

Springers

A Roleplaying Game For the Multiverse

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Chapter 1

What Is This?

1.1 Role-Playing Games

Springers is a tabletop role-playing game (often abbreviated RPG). As the name suggests this is a game where you gather with your friends and take on the roles of characters to tell a story together and enjoy one another's company. The input from your friends and some chance outcomes from dice will take the story in directions you didn't expect.

There are lots of different types of role-playing games just as there are lots of different types of board games or sports. Some role-playing games focus on sword & sorcery fantasy stories or espionage stories in a dark cyberpunk future or tales of romance and courtship. For almost any genre of book, film, or television you can imagine there is a corre-

sponding role-playing game where you can inhabit characters from that genre and tell those stories with your friends.

Lots of ink has been spilled describing RPGs to new players, but lots of habits and game etiquette are picked up by playing with friends and acquaintances. Often an example of play helps. Here are some resources for those that are new to the hobby.

- Learn to Play Tabletop RPGs - A site with advice and intro videos for new players - <http://learntabletoprpgs.com/>
- TableTop - Wil Wheaton and other minor celebrities gather to play tabletop games together. Their series on the game "Fiasco" perfectly captures how RPGS are

played - [Fiasco Set-Up](#), [Fiasco Play Part One](#), and [Fiasco Play Part Two](#)

- The Walking Eye Podcast - Listen to their cast play lots of different games together - <http://www.thewalkingeye.com/>
- The RPG subreddit beginner's guide - An introductory wiki maintained by the community - <https://www.reddit.com/r/rpg/wiki/beginnersguide>

1.1.1 So What Kind of Role-Playing Game is This?

In *Springers* each player will take on the role of a disembodied mind jumping randomly through an infinity of possible universes. Each time you play your disembodied mind will find itself temporarily possessing the body of someone who normally lives in that universe. You work to solve their problems and then your mind leaves their bodies, hopefully with them better off than before, and travels on to the next universe.

We've all seen [Quantum Leap](#) right? It's like that.

1.2 What Do I Need In Order to Play?

To play *Springers* each player will need two ten sided dice (2d10), paper, and pencil. In addition one deck of standard playing cards is needed. It can be shared among the group. Also a stack of 3x5 index cards will come in handy.

Chapter 2

A Springer's Guide to the Multiverse

2.1 Wait, So What Kind of Character is This?

You play a “Springer” a rare being who’s mind jumps from one universe to another. In fact you could say a Springer is nothing but a mind. They don’t seem to have a bodies of their own. When their mind jumps to a new world it needs to inhabit the body of some conscious intelligent being in order to perceive and interact with the universe.

Some believe that seeking intelligent minds is how Springers unconsciously navigate the multiverse. It prevents them from ending up in any of the infinite number of universes that contain nothing but hard vacuum and gamma radiation. For-

tunately for Springers there are also an infinite number of universes where intelligent life exists.

No one truly understands the process of being “inhabited” or “possessed” by a Springer. What is certain is that when the pattern of the Springer’s mind is laid down atop the existing brain (or whatever structure intelligent beings in this universe use to think) the mind and consciousness of that being is temporarily suppressed for as long as the Springer remains. This results in a period of temporary amnesia that the being will have difficulty explaining afterward.

From the point of view of the Springer inhabiting a new body is only somewhat better. They cannot direct their travels through the multiverse or choose who they inhabit. As they

leave one body there is a sensation of falling and a white light rapidly sweeps over their vision from the periphery until it fills their entire field of view. Then suddenly sensation pours back in as they find themselves in a new body. Because this happens at a seemingly random instant in the being's life it can easily be awkward or dangerous. Whatever they were doing the moment before the Springer jumped into their mind is exactly the situation that the Springer now finds itself facing. Game masters are encouraged to make liberal use of *in medias res*.

As minutes and hours pass in the new body the Springer can often concentrate on interrogating the brain's contents to access some rudimentary biographical information about the being they now appear to be.

Only the Springer's mind travels between various worlds nothing physical can possibly make the jump.

Some mysteries that will be explored in play are: Where the Springers come from and how they come to be. What is their place and function in the multiverse? Each individual Springer begins play with memories of many past jumps, but no clear notion of where they come from or what their destiny is. Many have ideas and even firmly held beliefs, but none are sure. Some say that Springers are dreamers or astral projectors that have come untethered from their original body and must make this journey until they can find their

way back to their own bodies. Others say that Springers are a type of angel or immune system for the universe destined to travel forever through the multiverse correcting problems and righting wrongs. Another hypothesis states that they are a type of self aware information from the higher realm of mathematics. Still others say that Springers are cursed and need to atone for misdeeds in a previous life or that something has gone wrong with their reincarnation. Any or none of these could be true. Your group will work to find your own answers to these questions.

2.2 What is the Collective Noun for a Group of Springers?

Traveling through the multiverse by endlessly hopping from one strange body to another is a draining and lonely existence. However some Springers are able to travel as a group. How this is possible is as poorly understood as the nature of the jumping itself. Perhaps they travel together as part of God's plan or because of quantum entanglement between their information matrices or because their souls carry the memory of unresolved issues between them. In any case the Springers bound together in such a group

typically use a term invented by the author Kurt Vonnegut in several universes including the one containing Earth-262144.

That author defined a *karass* as “a team that does God’s Will without ever discovering what they are doing.”

Springers are always able to recognize one another despite their ever shifting series of host bodies. There is a certain familiarity to the presence of any Springer in your *karass* that can be sensed at a moderate range (across a room, but not across a sports stadium).

There are malicious Springers roaming the multiverse, terrible minds that have given in to insanity or sadism. Your *karass* may encounter one or even many traveling in a *demonic karass*. However all players are expected to take on the roles of well meaning Springers that treat the lives of the beings who’s bodies they temporarily inhabit with respect. This does not mean that they cannot be cynical or flawed characters.

something went slightly differently are all potential landing spots for Springers.

In some universes the rules of physics work quite differently. For instance in a number of universes the fine-structure constant is just right to allow telepathic communication between brains via electromagnetism. In other universes the luminiferous æther has the correct resonance to allow the working of magical effects.

Creativity and variety in universes is strongly encouraged. Certainly all the universes in film, comics, literature, and television are available. But it can be rewarding to occasionally create a truly alien universe.

2.3 The Multiverse

What is in the multiverse you ask? Well it contains every possible type of place you can imagine and also an infinite number of places that you cannot imagine. Every historical version of earth every and every alternate history where

Chapter 3

Character Creation

3.1 Attributes

Springers have four mental attributes that follow them throughout the multiverse. They are:

- **Quick Thinking** : The ability to think on your feet, when under fire, or to react quickly.
- **Empathy** : The ability to interact with other minds effectively. To understand their thinking and act appropriately.
- **Reasoning** : The ability to deduce a result from first principles, abstract and critical thinking.

- **Cool** : Mental distance from the present situation and self assurance. The ability to remove yourself from your own emotions and the emotions of others.

In the game we measure these attributes on a five point scale from -2 to +2. According to the following scale.

- **-2, Feeble** : The character has a serious deficit in this area and will struggle to succeed in it.
- **-1, Poor** : The character is below average in this area.
- **0, Average** : The character is about average in this area.
- **+1, Good** : The character is above average in this area.

- **+2, Great** : The character is exceptional in this area. Few match them.

When building your character you may assign skills anywhere on this scale so long as the following rules are obeyed.

- **Quick Thinking** must be the mathematical negation of **Reasoning**.
- **Empathy** must be the mathematical negation of **Cool**.

This means that if a character has a **Quick Thinking of +2** they must also have a **Reasoning of -2**. And likewise if the character has an **Empathy of 0** they must also have a **Cool of 0**.

3.2 Descriptors

Choose a positive personality trait. This is who your Springer believes themselves to be. They would list it among their virtues if asked to account for themselves.

Choose a negative personality trait. This is who your Springer is on a bad day. They may or may not recognize this as a flaw in themselves, but it surely is.

Choose a gender. This has no bearing whatsoever on the biological sex of the bodies you will inhabit, but some minds traveling the multiverse think of themselves as female and some think of themselves as male. Others don't feel a pull toward either gender and some have a more dynamic notion of gender.

That's it character creation is done.

3.3 Bonds

Choose any number of characters in your *karass*. Work with them to describe a situation where they strongly affected your character. Good examples: Describe a time they helped you out of a tough spot, Describe the first time they appeared in your *karass*, Describe a time they betrayed you or let you down that you haven't forgiven them for.

For each player with whom you create a story make a note and add a bond to your character sheet.

3.4 Wait! Aren't you Forgetting Something?

Yes. In any given world the character will have physical attributes appropriate to the body they happen to inhabit. Those will be part of the physical overlay that you add to your character with each jump. These will change each time. More in section TODO REFERENCE.

Chapter 4

Playing the Game

4.1 Initial Setup

Once everyone has built their characters the players draw cards to see who gets to take on the role of Game Master (GM) first. High card wins, identical face values are resolved in bridge suit order (\spadesuit is better than \heartsuit is better than \diamondsuit is better than \clubsuit). It is important to record everyone's order in the draw. Write it down and email it to yourself or take a photo with your phone. This will be the order you each play as GM. When you are finished shuffle the cards back into the deck.

4.2 Being The Game Master

The Game Master is a special player that describes the environment faced by the other players and all the strange and interesting people in it.

When it is your turn as GM you will not be playing as your usual character. You will be busy creating problems for the other players to resolve and portraying the beings in the little corner of the multiverse their characters find themselves in.

The player who is GM has a few primary objectives.

- **Make the Character's Lives Interesting** : Jumping from one universe to another should never feel like a leisurely walk in the park. Give them drama and action.

- **Make The Multiverse Strange** : Everything that is possible, and quite a bit that isn't is going on out there. Give the other players something truly strange.
- **Keep The Story Human** : The problems the characters face need to be relatable on some level. Even as things get strange always show interest in the GMPCs you portray. What do they hope for? Who do they love? Who do they want to impress?

If it is your turn to GM next draw a card from the deck and consult the table below to determine what kind of problem the players will be facing. Reveal your card to the other players.

♠	The problem involves force or violence.
♥	The problem involves emotion and the relationship between two or more beings.
♦	The problem involves a significant object.
♣	The problem involves hidden knowledge.

If this sparks an idea in you immediately, great! Otherwise ask the players what kind of world might have this kind of problem. What kind of beings live there? What factions might be at play? Brainstorm with them and collect the best ideas in quick notes for the play session.

If the card drawn is a face-card then this session will provide clues to the nature or destiny of the Springers or their

adversaries. These sessions advance the mythology of the Springers. When a non-face-card is drawn it is a normal episodic sessions.

Now draw a second card and keep it hidden from the other players.

♠	This problem is amenable to force or violence.
♥	The problem may be solved by emotional appeal or negotiation.
♦	The situation can be improved via infiltration, stealth, or espionage.
♣	The problem can be addressed through investigation, research, or magic.

4.2.1 Creating Physical Overlays

To create physical overlays for the other characters you need to follow a few easy steps. Get out some 3x5 cards or some scratch paper. You will need one for each player excluding yourself.

Also do this part on your own.

Descriptive Tag

What kind of being is this? Keep it very simple. Just something to give the players an idea. Often 2-3 words are suffi-

cient. Some examples some descriptive tags might be: *Space Marine*, *Marie Antoinette*, *Reptilian Infiltrator*, *Crime-fighting Pop Star*, *Mouse Knight*, or *Clone Number 23456908*

If you have some idea about the background of this being that is great, because it is likely that players will want to investigate this body their characters find themselves inhabiting.

Biological Sex

Does the being in question have a meaningful biological sex? If so note it here also.

Physical Attributes

You need to assign three physical attributes to each being. They are:

- **Body** : The strength and toughness of this body. The creature has wound levels equal to 3 plus, or minus, its Body rating.
- **Agility** : The grace and speed that this body is capable of.

- **Strange** : This body's ability to interact with the strange physics of this place. It is used to measure aptitude with any odd powers that may be native to this universe. This score may often be given a value of N/A if the being doesn't have any powers or the universe in question appears to strictly follow our own physics.

These attributes are rated just as the others are -2 to +2 some exceptional beings might even have physical attributes greater than +2.

These values do not need to be balanced against one another as the mental attributes do. Feel free to assign whatever stats you feel best captures the physical nature of this being. There is no need to "balance" the physical attributes between each 3x5 card. Some beings are vastly more physically powerful than others. That is fine. Or on a planet populated entirely by identical clones you could give everyone the same physical attributes. This is fine as well.

Notes on Strangeness

If this being has any strange powers make a quick note of them here. Describe the superpowers available in a universe with superheroes. Make a note if magic is available. If everyone on the planet has a natural telepathy make a note for the players.

Once you have completed those four steps for each 3x5 card put them in a pile face down and shuffle them. Allow the players to each pick one of the physical overlays you have created at random. That will be the physical body they will inhabit for this session.

4.2.2 GM Advice

As the characters move through the session working toward the solution to the problem be sure to advantage those players that are using the preferred method, based on your earlier secret card draw, to solve it. This does not mean that other methods of approaching the problem will not work, merely that one is best. You should never insist that they use your solution to the exclusion of all others.

You should show signs of the problem the players are meant to solve early.

TODO: More on GM moves, when exactly to call for rolls, how to keep the story going, in medias res, throw them into awkward situations (e.g. opposite sides: make some Montagues and some Capulets), more scenario building advice, etc.

4.3 Being a Normal Player

At any given time most of you won't be playing as the game master. Instead you will be portraying your characters.

At the beginning of the session the GM will show you a card indicating what type of problem you are facing. He or she may also brainstorm with you asking about they types of universes that are a good match for that type of problem and your interests. Help them out if you have any ideas.

The GM will also draw a secret card that lets them know which types of approaches to the problem will be most fruitful, so be sure to try more than one strategy for solving the problem.

You will then select one of the physical overlays the GM has prepared at random from the pile. Look it over and see what kind of being you have become.

The GM will then describe the situation your characters find themselves in as they snap into consciousness in their new bodies. Describe what you do to the GM and he or she will tell you what happens or ask you to roll some dice.

4.3.1 Conflict and Resolution

As you move through the world looking to solve the problem you will eventually come into conflict with someone or end up

in a situation where the outcome of your actions is uncertain. In these cases the game master will often ask you to roll to determine the outcome.

Rolls are always made using two ten-sided dice (2d10) often you will have a bonus, or penalty, from your attributes. Rolls of 9 or lower are a complete miss. Rolls between 10 and 15 inclusive are partial success, you may get the outcome you want at a cost or have to make a tough decision. Rolls of 16 to 19 are a Hit. On rolls of 20 or above you not only succeed, but you and the other players decide on some way the success gives you future advantage.

Roll	Result
2-9	Miss
10-15	Partial Success
16-19	Hit
20+	Hit & Advantage

The GM will tell you what attribute(s) you should add to your roll based on the type of conflict. Some common rolls are below.

When you **search the memories of your host body** roll+**Empathy+Reasoning**. On a Partial Success the GM will give you some impressions of the being's life. On a Hit the GM will also allow you to ask two specific questions.

When you **seek to avoid detection**

roll+**Reasoning+Agility**. On a Hit you pass unnoticed. On a partial success you make a small mistake. The GM will offer you a hard choice.

When you **use violence against an opponent** roll+**Body+Cool**. On a Hit you cause them a wound. On a partial success you wound them, but take a wound yourself.

When you **negotiate or argue with someone** roll+**Empathy**. On a hit they must give you some concession, but they needn't do as you say. On a Partial Success you win the argument but lose face with your interlocutor or lose the argument but leave them doubting their position.

When you attempt to **avoid sudden danger** roll+**Quick Thinking+Agility**. On a Hit you avoid the danger. On a partial success you bought an extra second but the danger is not past.

When you attempt to **attempt to help or hinder someone** roll+**Bonds** with that person. On a Hit they take +1 or -2 to their roll (your choice). On a partial success you still give them the bonus or penalty, but you have put yourself in a bad spot in doing so.

TODO: investigate(roll+Reason) - questions?

TODO: These moves are in pretty bad shape. They don't force enough hard choices. They need to be improved. Out of time.

4.3.2 Death and Dying

A physical body has wound levels equal to its **Body** score plus 3. A being reduced to zero wounds is unconscious and will eventually die without aid. A body with less than zero wound levels remaining is dead.

If the physical body of the being you possess is killed then your Springer jumps on to the next situation carrying the guilt of another lost life. Your *karass* will catch up with you soon.

There is no known way to destroy the mind of a Springer.

4.4 End of Session & Beyond

At the end of the session the characters have either resolved the problem or not. In either case it is time to move on. They return their physical overlay cards to the GM and move on to the next universe.

The next GM in the cycle then immediately draws his or her two cards. Allowing both the GM and the players a preview of what is in store for next session.

