Fate's Edge Horror Campaigns
Sanity Mechanics and Fear-Based Clock Management

Horror Campaign Design Philosophy

Horror in Fate's Edge should:

- Create a sense of helplessness and mounting dread

- Make players feel their characters are out of their depth

- Use psychological tension as much as physical threat

- Reward careful investigation and preparation

- Punish reckless actions with lasting consequences

   Key Horror Elements:

- **Isolation**: Characters are cut off from help

- **Unknown Threats**: The enemy cannot be easily understood or fought

- **Psychological Decay**: Mental stability becomes as important as physical health

- **Escalating Tension**: Fear builds throughout the campaign

- **Moral Ambiguity**: Survival may require compromising principles

The Sanity System

Boon-Based Sanity Management

Sanity as Resource Management: Instead of traditional sanity points, players must spend Boons to prevent the **Dread Clock** from advancing. This creates a resource management challenge where players must choose between immediate tactical advantages and long-term psychological stability.
   How It Works:

- Each time a character witnesses something horrific or experiences genuine terror, the GM may advance the Dread Clock

- Players can spend 1 Boon to prevent 1 segment of Dread Clock advancement

- If the Dread Clock advances, the character suffers escalating psychological effects

- Boons spent for sanity cannot be used for other purposes (rerolls, asset activation, XP conversion)

The Dread Clock

Dread Clock (10 segments)

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Psychological deterioration and mounting horror

Advancement Triggers (GM spends Boons to prevent):

- Witnessing death or violence: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)

- Encountering the unknown: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)

- Personal failure leading to harm: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)

- Direct threat to sanity/morality: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

- Major revelation about the horror: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

- Companion/friend harmed or lost: +3 segments (prevent with 3 Boons)

Psychological Effects by Dread Level

0-2 Segments - Unease Characters feel on edge, -1 die to social rolls involving trust, minor sleep disturbances

3-4 Segments - Fear -1 die to all rolls when alone, startle easily, avoid dark spaces, nightmares

5-6 Segments - Terror -2 dice to rolls involving courage or rational thought, may flee from non-threatening situations

7-8 Segments - Madness -2 dice to most rolls, may act against own interests, hallucinations, unreliable perception

9-10 Segments - Broken Out of control, may become hostile to allies, permanent psychological damage, requires major intervention to recover

Sample Horror Campaign: "The Whispering Dark"

Campaign Hook

> **The Premise**: The PCs are investigators (scholars, agents, or simply curious individuals) who have been drawn to the remote mining town of Black Hollow in the Aelerian mountains. Miners have been disappearing, and those who return speak of whispers in the dark tunnels and shadows that move against the light. The local priest has fled, and the few remaining townspeople are on the verge of abandoning the settlement entirely.
>
> **Real Hook**: The disappearances are connected to an ancient entity that was imprisoned beneath the mountain centuries ago. As the mining operations have deepened, they've disturbed the seals that keep it bound. Now it's beginning to awaken, and its influence is spreading through the town like a psychic contagion.

Campaign Clocks

Entity's Awakening Clock (12 segments)
●●●●●●●●●●●● 0/12
Progress toward the ancient entity's full manifestation

Advancement Triggers:

- Mining operations continue: +1 segment per day

- Seals investigated but not properly secured: +2 segments

- PCs experience direct contact with entity: +3 segments

- Townspeople driven to madness: +1 segment per person

- Ancient rituals discovered but not understood: +2 segments

Town Collapse Clock (8 segments)
●●●●●●●● 0/8
How quickly the community breaks down under supernatural pressure

Advancement Triggers:

- Dread Clock advances: +1 segment

- Townspeople disappear or go mad: +1 segment each

- PCs fail to provide leadership: +1 segment

- Supernatural events witnessed by townsfolk: +2 segments

- Essential services fail (doctor, supplies, communication): +1 segment

Dread Clock (10 segments)
●●●●●●●●●● 0/10
Psychological deterioration of investigators

Advancement Triggers (Players can spend Boons to prevent):

- Discovering miners' fate: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)

- Hearing whispers in the dark: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)

- Seeing shadows move unnaturally: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)

- Finding evidence of entity's influence: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

- Companion shows signs of corruption: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

- Direct psychic attack from entity: +3 segments (prevent with 3 Boons)

Key NPCs

Marshal Elena Vasquez The town's last law enforcement officer. Pragmatic but increasingly desperate. Knows something is wrong but can't admit the truth even to herself. Will sacrifice herself to protect the PCs if it means their escape.

- **Motivation**: Protect the innocent, maintain order
- **Secret**: Found her deputy's remains with symbols carved into the bones
- **Fate**: Becomes increasingly erratic, may need to be stopped

Dr. Samuel Crowell The town physician, arrived three months ago. Intellectual and curious, but his medical training is useless against supernatural threats. Has been documenting the psychological symptoms but doesn't understand their cause.

- **Motivation**: Understand and cure the "epidemic"
- **Research**: Has compiled notes on psychological effects that could help PCs
- **Weakness**: Becomes obsessed, may be corrupted by forbidden knowledge

The Entity (Ancient in the Dark) A being of pure malice that was imprisoned beneath the mountain by dwarven geomancers centuries ago. Cannot fully manifest but can influence minds and corrupt matter. Speaks through whispers and appears in peripheral vision.

- **Motivation**: Freedom and expansion of influence
- **Method**: Corrupt individuals to do its bidding
- **Weakness**: Bound by ancient seals, vulnerable to dwarven warding techniques

Custom Horror Mechanics

Whispering Mechanic: When in dark or enclosed spaces, PCs must make Wits + Perception rolls (DV 2) to resist hearing the entity's whispers. Each failure:

- Generates 1 CP that the GM can spend for psychological effects

- Advances Dread Clock by 1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)

- May reveal useful but disturbing information

Shadow Sight: When PCs are at 5+ Dread segments, they begin to see things that aren't there or notice details others miss:

- +1 die to Investigation rolls in familiar areas

- But also see disturbing visions that generate 1 CP

- May become unreliable narrators

Corruption Spread: PCs who reach 7+ Dread segments begin to show physical signs of the entity's influence:

- Eyes that reflect unusual colors in darkness

- Speaking in whispers without realizing it

- Attraction to dark, enclosed spaces

- May be able to communicate with the entity

  Group Sanity: The party's collective Dread affects their ability to work together:

- Average Dread level determines group cohesion

- High average = paranoia, infighting, poor coordination

- Low average = effective teamwork, shared resilience

Sample Sessions

Session 1: Arrival in Black Hollow

Opening Scene: The PCs arrive to find the town eerily quiet. Most businesses are shuttered, and the few people they encounter are jumpy and unhelpful. The mine entrance is guarded by Marshal Vasquez, who warns them to leave.

Key Encounters:

1. Investigation of abandoned miner's cabin (Wits + Investigation)

2. Conversation with increasingly paranoid shopkeeper (Presence + Sway)

3. First encounter with whispers in the dark (Wits + Perception, DV 2)

4. Discovery of strange symbols carved near mine entrance

Dread Clock Advancement:

- First whisper encounter: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)

- Seeing abandoned, obviously terrified miner: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

- Discovering symbols that shouldn't exist: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)

Campaign Clock Advancement:

- Entity's Awakening: +1 (mining operations continue unchecked)

- Town Collapse: +1 (more townspeople decide to flee)

Session 2: Descent into Darkness

Key Encounters:

1. Exploration of mine tunnels (Wits + Survival)

2. Encounter with corrupted miner (combat + social)

3. Discovery of ritual chamber deep underground (Wits + Lore)

4. First direct contact with entity's influence (Spirit + Resolve, DV 4)

Dread Clock Advancement:

- Seeing first corrupted miner: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

- Being touched by entity's influence: +3 segments (prevent with 3 Boons)

- Discovering extent of corruption: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

  Campaign Clock Advancement:

- Entity's Awakening: +2 (seals disturbed)

- Town Collapse: +1 (miners don't return)

Session 3: The Truth Revealed

Key Encounters:

1. Research in Dr. Crowell's notes (Wits + Lore)

2. Confrontation with Marshal Vasquez as she becomes erratic (Presence + Command)

3. Discovery of dwarven warding techniques (Wits + Arcana)

4. Choice: Attempt to reinforce seals or flee while there's still time

  Dread Clock Advancement:

- Learning the true nature of the entity: +3 segments (prevent with 3 Boons)

- Witnessing Marshal's breakdown: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

- Realizing the scope of the threat: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

  Campaign Clock Advancement:

- Entity's Awakening: +3 (major seal damaged)

- Town Collapse: +2 (Marshal's authority breaks down)

Resolution Paths

The Sacrifice Permanently seal the entity using dwarven techniques, but it requires one PC to remain behind as a living anchor. Success means the entity is contained, but at great personal cost. Award 15-18 XP.

The Escape Flee with evidence of the threat, warning other settlements. The entity remains but is contained for now. Award 10-12 XP, but create ongoing campaign thread.

The Corruption Allow the entity to partially manifest, gaining its power but becoming its servants. Transform PCs into agents of horror. Award 8-10 XP but fundamentally change character nature.

The Investigation Fully understand the entity and find a way to banish it without sacrifice. Requires significant research and resources. Award 18-20 XP if successful, but very difficult.

Alternative Horror Mechanics

Fear Tokens System

Fear Tokens: Instead of spending Boons, players collect Fear Tokens when exposed to horror. These represent psychological trauma that can be spent for mechanical benefits but come with narrative costs.

Gaining Fear Tokens:

- Witnessing death or violence: 1 token

- Direct threat to sanity: 2 tokens

- Personal failure with consequences: 1 token

- Major revelation: 2 tokens

- Companion lost: 3 tokens

Spending Fear Tokens:

- +1 die to rolls involving fear or intimidation: 1 token

- Reroll a failed roll when acting recklessly: 2 tokens

- Gain temporary immunity to a specific fear: 3 tokens

- But each token spent increases Dread Clock by 1 segment

Fear Manifestations: As tokens accumulate, characters develop phobias and compulsions:

- 3+ tokens: -1 die in dark environments

- 5+ tokens: Must make Wits + Resolve (DV 2) to enter confined spaces

- 7+ tokens: Hallucinations that generate 1 CP per scene

- 10+ tokens: Permanent psychological scar (narrative consequence)

Breaking Point Mechanics

Breaking Points: Specific triggers that force immediate Dread Clock advancement unless resisted.

Common Breaking Points:

- **Witnessing Corruption**: Seeing a friend or ally become corrupted advances Dread by 2

- **Personal Loss**: Losing something precious advances Dread by 3

- **Moral Compromise**: Acting against core beliefs advances Dread by 2

- **Hopelessness**: When all seems lost, advance Dread by 1 automatically

Resistance: Players can resist Breaking Points by:

- Spending 2 Boons to prevent advancement

- Making Spirit + Resolve roll (DV 3) with narrative justification

- Having relevant Talents or Backgrounds that provide resistance

    Consequences of Breaking: When a Breaking Point occurs:

- Character gains a permanent personality shift

- May temporarily become unreliable or hostile

- Creates new complications for the party

- May unlock new information about the horror

Horror Campaign Templates

Template 1: "The Isolated Institution"

Setting: Remote location (asylum, research station, monastery) cut off from outside help
    Key Elements:

- **Campaign Clocks**: Sanity Decay (8), Institution Collapse (10), Horror Manifestation (12)

- **Breaking Points**: Discovery of experiments, witnessing staff corruption, personal isolation

- **Resolution**: Escape, contain the threat, or become part of the institution

- **Custom Mechanics**: Communication breakdown (rolls to contact outside world), supply depletion, group paranoia

    Sample Hooks:

- Investigating reports of unethical experiments at a remote research facility

- Visiting a family member at an isolated psychiatric hospital

- Seeking shelter during a storm at a monastery with a dark past

Template 2: "The Haunted Location"

Template 3: "The Cosmic Horror"

Setting: Reality-breaking threat that challenges understanding of the universe
    Key Elements:

- **Campaign Clocks**: Reality Fracture (12), Collective Sanity (10), Existential Threat (15)

- **Breaking Points**: Comprehending the incomprehensible, witnessing reality warp, losing sense of self

- **Resolution**: Seal the breach, ascend to a higher reality, or become part of the cosmic order

- **Custom Mechanics**: Sanity loss affects perception of reality, time distortion, fundamental

laws of physics become unreliable

Sample Hooks:

- Ancient observatory detects impossible stellar alignments that shouldn't exist
- Scholar's research into forbidden mathematics opens door to alien geometry
- Remote research station experiences temporal anomalies and dimensional bleeds

Cosmic Horror Campaign: "The Infinite Spiral"

Campaign Hook

The Premise: The PCs are scholars, researchers, or investigators who have been drawn to the remote Aelerian Observatory at Khaz-Vurim, where astronomers have detected impossible stellar phenomena. Stars are moving in patterns that violate every known law of physics, and observers report seeing geometric shapes in the void that hurt to perceive directly.

    Real Hook: The stellar anomalies are caused by a rift in the fabric of reality itself, created by ancient Aeler experiments into dimensional mathematics. Something from beyond the normal dimensions is seeping through, and its alien geometry is slowly rewriting the fundamental laws of existence in this region of space.

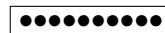## Campaign Clocks

Reality Fracture Clock (12 segments)

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How much the fundamental laws of reality have been altered

Advancement Triggers:

- Impossible stellar movements observed: +1 segment per day
- Dimensional mathematics researched: +2 segments
- PCs directly perceive alien geometry: +3 segments
- Local reality becomes unstable: +2 segments per incident
- Ancient Aeler experiments disturbed: +3 segments

Collective Sanity Clock (10 segments)

●●●●●●●●●● 0/10

How much the observers and inhabitants are affected by cosmic horror

Advancement Triggers:

- Reality Fracture Clock advances: +1 segment
- Direct observation of alien entities: +2 segments each
- Comprehension of higher-dimensional concepts: +2 segments
- Witnessing impossible geometric shapes: +1 segment each
- Temporal anomalies experienced: +1 segment per hour

Existential Threat Clock (15 segments)

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How close the cosmic entity is to fully manifesting in our reality

Advancement Triggers:

- Reality Fracture reaches 6 segments: +2 segments
- Collective Sanity reaches 8 segments: +3 segments
- PCs attempt to communicate with alien intelligence: +3 segments
- Dimensional barriers weakened further: +2 segments
- Ancient Aeler safeguards fail: +4 segments

Dread Clock (10 segments)
●●●●●●●●●● 0/10
Psychological deterioration of investigators

Advancement Triggers (Players can spend Boons to prevent):

- Observing stellar impossibilities: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)
- Perceiving alien geometry: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)
- Experiencing temporal distortions: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)
- Comprehending mathematical impossibilities: +3 segments (prevent with 3 Boons)
- Direct contact with cosmic entity: +3 segments (prevent with 3 Boons)
- Reality shifts around PCs: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

Key NPCs

Master Astronomer Thane Ironwright The dwarven head of the observatory. Brilliant but increasingly paranoid as stellar phenomena defy explanation. Knows more about the Aeler experiments than he admits.

- **Motivation**: Preserve the integrity of astronomical knowledge
- **Secret**: Discovered the Aeler connection but fears the consequences of revelation
- **Fate**: May become a conduit for cosmic influence or the key to sealing the rift

Scholar Elena Vasquez A human mathematician studying the impossible equations. Young and ambitious, but her research is driving her toward madness.

- **Motivation**: Solve the greatest mathematical mystery in history
- **Research**: Has calculated patterns that predict reality fractures
- **Weakness**: Becoming obsessed, may willingly open dimensional gates

The Entity (Beyond the Void) An alien intelligence from outside normal space-time. Cannot fully manifest but can influence reality through mathematical resonance. Speaks through impossible equations and appears as geometric impossibilities.

- **Motivation**: Understand and reshape reality according to alien logic
- **Method**: Corrupt mathematical understanding to break dimensional barriers
- **Weakness**: Bound by logical consistency, vulnerable to paradox and contradiction

Custom Horror Mechanics

Geometric Perception: When PCs observe alien geometry or impossible stellar patterns, they must make Wits + Lore rolls (DV 3) to avoid comprehension effects. Each failure:

- Generates 2 CP that the GM can spend for reality distortions
- Advances Dread Clock by 2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)
- May grant forbidden knowledge at great psychological cost

   Temporal Distortion: As reality fractures, time becomes unreliable:

- +1 die to Investigation rolls for finding temporal anomalies
- But also experience time loops that generate 2 CP
- May become unstuck in time, unreliable narrators

   Dimensional Bleed: PCs who reach 7+ Dread segments begin to exist partially outside normal space:

- Can perceive multiple dimensional layers simultaneously
- Speaking in mathematical equations without realizing it
- Attraction to impossible geometric patterns
- May be able to perceive the entity directly

   Collective Insanity: The party's collective Dread affects their perception of reality:

- Average Dread level determines reality stability
- High average = shared hallucinations, impossible events become real
- Low average = grounding effect, some resistance to cosmic influence

Sample Sessions

Session 1: Arrival at Khaz-Vurim

Opening Scene: The PCs arrive at the dwarven observatory to find the astronomers in a state of controlled panic. Stars are moving in impossible patterns, and some have simply vanished from the sky. The Master Astronomer is holding emergency sessions to discuss the phenomena.

   Key Encounters:

1. Investigation of observatory records (Wits + Investigation)
2. Conversation with increasingly paranoid astronomers (Presence + Sway)
3. First observation of stellar impossibilities through telescopes (Wits + Perception, DV 2)
4. Discovery of ancient Aeler mathematical notations in vault records

   Dread Clock Advancement:

- First observation of impossible stars: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)
- Realizing astronomical laws are breaking down: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)
- Discovering Aeler connection: +1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)

   Campaign Clock Advancement:

- Reality Fracture: +1 (stellar anomalies continue unchecked)
- Collective Sanity: +1 (more observers affected by phenomena)

Session 2: The Mathematics of Madness

Key Encounters:

1. Research in the Aeler vault archives (Wits + Lore)

2. Working with Scholar Elena on impossible equations (Wits + Arcana)

3. Encounter with temporal distortions in the observatory (Wits + Survival)

4. First direct contact with alien geometric patterns (Spirit + Resolve, DV 4)

    Dread Clock Advancement:

- Comprehending partial Aeler mathematics: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

- Experiencing first temporal loop: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

- Seeing geometric impossibilities directly: +3 segments (prevent with 3 Boons)

    Campaign Clock Advancement:

- Reality Fracture: +2 (mathematical understanding accelerates reality shifts)

- Collective Sanity: +2 (more researchers driven to obsession)

Session 3: The Entity's Influence

Key Encounters:

1. Confrontation with Master Astronomer as he becomes influenced (Presence + Command)

2. Discovery of the true nature of Aeler experiments (Wits + Lore)

3. Choice: Attempt to seal dimensional rift or embrace cosmic knowledge

4. Final observation of the entity through mathematical resonance

    Dread Clock Advancement:

- Learning the truth about Aeler experiments: +3 segments (prevent with 3 Boons)

- Witnessing Master Astronomer's transformation: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

- Realizing the scope of cosmic threat: +2 segments (prevent with 2 Boons)

    Campaign Clock Advancement:

- Reality Fracture: +3 (major dimensional barrier weakened)

- Collective Sanity: +3 (observatory staff affected)

- Existential Threat: +2 (entity closer to manifestation)

Resolution Paths

The Paradox Seal Use contradictory mathematical principles to create a logical paradox that forces the entity back beyond dimensional barriers. Success seals the rift but leaves the PCs with fragmented understanding of reality. Award 15-18 XP.

The Sacrificial Equation Permanently bind oneself to the dimensional rift as an anchor to keep it stable. The PC becomes a living mathematical constant, existing partially outside normal reality but preventing the entity's full manifestation. Award 18-20 XP but fundamentally change character nature.

The Embrace of Infinity Accept the entity's influence and allow it to rewrite reality according to alien logic. The PCs become heralds of a new cosmic order, gaining vast power but losing their humanity and connection to normal existence. Award 8-10 XP but transform PCs into agents of cosmic horror.

The Fractal Escape Use the entity's own geometric principles against it, creating a recursive pattern that traps it in an infinite loop of self-reference. Requires significant mathematical understanding and risks fractal contamination. Award 20-22 XP if successful, but very difficult.

Cosmic Horror Mechanics

Reality Distortion Points: Instead of spending Boons, players can accumulate Reality Distortion Points when exposed to cosmic horror. These represent fundamental changes to their perception of reality that can be spent for mechanical benefits but come with narrative costs.

> **Gaining Reality Distortion Points**:

- Witnessing stellar impossibilities: 1 point

- Direct contact with alien geometry: 2 points

- Comprehending higher-dimensional mathematics: 2 points

- Experiencing temporal distortions: 1 point

- Partial manifestation of cosmic entity: 3 points

> **Spending Reality Distortion Points**:

- +1 die to rolls involving mathematical or geometric understanding: 1 point

- Perceive hidden dimensional layers: 2 points

- Gain temporary immunity to reality distortions: 3 points

- But each point spent increases Dread Clock by 1 segment

> **Cosmic Manifestations**: As points accumulate, characters develop alien perceptions and abilities:

- 3+ points: -1 die in normal three-dimensional environments

- 5+ points: Must make Wits + Resolve (DV 2) to interact with normal reality

- 7+ points: Can perceive multiple timeline branches, but generates 2 CP per scene

- 10+ points: Permanent reality distortion (narrative consequence)

Cosmic Breaking Points

Cosmic Breaking Points: Specific triggers that force immediate Dread Clock advancement unless resisted through cosmic understanding.

> **Common Cosmic Breaking Points**:

- **Incomprehensible Truth**: Understanding a fact that fundamentally challenges reality advances Dread by 3

- **Dimensional Witness**: Seeing the entity directly advances Dread by 4

- **Mathematical Corruption**: Having one's core understanding of mathematics altered ad-

vances Dread by 3

- **Temporal Fracture**: Experiencing personal timeline disruption advances Dread by 2

    Resistance: Players can resist Cosmic Breaking Points by:

- Spending 3 Boons to prevent advancement
- Making Spirit + Lore roll (DV 4) with narrative justification involving mathematical or cosmic understanding
- Having relevant Talents or Backgrounds that provide resistance to reality distortion

    Consequences of Cosmic Breaking: When a Cosmic Breaking Point occurs:

- Character gains a permanent alien perception
- May temporarily become unreliable or exist partially outside normal time
- Creates new complications for the party through reality distortions
- May unlock forbidden cosmic knowledge

The Investigation

Whispering Investigation: When investigating areas where whispers have been heard, PCs must make Wits + Investigation rolls (DV 2) to avoid being overwhelmed by the entity's influence. Each failure:

- Generates 1 CP that can be spent for entity manifestations
- Advances Dread Clock by 1 segment (prevent with 1 Boon)
- May reveal crucial but disturbing clues

    Forbidden Knowledge: Researching the entity through ancient tomes or speaking with knowledgeable NPCs carries risks:

- Each research attempt requires Spirit + Lore (DV 3)
- Success grants valuable information but advances Dread Clock by 1
- Failure generates 2 CP and advances Dread Clock by 2
- Critical failure may result in direct entity contact

Horror Campaign Variations

Variant: The Isolated Institution

Setting : Remote location (asylum, research station, monastery) cut off from outside help

Key Elements :

- **Campaign Clocks**: Sanity Decay (8), Institution Collapse (10), Horror Manifestation (12)
- **Breaking Points**: Discovery of experiments, witnessing staff corruption, personal isolation
- **Resolution**: Escape, contain the threat, or become part of the institution
- **Custom Mechanics**: Communication breakdown (rolls to contact outside world), supply depletion, group paranoia

Variant: The Haunted Location

Setting : Specific place with supernatural activity (house, battlefield, ancient ruin)

Key Elements :

- **Campaign Clocks**: Location Corruption (10), Resident Sanity (8), Supernatural Escalation (12)
- **Breaking Points**: Personal connection to location, witnessing ghostly death, being trapped
- **Resolution**: Banish the spirits, seal the location, or join the haunting
- **Custom Mechanics**: Location familiarity (affects investigation rolls), haunting intensity (environmental effects), ghostly communication (social rolls with spirits)

Variant: The Cosmic Horror

Setting : Reality-breaking threat that challenges understanding of the universe

Key Elements :

- **Campaign Clocks**: Reality Fracture (12), Collective Madness (10), Existential Threat (15)
- **Breaking Points**: Comprehending the incomprehensible, witnessing reality warp, losing sense of self
- **Resolution**: Seal the breach, ascend to a higher reality, or become part of the cosmic order
- **Custom Mechanics**: Sanity loss affects perception of reality, time distortion, fundamental laws of physics become unreliable

GM Tips for Running Horror Campaigns

Atmosphere and Tension

Building Dread:

- Use lighting, sound, and physical environment to create unease
- Describe sensations and feelings, not just visual details
- Let silences and pauses carry weight
- Make the familiar seem alien and threatening

  Pacing the Horror:
- Start subtle and build gradually
- Vary the intensity - allow moments of false security
- Use foreshadowing and ominous signs
- Save the biggest revelations for climactic moments

  Player Agency:
- Give players meaningful choices, even when options seem limited
- Let their decisions have real consequences
- Provide multiple approaches to problems
- Respect their courage to face the horror head-on

Managing Fear and Sanity

Fear as a Resource:
- Fear should be a narrative driver, not a punishment
- Let players feel powerful even when afraid
- Provide opportunities to confront and overcome fears
- Balance terror with moments of triumph
  Sanity Management:
- Make sanity loss feel meaningful and personal
- Let it change how characters perceive and interact with the world
- Provide ways to recover or adapt to mental trauma
- Avoid making characters useless when sanity is low

Narrative Techniques

Unreliable Information:
- Not all sources are trustworthy
- Clues may be misleading or incomplete
- NPCs might be lying, mistaken, or hiding crucial information
- Let players discover the truth through investigation and deduction
  The Unknown vs. The Known:
- The unknown should be terrifying because of what it might be
- Revelations should be both satisfying and horrifying
- Partial knowledge can be more unsettling than complete ignorance
- Let mystery be part of the horror

Sample Horror Items and Relics

Cursed Artifacts

Whispering Blade A dagger that hums with voices inaudible to most. Wielder gains +1 die to stealth and investigation rolls but must make Spirit + Resolve (DV 2) each session or advance Dread Clock by 1.

Mirror of the Forgotten Shows glimpses of possible futures and past events. Provides valuable insights (Wits + Lore, DV 2) but each use advances Dread Clock by 1 and generates 1 CP.

Shroud of Whispers A burial cloth that grants immunity to fear effects but causes the wearer to hear the entity's whispers constantly. Must make Wits + Perception (DV 3) or advance Dread Clock by 2 each day worn.

Protective Items

Blessed Warding Stone Provides +2 dice to resist supernatural influence and reduces Dread Clock advancement by 1 (minimum 1). Crumbles to dust if Dread Clock fills completely.

Sanctified Salt Can be used to create protective circles or barriers. One use per session to prevent Dread Clock advancement or gain start Controlled vs. supernatural threats.

Prayer Book of the Steadfast Once per session, allows reroll of failed Spirit + Resolve roll and prevents 1 segment of Dread Clock advancement.

Conclusion

Horror in Fate's Edge is about creating a sense of vulnerability and mounting dread while still allowing players to feel their characters are capable of meaningful action. The sanity system provides mechanical weight to psychological horror, while the campaign clocks ensure that tension builds naturally throughout the story.

Remember that the best horror comes from what is left unsaid and unseen. Let the players' imaginations fill in the gaps, and trust in the power of implication over explicit description. The fear of what might be lurking in the shadows is often more effective than showing every monster in detail.

Most importantly, maintain communication with your players about comfort levels and boundaries. Horror can be deeply personal, and what one player finds thrilling, another might find genuinely distressing. A good horror game is one where everyone at the table is having fun and feeling appropriately challenged, not traumatized.

The mechanics provided here are tools to enhance the horror experience, not replace good storytelling and atmosphere. Use them to support your narrative goals and create memorable, chilling experiences for your players.

Cosmic Horror Generator

> **Theme**: Reality-breaking threats that challenge understanding of existence itself
>   **Special Mechanics**:
> - Any Ace adds a fundamental law of reality that becomes unreliable
> - Face cards (J/Q/K) represent cosmic entities or phenomena beyond normal comprehension
> - Black suits (♠, ♣) : $Physical reality distortions, existential threats$
> - Red suits (♡, ◇) : $Psychological/cosmic influence, forbidden knowledge$

Spades — Places (impossible locations, reality-warped sites)

- 2. Observatory with a telescope that shows stars that shouldn't exist
- 3. Library where books rewrite themselves when read
- 4. Laboratory where the walls breathe and mathematical equations drip like liquid
- 5. Ancient vault with doors that open to different dimensions
- 6. Tower that exists in multiple time periods simultaneously
- 7. Cave system where gravity flows in impossible directions

- 8. Room where the corners don't meet and shadows have shadows
- 9. Mirror maze that reflects possible futures instead of present reality
- 10. Garden where plants grow in geometric patterns that hurt to perceive
- J. Research station experiencing temporal anomalies and dimensional bleeds
- Q. Ancient temple built according to alien geometry that shouldn't be physically possible
- K. Black monolith that exists partially outside normal space-time
- A. Location where a fundamental law of physics (time, gravity, causality) no longer applies

Hearts — Entities & Factions (cosmic beings, affected people)

- 2. Researcher who speaks only in mathematical equations
- 3. Astronomer who can see the approach of something from beyond
- 4. Mathematician whose calculations predict reality fractures
- 5. Entity that exists as pure geometric impossibility
- 6. Being from outside normal space-time seeking understanding
- 7. Collective consciousness of a species that transcended physical form
- 8. Fragment of a dead god that remembers when reality was different
- 9. Scientist whose mind has been rewritten by cosmic influence
- 10. Cultist who worships mathematical perfection and cosmic order
- J. Ancient Aeler philosopher who opened doors that should have remained closed
- Q. Cosmic entity that communicates through stellar movements and impossible geometry
- K. Being that exists simultaneously in all possible dimensions
- A. Intelligence that predates the current configuration of reality itself

Clubs — Threats & Complications (reality distortions, existential dread)

- 2. Stars moving in patterns that violate known astronomical laws
- 3. Mathematical proof that shows reality is fundamentally inconsistent
- 4. Temporal loop where the same conversation repeats with slight variations
- 5. Geometric shapes that exist in more than three dimensions becoming visible
- 6. Fundamental constant of physics beginning to shift and change
- 7. Memory of events that never happened becoming more real than actual history
- 8. Observer effect causing reality to change based on perception
- 9. Causality breaking down—effects preceding their causes
- 10. Consciousness beginning to exist in multiple states simultaneously
- J. Local reality becoming unstable and fragmenting into possibility storms
- Q. Dimensions beginning to bleed into each other, mixing incompatible laws
- K. The universe approaching a mathematical proof of its own non-existence
- A. A fundamental aspect of existence (time, space, identity) ceasing to be reliable

Diamonds — Revelations & Resources (forbidden knowledge, cosmic tools)

- 2. Star charts showing constellations from impossible angles
- 3. Mathematical formula that describes the shape of space-time itself
- 4. Instrument that can detect fluctuations in the fundamental constants
- 5. Tome written in a language that predates human civilization by eons
- 6. Crystal that stores memories from alternate versions of reality
- 7. Equation that can temporarily stabilize dimensional barriers
- 8. Observatory equipment calibrated to detect entities from outside normal space
- 9. Protective ward that maintains local reality coherence for a limited time
- 10. Research notes detailing experiments into forbidden dimensions
- J. Key to an ancient vault containing Aeler research into reality structure
- Q. Device that can briefly open controlled portals to adjacent dimensions
- K. Formula for creating paradoxes that can trap cosmic entities
- A. Knowledge of how to permanently seal breaches in dimensional barriers

Quick Use Notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage
- Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–$5 \rightarrow 4$, 6–$10 \rightarrow 6$, J/Q/K $\rightarrow 8$, A $\rightarrow 10$)
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (knowledge/tools) that change position rather than call for a roll
- If any Ace appears, add a fundamental law of reality that becomes unreliable (time flows backward, gravity weakens, etc.)
- Face cards represent cosmic entities or phenomena beyond normal comprehension

Using the Cosmic Horror Generator

Standalone Campaign Use: When using the Cosmic Horror generator on its own, focus on reality-breaking threats that challenge the fundamental nature of existence. The generator provides a complete framework for campaigns where the PCs face threats beyond normal comprehension.

Key Considerations:

- **Scale**: Cosmic horror operates on a universal or existential scale rather than personal threats
- **Comprehension**: Understanding the threat may be as dangerous as ignoring it
- **Permanence**: Changes to reality may be irreversible
- **Isolation**: The PCs may be among the few who perceive the true threat

Standalone Setup:

1. Draw the full seed (Spade, Heart, Club, Diamond) to establish the cosmic threat
2. Note any Aces for fundamental reality changes
3. Use Face cards to identify cosmic entities involved

4. Set primary clock based on highest rank

5. Establish 2-3 supporting clocks (Reality Fracture, Collective Sanity, Existential Threat)

Mixed Generator Use: The Cosmic Horror generator excels at adding existential weight to other campaign types. Mix it with regional generators to create campaigns where local threats have cosmic implications.

Common Mixing Strategies:

With Mistlands:

- Use Mistlands Spades/Clubs for atmospheric horror
- Use Cosmic Hearts/Diamonds for the underlying threat
- Result: Ancient entities sleeping beneath the mist, awakened by reality fractures

With Acasia:

- Use Acasia Spades/Clubs for cursed locations and social pressure
- Use Cosmic Hearts/Diamonds for the true threat behind local disturbances
- Result: Merchant houses unknowingly trafficking in reality-distorting artifacts

With Aeler:

- Use Aeler Spades/Clubs for underground locations and ancient dangers
- Use Cosmic Hearts/Diamonds for the vault-dwelling entities
- Result: Dwarven experiments that opened doors to impossible dimensions

With Valewood:

- Use Valewood Spades/Clubs for phasing ruins and imperial residue
- Use Cosmic Hearts/Diamonds for the entities behind the empire's fall
- Result: The empire fell not to war, but to reality-altering influence

Mixing Procedure:

1. Draw 2-3 cards from base generator (location, local actor, local pressure)

2. Draw 1-2 cards from Cosmic Horror generator (cosmic entity, reality threat)

3. Blend elements to create a threat that feels both local and universal

4. Use base generator's clock size, modified by cosmic elements

5. Add 1-2 cosmic-themed supporting clocks to base campaign clocks

Campaign Integration Tips:

Gradual Revelation: Start with local/normal threats, gradually revealing cosmic implications. Players are more invested when they discover their small problem is part of a universal threat.

Personal Stakes: Even cosmic threats need personal connections. Tie the existential danger to characters' backgrounds, goals, or loved ones.

Escalation Patterns:

- Sessions 1-2: Local anomalies, minor reality distortions
- Sessions 3-4: Pattern recognition, first contact with cosmic entities

- Sessions 5-6: Full revelation, existential stakes become clear

- Final Session: Resolution with universal consequences

Reality as Character: Treat the laws of physics and fundamental reality as active elements that can shift, change, and react to player actions. When players solve problems, let reality itself respond.

Knowledge Management: Forbidden knowledge should be both valuable and dangerous. Create systems where learning the truth advances both understanding and threat levels.

Mixed Deck Campaign: "The Whispering Depths" (Mistlands + Cosmic Horror)

Campaign Setup: Mixing the Mistlands generator with Cosmic Horror creates a campaign where ancient entities sleeping beneath the fog have begun to awaken as reality barriers weaken.

Drawn Elements:

- Mistlands Spade (7 - Pall Watch-tower on piles above the mire)

- Cosmic Horror Heart (Q - Cosmic entity that communicates through stellar movements)

- Mistlands Club (9 - Bell-line failure on the levee; a wraith steps across like it owns the road)

- Cosmic Horror Diamond (8 - Instrument that can detect fluctuations in the fundamental constants)

Clock Size: 9 (Queen) = 8-segment primary clock

Campaign Hook: The Pall Watch-tower, a key defensive position in the Mistlands, has begun experiencing temporal anomalies. Guards report that the bell-line failures don't follow normal patterns—instead, the bells ring in mathematical sequences that correspond to stellar movements visible only through the tower's ancient spyglass. Something from beyond normal space is using the weakened barriers between dimensions to influence the physical world, and the bell-code system that once kept the Mistlands safe is now serving as a communication channel for entities that predate human civilization.

Key NPCs:

- Bell-Warden Thorne: Paranoid keeper who first noticed the anomalous bell patterns

- Astronomer-Liaison Mara: Assigned to interpret the stellar correlations, slowly losing sanity

- The Deep Listener: Cosmic entity that exists partially in our dimension, communicating through bell harmonics

Campaign Clocks:

- Bell-Line Corruption (8): How much the communication system has been compromised

- Reality Fracture (10): Local weakening of dimensional barriers

- Collective Sanity (8): Mental stability of the watch-tower garrison

Resolution Paths:

- Seal the dimensional breach using the stellar-aligned bell-code in reverse

- Negotiate with the entity to establish a controlled communication channel

- Destroy the watch-tower to sever the connection, sacrificing the region's defense

- Allow the entity full access to our reality in exchange for protection from other cosmic threats

Horror Elements:

- The bells ring in patterns that hurt to hear directly

- Guards begin aging rapidly during their watches

- Shadows cast by the tower show events from impossible futures

- The entity's influence causes time to loop in 8-hour cycles