

Ea-nasir Gambit

This temporal trick is the Time Patrol's equivalent of an emergency field dressing, in the sense that it's kept in reserve for use during a genuinely life-threatening situation. It's not a desperation play; the Ea-nasir Gambit works perfectly well, which is why the Time Patrol uses it. It's just that the Gambit is not a permanent fix. It's barely a temporary one.

The math that explains how the Ea-nasir Gambit works is complex -- to the point where parts of it have applied for, and gotten, official legal status as sapient entities -- but the incredibly dumbed-down explanation involves temporal inertia. To put it obscenely simply, the universe is expected to go from Point A to Point B, and it does. Everything in between can be changed, but not permanently, or more accurately, it doesn't matter if things 'change' or not. When the Big Crunch happens in the end, it's not going to make any difference if Earth was the center of a giant stellar empire, or whether it got saved from being vaporized in 2145 AD, or whether the Union won the Civil War, or whether somebody turned left instead of right on the corner and thus discovered a really

nice restaurant that she totally didn't know was there. It all smooths out in the end.

That smoothing process is called 'temporal inertia,' and it's what permits alternate timelines to form (typically through temporal meddling). They don't last long, if 'really long' means anything in this context, but while they exist there are two (or more) alternative 'presents' simultaneously existing, and able to interact with each other. And one timeline can be chosen over the other(s), so that when the smoothing occurs later it will become the Only Timeline That Ever Was.

And *that's* why the Time Patrol refuses to tolerate any rival organizations.

Anyway, most of the time the Patrol doesn't bother with choosing one timeline over another; it all comes out in the wash, so to speak. But when a rogue timeline threatens to disrupt reality to the point where the changes **can't** be ignored, and there's not enough time to solve the problem quickly, the Patrol will reinforce a particular timeline by going back in time before the split, picking a specific event, and reinforcing it (more sapient math here, sorry) so that it strengthens the probability of the reinforced timeline at the expense of any others.

They call it the Ea-nasir Gambit because it was 'first' used using the existence of a Babylonian merchant of that name who, through an interesting set of circumstances, is remembered **to this day* and by name** as being a notorious cheat and dishonest businessman. By locking in, temporally speaking, the events that would produce Ea-nasir, an agent of the Time Patrol was able to reinforce the preferred reality in a rather nasty 6th Century AD paradox for just long enough to allow another team to make rough repairs. The process has been refined since then.

But how does the Ea-nasir Gambit translate, in terms of a team of Time Patrol agents? In the usual way, of course: "Go here, do these odd and seemingly trivial things, and shoot the screaming nightmares and/or sinister doppelgangers that try to stop you. Try not to give any interesting historical figures hints, heart attacks, or a social disease." That goes without saying. But at least now the team will have an idea *why* they're doing it, hey?

*Using an arbitrary point of 2019 AD to mean 'to this day,' of course. Almost four thousand years, using said arbitrary point.

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