversal powers behind them are very jealous of their secrets. Not the least of these is Yrnë herself, in defending the Royal Road (which from the outside, arguably leads to the origin of time and versal travel!)

Proximity

Shooting Blind

Many inexperienced crashers believe that just by adding up prepared crash points they can figure the proximity. What they don’t count on is rival crashers stealing their points— sometimes the remaining points are still a Gate nexus in the same spot, but leading to a different destiny and destination. So when acquiring maps and info, careful who you trust. Hey, your best friend may have extras out there who hate your guts...

Negative Proximity

(See Mnemelos Overview Chart, pg. PPP)

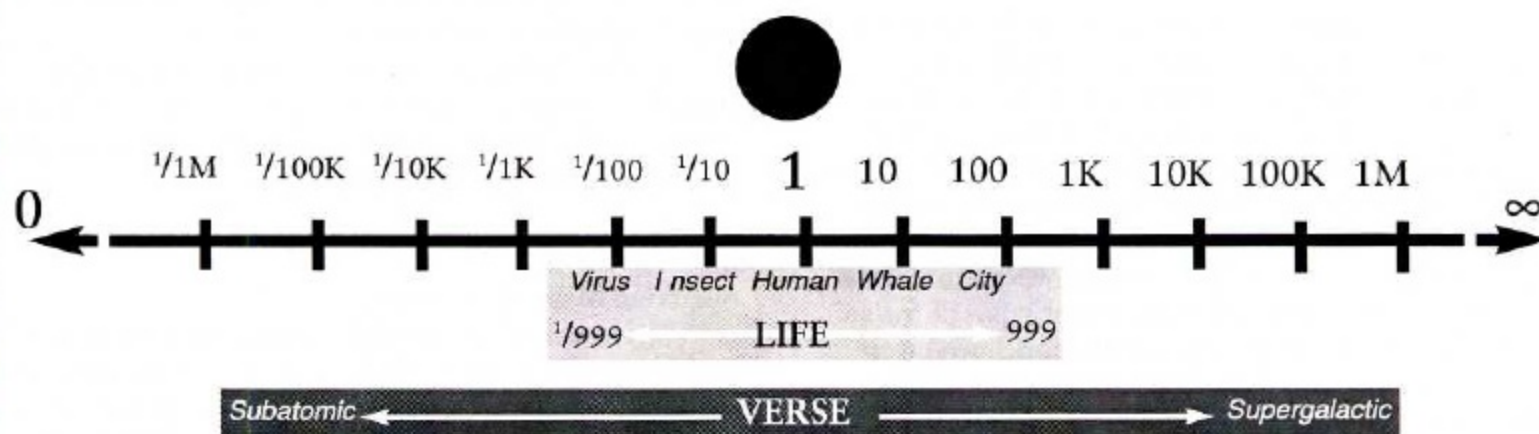
This would seem to be a self-contradictory concept: How can I get closer to a universe than I already am? But as a construct it is what the Order (and ultimately the Singularity) use to bend Swarm Prime to their collective will. Negative Proximity is the sometimes the notation used by crashers to warn others away from collapsed verses; but verses that aren’t there aren’t entered. A negative Thrust notation is usually preferred to warn of dangerous conditions, most commonly verse that have “melded” together, usually resulting in a host of unnatural conditions.

The Dreamcatcher™ Scalable System (v.0.7)

The heart of playing the N^RCISSIST multiverse is in handling infinite differences. In an ironic twist (or an observational inevitability) it has been determined that the old doctrine of humans being the “center of the universe” is true after all— at least in terms of *scale*. Life is almost always in the middle of the scale of things that exist.

Most people are getting familiar with the “metric” of downloadable files from the internet: You’d know that downloading a 10K (kilobyte) file is nothing, but a 10M (megabyte) file would take awhile with a phone connection. These are the question of scale that crashing verses brings to the fore.

The strength of this system is that you don’t have to have an entirely different ruleset for every game you design, nor do you require a thousand adjustments to make cyborgs, pirates, mages, werepeople and space aliens all interact. It’s even simple to design a game where they are all essentially of equal power...



Scalable Thrust

What it Affects

Characters (and anything with stats) can use the Dreamcatcher rules as stated on ppg. PPP-PPP. What makes them different is their home verse. On the Mnemelos Scale, verses have a Thrust rating (∴). These variations represent the mass and energy scale of that verse, and affects all life in it. This makes for some profound differences between verses—all the difference in the worlds.

Put simply, when interacting with people from or in another world, characters multiply their scores by their home world’s Base Thrust to determine challenges.

The scale affects BODY and QUICK results, and the success of Skills and Benefits carried over to other verses. It can also affect Armor, Damage, and any other physical (but not *time*) rating in the Dreamcatcher System. Characters will likely be amazed at their own strength or shudder at their weakness upon crashing to a verse with a wildly different Thrust. The GM can always interpret whether a different Thrust means a physically different size: often, it need not.

MIND is normally treated as equivalent as far as information and thought is concerned. So you can be a PhD with a MIND 7 from a Thrust 1 verse, and you’re on the same page as your extra from a Thrust 100 verse. Although at home she counts her MIND as 7, too, in comparison to you, *her* Telepathy will be 700 + her triple-digit Skill bonus—so watch your ass.

Hence, if you’re playing in a verse of superheroes, they may all be Thrust Base 10, or higher! Perhaps your long-running fantasy campaign has been Base 10 all along, which may explain why when cross-overs occur, the PCs kick high-tech butt, armed with only swords and bows.

This system can also explain why magic or technology works or fails or is altered in another verse: the molecules or fields of energy don’t match. Or maybe the gods of one verse can be generous with power, but in another verse have to be stingy. The impressions of life-draining or energy-surgings powers are given a meaningful underpinning.

Interpreting the Scale in one universe

Life Scale The light gray box above demonstrates that life is in fragile balance in the multiverse. Only two categories of Thrust to either side of the human mean, and life is threatened or extinguished. Note especially the examples of Life, how *Virus* and *City* are even different *interpretations* of living organisms.

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Mnemelos Overview Chart

	π	∴	∅
	Proximity	Thrust	Drift
High	very inconvenient	deadly to humans	runs very fast
Low	fairly convenient	acceptable	runs a little fast
Zero	you are here	dangerous	runs parallel
Negative	gone or melded	an entropy trap	runs 'backwards' (opposite arrow)

Interpreting the Scale in one universe

Life Scale The light gray box above demonstrates that life is in fragile balance in the multiverse. Only two categories of Thrust to either side of the human mean, and life is threatened or extinguished. Note especially the examples of Life, how *Virus* and *City* are even different *interpretations* of living organisms.

GMs have leave to irradiate/freeze-dry or otherwise make ill characters that enter verses that are more 250x/+ their native Thrust Base. Put simply: If you're Thrust Base 1, in a verse over ∴250 or under ∴1/250—you start to die. Upon entering Thrust of over ∴999, or under ∴1/999, you die instantly and permanently, period. A working damage method or purposes of this version of N^{ARC}ISSIST would be:

<i>For every</i>	<i>character takes, per day</i>
∴250 x native Thrust base	1 IP radiation damage
∴1/250 x native Thrust base	-1 to each Attribute

Universe Scale This demonstrates the totality of a verse: six categories of Thrust to either side of the mean. Anything larger exceeds the capacity of the verse to contain it. Anything smaller, and it either cannot meaningfully enter the verse, or is absorbed by the first electron that comes by.

Interpreting the Scale in paraverses

Simple method

If the ∴ is 1 - 9, the verse is considered Thrust Base 1. If ∴ is 10 - 99 it is Thrust Base 10; ∴ .1 - .9 is Thrust Base .1 (or 1/10), and so on. When "calculating" for character stats, just add the zero, or move the decimal point. Thrusts that are consistently close to the next Thrust Base may well have inhabitants that natively have a bonus of +1 or +2—see Slight Adjustments below.

Complex method

Players with close affinities to their calculators are allowed to haggle over every point of Thrust, if the GM wants that level of realism (or mathematical carnage) in his or her game.

Superiority between verses - Each category of Thrust a character's home verse is greater than his opponent's verse is equivalent to one rank of Skill for purposes of superiority. Put simply: If you're a Fencing Grandmaster from a verse with Thrust 100, and are fighting a Master from a Thrust 10 verse, you beat him (except on a Blunder, of course). A Journeyman Fencer from a Thrust 1000 verse could beat a Master from a Thrust 1 verse—though they'd have to meet up in some Thrust 10 or 100 verse to both survive!

Drift: An Overview

Drift is the rate of change of the proximity of verses. Put simply, it's how fast the target verse is moving away or towards the verse you're in. In game terms, therefore:

Harog Year 5 Day 7 > Affiliation II
 $\pi 10 \therefore 17 \emptyset 0$

would indicate that Harog was running parallel to Affiliation II at that time, but:

Harog Year 5 Day 7 > Xenon III
 $\pi 10 \therefore 15 \emptyset 40$

would indicate that Harog was running slower than Xenon III by a factor of 40. Also, to reach the same point in Xenon III a day later *might* be $\pi 50 (10 + 40)$ but that assumes Drift is constant—but like cars on the highway, the 'speed' of a verse is rarely completely constant—and in terms of relativity, a stream of cars often looks like they're standing still—to another car.

Negative Drift

There are two arrows of time—one leading in the direction we're familiar with, and another, moving in the equal and opposite direction. Happily, paraverse going the other way aren't made out of antimatter—they're just expanding towards dimensional spaces that are available. Anyway, don't worry about that now. All you need to know is, when in a verse of negative Drift, everything looks normal and the same—time seems to move forward, cause is followed by effect. But in relation to other verses, their stories are unfolding into the past...

The reason the Swarm's agents are rarely found on verses with negative drift is that the Singularity does not conceive of time as having more than one relevant direction. In the Singularity's monolithic worldview, spanners can go Down, but only by being dissolved into FTL particles, and reformed on the far end of their 'journey'—time itself is the 'natural' expansion from Big Bang to... well, the Singularity. Even the Quicker are dismayed by the 'other arrow' of Time.

Compounding Drift

Now here's the cool part. Swarm spanners have a huge heirarchy that says how far they're *allowed* to travel time and so on. Control is a big deal for them. But crashers have the angle, plain and simple.

Say you need to go Up in time. Find a closeby verse with a high drift—say

Homeworld > Exemplar I $\pi 2 \therefore 5 \emptyset 40$

For every day that passes on Exemplar I, 40 days passes on Homeworld. Now go

Exemplar I > Exampleopolis II $\pi 2 \therefore 5 \emptyset 50$

For every day that passes on Exampleopolis II, 50 days pass on Exemplar I.

So by retracing your steps, as long as the Thrust or Drift don't *wildly* fluctuate, you'll have travelled ($40 \times 50 =$) 2000 days (5.78 years) into Homeworld's future, spending only a couple days and 8 crash points. And verses with even higher Drifts are always out there!

The same works for negative Drift, only into the (relative) past.

This holds true *as long as you retrace your steps, verse by verse*. Even if available alternate routes include

Homeworld > Exampleopolis II $\pi 4 \therefore 5 \emptyset 20$

or Exampleopolis II > Homeworld $\pi 12 \therefore 10 \emptyset 0$

...because dimensional travel is like that. It is *the path you take back and forth* that determines how much time you travel. Think about that, then take a breather.

Ordered Chains

Some strings of verses are highly in sync with one another. One of the most famous is the Adchallazzar Cascade (or the 'Chaz') which has a steady stream of paraverses all with evenly incremented Proximity, Thrust and (negative) Drift, *and* stay in tight Proximity to the Swarm verse. Crashers like it because all the Chadze verses have an unmistakable Babylonian/Arabic flavor, and many have locals savvy to crashing, and helpful to travellers. And the Drift is very attractive, looking something like this:

Chaz I (day 1) > Chaz II $\pi 2 \therefore 10 \emptyset -10$
 Chaz II (day 2) > Chaz III $\pi 2 \therefore 20 \emptyset -20$
 Chaz III (day 3) > Chaz IV $\pi 2 \therefore 30 \emptyset -30$
 and so on...

Many individual verses of the Chaz have 'chazes' of their own, allowing for some very fine-tuned crashing.

Crashing when you know the lay of the verses is as easy as riding the train.

Yrnë and the gangs tending the Royal Road

It's *like* a train... but remember, while it's convenient for the passengers, someone has to *operate* the train. At lower caste, that's what you do. Lower caste crashers spend alot of effort creating crash points for their 'betters'. Smart GMs know that doing someone else's sh—work does not an adventure make; hence suffice to say that vast numbers of crashers are out there toiling to build crash points for their Yrnëan superiors—and often getting stomped on by the Swarm. The player characters are likely to win higher caste by performing daring missions for their Merchant and Warrior benefactors—and all the while struggling to make their own ends (crash points) meet.

Uncharted? Roll for Thrust and Drift—

Impatient crashers are known for saying, "Screw waiting around or gathering crash points, I just want to go." Outside Swarm Prime and the Royal Road, it's always possible to get to another verse just by changing something. The trouble is you have *no* idea where you're going, or even whether you've entered a pocket or a stable verse.

It's always a good idea to get your bearings to avoid this crashshoot with existence. After all, it's *your* existence. But sometimes circumstances dictate one to crash away on the fly.

To determine where you've crashed to, roll a d10 twice: once for Thrust, and once for Drift. Proximity is determined by crash points spent, of course:

Crashing Blind	\therefore	\emptyset
1 Victory	Equal to native verse	0
2	Within a decimal point	0
3-4	Within a point	very low
5-6	1.25x native verse	low
7	1.5x native verse	low
8	2x native verse	high
9	2.5x native verse (or 0)	high
0 Blunder	over 2.5x (or negative)	high, and closer to the Swarm!

The options on a Thrust roll of 9 or 0 are entirely the GM's discreton. The "native verse" is that of the most experienced crasher in the group.

Getting to E

In their book [CONTINUUM] the Swarm advises you to chop up their causality-explanation page with a knife, so you can wince at the value you are destroying. Very coy. Subtly fascist. Makes us look evil *and* stupid. Well, put those boxcutters away, take a look below and read the truth. If you manage to crash free, and conquer infinite worlds, then you can paper doll entire libraries to your heart's content.

A change in events is made by the intrepid crasher at A and either reverts to a non-paradox state without affect—natural failures sometimes happen— at B or it increases in affect until C. At C comes the As/AsNot, the border between two universes.

But look out! Here comes the Swarm, and you've made 'em mad. D is their Yet, which they think of as their Required Future. They apply their 'sentient force' all over your lovely design like whitewash on an oil painting, and as far as they're concerned, it's over, they win, let's break for lunch. You're slapped with a point of Frag for your trouble, and probably have a Time Combat waiting for you to fight.

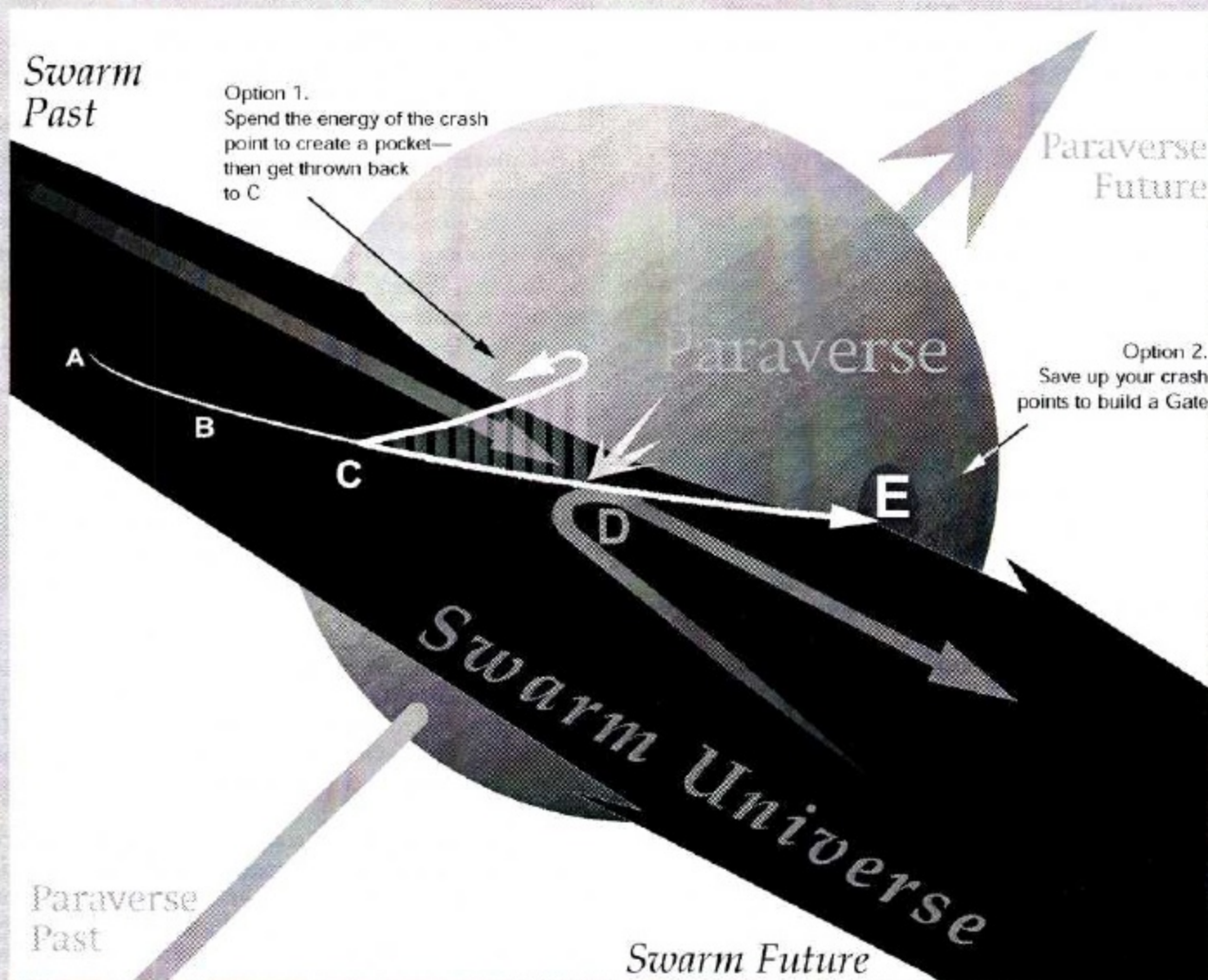
Ah, but hang on. The Swarm *has* put events back, but what about those other events you started? The Swarm is encouraged by the Singularity to fix events as close to the as/as not as possible, but they very often miss this exactitude. They miss it enough for some— indeed, quite a bit— of energy to slip through.

In fact, all the Swarm does is change events— *just like you do!* They just *change them back!!* Only your events are 'no good' to them, so they have to squelch it from all sides.

The beauty of it all is, they never notice you 'missing'. Their cameras and witnesses only recall the Swarm timeline. They hypnotize any spanners that get caught into a pocket universe, and this almost never occurs anyway. The pocket is the spacetime between C and D. The Swarm at D slam you back squarely into the Swarm universe; vacation over.

But a stream of energy has already been released—a pocket of extraneous reality, at least *exists*. The path may be blocked, but there *is* a path. Enough of these pocket-paths combined, and you have the way to a Gate.

You want to get to E. And you want that E to be the best E you can f—g imagine.



Screwing Around With Spanning & Crashing

Slipshank

Frag is never desirable, but crashers are always being backed into a corner. A difference is often made when a favorite weapon is discovered hidden within reach, or a lost map is in one's breast pocket after all. A crasher of Span 0.6 or higher may will any known object to be wherever he wants it at the place he's currently at. This does not extend to suddenly having in one's head previously-learned information or known skills, but can include a Gemini Incident (see below), or a future newspaper. The price is 1 Frag each, and the need to physically place the slipshanked object does go in his 'Yet'. Happily, successful placement of the object by the crasher himself cures the Frag.

Note that the Swarm forbids slipshanks to its spanners with more than Zero Frag. This fact can be very useful in combat and Time Combat, as you can keep pulling out more weapons, and they can't. As long as you have places nearby you haven't looked in yet.

Gemini Incidents: Encountering Elders, Extras... and Echoes.

Encountering oneself seems inevitable, but what is that other person with your face? There are three major likelihoods for that unnatural twin being in your life:

Elders. This would be you, coming from your 'Yet', or personal future. It's very difficult to tell if it's really you, though. Some crashers rely on secret passwords, but many prefer to ignore or distrust anyone who looks like themselves, and make a mental note to simply *never* bother their juniors.

Extras. This is a person from (or in) a paraverse, that has your name, genome, and/or anything else you deem private and personal. Many extras are actually highly divergent, and the differences go way beyond the goatee they may be sporting. But they are usually similar enough to sow confusion unless dealt with.

Echoes. These would be Swarm spanners posing as you. Some of them even volunteer for this suicidal duty. Echoes are often seen when the Swarm wish to humiliate, rob or demoralize you. They exist solely to live your life the way *they* want it lived—the only remaining detail is to dispose of you. They are harbingers of your demise: Kill them and crash away as quick as you can.

Young Geminis.

A crasher may not even remember his earliest set of Geminis: Ones that took place before he learned to travel time. These are called the Young Geminis. It's usually wisest to visit your leveller self in half-remembered encounters in youth, and take disguises when doing so.

Elder and Junior Incidents.

Theoretically, if both participants are in the same paraverse, each incident *should* happen twice: Once for the junior (the "junior incident") and once again later for the elder (the "elder incident"). During the junior incident, the GM portrays the elder crasher. During the elder incident, the GM portrays the junior crasher. This allows the player to experience the Gemini much as his character would.

Initiating a Gemini.

The GM may include a Gemini Incident at any time. The GM plays the elder version of the crasher, and may appear to deliver information, take or give objects, or just pass through ignoring the junior, among many other possibilities.

If a player wishes to meet an elder self, he doesn't take a point of frag, but the GM rolls 1d10 secretly on the table below.

1 - 2	Goes without a hitch— unless the player screws it up
3 - 4	Elder shows up late, possibly nervous
5 - 6	Elder leaves a message within sight
7 - 8	No response
9	It's an extra— some dim, probably trying to take the character's place
0	It's an echo— the Swarm is on to the character
Naturally the GM decides the details of any variables (i.e. content of notes, where the dim came from and why, etc.)	

If a player decides his character should meet a junior self while in the Swarm universe, he must have either 1) played the junior incident first, 2) be meeting a junior of Span Zero as per Young Geminis above, or 3) attempts a Gemini in a Pocket. Player attempts to meet a junior without removing at once to a pocket or paraverse results in Time Combat with the Swarm: Too much causality is involved.

Gemini in a Pocket. Sometimes the Swarm gets the better of you. A crasher has gotten close to crashing free, built up a respectable number of crash points, but finds himself at Frag 6 or 7, with the Swarm close on his tail. This crasher knows he's done for, but wants the equivalent of a second chance at life: So he goes to warn a junior.

It's tantamount to suicide, and will frag out the elder (when pocketing from the Swarm universe). The elder must convince a junior to spend a crash point the junior just created, so to share a pocket universe. (The elder's alteration of his own past at the same moment creates the second point of crash necessary for 'two' people to enter).

The psychological environment necessary to effect a gemini in a pocket is very specific: a crasher must *decide* to attempt the pocket gemini *after* he's made the crash point. Otherwise an elder will show up without surprising or changing the junior, and the attempt to gemini in a pocket is lost.

The elder may say or do anything in the pocket to convince the junior to avoid his mistakes, including handing over written information, etc. When the pocket collapses, the elder takes all the frag, and usually fragged out. If not, the Swarm will be after him to finish the job. But the junior gets away with no additional frag from entering the pocket and experiencing the gemini.

The player must take up a new character sheet, and set the character back to where he was when he was that junior, subject to GM approval. If he and the GM cannot recall his earlier statistics precisely, remove at least one Skill, and reduce all other Skill and Ability scores by 1 (min. 1). GM's decision on what scores the junior has is final. The player now plays the junior.

The GM takes away the elder's character sheet. After all, his 'life' still happens in the Swarm universe. But the junior need never be that man. Who was he? An extra? A very confused echo? Something nameless, even inexplicable?

This is why most crashers don't respect their elders.

Yanking the Chain.

This lack of respect is often so intense, gemini incidents often give the junior great power over the elder. The 'elder' is usually there to make sure *his* timeline plays out, but what if it's just an extra or an echo? What smart crasher would ever allow themselves to meet a junior, since that person's Philosophy need have no respect for your existence?

So when an 'elder' shows up, many juniors make heavy demands on them, and give little in return. Some decide to help, others just ignore the intruder, still others get vicious. It's all up to the individual.

Juniors can afford to be callous, because the 'elder' takes the frag, and depending on how divergent the junior gets, it could be a lot of frag. Many crasher elders are meek and afraid in the presence of their juniors: The *junior* might decide to alter the outcome!

Try to avoid entanglements with your juniors, unless you are very very *very* sure of yourself. And besides: That 'junior' might be an echo assigned to erase you. You've been warned.

Pocket Treasures

Don't have enough bullets to kill that Foxhorn? Don't have the money to buy food for your crib? Don't have that last rare trading card to complete your collection?

This use of pocket is limited to those of Span 0.7 or higher: You can bring anything back up to your weight allowance (see table, pg. 19). This includes, at Spans 2 and higher, people.

Pocket people are exact duplicate extras, down to memories and hairstyles, of the levellers in the universe you pocketed from. This can be great fun, as it leaves the Swarm stepping on itself to explain how you did that. (Though heed the warning under Faking Death, below.)

But don't get carried away: Pocket frag is very hard to cure, and bringing things across only makes it more difficult, not less. Pocket Treasures each have 1 Frag.

Surveillance In Absentia

Casing out a room filled with deadly opponents, reading files locked away in cabinets or limited-access terminals, even practicing an escape route or assassination is entirely feasible inside a pocket, if it's large enough. This is the most common use for a pocket: Gathering otherwise inaccessible information.

Be aware of the limits of this, of course. Contracting a deadly virus in a pocket, or being stabbed, shot, or poisoned there doesn't mean the damage goes away once you return to Swarm spacetime. But you can witness consequences of actions, or find hidden dangers and prepare for them far better than any Swarm spanner can.

Another potent benefit of this technique is of spotting who the spanners and crashers are—in a pocket, you're the only version of you there, and *the same goes for other time travellers*. So unless they follow you in (see pg. 24), which Swarm spanners almost never do, any people you see there are ordinary levellers back in the main universe. ...People absent from a pocket are those already outside the natural course of time, are your enemies— or unexpected new friends.

Objects that have travelled time in the Swarm universe are also often absent (like the clothes the spanners are wearing), though this is not a universal. Objects that already carry 1 point of Frag are usually absent from a pocket.

Taking Over

One of the smartest things to do once you do crash free is to find your extra in that paraverse, and swipe his life. Now, some Philosophies and a couple Kings of Yrnë teach the policy to be kind and befriend your extras, but this rarely if ever works. Remember that the cultures and people in nearby paraverses are near-identical in fears, suspicions, disbelief and punishment as they are here.

And nothing is easier to get away with than murder when no one is asking after a missing person. And as for disposing of the body...

Faking Death

Getting killed or fragged out is no fun, as it's usually painful and laced with the knowledge that the Swarm has beaten you. So we recommend the practice of faking your death.

This can be done in a number of ways, but the most expedient method successful crashers use is to deposit the dead body of an extra back in the Swarm universe. This does entail crashing free to a full-fledged, stable paraverse, returning and escaping once again. But tying up the loose end is the best way to keep the Quicker from chasing you across the multiverse. It also satisfies even the most zealous Foxhorn that you are well and truly dead, and further assaults on your existence and timeline in the Swarm universe are likely to be suspended.

Some wags think it's fun to deposit a hapless, living extra of themselves back with the Swarm. This usually results in annoyed crasher contacts, further Foxhorn hunts on your timeline, and being put on the Quicker's most wanted list.

Time Combat: the Price Exacted by this World

When Is It Time Combat?

As far as the Swarm is concerned, every crash point is the beginning of a Time Combat. If you want to open a door, they'll want to slam it and crush your fingers, or as *They* put it: "Whenever sentient force is applied to create deliberate paradox and Frag another sentient being, Time Combat has commenced. In other words, once someone punches you, get your friends and fight back."

For when Time Combat concludes, see pg. 32.

Why Me?

There are many myriad reasons why a crasher or crib of crashers want to create crash points, and any of these can start a Time Combat. Sometimes two cribs choose the same event, and wish mutually exclusive outcomes. With only one universe to start from, that makes for a careening set of as/as nots, and desperate crashers often find themselves battling their own. The Swarm is certain to show up to put us all down, and laugh while they do it.

But the Swarm can choose any moment of your life in their universe to cause you grief—genuine *grief*. Their motive is purely evil: Keep all matter and energy for their use. Countless paraverses have been swallowed up by them already, and your puny little attempts to escape are not going to stop their pitiless juggernaut.

Prepare for Combat in Advance

You may describe to your GM in great detail new Stratagems you will take during Time Combat, but it's often best to plan them out between game sessions. Essentially, you should describe your invented Stratagem in writing, the GM should take the time to consider its consequences before approving it. The GM may edit the Stratagem before it comes into use, and interpret its description during the game. Stratagems that prove inconsistent or unbalancing may be reedited by the GM between games.

On the other hand, N^{RCISSIST} is a game of invention on the fly. Any object or objective you bring back from a pocket or paraverse that the GM approves, can be implemented...

Know Your Corner, and When to Rendezvous

Try to arrange meeting placetimes so that if you're separated from your friends suddenly, you'll all be able to find one another again. This is an essential coordinating element for any group wishing to succeed at Time Combat, and it's a necessary part of the everyday life of a crasher as well.

A good place to meet is one's crib, if feasible. If you and your friends are doing Combat in or near other crashers' territory, be careful to not upset the natives, or

you may find a three-way brawl on your hands.

Rendezvousing every other (or every third) Sweep of Time Combat is a good idea, and it's been proven to work. It allows friends to coordinate and get the job done.

Swarm Tactics

Time Combat often begins shortly after you see a Swarm spanner "Measuring" you. It's a Stratagem whereby they believe they are pinning down your every move through time, and nail you. (Not unlike what you do before creating a crash point—only their case it's *you* they want to change.) It looks ominous enough: A solitary figure standing still either in the distance, or closer on, staring at you. Then the Swarm arrive on all sides, beating you senseless and fragging you, or trying to.

This is because the Swarm has to make certain of where you and your friends are *before* they begin to attack. Any crash point is going to be targeted, which is why using a pocket is so often associated with Time Combat.

Losing

When the Swarm brings a crasher to heel, it's usually a matter of spanning in, surprising him, and clobbering him physically. Since spanning is at will and instantaneous, they don't mess around, and try to get you from behind. Open-faced honesty is not their strong suit.

Worse, they may capture you and keep you unconscious—even in dreamless sleep in case you have Dreaming skills—and then ream your brain for its information. Your dead husk is discarded expediently enough.

But worse than even that is the possibility, especially if badly fragged, that you'll be taken to a facility of the Singularity with the ugly moniker of 'Cold Storage'. Cold Storage means they want to use your frag to help power their own inhuman 'civilization'. Being fragged out beyond Frag 7 means you're both very helpless because you can't think straight, but very dangerous to them, due to your unstable causality. And be careful, because many factions in Yrnë will use badly fragged crashers as power sources as well. These are called 'Vessels', and will be detailed in a subsequent version of N^{RCISSIST}.

Winning

Hiding your identity and your whenabouts is the surest road to success in Time Combat. If you remain a marginal person, a cipher, during the course of every normal day, they need never suspect you as a crasher. Spans below 0.6 are rarely targeted, because the Swarm isn't so perfect as to notice such miniscule spans. And occasionally you'll fight a less experienced spanner, or your crib may meet an objective through cautious planning. The fewer spanners you frag, the less motive the Swarm has to avenge them.

But be quick. *They* ultimately get their way *here*. Try to build a way out of this universe, because beyond it, Time Combat is mostly an unpleasant memory.

As for Frag that may seem unfixable (due to a pocket you used or a distant—but successful—Fragging Action) you can turn to your friends for help. (See The Fix Stratagem, pg. 28.) Also, the Merchants of Yrnë can be bargained with for help in fixing more difficult frags (see pg. 39).

Conducting Time Combat

These rules simulate what actually occurs on the unfortunate occasions when crashers fight spanners—or one another. With the Swarm eternally patrolling their universe, Time Combat is run across all too frequently.

Intention & Participation

Time Combat is to harm an opponent either by intentionally increasing their Frag, or surprising them and stopping them physically.

Frag is increased by attempting to change any incident in a spanner or crasher's life. Innocuous events are usually chosen by crashers, because trying to kill family members before their time, blow up buildings that are to stand for years more, etc. usually Frags many other Swarm spanners, and they would take action also. The GM may bring in as many other Swarm spanners and independent crashers into a Time Combat as he feels he can handle, and is fair. Some of these combatants may have their own agendas and coordinations, and character crashers may never meet many (or even any!) of the participants in a Time Combat.

For purposes of this version of N^oRCISSIST (v.0.5), events of previously played-out Time Combats cannot be targeted by subsequently played Time Combats.

A character being attacked may do nothing, and try to heal the Frag later. But it's likely that unless you take care of the spanner harassing you, he'll be back soon enough with friends.

Here's an annoying, but functional game rule:

SPAN IS NOT REGAINED DURING TIME COMBAT.

This simulates the stress of conflict and the effects of repeated Frag attempts on all involved. It gives players' the feeling of desperation that the characters would actually be suffering.

Who Goes First in a Time Travel Game?

Initiative in many RPGs is a standard way to determine who strikes first, or gains surprise. And the Physical Combat system (ppg. 14-17) used in N^oRCISSIST is just that. But when Time itself is an element of play, a

unique combat system is necessary.

Each turn of Time Combat is called a **Sweep**. As necessary, refer to each part of the Sweep as an **Element**. Sweeps and Elements are not measurements of Time, but of Actions.

In each Sweep, each participant chooses a **Direction** and a **Stratagem**. During Time Combat each player has sixty seconds "real time" alone with the GM each Sweep to declare their crasher's actions.

Direction

Crashers must always declare the Direction of their next Sweep whenever they alter an event, referred to in Time Combat as a Fragging Action (i.e. creating Crash and Frag). This is because if they 1) do not Span or 2) try to Span Up, they will enter a pocket. Spanning away Levelly or Down nets them 1 Crash Point (see pg. 22), and may Frag an opponent, as per the tables on pg. 33.

- *Going Down*
- *Staying Level*
- *Spanning Level*
- *Going Up*

GOING DOWN to the Past often has the advantage of attempts to Frag, such as Hit and Run. While the timelines of Swarm spanners may wend all over spacetime, all began as levellers, as were (most) of their ancestors.

STAYING LEVEL in a Present (not Spanning) has the advantage of certain clarity: one isn't spanning in the heat of the moment, one can observe the first volley of attacks, and one conserves Span for final assaults. Or, if you've just fragged someone, Staying Level the subsequent Sweep puts you in a pocket (see Pocket stratagem, pg. 29)

SPANNING LEVEL in a Present is usually done when one wants to keep a Crash Point for later, and not spend the following Sweep in a pocket, nor waste any Span.

GOING UP to the Future has the advantage of attempts to find the location of most of the spanners and crashers involved in the Combat with Oracle. Except, of course, combatants farther Up. Attempts to Span Up directly after a Fragging Action lands one instead in a pocket made by the Fragging Action. The crasher will not gain a Crash Point for the Action, but will also spend no Span, since the span Up fails.

Naturally, the advantages of one Direction create disadvantages in the others, as detailed above. And once again, **SPAN IS NOT REGAINED DURING TIME COMBAT.**

Acceptable Stratagems

Stratagems are shorthand for a series of actions during Time Combat. Since the pace is kept fast during the game, a spanner may choose only one Stratagem per sweep. They come in 3 categories:

- **Attacks/Defenses**
 - some basic swipes and parries across time
- **Spin Control**
 - manipulating information to find or fool the enemy
- **Swarm Tactics**
 - some of the worst weapons they have at their disposal

Here follows a few of the approved Stratagems for the N^oRCISSIST game:

Attacks/Defenses

The Fix (Statue of Liberty)

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent ≥	To a Max. of
1 minute	n/a	—	—

The Swarm have a skewed understanding of this Stratagem, and call it by a number of names like 'Statue of Liberty' or 'Cheshire Cat'. It's really the fastest means for repairing pocket frag.

They believe the intent is only to deliver the coveted second point of Frag to an opponent just before Time Combat begins by making the opponent... late for the first point of Frag they received. (Ensuring a bus breaks down, a car stalls, an escalator catches their pantleg, etc.) But in fact we usually target spanners who are fragging us for creating and entering a pocket (the first point of frag the Swarm spanner noticed, and was coming to change back). This has the special benefit of letting the crasher *lose* a point of Frag if successful: Essentially, the crasher moves the as/as not right back on the Swarm spanner, who can't understand what a 'pocket' is. (If tried on a crasher, you lose the point of frag, but they wind up in a new pocket... and will get the Swarm's frag for being there.)

The crasher goes to a point just before his victim knew he first was Fragged in this Time Combat, preferably before Time Combat commenced. There he performs a Fraggng Action (and should describe it as per Hit & Run) the main function is to delay the target's discovery that he was fragged, or place the discovery elsewhere or elsewhere.

Once you've fragged the same spanner in the same Time Combat twice, by the Ending Time Combat rules (pg. 32), the Combat's over! Now you can try and slip away, having fixed that nasty pocket frag, and leaving the Swarm toady with a nasty knot: Fragged for not knowing he was Fragged! The Swarm has already done the work of getting you out of your transdimensional fix (slamming you back out of the pocket) and now is obliged to make their own minions forget about the whole thing, probably through hypnotism. What a hoot!

Gemini Flush

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent ≥	To a Max. of
10 mins.	n/a	—	—

This is a dangerous Stratagem, as it gives the user a point of Frag as per Slipshank/Gemini Incident rules (ppg. 24-25). However, it is strong way to span in and engage in Physical Combat [see pg. 17]. An elder arrives, played by the GM, and both may attack any opponents. The elder will probably do what the player intends, but the GM may decide otherwise in any circumstance as he sees fit, including having the elder leave.

During Time Combat, if Gemini Flush is the chosen stratagem, another elder may appear per Bout, resulting in even more than two of the same spanner in the same Combat. Each costs a point of Frag; this Frag can be cured after the Combat as per Slipshank/Gemini Incident rules (ppg. 24-25). There is also a 1 in 10 chance that each elder will be an echo sent by the Swarm: the GM rolls secretly for each elder; any result of 0 means the Swarm sends a lookalike to hound the crasher.

The elder(s) will depart after the end of the Sweep unless the junior attempts to direct them. The player must successfully roll against the elder's Quick at the end of each Sweep, or the elder departs. Success means that elder will stay in the Combat, and can take actions as an additional player character.

The player must use a separate Span Card for each elder during Time Combat; he may also wish to note the elders' movement into his 'Yet', though this isn't required. The elder(s) depart soon after Time Combat is over., since few crasher elders are very comfortable among their juniors.

Harbinger

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent ≥	To a Max. of
1 second	n/a	—	—

If a successful attack (Frag or physical) on an opponent has been made, but he or his cohorts are still engaged in the Combat, this stratagem is useful for increasing one's advantage in the Time Combat.

The combatant confronts his opponent not with Physical Combat, but with psychological warfare: evidence of his defeat from the attack mentioned above (a bloody knife, a photo of his humiliation or confusion from frag, a rent and stained piece of his clothing) is shown to or left where a junior of the opponent can find it. Crashers (*not* Swarm spanners) of Span 1 and higher may roll against Quick, any success means they take no penalty.

But if they fail (or are not allowed) the Quick roll, the elder (the one you're fighting) knows the threat was made good, and he is penalized -1 on all his Skills for the rest of the Combat due to sheer nervousness and self-doubt. This is especially effective against Swarm spanners, since they have an unshakable belief in their Yets.

Harbingers are cumulative if evidence from separate successful attacks are presented to the target. (I.e. a penalty of -2 for proof of two attacks, -3 for three attacks, etc.)

Hide

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent \geq	To a Max. of
7 days	n/a	—	128 days

The crasher slinks off to his corner, and takes no actions. Oracles can locate him only on a Victory. Frunes are halved, round down. Attempts to Frag a Hiding character are penalized +1 on the roll, but aren't impossible; they can't Hide their entire lives. Attempts to Physically attack a crasher or spanner while in his Corner will invite all the members of that Corner to join in the Time Combat; assailants beware.

If his corner is somehow out of the range of his remaining Span, a crasher may declare his Direction as Level, and pretend to be a leveller, living an ordinary, normal life. This always works for Blinkers; Darters must roll a d10 and only fail on a 0. All other crashers must roll vs. Quick: failure means Hide doesn't work; a Blunder or Jinx roll even gives attempts to Frag a bonus of -1 to the assailant's roll. Swarm spanners cannot (or do not) Hide outside a corner.

Hit and Run

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent \geq	To a Max. of
1 minute	n/a	—	—

The crasher targets a specified event, person or object in his opponent's timeline to alter, and therefore Frag, and immediately moves on. The crasher must declare his Fraggling Action (i.e. I move the lamp so that he trips over and breaks it, instead of switching it on; I steal his car keys so he can't arrive on time, etc.), and then roll on the Frag Table (pg. 33).

The player should give a convincing description of how he Frags his target, within the narrow confines of a sixty-second deadline. Many results on the Frag table are up to the GM's discretion, and he may have to decide if what you've attempted works. The GM may also decide from the description that an Action would Frag not only the target, but the fragger and other things beside, so describe carefully!

If successful in Fraggling the target, he must declare his NEXT SWEEP privately to the GM. If the next Sweep declared is Going Down, or Spanning Level, he gains 1 Crash Point. Otherwise, his next Stratagem is Pocket (see below).

Patch

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent \geq	To a Max. of
1 second	n/a	—	—

This is an important stratagem for Swarm spanners, as it employs a quick-fix to known sources of Frag, but with post-Combat consequences.

A spanner or crasher that has located a source of Frag caused in Time Combat (see Oracle) can recover one point of Frag with a non-confrontational action farther Up from the As/As Not. This action must occur between 15 seconds and 30 minutes after the As/As Not.

The player describes his attempt to Patch (i.e. 'I replace the car keys in my pocket in time', 'I arrive and use my

authority to cancel the bogus shipment of lifeboats to the White Star Line', etc.) in such a way that the original assailant is not confronted or encountered at all.

Patches are written into a spanner's(or crasher's) Yet, because they are imperfect resolution, and merely buy a character some Age before the frag comes back to haunt them. They must be better resolved after or later in Time Combat, unless the character rolls a Victory vs. their Span at the time of the Patch.

The GM may always rule a Patch unsuccessful (or even fraggling), and decide whether or not further information would assist in another attempt to Patch.

Pocket

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent \geq	To a Max. of
1 second	special	—	—

This stratagem requires that the crasher either create a crash point (having Measured the target area in a previous Sweep), or revisit one he's already set up (see pg. 22).

The crasher enters a pocket, and may take any action allowed therein. (See ppg. 22, 24-25 for elaboration). He is still held to the sixty-second rule of Time Combat in describing what he does while in the pocket.

A Swarm spanner *will* arrive to knock him back out of the pocket—a new NPC if no Swarm PC or NPC is available, aware or interested in performing the "Hit & Run" or equivalent stratagem this Sweep. If no Swarm spanner was previously involved in the Time Combat, this action will alert the Swarm, and they become involved.

It ends with the crasher taking the requisite point of Frag, and forced back to the precise moment and place he made the change, left only with memories and possibly pocket treasure from the 'other events'.

If the crasher created the crash point this Sweep, it is a Fraggling Action, and he must declare NEXT SWEEP. But if he's used a previously made crash point, he need not.

Reverse Engineer

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent \geq	To a Max. of
1 minute	n/a	—	—

This stratagem is expressly forbidden to Swarm spanners, but not to you. It targets events a spanner knows are in his Yet, and attempts to erase them.

Some preparation of the ground applies:

- 1) Crasher must know who the target is. (either previous to the Combat, or via Oracle.)
- 2) The crasher must Oracle an event in his target's Yet. (Using the question "Where/when is he going?" suffices nicely.)
- 3) The crasher spans to that event, and attempts a Fraggling Action upon it (and should describe it as per Hit & Run).
- 4) Since this is a Fraggling Action, the crasher must declare his NEXT SWEEP.

Note that elder Gemini Incidents are almost always in a Swarm spanner's Yet, even if nothing else is. Attempting to stop a Gemini is very risky, as the GM may bring the

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attacked spanner's elder into the Time Combat (like Gemini Flush, but at no extra penalty of Frag)—and this elder may be of whatever Span and Abilities the GM feels is appropriate. The crasher almost always finds his trouble doubled; it's only attempted when the likelihood of pushing an enemy beyond Frag 7 arises.

Surrender

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent ≥	To a Max. of
1 minute	n/a	—	—

This can be used as a distraction or a ruse, so it may not be as desperate as it sounds.

The crasher, having performed Oracle (or Frune) the previous Sweep, appears before a Swarm spanner combatant in a position of surrender, supplication, or other obvious demonstration of begging for mercy. It is merely a statement that you wish the Combat to end. It is not in any one combatant's power to end a Time Combat, except by the rules stated on pg. 32.

Of course, if you're using this as a ruse, you may simply string them along briefly before attempting Physical Combat. Just make sure your weapon of choice can take all your opponents out at once.

Caution. If you really wish to give yourself up, they will knock you unconscious (and heed the caution about Dreaming, pg. 26). And being at their complete mercy, they will likely finish you off.

Crashers created by artisans are considered dangerous lower-lifeforms by the Swarm. If your reengineering and lifestory are less than excellent, the Swarm will not hesitate to have you killed—during or after vivisection. But if you're a Turned Swarm spanner or can pass as one, you might survive their interrogations and become "a healthy ex-narcissist reintegrated into Continuum life". And you can go out and buy C^oN^tIⁿU^m and play that.

Swarm spanners almost never surrender to crashers. They have too great a terror of the retribution from their own kind, and have been told repeatedly that we're all monsters out to destroy humanity, etc. Be on your strongest guard if you do seem to convince one to Turn during Time Combat: 99.9% chance it's just a ruse.

Spin Control

Cobweb

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent ≥	To a Max. of
7 days	+1	14 days	+6 / 84 days

The crasher or spanner plants false information, in order to fool an Oracle stratagem, and/or possibly deceive a combatant into arriving to perform a Measure. The GM secretly subtracts the Mind score of the Cobweb user from the Skill used in performing the Oracle. If the Oracle is successful despite the Cobweb, the Cobweb is revealed for the false information it is, and anyone can be informed of this through Dreaming, Rendezvous or other logical means.

A Measure stratagem conducted where the Cobweb is placed will also uncover its falsehood, but will distract the Measurer sufficiently to be open to Physical Attack. Cobwebs can become baited traps in this way: Your opponents may suspect you're lurking around the Cobweb, and attempt to get the drop on you. This becomes a layered shell game of information control, with each side trying to get the edge and the final drop on the other.

Cobweb cannot affect the Dreaming Skill unless the Cobwebber has Dreaming himself; in this case, his Dreaming is subtracted from anyone attempting to Oracle information about him with the Dreaming Skill. A successful Oracle or Frune performed with Dreaming also reveals the details of the Cobweb, though not necessarily the creator of the Cobweb.

Rubber Man

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent ≥	To a Max. of
7 days	special	—	—

The crasher Goes Up to a point in the future where he feels he is certain to discover his fate in the outcome of this Time Combat. Naturally, if he finds out something good he rides with it; if he finds out something bad, he can still struggle against the bad news, but at a penalty. The GM rolls d10:

1	<i>Reported Victory.</i>	+5 to all Skills and Abilities in this Combat; crasher will emerge with at most minimal damage, and no additional Frag.
2-5	<i>Signs Favorable.</i>	+3 to all Skills and Abilities in this Combat. No meaningful information available.
6-9	<i>Signs Unfavorable.</i>	-2 to all all Skills and Abilities in this Combat.
0	<i>Reported Death.</i>	-5 to all Skills and Abilities in this Combat; crasher will take at least 2 IP, either during the Time Combat, or immediately after, even if from a seeming accidental source.

A player who's crasher has the Lucky benefit may use his one roll this game to ask the GM to reroll on the Table. Rubber Man can only be played once per crasher per Time Combat.

Measure

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent ≥	To a Max. of
1 day	+2	14 days	+6 / 42 days

The crasher or spanner goes to where an assailant (or victim) is, and studies him clandestinely and in detail—gathering information for *other* spanners to act upon.

The spanner rolls his Mind score, adjusted by Duration. (If the target being Measured doesn't spend at least 14 days on the studied level, these bonuses cannot

accrue.)

Measure dispels the lies of any Cobweb placed at that level and locality. But any bonuses gathered are primarily for the benefit of other spanners whom the Measurer would inform (presumably through Rendezvous). These bonuses are applied any time an informed spanner makes or tries to stop a Fragging Action at that level (such as Hit & Run or Isolate).

The reason the Measurer cannot use the bonuses himself is simply that he learns too much of what happens there. If he tried to change or influence anything, he runs the risk of fragging himself.

Oracle			
Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent ≥	To a Max. of
7 days (in addition to target's Duration)	+1	12 days	+5 / 60 days

This is a critical stratagem, as it allows a crasher or spanner with Anthropology, History, Library Science, or similar Skills to discover information of the Past regarding opponents who have travelled there. Dreaming can also be used, and even has a chance of seeing into the Future. Once located, an opponent can be surprised by a character that has Oracled successfully, and Physical Combat may be initiated.

The spanner attempting Oracle:

- 1) Declares a target character, object or event to research (even if it's only "whoever just fragged me").
 - 2) Declares Duration of study (see box).
 - 3) Asks one and only one of these questions [with examples of usefulness]:
 - a) Who/What is this? [asked if you've been Fragged by an unknown assailant]
 - b) Where and when is he/it? [asked if you intend to go and attack this Sweep, or Measure in a later Sweep]
 - c) Where and when did he/it go? [asked if you've been hit this Sweep, & intend to go and attack next Sweep]
 - d) How (when/where) was it done? [asked if you intend to go and heal Frag]
- Then rolls his ability.

Adjustments to Oracle

In ADDITION to the Duration adjustments (above), THE TARGET'S DURATION (Age Spent) IS ADDED TO THE ORACLER'S DURATION TO DETERMINE THE ORACLER'S BONUSSES. Thus, spending extra time doing anything at one level increases the danger of being discovered and attacked. [See Dangers of Staying Put, pg. 32]

Note that only on a Victory roll will an Oracle reveal a spanner or crasher that is in his native Corner; otherwise, the Oracle fails to pinpoint the character well enough to surprise him.

Characters who have Gone Up gain a +1 to their ability, as more information is available the farther into the future one goes. If the Oracler is farthest ahead in the future of all player participants in the Combat, he gains +2.

If Dreaming is used to Oracle, answers about events and persons farther Up (in the Future) can be got, but the GM secretly penalizes the Oracler's ability by -2 or

more, depending on how hard he deems the information is to come by. The GM need not reveal that the information is about the Future, unless the Oracler is asking 'where & when', or already knows when to look.

Finally, if a spanner or crasher has not spanned this Sweep, and has successfully Oracled, he may Span Levelly and Physically Attack this Sweep, if otherwise feasible. Or hit the opponent with a Reverse Engineer.

Rendezvous			
Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent ≥	To a Max. of
1 day	n/a	—	—

Another critical stratagem to employ, as working in concert allows assailants to be brought down expediently.

This is how the Swarm works together to coordinate that special swarm-like effect, and how groups of crashers plan ways to counterattack and survive. When Rendezvous is declared, a corner or other private place within spanning range is gone to, and at least a day of Age is spent there. Nearly all information known, including Frag, Oracles, etc. are shared by all friendly parties at the Rendezvous; crash points are assumed to be kept secret to the individual, unless they volunteer the whereabouts. The Rendezvousing characters are given three minutes to discuss the Next Sweep, then each may have sixty seconds apiece to make declarations for the Next Sweep, if they desire to coordinate plans.

The Rendezvous begins on the Element when the last character arrives for the Rendezvous. More than one character must declare Rendezvous to the same corner in the same Sweep, or it is assumed they missed one another, or the information miscarried.

Rendezvous la Reve			
Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent ≥	To a Max. of
2 hours	n/a	—	—

This acts like the Rendezvous stratagem, only the characters conserve Span (and Age) by Dreamsharing in order to meet. Naturally, all participants in Rendezvous la Reve must be meet the requirements for Dreamsharing, and therefore are likely to be all Grandmaster Dreamers. Each must successfully roll their Skill, or miss the Rendezvous in the Dreamtime. Happily, longer Dreaming sessions add bonuses to a successful Rendezvous.

Swarm Tactics

Frune			
Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent ≥	To a Max. of
7 days	+1	14 days	+6 / 84 days

Frune is primarily a Swarm stratagem, since it relies on spanner gossip and grapevine up and down spacetime to gather and disseminate its information. The spanner asks around among others in the Swarm for information, especially regarding targets and other matters of his current Time Combat. But he might Frune anything.

The extra time is taken because 1) Swarm spanners are very very cautious about passing information to people engaged in Time Combat, and 2) any one question the Fruner can imagine may be asked. The spanner must roll his Span, (as adjusted by Duration) to gain an answer. Failure nets only comments like "Further information is not available here."

Crashers may attempt to Frune, but note that if *any* participant Frunes successfully during the Combat, the Swarm is more widely involved. Therefore, the Swarm will actively encourage *all* Swarm survivors to patch up any details in their Yet, especially Frag, generated by the Combat, directly after the Combat ceases (assuming it's within any possibility of their doing so). This "encouragement" can take the form of plain messages or visitors, subtle or unsubtle hints and coincidences, dreams, the players' own consciences, or anything the GM can imagine. It also often entails a fresh assault on any crashers that survived the last Time Combat.

Note that in Yrnë spacetime the advantages are reversed: Crashers can Frune there with impunity, and the Swarm has to be trebly secret and careful in whom they confide.

Isolate

Minimum Duration	Bonus to Skill	For every amount of Age spent \geq	To a Max. of
1 second	n/a	—	—

Okay, this is what we mean by "the Swarm".

When they employ Isolate, the Swarm coordinates information about the incident of Frag in such a way that no one Swarm spanner knows enough to become deeply involved with the Fragging Action, but enough so that each can pass along sufficient information (or opportunity) to another spanner to attack the same spacetime in the same Sweep. A kind of deadly, fragging round-the-rosie, and the target crasher all falls down.

Isolate requires the coordination of at least three spanners; there is no maximum number of spanners who can be involved. They must first Rendezvous in one Sweep, and then the next Sweep descend upon the moment when the Frag was created. Each must succeed in a competitive challenge: Their Quick versus the target's Quick. Naturally, each are resolved highest Quick to lowest. Each success against the target adds a penalty to his Quick of -1, so it becomes progressively easier to win the challenges.

Losing against the target means taking a point of Frag— but only the one spanner, and probably not for long (see below).

Every success adds a point of Frag to the target. Specifically, the elder version of the assailant, attempting to perform a stratagem in the same Sweep, takes all the Frag at once. If he is not set beyond Frag 7, he is very disoriented for at least 7 days Duration, and he loses the next chance to perform a Stratagem, though he may Span normally. Beyond Frag 7, he is out of the game.

Spanners involved in the Isolate stratagem must return to their point of Rendezvous from the previous Sweep, about a minute after they left. This is equivalent to declaring their stratagem for Next Sweep.

Isolate heals all Frag of a specific As/As Not if target-

ing the crasher that caused it while within 15 seconds of the event (or by GM's discretion). This includes Frag acquired while performing Isolate, at the last element of the Sweep.

Details of Time Combat

Segueing in and out of Physical Combat

Physical Combat during Time Combat is usually swift and brutal. The sixty-second limit to each Element is waived until Physical Combat ends.

Any crasher or spanner that has performed Oracle or Frune can surprise their opponent in Physical Combat, unless they have already left that Level. See Oracle (pg. 31) and Frune (pg. 31) for details.

Filling Spanning Cards

Spanning Cards must be filled as Time Combat progresses. At the end of each Sweep, the GM reiterates the actions taken in the Sweep, and calls for all players to update their cards. (See pg. 34 for a detailed explanation of how to keep your cards up to date).

Dangers of Staying Put

Staying put for too long has a downside. Long Durations in one place, except for Hide, also adds to rolls of anyone doing Oracle or Frune to find you. The bonuses in the Duration box are applied to the benefit of the Oracler for BOTH the investigating spanner's AND the target's Duration.

Ending Time Combat

Time Combat ends when any one of the following occurs:

- 1) Two otherwise successful attempts to Oracle or Frune the whereabouts an attacker fails to result in catching him (the attacker gets away), or
- 2) Two attempts to Frag the same crasher or spanner by the same assailant succeed (further attempts is asking for trouble from Swarm spanners of higher Span²), or
- 3) If the parties manage to agree to stop, or
- 4) If all of one side is brought down physically, or
- 5) If all of one side is hit to beyond Frag 7.

If the requirements for ending Time Combat are met, but the players are still eager to beat up bad guys, the GM recommends they rest, heal, regain Span, and maybe even heal Frag if feasible. Then go after them again. Of course, they might be rested, too— unless the player characters do careful research before jumping in.

Time Combat Sequence

EACH SWEEP:

GM calls for Spanning Cards to be filled as each player announces.

- I. All combatants are sorted by when they are in spacetime.
 - A. Farthest Down (Earliest) spanner declares intentions** and acts.
 - B. Next Farthest Down declares and acts, and so on.

** Taking a maximum of 60 seconds apiece, real time.

- II. If more than one combatant is on the same Level, their declarations are handled in order:

A. Declarations

0. (Levellers & Blinkers declare intentions, HIGHEST Quick to LOWEST)
1. Other Crashers & Spanners declare intentions LOWEST Quick to HIGHEST***

B. Execution

The GM then sorts the actions taken:

1. Declarations are handled
 - a. By when they are in spacetime (as above)
 - b. HIGHEST Quick to LOWEST.
2. Any successful Frag attempts by them take effect at once and:
 - a. the affected characters are informed
 - b. the combatant who successfully attacked secretly declares his NEXT SPAN to the GM

*** Tied Quicks are resolved by each rolling d10; highest roll to lowest, repeat as necessary.

At the end of each Sweep, the GM reiterates to each player what has occurred to his character.(Once the First Sweep concludes, any Leveller and Blinker intentions are carried out. Leveller and Blinker characters can only participate in a single Sweep.)

Note on Physical Combat within Time Combat.

All Physical combatants may only depart from Physical Combat by spanning *once* during a Sweep, and must declare their intentions to the GM for the next Sweep. Characters that depart must also openly declare their direction to any characters left standing within view.

FRAG TABLES

Whenever an attempt at Frag is made, the Fragger may well take a backlash of Frag upon himself. Results in brackets (below) is Frag taken by the attacker. Results with an asterisk (*) are left up to the GM, whether the character has been descriptive enough in his attack to warrant causing 1 or no Frag to his target.

Additionally, each Frag successfully applied in the same Time Combat to any opponent(s) adds +1 to all rolls for a spanner on this table. (The more you Frag someone, the more dangerous it becomes for you to Frag again.)

Note that the GM is final arbiter of how much Frag a character takes in any given situation; indeed the table is designed to allow GMs to craft amount of Frag suitable to their campaign style. Also, for game purposes, Frag is always taken in whole numbers.

Adjustments to Frag Results, by Span

Number indicates adjustments to the roll.

Target's Span >	0	1	2	3	4	5
Attacker's Span						
≤1	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
2	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3
3	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2
4	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1
5	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0

Frag Results

* = One or Zero Frag, GM discretion

The Roll >	<=0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	>=11
Attacker's Span												
≤1	1	1	*	*	*	*	0	0	0	(1)	(1)	(1)
2	1	1	1	*	*	*	*	0	0	0	(1)	(1)
3	1	1	1	1	*	*	*	*	0	0	0	(1)
4	2	1	1	1	1	*	*	*	*	0	0	(1)
5	2	2	1	1	1	1	*	*	*	*	0	(1)

How to Fill Out Span & Yet Cards

As the game progresses, and you span Up and Down time, keeping track of where and when you are is a good plan. Failure to do so will result in confusion and often death at the hands of the Swarm; a smart crasher is as cautious as his enemies.

The ovals represent the most important scores while in the Swarm universe: one's Span, and the Frag one has taken.

The SPAN half of the card is essentially the diary of your actions. Once written down, it becomes a part of your past.

DIR (Direction) Column is to record the direction of the Span taken. A single letter code will suffice: Going Down (to the Past) = D Staying Level (in the Present) = L and Going Up (to the Future) = U.

WHEN and WHERE Columns are simply when and where on Earth you are as you first arrive at that Level.

When. The recommended way to list the date is presented on the card: YYYY/MM/DD hh:mm:ss. Three seconds after 10:04 AM on the first day of 1999 would read: 1999/01/01 10:04:03. Keeping it precise to the minute is advisable—seconds count, but usually only when you're fine tuning events.

Where. Note where you are and/or the main thing you're doing— during Time Combat, the name of the Stratagem usually suffices.

SPAN SPENT/REMAINING Columns are for keeping track of how much Span you have left. Don't feel obliged to fill out both Spent and Remaining; either will do; it's your preference. The recommended method of recording is listed, of course: Y/D/h/m/s. If a Span 1 character went back in time ninety-seven days, two hours and eight minutes, Span Spent would read: 97D/2h/8m or Span Remaining would read (subtracting from 1 year of 365 days) 267D/21h/52m.

Span is measured in years able to travel, and the more you spend before resting, the less far you can go in one trip. Since Span is regained every time one rests enough, make sure you reset back to your maximum every time you spend sufficient Duration on a Level to get some sleep. Since Span is *not* regained during Time Combat, keeping track of it then is even more critical.

Note. For convenience sake, characters of Span 2 and higher get to spend leap days (i.e. one 366-day year for every three 365-day years). Other calendrical oddities should be arbitrated by the GM.

DURATION Column is how long you remain Level, i.e. the time you spend between spans. Duration must be filled out every Sweep of Time Combat, and it is important to keep track of outside of combat as well. A short hand for time that you may find useful: 2y, 3m, 4d 3" 12s would translate 2 years, 3 months, 4 days, 3 minutes and 12 seconds.

AGE Column records your linear Age, or simply, how old your body actually is, and how old you would normally appear. This column doesn't have to tallied every time you Span; once at the end of a gaming session usually suffices. (Age is a natural progression unless checked by technology, and some crashers are a trifle vain.)

THE YET half of the card contains the actions that 'must' happen in your future. Swarm spanners adhere to their Yets zealously, (believing that all events in one's Yet must be ultimately accounted for, or Frag occurs,) but we know better. Still, sometimes you learn of an event you have yet to experience, and if it's something you'd like, go for it.

IN THE YET Column holds these incidents. Describes the required action itself, as best known to you.

CHECK BOX Column at the end is useful for tallying completed incidents, like any To-Do list. Details of completion can be recorded at the appropriate time on the Span side of the card.

FRAG Column lists the amount of Frag caused by a Fraggling Action— this is always known to the crasher. Total Frag goes in the oval at the bottom.

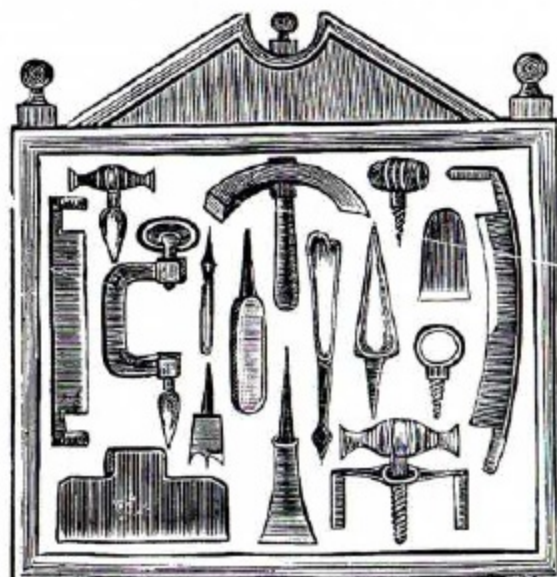
WHEN +/- Column contains the *range* of when the action must be fulfilled. Examples: "Between noon and 3 pm 12/24/1956 AD" or "86 BC - 44 AD".

If an incident causing Frag to you is known, its precise date and time is known, and you can write it down under **When**.

If the incident causing Frag is unknown to the crasher, "unknown" is pencilled in the **When +/-** column, and the crasher then has to find out more about it. (Though Time Combat has probably commenced.)

See also the Span (ppg. 18-20), Frag (pg. 21) and Time Combat (ppg. 26-33) sections.

Note. If you're going to infiltrate the Swarm during a C^oN^oT^oI^oN^oU^oM game, please use the C^oN^oT^oI^oN^oU^oM Span and Yet cards and character sheet, to remain incognito. You'll be glad you did.



Time & Dreaming

The Hegemony, through the threat of their terrible power, have forced Dreamers throughout history to serve the Swarm, as their means of ready communication. But they fight back as they can, leaving clues to the truth even as they are bent to their servitude.

For example, peruse this sample from the *Pages of Sleep* of I-manu Elchurai:

Within the perspective of time travel, wisdom and enlightenment need to find a new definition, a new perspective. Most timebound cultures have a general philosophy that places an ideal wisdom either in a vague, indefinite past (such as all the Golden Ages many cultures propound) or in the indefinite future (the Progress we're all working to build). Time travelers know that these places don't hold any special answers. They've been there. This destroys, for them, the Grail of the perfect wise culture, the people who know the truth.

But Man, as a species, has his ways. The first thing a time traveler notices is that a peasant, or a bureaucrat, or an ecclesiastic, in fourth-century Rome, is very like his opposite number in Des Moines, 1943. We are Homo sapiens, by gum, and most of us like chocolate. After a little experience, most time travelers come to recognize the unity in human nature, and see the differences as variations on a theme.

But what about God? Time travelers keep hearing about him, in every culture they meet. All societies have some version of God, of otherness, of mythos that undercatches and sustains the order of daily life. Evidence keeps showing itself, just around a corner or beyond a pale. Chronies are canny people, and although cause and effect is the discipline on which their survival depends, they know that too much evidence has been accumulated to deny the existence of a spiritual truth. If God is real, he's hiding from them for some reason.

Seasoned time travelers, the [Hegemony], have sought out an approach into this mystery. In all times, mystics have leaned heavily on the power of dreams. Everyone dreams. And although different cultures interpret dreams differently, (since even the wisest shaman is still timebound and the product of his culture) certain common threads emerge.

1. Dreams can be used to predict the future. Not the temporal future, so much as the future of an individual.
2. Dreams can reveal important clues about people's motives and agendas.
3. Certain adepts are able to "send" a dream, to communicate a message or influence the dream's recipients.
4. Dreams take place in an alternative landscape, independent of our space-time continuum. While this region is beyond our understanding, it still obeys its own laws and is as real as our own world, if not more.



5. Gods and Powers are aware of the dreaming of man, and use it to affect humankind for good or ill.

6. The dream world has its own inhabitants. Some of them take a keen interest in us, for reasons we do not understand.

Therefore, the [Hegemony] have adopted a conception of mankind's Dreamtime, and use it as a means to understanding what happens to them in their sleep. This paradigm is only a tool that they use. It is not perfect, and it is certainly not real. It is merely, like Kurt Vonnegut's foma, a lie that makes sense and solves most of the riddles, thus allowing one to use the vast medium that no one understands.

It is an intensely personal medium. It enfranchises the validity of your past, and your Yet. We admonish you to use it with respect, and caution.

These Gods and Powers, these inhabitants of the dreamtime the Dreamers believe in, are presumed to be ourselves, the crashers, calling back across the bent paths from other worlds.

Dreaming (Quick-based Skill; see ppg. 9, 13)

Time Index:

120 days/ 90 days

Description:

This Skill is unique; it encompasses the many powers listed below.

The following powers may be attempted at the Title rank of Mastery indicated.

Restfulness (Novice)

With a successful Dreaming roll, the character is able to fall asleep at will.

With another successful roll, a specific time, or amount of time spent asleep, can be predetermined for the character to wake up at.

Lucid Dreaming (Apprentice)

This allows the dreamer to control the content and direction of dreams to reveal desired information. If Lucid Dreaming is successful, the dreamer may automatically learn something about himself or evidence he has seen but not understood. A second roll is required to discover information about people or events the dreamer is not normally privy to. Note that this information is likely to contain primarily symbolic representation of how others currently perceive themselves, the dreamer, or events.

Oracular Dreaming (Journeyman)

This allows a dreamer visions of other times, that are reachable from his current Level with his Span. Only on a Victory or a Grace roll will the dreamer be able to control exactly what he wants to learn of the past, the future, or his Yet.

Dreamsharing (Master)

Two characters with Dreaming Skill may share dreams and information, within reason, as long as one of the dreamers is a Master, and they are both in the same Level time. Certain particulars may become clouded depending on fatigue of the dreamers; an appropriate level of difficulty should be assigned. Also, if one of the dreamers is not a Master, that dreamer must make a Dreaming success for every REM cycle of sleep (about 45 minutes).

Transchronal Dreamsharing (Grandmaster)

The same as Dreamsharing, only across spacetime. This is a remarkable feat, and is limited to being between Dreaming Grandmasters that are within each other's range of Span. (I.e. A crasher of Span 2 is forty years away from a crasher of Span 4. Both are Dreaming Grandmasters, but the Span 2 dreamer is not within range to receive the other's dreams, so they may not Dreamshare.)

Transdimensional Dreamsharing (Grandmaster)

The same as Dreamsharing, only across universes. For purposes of N^oRCISSIST v.0.5:

This requires a Mind of at least 8, but can sometimes include less-skilled Dreamers in the physical vicinity of the Dreamsharing Grandmaster (within 100 feet). It also requires the Grandmaster to be within 10 miles and 10 years of a Gate. Transdimensional Dreamsharing can be used to simply send messages to less skilled Dreamers in another universe, or to simply receive them: Dreams from alien dimensions are often best left to the wakeful world to interpret. If interaction while asleep is desired, there must be a Grandmaster in the target universe.

V: A Glimpse of the Multiverse

16,000 Years from Safety

When new crashers think of history, they tend to consider only their closest surroundings, or what they've heard about "ancient" times. Humanity is much vaster than that recorded by any modern levellers.

The following overview is intended to broaden the minds of new crashers, inviting them to consider that people—crashers, spanners and levellers—are very much alive and active in these times. How much more so, then, when one considers the infinite worlds beyond.

Distant Allies

pre-18122 BC

Many early cultures have time travellers amongst them, and are not wholly in the grip of the Swarm— But they're not great help, either, being relatively primitive, and with few members interested in the effort it takes to crash free.

Yrnë of the Kings

18122 - 15780 BC

The times directly adjacent to Betne's arrival, and the origin of the Kings of the Royal Road.

Yrnë of the Gods

16080 - 13557 BC

The aeon of the rule of the Seven and the Sixteen, last defenders of humanity.

Interregnum

13557 - 12969 BC

A period of extreme frag and unstable crash points. Many crashers, hoping for an easy escape, have simply found themselves ground to powder here. While a vast number of universes are very proximate here, their combined thrust makes crashing there, at best, a daredevil experience.

Early Hegemony

12969 - 6927 BC

While assembling a new genetic order among levellers, the spanners from the rest of the "Societies" are here in force, on massive battle installations, prepared to repel any assault from Yrnë— and to launch invasions into her.

Middle Hegemony

6927 - 2867 BC

The time of Hunt of the Sun, with its peak in the Gemini Wars. Some hold out hope that this entire universe can be saved by the actions of this era.

Late Hegemony

2867 BC - AD 2222

The time of increasing wars among levellers, and strictures on freedom and information, culminating in the creation of the Singularity. Most spanners come from the Late Hegemony spacetime, or upward, due to its ever-increasing population.

Spacetime of the Singularity

This wraps around our tiny planet, around the scant few thousand years of Yrnë, like the titanic deadly monster it is. The Hegemony is already 99% of the way there as you read this.

Yrnë & the Royal Road

Yrnë

Yrnë means "fruitful" in the ancient language.

She is the only spacetime in the Swarm universe that is free. And she is very far away. The prices of that freedom are multi-fold, and not all of them are exacted by the jealous Swarm.

The land is referred to as "She" because the Yrnëans see her as the mother of mankind, struggling and bountiful so that her children may be proud humans under uncounted suns. It is a small glimpse into what the bedrock culture of these great masters of dimensional physics is like: Cherishing life, and warmth and all the good that mankind can achieve.

She is located in what today is the Sahara Desert, the Mediterranean Sea, and southern Europe. In her time, Yrnë is a land of lush plains and many lakes. The Kings and Princes rule over many city-states there, and do all they can to defend their people from attack, and their spacetime from intrusion.

Ever since the causality of Betne's appearance spiralled out from his Gate, the social order of Yrnë has organized itself into castes. It is these social rankings that allow life to proceed in an orderly fashion, even as it is being ceaselessly rearranged.

It is for this reason that you will be seen only as another intruder, another mistake from the Hegemony, unless you can master their customs, master yourself, and respect all that is held dear in Yrnë.

The Royal Road

These are the universes of the Kings of Yrnë.

All are adjacent, or are strung out from, Yrnëan spacetime. Chains upon chains of universes, in which the Kings live forever, and their Princes under them.

Many crashers seek entrance to the Royal Road, for it leads safely to paraverses beyond; countless forms of existence far from the grasp of the Swarm, far even from the interests of Yrnë. Complete freedom to change and alter and choose one's entire surround. The power to master one or an infinite number of possibilities. And the power to step in and save lives that would be doomed but for your foreknowledge.

These are dreams worthy of kings and princes. Worthy of any human of noble spirit and divine imagination.

You begin to see the reward for our pain and troubles, our tremendous strategic advantage. The Swarm is absolute master of its universe, but struggles blindly in any paraverse beyond. They may have vast legions at their beck and call here, but ultimately, we can attain infinite anything.

In the final analysis, in the final battle, *we* will overpower *them*. It's only a matter of when, or whether as immortal gods, we should even bother.

The Castes of Yrnë

In a universe bent against freedom, it should come as small surprise that those there who most champion freedom still hold strong biases and barriers to unfettered advancement. While a crasher can live his life without worrying about his caste in the structure of Yrnë, any who wish to deal with Pilgrims, Acolytes, or even the Order, will find himself treated as though he should know his place.

And there is that overriding belief that you're soulless until you can stop using the Swarm's sky-road. Maybe it's an Yrnë superstition. Or maybe the Kings and Gods know a lot more than you do, little one.

Where do you go when you span? And from what do you come when you return? Who would trust a thing that forms out of thin air. No myth in human history ever completely trusts such a thing. And such a thing is never human, even when it comes forth most benign.

So until you can crash without spanning, you'll be of a humble caste, and the more powerful crashers here in the Swarm universe won't trust you. It's a bitter road earning trust, and learning how to do without peace and comforts. It's not a rich man's existence, being a crasher. Not at the outset, anyway.

Zero. The Levellers.

These are the common folk of the Earth. The Swarm takes great pains to hide their depredations from them, and to spread the false comfort that their lives are brief and helpless. But most are beyond our aid, since alerting them may put you in direct confrontation with the Swarm.

But sometimes, crashers make clean off with a few to the freedom of other universes. That's always a nice feeling.

One. The Pressed.

These are the most common crashers found in the spacetime of the Hegemony; most of the rules of this version of N^oRCISSIST (v.0.5) assume the players start out in this lowly caste. You're considered soulless in the eyes of Yrnë until you can rid yourself of the nanotech that allows you to travel time—it's a tall crawl to both rid yourself of the means of power, and learn a method to replace it in the same amount of Age. So if you're wondering why you get all the dirtwork and all that abuse is coming from your artisan, it's probably because he was "raised" the same way.

Two. The Turned.

These are minions of the Swarm that have been saved from a damned existence, turning back from the brink of inhumanity by secretly turning against their "chronies". The Turned have either awoke to the ethical choice that stands screaming before them... or realized that the Swarm's lies were keeping them from exploring infinite worlds with an infinite lifespan. Or any reason in-between. The Turned are considered higher caste than Pressed, because they know that they are redeeming themselves in the eyes of the Kings—and face the merciless wrath of the Swarm if they are ever discovered.



If you've been playing a C^oN^oTINUUM spanner, perhaps now is the moment to have second thoughts...

Three. The Merchants.

These are crashers who work to find materials for crashers, especially devices, substances, and knowledge that can thwart the Singularity. Their primary trade is in time machines and parts thereof—and in information. But any curiosity from this world or any other is within the purview of these able people. Crashers of low caste but high Span can always find missions to run for Merchants, in order to gain coveted devices or knowledge.

Confirming the activities of the Swarm is one of the most dangerous activities a Pressed or Turned crasher can perform, but also one of the most necessary. Merchants cannot themselves infiltrate the Swarm. Because to enter the Merchant caste means you must be human, or have already unmade your reengineering and have returned to the ranks of humanity—It means you know the difference between a commodity and a person. This is not a test you can afford to fail when dealing with Ymēans.

A member of the Merchant caste is the most likely connection a crasher will first have with Ymē. They are looking for people to aid them in the fight, and you are looking for strong allies to survive in this hostile world. Good luck in your dealings with them..

Four. The Warriors.

Warriors are just that: The men and women who fight the good fight against the Swarm. Warriors tend to have the equivalent of Span 4 or 5, though naturally those of or elevated to the Warrior caste of Ymē have learned to do without the Swarm's sky-road.

A Warrior is the best person to learn the ways of travelling time without nanotech, a secret only hinted at in hidden places in this volume. They are the ones who hold the least fear of Death, and the ferocious battles they wage with the Swarm are closely studied by the children and sages of Ymē for the enlightenment of their beginnings, progress and outcome.

Warriors have troupes of Merchants, and decide who can be elevated to the Merchant caste. Most troupes are sent with instructions to gain war materiél or information on the enemy for any given engagement. But often a Warrior will have special units set aside to surprise and harass the Swarm, and a most are allowed at least one base on another universe from which to plan and strike.

Five. The Princes.¹

The Princes are the chosen right hands of the Kings. They are the greatest and most loyal souls of this universe. Each commands at least ten paraverses in the name of their King, and some rule thousands.

Princes command legions of Warriors, which they use to harry the Swarm, or pursue other important agendas. Most of a Prince's forces never see action in the Swarm universe, as it next to impossible Gate in many fleets and armed beings, and not

upset the balance of power among the Kings. But the power exists, and all a Prince's forces are at the disposal of his King.

They can extend protection to anyone they choose, for whatever duration they choose, and all lesser castes are expected to respect this. Not surprisingly, this is the source of many unfortunate conflicts, especially when one Prince's protection conflicts with another's animosity.

An ongoing crisis of Ymē civilization is that the various Princes and Kings are at odds over how to handle the Hegemony and the Swarm, both tactically and strategically. While war between Kings is rare in the Swarm universe, actions among them are hard to coordinate, and it is said they have range wars in far-flung universes. And Princes often only work together when their King's interest is focussed directly upon them.

Naturally, Princes can elevate a crasher to the Merchant or Warrior castes; to impress a Prince sufficiently to raise you to the Merchant caste, you have to retrieve something of tremendous value. And to be raised to the status of Warrior requires acts of brilliance and courage in battling the Swarm.

Six. The Kings.¹

These are the earliest rulers of Ymē, who took the means of time travel Betne delivered to them, and forged a civilization that could accommodate humanity, instead of destroy it.

There are actually several hundred people in this caste, but that is because the will of the Seventy Kings extends to the people they hold most dear. It is the only caste which can include dims. (Princes, no matter their power are not considered to have the authority to extend their caste beyond their persons).

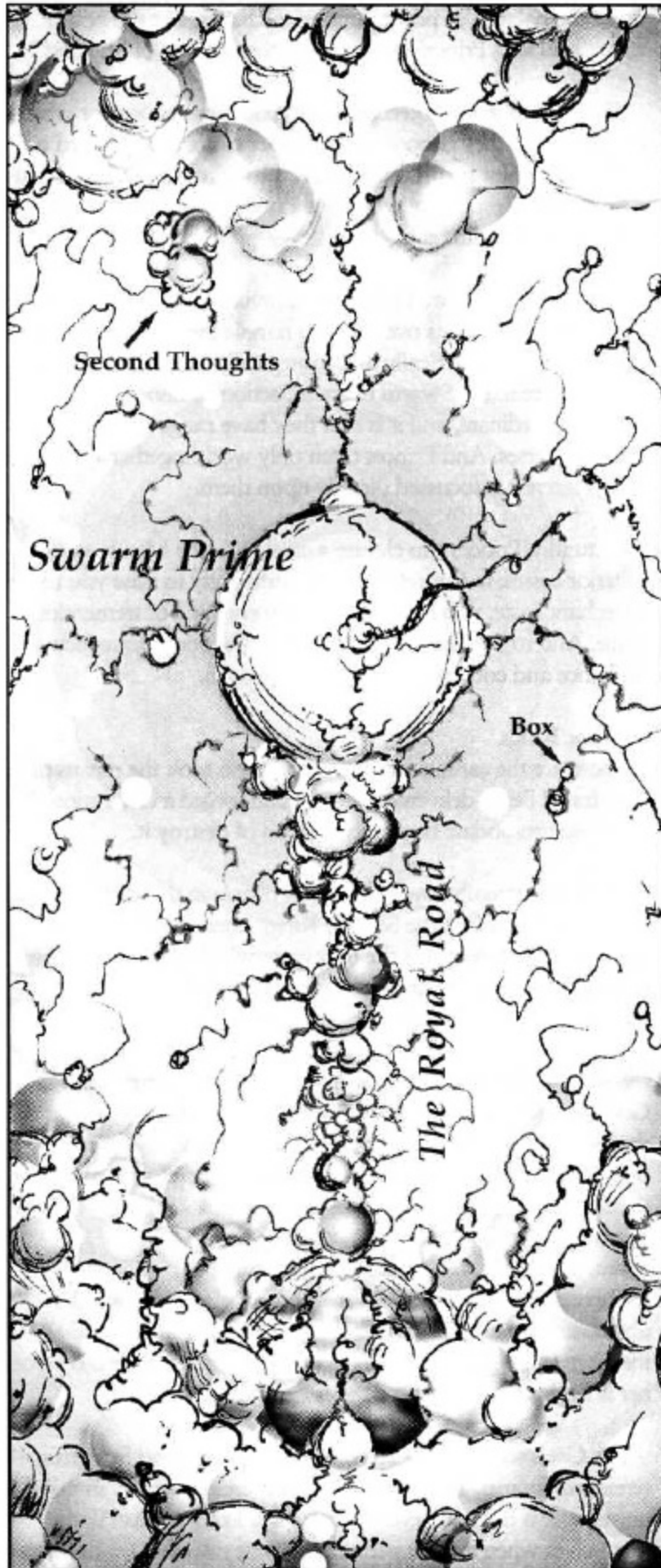
Since it is known that the Kings gave life and existence to the Gods, in true crasher fashion, the Kings rarely do obeisance to the Gods, their "elders". But the Gods do command greater power on this Earth, and the Kings are ever careful, despite their dignity.

Seven. The Gods.

There are no more than 23 members of this caste, which is obvious if you can count. What is less obvious is that many of the Sixteen are said to be juniors of the Seven. So the exact number is debatable—but nevertheless, extremely small.

The Gods see to it that some of mankind is saved from this wretched Swarm. This means long and tireless activity in this universe. It is not a life every character is likely to wish upon themselves when infinite paraverses await rulership for the castes of Princes and Kings.

¹Members of these, and indeed, all Castes may be male or female.



Like the galaxies of the Swarm universe, the multiverse is a vast Mandelbrot set that has been smashed and set spinning. The above sketch represents this dynamism in three dimensions, though dozens more are involved. Like diagrams of funnel-shaped wormholes, the image is misleading, since it is never seen from the outside of any universe. It is a popular image among crashers, nonetheless.

Some of the major landmarks crashers hear about are listed above.

The Swarm Chains © 1999 Chris Adams

Mapping Infinity

The Mnemelos Scale

Named for the dimensional that brought this method of measurement to Swarm Prime, the Mnemelos Scale is shorthand for the traveller mapping the best spacetimes of various universes to crash from. Usually these coordinates map out habitable planets inside these universes to crash to— but be careful out there.

A typical set of coordinates would read as follows:

Taydar XVII Year 85 Day 321 > Gebenedos (nearest)
 $\pi 4 \therefore .115 \text{ } \textcircled{6.6}$

This would mean: Leaving the fic universe of Taydar XVII on the 321st day of the 85th year of the reign of King Khar Tembedh for the closest point in the universe of Gebenedos, proximity is 4, thrust is 115 and drift 6.6.

Proximity. How close the paraverse is at the given point in spacetime. If you don't know your target's proximity before you crash, you are shooting blind, my friend.

Thrust. This is a measurement of a universe's free energy. Not surprisingly, young universes have greater thrust, but are more hazardous to life as we know it. Thrust tends to be a gauge to determine how easily time travel can be effected there: the higher the thrust, the easier the crashing and spanning therein. Swarm Prime's mean thrust during the Hegemony is ten (10).

Drift. This is a measurement of how much the universe's proximity is changing, and how much the swirling forces of the multiverse are pulling or slowing the universe's progress. A universe experiencing a high drift in relation to the one you're leaving may be difficult to enter. Swarm Prime's mean drift during the Hegemony is zero (0).

Thus $\pi 4 \therefore .115 \text{ } \textcircled{6.6}$ is a universe with close proximity², high thrust and low drift. Since it seems to be parked close by the place and time of the universe you're in, it's probably spinning madly in its place on the chain, and affecting travel to the paraverses around it. And/or it has heavy radiation throughout. But the chances for being able to span there in some form are very good.

For comparison, the minimum proximity of a stable universe from Swarm Prime (here) is $\pi 10$ (ten crash points), but there are relatively few of these, and most are either deadly or well-known. To have really crashed free, you should be at least $\pi 100$ from Swarm Prime— and the Quicker have standing orders to pursue to a distance of $\pi 1000$.

And bear in mind, $\therefore .115$ is a high thrust for *us*, not for anything *native* to that universe.

You'll learn about that sh— soon enough.

The Long Cold Drive Up to Hell.

The Swarm & the Hegemony

History, as we know it, is a fabrication. Not a lie, nor a falsehood. It is all too horribly real and true. It has simply been engineered to be that way.

The Swarm is the artist, fashioning the cold future. It is the legions of spanners going and doing what they are told, never letting so much as a hair fall out of its proper place in space and time, and taking great pains to kill us off.

The Hegemony is the work in progress. It is the civilizations, kingdoms, religions, mores, behaviors and attitudes that the Swarm tend, encourage, and define. For instance, your enjoyment of gaming and/or science fiction is all part of their design. As long as you are comfortable with other worlds being *just a game* or *just a fiction*, you will never develop the desire to make real, genuine change.

This is the real danger of never questioning authority. You will be quietly robbed of all you might ever hope to be.

Singularity

It has every face and no face. It is the ultimate chimera, the eternity from the depths of the prisons of Cold Storage close on the Big Bang, to the lonely Isolates, at the distant future, struggling to continue when the Nature of this universe has long since dissipated away. The Singularity is the unified intelligence stretching across all galaxies that mankind is hurtling toward. At this writing, all the remaining events needed to create the Singularity will be achieved in less than 230 years.

The Singularity, with consummate hypocrisy, eats worlds: This universe is expanding at an increasing rate, speeding up as the Singularity destroys paraverses unfortunate enough to be prox-

imate to us. It uses this excess energy in the vain hope of maintaining existence within the scope of a single universe. And they call *us* narcissists.

Allies within the Swarm and the Singularity above it are few and far, far between. Elements of the Singularity that develop doubts or consciences find their schedules full with dodging their own kind to escape the madness— More often than not, *they* turn to *us* for advice, since we map other worlds which they thought were just imaginings. Some of these... things are very willing to lend powerful technologies for the chance to crash free.

The Sky-road

Time travel is not achieved in secret, but right out in the open. The Van Allen Belts, found by a leveller scientist in 1958, are shifting, magnetically-sheathed conduits of radiation stretching to all points in the lifetime of the planet. Along these conduits is sent the massless information that once were human beings.

The reengineering a person undergoes to be able to use this road is nightmarish. The Swarm hypnotize their younger minions to forget the ordeal, but crashers are almost never so blessed. Transforming 100% of your flesh into nanotech... capable of converting itself to a pure energy beacon that you *hope* will be accepted by the Belts for transmission and rematerialization on the other side of the trip... is a painful, messy process.

The Belts are also in the skies over Yrnë, but Yrnë has numerous defenses. Spanners from the Hegemony must often resort to the more dangerous pathways of the solar wind to slip into the distant past beyond. But unfortunately, they manage to keep Yrnë surrounded.



Philosophies

Relearning Human Trust.

Yrnë is very far away. Its actions affect you, but closer to home, there are a myriad of opinions as to how the multiverse really “works”. And armed with little more than these opinions, crashers are alternating history all around you.

As quickly as expedient, you should join a group you consider friends. If you're lucky, the group you're born into will be of a similar outlook, or Philosophy. If you're less fortunate, you have your adventure cut out for you, just trying to stay alive, sane, and unfragged. But don't despair: Somewhere out there are people who see things the way you do. On the other hand, there are many more who hope to convince you to see the multiverse their way...

These are a sampling of the plethora of worldviews and attitudes crashers have toward a multiverse of infinite possibility:

Cribs

Most crashers start life in a crib (see pg. 3) A crib is a corner formed by an artisan, a kind of crasher equivalent to a Swarm Mentor. Artisans are the leaders of their corners, but that's usually where the comparison ends. swarm mentors give their broods lots of money and candy and promises that they will always get to beat up the nasty, narcissistic crashers. Artisans often have a narrow worldview, and have neither the money nor the patience to help their creations (you) out.

Most are just fanatics or a guy with a brilliant plan to alter history for the betterment of... well, whoever. Not often you.

Don't get us wrong, there are some artisans out there who are great people, but the reputation of artisans as a whole is pretty poor. The Frankenstein stereotype remains of dank warehouse laboratories, nightmarish agendas, and dazed new crashers living under the constant threat of being discarded, meat for the angry Swarm.

Hitchers

These are the drifters of the timescape, and watch your back around them: they're famous for swiping others' crash points. But they're inquisitive ways an also discover the crash points that are never used by their creators— because the Swarm aces them before they can escape.

Good at finding out where the Gates are, and are often very clever at coordinating seemingly unrelated crash points. You might not trust every one that comes along, but they have been known to bring a windfall of crash points to a corner just when they need them most.

Lotus-Dancers

This Philosophy is unique as its devotees learn a rudimentary form of the ancient Yrnëan method of travelling space and time. As such, it is immensely powerful for a beginning crasher to learn, though it comes with long-term strictures that appeal to very few.

Dancers must begin with a minimum Body 5, Mind 5,

Quick 6 and Span 1. Note that their skill at spanning does not involve Swarm nanotech: Thus, they never fail at spanning, never ‘Burn Out’, but also can never attempt to travel beyond their Span. Any such attempt, and the Dancer does not move his position.

The primary tenet among Dancers is that they always move the same way, no matter what happens, when an attempt to frag them is made. Whenever he first feels the frag, a Dancer need only perform his ritual moves, and the frag returns to the spanner or crasher attempting the frag.

They tend to set up shop in a section of spacetime of about 100 to 250 mile radius, and extending a length of 75 to 200 years end to end. There is never more than one Dancer occupying this area of spacetime. They implicitly respect each others' chosen stretch of spacetime, due to the nature of their power. Other spanners and crashers may come and go, unless the Dancer wants to make an issue of it.

Gemini Incidents never frag them, and they can always tell when the encounter is with an echo, since the Swarm cannot duplicate the Dancer methods or discipline.

Since there is never more than one Dancer in an area, crasher parties are likely to contain only one. And even with advancement in the Dancer Spanning (through training or discovery), a Dancer always returns to his chosen spacetime at least every other span. It is his chosen place in the universe, and leaving it for long could lose him his ability and protection from frag.

The Order

A kind of mini-Continuum, the Order is primarily based in 16220-15630 BC, and in 5850-5600 BC. The Order follows many of the same precepts as the Swarm, with two important exceptions: They prefer not to use the sky-road, and they value the ability to alter history, if enough members agree that it is a good idea. They even have ongoing diplomatic relations with the Swarm, to a small degree, a unique quality that keeps its members from being murdered. A member of the Order will always refer to the Swarm as ‘the Continuum’ out of perceived respect; naturally the Order is the likeliest place to find infiltrators into— and from— the Swarm itself.

Pilgrims of the Kings

Many crashers see Yrnë as the surest road to freedom. Many others feel that the Yrnëans are right: Their souls are missing, and they want to win them back. Crashers that work their way up the Castes, pursuing the way to the Royal Road, are called Pilgrims.

Pilgrims must devote themselves to the cause of one of the Kings' representatives living (and fighting) in the Hegemony. The Kings themselves never leave Yrnë, at least not for other parts of the Swarm universe.

The duties and rewards of the various Castes of Yrnë are detailed on ppg. 38-39.

Acolytes of the Gods (*Demigods, Jars-With-Legs, Cherubim, etc.*)

The Swarm's descriptions of the Seven and the Sixteen are criminal in their portraying these mighty defenders of humanity as monsters, ogres, and terrorists [C^ONTINUUM ppg. 204-5]. The Swarm claims that the Seven murder the population of Yrnë to satisfy inhuman pride, when the truth is much simpler: The Seven ensure the escape of even lowly levellers to a paraverse safe from the Hegemony. Little surprise the Swarm can't admit *that* to its rank-and-file.

Acolytes of the Seven must devote themselves utterly to the causes of their god for *life*. Any acolyte that divides their loyalty is always discarded, and often destroyed. Loyal ones are said to be handed a universe all their own after a period of distinguished service.

NABIR TOA. 'Two-Horned Worm'

This god is the prototype of legends of sky-dragons, as his transdimensional presence often resembles a vast coil with two smaller coils entering his "head". He is a living as/as not, and can work the miracles that that suggests. He also takes the semblance of a giant merry warrior of Yrnë, to remind himself of what being human means. His followers meet the Swarm's challenge in earnest: Fighting head-to-head with them to open Gates and keep crash points free. His most worthy followers are said to share directly the power of his gift.

ADDA-YTA 'Dome-and-Mirror'

This goddess is devoted to creating a multiverse of exquisite beauty, excellence and cosmic understanding. Devotees are expected to "open themselves" to the goddess periodically—these sessions are the goddess' means of communication and revelation even at tremendous distance—a kind of waking dreamstate. She is also known for being able to see the positive side of any situation, and encourages her followers to be as generous with others as they can manage.

UGANE 'No Eyes'

This god deliberately sacrificed his senses so as not to be dissuaded from his tasks by the temptations and deceptions of the Swarm. Many claim the Lotus Dancers are this god's acolytes. While some Dancers may find much in common with this god, they are stoically independent of the powers of Yrnë. Ugane's powers are said to be the liberating powers of the imagination, and many crasher Dreamers follow him to learn his gifts.

YT NAL GEHAAR 'Eight-Stars-In-A-Disc'

A mighty goddess of warfare, Yt Nal Gehaar normally appears as a swirl of eight blinding lights rotating around a central point, but also manifests as a tall, powerful and stern ruler of Yrnë. Encounters with her are always momentous, so be extremely careful what you say and do in her presence. She is said to be an embodiment of Judgement & Justice, and her martial appearance is to underscore that—her appearances on the battlefield are relatively rare. Followers are few, but can expect the power of reading the hearts of any human—or non-human—they ever meet.

KUW SABET 'Shadowangle'

Like a big roaming pocket, Kuw Sabet hovers over those who would remake events to harm people, and puts a stop to it. He gave up his human form, it is said, as a solution to the dilemma and selfish temptations of Gemini Incidents. His great work is said to be travelling about the Swarm universe, quietly erasing unnecessary human suffering. Followers of Kuw Sabet are said to have the power to effect minor but very real alterations in a timeline, with only a thought.

Á 'The Welcome One'

Hospitality and friendship are great blessings and signs of humanity throughout Yrnë, and this god personifies a well-known figure in Yrnëan society, the Travelling Host. The function of hiring a host to welcome guests is to emphasize that any stranger will be considered an equal in one's home—and the job comes with the responsibility of ensuring that everyone is fed and happy. Á is tireless in his efforts to feed and comfort the humans left in poverty and misery by the Swarm. Acolytes of Á are given tremendous mental and physical prowess, and gravitate to times of strife between humans, to save all of them that they can from needless injury.

HINISIH 'SunRender'

This god is famed for his vigilance and fortitude. He gathers fleets of starships from nearby paraverses, and is always looking for more from the more distant ones. His acolytes are those that wish to experience the truth of space travel, the awesome stretching of time that entails, and to fight the Singularity in the heavens it claims for itself alone.

Acolytes of the Sixteen can devote themselves to their god for a limited time before moving on, since the Sixteen work deep inside the Hegemony, and are always moving on to new cribs and challenges. Devotees are usually given psi powers to do battle with the Swarm.

Time Machines.

One must wonder why, if you yourself are already a time machine, would you ever need another?

There are two major reasons.

1) In a paraverse without a Swarm, there is likely to be no sky-road, no means to span or crash. So you should be prepared in case you are stranded in such a paraverse.³

2) The Kings of Yrnë do not aid those that use the sky-road, as they see it as alien, a corkscrew invasion through their space-time. Spanners are branded inhuman—because most of them are, or are becoming that way.

The "gift" of spanning is really an ugly, insidious trap. Once you have access to the Swarm's easy use of time travel, it gets harder and harder to brave the unknown multiverse, with its tough, meaningful choices.

Kinds of machines

Nearly all time machines the Swarm allows—or even acknowledges—in their universe are not *vehicles* but are instead *highways*. Highways are easier to police and control access to.

What to Look for. Something physically transportable, with its own (renewable) energy source, and preferably with life-support and shielding to guard against those high-thrust paraverses and materializing too near a star. ...And an instruction manual.

Sky-road. This is not a transportable device, and a duplicate may not exist in a paraverse, or not work with your nanotech.

Wormhole. Most science fiction show wormholes as highly unstable, since the matter necessary to hold them open is "impossibly" dense. But with the resources of infinite universes to work from, this becomes easy enough, and is in fact how the Singularity gets the energy to maintain its grip on this universe.

Starships. These have a variety of time drives, most of which will work in a paraverse. They're mighty hard to come by, of course.

Smaller, one-person devices. These do exist, but are usually based on some Swarm starship prototype, or other tech that would, at least, be seen as highly suspect by Yrnëans. Not that that would stop some of them from selling *you* one. They come in a variety of ranges and qualities—this is one reason knowing who to trust becomes a cornerstone of crasher life.

³All pockets come under this category, though ones made in the Swarm universe will always be fixed by them, returning you to the start of the crash point (see pg. 22).

Crash Cards and how to use them

Fill out your crash cards thus:

Universe = This is the universe in which the crash points and Gates lead *from*. Crash points in one paraverse do not correlate to points in other paraverses, so you'll want a separate Crash Card for each universe you explore.

√ = Check off crash points and Gates as you use them.

Point Value = Most crash points are valued at 1, but it will at least have a value equal to the number of crashers that created it. GM's discretion if the Alternated Event is major enough to warrant a higher point value.

You can fill in points you immediately spend on pockets if you want; there's no hard and fast rule. But the GM is within bounds to insist you keep track, if that's your style of play.

Alternated Event = This is the event you caused, you naughty narcissist you. Its outcome will directly affect what the paraverse is like, on the other side of a Gate made from its crash point.

Original Event = Just to keep track. For auld lang syne.

WHEN and WHERE columns = In the Crash section, this is when and where the crash point is (don't let anyone you don't trust implicitly know! This information is gold.) In the Gate section, it's when and where a Gate is, or is believed to be (even more sensitive info).

Gate # = In the Crash section, this is the Gate the crash point is spent on (since crash points can be pretty interchangeable, this is usually marked down *after* the Gate is passed through). In the Gate section, number your Gates as you go, so you don't lose track of how many crash points you spend where.

Total Points = This is the number of crash points correlating to make the Gate.

of Crashers = This the number of crashers in your... party.

π = Proximity. This number is how close the paraverse is in relation to the universe you're departing. You can either shoot for a precise balance of mass (crashers) and crash points to arrive at a known destination, or gather up the points, and head out to an unexplored paraverse at the Proximity that just happens to add up.

∴ = Thrust; Ø = Drift.

These parameters of paraverses have little bearing in this version (0.5) of N^oRCISSIST. (But see pg. 40.)

Target Paraverse = This is the name, if known, of the universe you're headed for. If you don't know, and especially if no one knows, name it yourself, Columbus. (Instead of the Yrñean title 'the Swarm Chain', one popular term some near neighbors have for our local paraverses is 'Cars & Cigarettes'. Thanks for *that*, Hegemony!)

Pocket Size & Duration.

Note also that other crashers can join you in a pocket if they are within ¹/₁₀₀ of the spatial Size of the pocket from you, and at the same moment in Time. Each additional crasher requires expenditure of a crash point, which they must generate at the same instant.

Naturally, the bigger the event, the bigger the pocket—but also expect to be fragged out for trying to stop assassinations of famous people, or prevent atomized cities. GM's call whether fame or quantity of people make bigger pockets in his campaign. The 'Min. Span of Crasher' only means that crashers may attempt any change, but less experienced ones are likely to be dragged back by the Swarm after experiencing only the lesser Size and Duration.

Pocket Size & Duration Table

Min. Span of Crasher	Example of Change to Effect:	Pocket Size	Pocket Duration
≤0.7	sneeze out of turn	10 feet	1 second
0.8	move small object	100 feet	10 seconds
0.9	snarl traffic	1000 feet	1 minute
1	save an animal's life	1 mile	10 minutes
2	save a person's life	10 miles	1 hour
3	save JFK	100 miles	10 hours
4	save the <i>Titanic</i>	1000 miles	1 day
5	save Hiroshima	10000 miles	10 days

Note that any crashers that get into a pocket without means of escape (Swarm interference or a functional time machine) will dissipate with the pocket at its maximum Duration.

Crash Point Correlation.

Most crashers plan their Gates well ahead of using them. Thus, well-correlated points may all center on **one time in space** (*Changes made at precisely 10 miles due N, E, W, S, NE, and SW of Hamilton, Bermuda at 3:43 PM, July 11, 1965 creates a 6-point Gate in the center of town at that moment*) or on **one space in time** (*Precise annual creation of crash points at 12:02 AM January 12th, 1978, '79, '81 and '82 at the top of the Empire State Building creates a 4-point Gate there in 1980. — Assuming the Earth's orbit and all doesn't deviate wildly.*) Any points anywhere and anywhen can be spent on a Gate, but finding such an ill-planned Gate becomes an adventure in itself. Many of these Gates are simply hovering out in Space.

Gate Stability.

Like most exotic spacetime constructs, Gates are sensitive to mass passing their thresholds. Thus while spending the same number of crash points as the target paraverse's proximity will allow one crasher through, additional crashers require additional points to pass. Of course, those points must correlate to the same Gate, or they can't be spent.

For purposes of N^oRCISSIST v.0.5, a Gate can be constructed with a number of crash points equal to the number of crashers, minus one, plus the proximity of the target paraverse. (Or, proximity + the number of crashers over 1 = points required to crash free.)

Also, due to the Swarm's diligence, a Gate in or out of Swarm Prime can only be used once. Stabilizing Gates between paraverses for repeated use is a process that is elaborated on in the complete version of N^oRCISSIST (v.1.0), coming in the Summer of AD 2000.

