

Fate's Edge GM Guide

Game Master's Companion

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In **Fate's Edge**, the Game Master (GM) is not a referee or adversary, but a **collaborative storyteller** and **weaver of consequences**. You are the guardian of the world's texture, the keeper of tension, and the guide who ensures that every action—no matter how small—ripples outward in meaningful ways.

You are not just running a game. You are stewarding a world where **the past is never truly gone**, where **choices echo**, and where **power always demands a price**. From the fog-shrouded bell-lines of the Mistlands to the sun-scorched marches of Acasia, the world of Fate's Edge is alive with history, ambition, and the quiet weight of forgotten oaths.

Narrative Primacy

At the heart of Fate's Edge lies a single truth: **mechanics serve the story**. Dice do not merely determine success or failure—they shape the unfolding narrative by introducing new problems, twists, or opportunities. Every roll should change the story, not just resolve an action.

As the GM, your role is to keep the fiction alive. When a player rolls dice, the outcome should never be mechanical alone—it should always feed back into the world, altering the path ahead. Whether it's a moment of triumph or a twist of fate, the story is the ledger. Let the dice guide you, not constrain you.

In the courts of Vhasia, a noble's smile may conceal betrayal. In the under-vaults of Aeler, a misplaced seal can mean the difference between breath and doom. In the Valewood, even the trees remember your name. Your job is to make sure that every roll—every choice—carries that same weight.

Risk as Drama

Fate's Edge is built on the idea that **risk drives drama**. Every roll carries the potential for both triumph and complication. This is not a game where players accumulate power in a vacuum—every gain comes with a cost, and every victory shifts the balance of the world.

Complication Points (CP) are your primary tool for introducing tension. They are not penalties—they are narrative fuel. Use them to escalate stakes, introduce new threats, or deepen the emotional weight of a scene. The dice are not your enemy; they are your collaborator in crafting a living, breathing story.

A player may win a duel, but if they rolled a 1, perhaps the crowd begins to murmur that their blade was guided by luck—or something darker. Maybe the duel was witnessed by a rival faction. Maybe the blade itself now hums with a whisper it shouldn't carry. These are the threads you pull.

Meaningful Growth

Characters in Fate's Edge do not level up in the traditional sense. Instead, they grow through **Experience Points (XP)**—a currency that represents meaningful choices and narrative investment. Players spend XP to enhance themselves, acquire assets, or unlock cultural talents. As the GM, you are the witness to this growth. You reward choices that shape the world, and you challenge players to live with the consequences of their decisions.

One PC may become a master duelist of Viterra, known for her silver tongue and her blade. Another might build a spy network across the Astroegro Straits, commanding influence from the shadows. A third may become a spirit-shielded dwarf, bearing the weight of ancestral voices. All are valid. All come at a cost. All change the world.

Your Tools as GM

To guide the story, you have a set of tools designed to keep the narrative alive and evolving:

- **Deck of Consequences:** A 52-card deck that provides thematic complications when players roll 1s. It externalizes risk and ensures that setbacks feel consistent and fair. Draw from it when the dice say the world pushes back.
- **Campaign Clocks:** Mandate and Crisis clocks that track the rise and fall of player influence, culminating in a finale shaped by their choices. These clocks are the heartbeat of long-term play.
- **Complication Points:** Earned from dice rolls, spent to add tension, introduce threats, or reshape the narrative. These are your levers of drama.
- **Crown Spread:** A Session 0 ritual that seeds the campaign's themes, rivals, and finale conditions. It is here that the fate of nations—or the silence of forgotten gods—may be written.

Flavor is Free

Players and GMs: Remember that in Fate's Edge, **flavor is free!**

This means you can add descriptive details, cultural elements, and atmospheric touches to your actions without spending resources or requiring mechanical justification. Want to perform a parry with the traditional Aelerian bell-guard technique? Go ahead! Want to invoke the seasonal festivals of Theona when making a social roll? Perfect!

Flavor doesn't change the mechanical outcome of your actions, but it makes the world come alive and helps everyone at the table visualize and engage with the rich setting. Describe your character's background, their cultural customs, the local architecture, or the atmospheric details of a scene. These elements enrich the narrative without requiring dice rolls or resource expenditure.

The GM should encourage flavorful descriptions and may even provide additional descriptive details about the world in return. This collaborative approach to world-building through flavor helps create a more immersive experience for everyone involved.

Remember: Mechanics determine success or failure, but flavor determines the story we tell about how that success or failure came to be.

1 Running the Game: Core Procedures

In **Fate's Edge**, the game flows through a series of **actions, consequences, and escalating stakes**. As the GM, your role is to guide this flow—not by dictating outcomes, but by **framing scenes, interpreting rolls, and spending Complication Points** to keep tension alive. This chapter walks you through the core procedures that define play, from the moment a player declares an action to the fallout that follows.

Scene Framing: Start with Stakes

Every scene begins with a question: **What's at risk?** Not just for the characters, but for the world, the mission, or the fragile alliances they've built. As the GM, you frame the scene by establishing:

- **Position:** Is the action *Controlled*, *Risky*, or *Desperate*?
- **Effect:** What happens on a success? What changes?
- **Stakes:** What is gained—or lost—if things go wrong?

A scene in the **Mistlands** might begin with the PCs crossing a flooded causeway at dusk. The bell-line hums with tension. The GM sets the position as *Risky*—slippery stones, rising mist, and the distant echo of a wraith-call. A failure here could mean separation, exposure, or worse.

Position Descriptions

- **Controlled:** You act on your terms. Complications are minor, setbacks are rare.
- **Risky:** You act under pressure. Success is possible, but failure brings a cost.
- **Desperate:** The odds are stacked against you. Success is hard-won, and failure is dramatic.

Use position to guide the fiction. A controlled entry into a noble salon in **Vhasia** might allow the PCs to charm or intimidate without resistance. A desperate one—perhaps after triggering an alarm—means blades are drawn before words.

Adjudicating Rolls: The Outcome Matrix

When a player rolls, they are not simply trying to "beat" a number. They are engaging with the world. The **Outcome Matrix** is your guide to interpreting the result in context.

Step-by-Step Roll Resolution

1. **Player declares action and approach** (Attribute + Skill).
2. **GM sets Difficulty Value (DV)** based on stakes and fiction.
3. **Player rolls pool of d10s.**

4. **Count successes (6+)** and **Complication Points (1s)**.
5. **Compare successes to DV** and apply Outcome Matrix.
6. **GM spends CP** or draws from the Deck of Consequences.

Outcome Matrix

Case	Name	Guidance
$S \geq DV$ and $C = 0$	Clean Success	Deliver the intent crisply.
$S \geq DV$ and $C > 0$	Success & Cost	Grant the intent; spend/bank CP for complications.
$0 < S < DV$	Partial	Progress with a fork.
$S = 0$	Miss	No progress. Cash/bank CP or offer Devil's Bargain.

Difficulty Ladder (Set Before the Roll)

DV	Name	When to Use
1	Routine	Clear intent, modest stakes, controlled environment.
2	Pressured	Time pressure, mild resistance, partial info.
3	Hard	Hostile conditions, active opposition, precise timing.
4+	Extreme	Multiple constraints, high precision, dramatic failure.

A DV should reflect not just mechanical difficulty, but narrative weight. Climbing a wall? That's routine. Climbing it while pursued by Aeler vault-wardens? That's pressured—or worse.

Complication Points: The Engine of Drama

Every time a player rolls a **1**, a Complication Point is generated. These are not mere penalties—they are narrative levers. Spend them to:

- Escalate a threat (drawing more enemies, raising the stakes).
- Drain resources (time, gear, positioning).
- Reveal hidden dangers or betrayals.
- Cause collateral damage or unintended consequences.

Complication Points should **push the story forward**, not grind it to a halt. Use them to add pressure, not to punish.

Complication Point (CP) Spend Menu

- **1 CP**: Minor pressure: noise, trace, +1 Supply segment.
- **2 CP**: Moderate setback: alarm raised, lose position/cover, lesser foe or lock.
- **3 CP**: Serious trouble: reinforcements, key gear breaks, rail tick.
- **4+ CP**: Major turn: trap springs, authority arrives, scene shifts.

When to Draw from the Deck of Consequences

The Deck of Consequences is a powerful tool for **thematic consistency**. When a player generates CP, you may choose to:

- **Direct Spend:** Translate CP into consequences/rail ticks immediately.
- **Deck Draw:** Draw up to **min(CP, 3)** cards and **synthesize a single twist** guided by suit and highest rank.

Never do both for the same roll. If the drawn card contradicts established fiction, reinterpret or redraw to fit the suit and tone.

High-Tier CP Sinks. For 3–6+ CP spends that move the world (reputation cascades, faction instability, resonance, prophecy), see the stand-alone *High CP Sinks* handout. A good default: at end of leg, **3 CP → tick 1 Front**.

Position + Effect in Action

A player declares a **Risky** action to **pick a lock** while guards patrol above. They roll **Wits + Skullduggery**, get 3 successes and 1 Complication Point.

The GM consults the Outcome Matrix: **Success & Cost**. The lock clicks—but a guard's bootstep halts above. The GM spends 1 CP to add tension: the patrol changes direction, heading toward the PCs' position.

Scene Starters and Hooks

To keep the game moving, always open a scene with a strong hook:

- "The alarm bells ring as you step into the courtyard."
- "A courier collapses at your feet, clutching a sealed scroll."
- "The tide is turning—the ghost-ferry won't wait."

Let the players react. Let the world respond. And always—**follow the consequences**.

Setting Stakes Fast (Cheat Prompts)

- If this goes right, what changes?
- If this goes wrong, what bites back?

Banking & Cashing CP

- Banked CP should pay off within the same scene or arc.
- Avoid nickel-and-diming. Prefer one memorable complication over many petty penalties.

Integrated Combat Procedures

Combat in **Fate's Edge** follows the same core procedures as all other actions, but with specific applications for violent conflict. Every combat action generates potential for both triumph and complication, with consequences that cascade through the same economy as all other challenges.

Combat Resolution Procedure

1. **Declare Action:** Player states intent and approach (Attribute + Skill)
2. **Set Position:** GM sets Controlled, Risky, or Desperate based on tactical situation
3. **Roll Dice:** Roll pool = Attribute + Skill
4. **Count Results:** 6+ = Success, 1 = Complication Point (CP)
5. **Apply Outcome:** Use standard Outcome Matrix
6. **Manage Consequences:** GM spends CP or draws from Consequences Deck

Combat-Specific Position Applications

- **Controlled:** Advantageous position, minor consequences (flanking, higher ground, surprised foe)
- **Risky:** Even odds, moderate consequences (evenly matched, contested terrain)
- **Desperate:** Disadvantaged, severe consequences (outnumbered, wounded, poor positioning)

Combat Consequence Types by Suit

The Deck of Consequences takes on specific meaning in combat:

- **Hearts:** Morale, fear, command/control breakdown, psychological pressure
- **Spades:** Physical harm, positioning changes, weapon status, tactical wounds
- **Clubs:** Resource depletion, gear damage, fatigue, ammunition/supply issues
- **Diamonds:** Environmental hazards, reinforcements, tactical setbacks, terrain changes

Harm Integration with CP Economy

Harm tracks directly tie to the CP economy, creating cascading consequences:

- **Minor (-):** Generate 1 CP on next 2 rolls
- **Moderate (=):** Generate 1 CP on next roll, -1 die to relevant actions
- **Severe ():** Generate 2 CP on next roll, -2 dice to relevant actions
- **Critical (†):** Generate 3 CP on next roll, out of action until treated

Tactical Clocks

Persistent combat conditions are tracked through clocks:

- **Mob Overwhelm (6):** Enemy numbers become advantage
- **Fatigue Spiral (4):** Exhaustion affects performance
- **Morale Collapse (6):** Fear undermines effectiveness
- **Environmental Collapse (8):** Terrain/fire/building failure

Position Dynamics in Combat

Position can shift during combat based on CP spending:

- **1 CP:** Shift position one step (GM choice)
- **Player Spending:** 1 CP to improve position one step
- **Narrative Triggers:** Flanking, reinforcement arrival, environmental changes

Magic Combat Integration

Spellcasting in combat feeds the same consequence economy:

- Channel/Weave Backlash CP applies to tactical situation
- Spells can shift position, create tactical clocks, or generate combat consequences
- Magic consequences cascade through existing combat systems

Asset/Follower Combat Integration

- **Follower Risk:** 2+ CP spent in combat can endanger assisting followers
- **Asset Compromise:** Combat in certain locations can damage relevant assets
- **Offensive Activation:** 1 Boon activates asset for combat advantage
- **Initiative Actions:** Followers can take combat-relevant independent actions

Combat Outcome Matrix Application

Same as standard resolution, but consequences are combat-specific:

- **Clean Success:** Intent achieved with no tactical complications
- **Success & Cost:** Intent achieved, but GM spends CP for combat consequences
- **Partial:** Progress with tactical fork (accept cost OR concede ground)
- **Miss:** No progress; GM spends CP for combat consequences OR offers tactical bargain

1.1 Bond-Driven Resource Generation

Players may earn boons by taking significant actions to aid bonded allies while providing intricate descriptions of how their bonds motivate their actions.

Adjudication Guidelines:

- **Mutual Bond:** Verify the player and ally share a defined bond
- **Intricate Description:** The description must meaningfully reference the bond's nature
- **Significant Aid:** The assistance must be substantial, not routine help
- **Fiction First:** The bond must genuinely explain the character's motivation

GM Discretion:

- Deny the boon if the action is trivial or the bond reference is superficial
- Encourage creative bond references that deepen character relationships
- Consider allowing this even when the aiding action fails, if the bond motivation was genuine

This mechanic reinforces collaborative play and character relationship development while providing meaningful mechanical rewards for roleplaying.

2 Managing Resources

In **Fate's Edge**, resources are not just numbers on a sheet—they are **living elements of the fiction**. From the last sip of water in the desert sands of Akilan to the loyalty of a Ykrul war-band, every resource has a story, and every story has a cost. As the GM, you are the keeper of these threads. This chapter outlines how to manage and narrate the systems that fuel both the characters and the campaign.

Supply Clock: The Pulse of Survival

The **Supply Clock** is a shared condition for the entire party. It tracks access to food, water, basic gear, and logistical support. It is not a strict inventory system—it is a **narrative lever** that adds tension when the party is isolated, pressed, or cut off.

Supply Clock States

Segments Filled	Effect
0 (Full)	The party is well-equipped.
2 (Low)	Minor narrative complications (bland food, damaged arrows, thinning waterskins).
3 (Dangerous)	Each character gains Fatigue.
4 (Empty)	Severe penalties.

Filling the Clock

The Supply Clock fills when:

- Extended travel without provisioning.
- GM spends 2+ CP on logistics failures.
- The party chooses to travel light for advantage.

Emptying the Clock

- Reaching civilization resets to Full.
- Group Survival check clears 1 segment.
- Downtime in safety removes 1 segment.

Example: A week-long sea passage across the Dolmis with uncertain winds. A failed Navigation roll causes the GM to spend 2 CP—filling two segments. The party is now at Low Supply. A second failed roll fills another segment—Dangerously Low. Fatigue sets in. The sea, once a path, now gnaws at their endurance.

Fatigue: The Weight of the World

Fatigue represents **exhaustion, hunger, and strain**. It is cumulative and persistent. Each level of Fatigue forces the character to **re-roll one success** on their next action.

Fatigue Effects

- **1 Fatigue:** Re-roll one success.
- **2 Fatigue:** Re-roll one success (cumulative).
- **3 Fatigue:** Re-roll two successes.
- **4 Fatigue:** Collapse, KO, or spiritual break. Out of the scene until treated.

Clearing Fatigue

- A night's rest with adequate Supply removes 1 Fatigue.
- Fatigue cannot be removed while the party is Dangerously Low or Out of Supply.

Narrative Note: Fatigue is not just physical—it can reflect mental strain, grief, or spiritual exhaustion. A failed ritual might leave a caster **Fatigue 2** from the backlash alone.

Followers and Assets: Power Beyond the Self

In Fate's Edge, players can invest XP into **Followers** and **Assets**—tools that extend their reach beyond personal skill. These are not mere stat blocks—they are **story agents** with their own motivations, risks, and narrative arcs.

Followers: On-Scene Allies

Followers are **on-screen allies** who can assist in their specialty. They are bought with XP and tracked by a **Cap** (their maximum assist bonus).

Cost: A follower with Specialty Cap C costs C² XP.

Assisting in Scenes

Followers assist by adding dice to your rolls:

- Assist dice come from the helper, not the leader.
- Total Assist on any roll (from any sources) remains hard-capped at +3. Exception: The "Exceptional Coordination" Talent allows one follower to provide +4 assist dice.
- When applicable, the follower adds help dice equal to **min(C, the helper's relevant Skill)**, capped at +3 dice.
- Slot Limit: Only one follower may assist a given action.

Follower Upkeep

- Each Downtime, pay XP equal to C or spend a Scene tending the relationship.
- Risk: If the GM spends 2+ Complication Points on an action you take with assistance, they may endanger, injure, or separate the follower instead of you if fictionally appropriate.

- **Off-Screen Capability:** Once per downtime, a Cap 5 follower can solve one significant problem but generates 1 CP for crew. The GM must describe how the follower's action creates story consequences for the CP generated.

Follower Condition

Followers track **Exposure** and **Harm**:

Exposure — Heat, attention, or narrative stress.

Harm — Injury or trauma.

States:

- **Maintained** — Reliable and ready.
- **Neglected** — Needs downtime or care.
- **Compromised** — Captured, defected, or lost.

Assets: Off-Screen Influence

Assets are **off-screen resources**—titles, safehouses, spy rings, charters. They do not act in scenes directly, but they change the fiction and provide leverage when you return to the table.

Minor (4 XP) — Safehouse, small shop, petty title.

Standard (8 XP) — Noble title, guild section, spy ring.

Major (12 XP) — City license, regional network, fortress lease.

Using Assets

Assets provide off-screen benefits:

- Use each Asset's listed Off-Screen effect once per session for free.
- To reshape the current scene, spend 1 Boon.
- The Asset must have scope and reach.

Asset Condition

All Assets have a **Condition Track**:

Maintained — Full capability.

Neglected — -1 die when used; requires attention.

Compromised — Unavailable until repaired or recovered.

Boons: The Currency of Resilience

Boons are **narrative tokens** earned by embracing risk and moving the story forward. They reward **failure with texture**, not failure with nothing.

Earning Boons

- On a failed roll with meaningful Complications.
- Through clever or risky roleplay.
- Via backstory ties with other players.

Boon Economy

- **Holding cap:** You can hold at most 5 Boons.
- **Conversion:** Once per session, in downtime, you may convert 2 Boons → 1 XP (max 2 XP via conversion per session).

Using Boons

- **Re-roll one die** after seeing the pool.
- **Activate an Off-Screen Asset.**

Design Note: Boons are not a "get out of jail free" card. They are earned by **leaning into the fiction**, not by fishing for failure. Reward players who take risks, not those who roll badly on purpose.

XP Awards: Growth Through Choice

XP in Fate's Edge is **meaningful currency**. It is not handed out for showing up—it is earned through **engagement, risk, and narrative impact**.

Session Awards

- **Table Attendance:** +2 XP
- **Major Objective Reached:** +2–4 XP
- **Discovery or Lore Unlocked:** +1–2 XP
- **Hard Choice Embraced:** +1–2 XP
- **Complication Spotlight:** +1–3 XP
- **Bond/Flag Driven Play:** +1–2 XP
- **GM Curveball Award:** +0–3 XP

Milestones

- +8–12 XP to all players at the conclusion of a major story arc.
- +2 XP bonus to one player for a signature moment of the arc.

Complication Dividend

- **Face Card:** +1 XP
- **Ace:** +2 XP

Combat Resource Management

In combat, resource management takes on new urgency. The same systems that govern exploration and downtime now operate under pressure, with immediate consequences.

Supply in Combat

Extended combat encounters can drain resources rapidly:

- **Intense Combat:** GM may spend 1 CP to fill 1 Supply segment
- **Prolonged Engagement:** Each hour of sustained combat adds 1 Supply segment
- **Ammunition Depletion:** Ranged weapons may run low, requiring scavenging actions

Fatigue in Combat

Combat fatigue compounds existing strain:

- **Each Round:** Characters with existing Fatigue re-roll additional successes equal to their Fatigue level
- **Critical Exhaustion:** Reaching 4 Fatigue during combat causes immediate collapse
- **Recovery:** Cannot clear Fatigue during active combat

Follower Combat Integration

Followers in combat face unique risks and opportunities:

- **Combat Assistance:** Followers can assist in combat rolls using their Cap
- **Follower Risk:** 2+ CP spent in combat can endanger assisting followers
- **Initiative Actions:** Followers can take combat-relevant independent actions
- **Combat Exposure:** Each time a follower acts on-screen in high-risk combat, mark Exposure +1

Asset Combat Activation

Assets can be activated for immediate combat advantage:

- **1 Boon:** Activate asset for combat advantage
- **Environmental Assets:** Terrain features, fortifications, magical wards
- **Compromise Risk:** Combat in certain locations can damage relevant assets

Tactical Clocks as Resources

Tactical clocks represent persistent combat conditions that drain party resources:

- **Mob Overwhelm (6):** Enemy numbers become advantage—forces Supply depletion and Fatigue
- **Fatigue Spiral (4):** Exhaustion affects performance—accelerates existing Fatigue
- **Morale Collapse (6):** Fear undermines effectiveness—generates CP and reduces effectiveness
- **Environmental Collapse (8):** Terrain/fire/building failure—creates new Supply and safety concerns

Narrative First: The Fiction Is the Ledger

In Fate's Edge, arrows, rations, and waterskins are tracked only in the fiction. Mechanics engage only when those resources become scarce. The focus is always on **narrative tension**, not bookkeeping.

Let the world breathe. Let the fiction lead. And when the dice say the world pushes back—**listen**.

3 Magic and Backlash

In **Fate's Edge**, magic is not a clean or safe art. It is a **dangerous negotiation with forces beyond mortal comprehension**. Every spell is a gamble—power on one side of the scale, consequence on the other. As the GM, your role is to make magic **feel weighty, thematic, and alive with risk**.

Philosophy of Magic

Magic in Fate's Edge is not about optimization or damage output. It is about **shaping the world through will, risk, and resonance**. The dice never merely ask, "Does it work?"—they whisper, "**What is the cost?**"

- **Volatile by Design:** Magic is not fully understood.
- **Risk Embodied:** Each spell generates Complication Points.
- **Narrative Weight:** Casting is always a story moment.
- **Thematic Consequence:** Backlash is not arbitrary; it aligns with the opposing or uncontrolled element of the Art invoked.

The Caster's Burden

Magicians are defined not by what they can do, but by what they are willing to risk.

The Casting Loop

All spellcasting in Fate's Edge follows a structured sequence called the **Casting Loop**. It unfolds across two phases of play: gathering strength, then weaving it into form.

1. Channel

The caster focuses, rolling **Wits + Arcana** to gather **Potential**. Each success becomes fuel for shaping the spell. Each **1 rolled adds Complication Points immediately**.

Example: Kestra the Arcanist rolls to **Channel** a firebolt. She gets 4 successes and 2 CP. The GM spends 1 CP: a spark leaps from her fingers, scorching her sleeve.

2. Weave

On the following turn, the caster rolls **Wits + (Art)** to shape Potential into a defined effect. The **Description Ladder** applies:

- **Basic Action:** Roll as-is. All 1s remain as CP.
- **Detailed Action:** A clear, descriptive flourish allows the player to re-roll one die showing 1.

- **Intricate Action:** A richly described, multi-sensory action allows the player to re-roll all dice showing 1, and add one positive narrative flourish to the scene if they succeed.

Example: Kestra Weaves the firebolt with an Intricate description—she calls the flame in the shape of a hawk. The GM allows the reroll and grants a small flourish: the fire-hawk circles once before striking, distracting an enemy.

3. Backlash

Complication Points spent by the GM manifest as **uncontrolled consequences**. These are **thematic** to the Art and scale with the number of points spent.

Mitigation: Boons do not reduce CP unless a Talent/Asset explicitly says "Mitigate CP."

Backlash Severity Table

CP Spent	Typical Consequence
1–2	Minor nuisance or tell (noise, fatigue, brief distraction)
3–4	Noticeable setback (hazard clock, condition, new pressure)
5+	Major turn (scene shift, new foe, severe condition)

Example: Kestra Weaves her firebolt but rolls two 1s. The GM spends 3 CP for Backlash: the flames flare too wide, catching a tapestry and starting a small Hazard clock.

Common Magical Arts

Each Art has its own flavor and risk. Below are examples:

Pyromancy — Fire and heat. Backlash: Flames leap to unattended surfaces, smoke blinds allies, or the heat weakens structures.

Umbramancy — Shadow and silence. Backlash: Illusions persist too long, unseen things whisper truths best left hidden, morale crumbles.

Stormcraft — Wind and lightning. Backlash: Winds scatter allies' plans, lightning arcs toward unintended targets, storms linger beyond the caster's will.

Geomancy — Stone and structure. Backlash: rigidity, slow movement, guardians awaken.

Hydromancy — Water and flow. Backlash: stagnation, flooding, pests drawn.

Vitalism — Life and healing. Backlash: overgrowth, exhaustion, sympathetic drain.

Thaumaturgy — Divine or holy magic. Backlash: flickering sanctity, beacon effects, spiritual fatigue.

Ritual Casting (Optional Rule)

Some workings are too great for a single will. A **ritual** allows multiple characters to join forces, pooling their dice and narrative effort—but the risk of Backlash rises with every participant.

Ritual Helper Cap

You may draw on **ceil(Arcana/2)** helpers (max 3).

Ritual Procedure

1. **Declare the Ritual.**
2. **Channel Together.**
3. **Weave.**
4. **Backlash.**

Ritual Mechanics

- Helpers may use different relevant skills if their procedure is fictionally distinct.
- CP from Channel resolves on that roller. CP from Weave is assigned to the primary caster.

Why Use Rituals?

- **Higher Ceiling:** Achieve effects impossible through normal spellcasting.
- **Shared Spotlight:** Every participant has narrative agency in the casting.
- **Bigger Risk:** More dice mean more 1s. Consequences can spread across the entire party.

Magic in Combat

Spellcasting in combat feeds the same consequence economy as all other actions, but with unique tactical applications and risks.

Combat Casting Loop

The Casting Loop operates in combat with specific tactical implications:

- **Channel:** Can be done as an action during combat turns
- **Weave:** Requires the following turn, making casters vulnerable
- **Backlash:** Channel/Weave Backlash CP applies to tactical situation

Combat Position Effects

Position affects magical casting in combat:

- **Controlled:** +1 die to Channel, reduced Backlash risk
- **Risky:** Standard casting conditions
- **Desperate:** -1 die to Channel, increased Backlash severity

Tactical Applications

Spells can shift the tactical situation:

- **Position Shifting:** Spells can improve or worsen combat position
- **Clock Creation:** Magic can create or advance tactical clocks
- **Consequence Generation:** Spells generate combat-specific consequences

Magic Consequence Cascade

Magic consequences cascade through existing combat systems:

- **Spades:** Physical harm, weapon effects, area control
- **Hearts:** Morale effects, fear, command disruption
- **Clubs:** Resource depletion, gear damage, fatigue
- **Diamonds:** Environmental hazards, reinforcements, tactical setbacks

Prestige Magical Abilities

- **Echo-Walker's Step** (High Elf, Cost: 20 XP; Req: Wits 5, Arcana 4): 1/arc, *observe* a perfect echo of a past event at your location (no retconning). GM immediately banks +2 CP; scenes touching that memory carry an omen. Grants DV 1 on one action that uses the revealed truth.
- **Warglord** (Ykrul, Cost: 18 XP; Req: Body 5, Command 3): Once per campaign, unify scattered warbands into a single host for a season. Start a *Logistics* clock and a *Grudge* clock; either one filling fractures the host.
- **Spirit-Shield** (Aeler, Cost: 15 XP; Req: Spirit 4, Insight 3): 1/session, erase up to 3 CP from an ally's *current* roll; you immediately mark Fatigue +1 and the GM banks +1 CP as backlash.

Design Intent

Magic should **feel dangerous, thematic, and alive**. It should never be a shortcut. Every magical act alters not just the world, but the flow of the narrative itself. The dice are not your enemy—they are your collaborator in crafting a world where **power always demands a price**.

GM Tip: When a player channels magic, describe the air shifting, the runes flaring, the tension in the weave. Make the world **react** to their casting. Let magic feel **alive**.

4 Clocks & Campaigns

Introduction to Clocks in Fate's Edge

Clocks are one of the most important tools in Fate's Edge. They represent ongoing conditions, threats, or progress toward objectives. Think of them as visual progress bars that help everyone track tension and stakes.

Types of Clocks

- **Travel Clocks:** Track progress through journey legs (4-10 segments)
- **Tactical Clocks:** Represent ongoing combat conditions (Mob Overwhelm, Fatigue Spiral, etc.)
- **Campaign Clocks:** Track long-term pressure (Mandate 0-6, Crisis 0-6)
- **Scene Clocks:** Specific to current situations (Building Collapse, Pursuit, etc.)

Tutorial Session: Setting Up Clocks

GM Today we'll run a session focused on teaching clock management. Our party consists of Elena the Scholar (Wits 4, Lore 3), Marcus the Warrior (Body 4, Melee 3), and Sariel the Scout (Wits 3, Stealth 3). They're investigating disturbances at an ancient Aeler ruin.

Step 1: Initial Scene Setup

GM First, I'll establish the scene using the Aeler generator. Drawing cards until I have all suits: Spade (8 - Gloam Cistern), Heart (6 - Key-Sister), Club (7 - Settling crack), Diamond (5 - Underway Pass)

Highest rank is 8, so we have an 8-segment travel clock. But for this tutorial, let's focus on the immediate scene clocks.

Step 2: Creating Scene Clocks

GM As you enter the Gloam Cistern, I'm establishing three key clocks:

Environmental Collapse Clock (8 segments)

□ 0/8

Represents the ancient structure's stability

Warden Search Clock (6 segments)

□ 0/6

How long before the Key-Sister finds you

Forbidden Knowledge Clock (4 segments)

□ 0/4

Progress in uncovering dangerous secrets

I always announce clocks to players so they understand the stakes. These represent: the building might collapse, you're being hunted, and you're meddling with something dangerous.

Scene 1: The Investigation Begins

Elena I want to examine the ancient inscriptions on the walls to understand what happened here. Wits + Lore.

Risky position, DV 2. The inscriptions are faded and in an old dialect.

Elena Rolling Wits 4 + Lore 3 = 7 dice. 79, 7, 6, 4, 3, 1, 1 4 2

Success & Cost

You decipher enough to understand this was a prison for something the dwarves considered extremely dangerous. But 1: Your scrutiny of the walls causes some loose stonework to shift. 2: The sound attracts attention - you hear footsteps approaching.

I'll tick the Environmental Collapse clock by 1 (loose stonework) and the Warden Search clock by 1 (attracted attention).

Environmental Collapse Clock (8 segments)

□ 1/8

Warden Search Clock (6 segments)

□ 1/6

Sariel I'll scout ahead to see what's making those footsteps. Wits + Stealth.

Controlled position, DV 1.

Sariel Rolling Wits 3 + Stealth 3 = 6 dice. 68, 6, 5, 4, 2, 1 3 1

Success & Cost

You slip into a shadowy alcove and see the Key-Sister approaching with a lantern, muttering prayers under her breath. She's definitely looking for intruders. 1: As you watch, more stone dust sifts down from the ceiling near your position.

Environmental Collapse clock ticks up by 1.

Environmental Collapse Clock (8 segments)

□ 2/8

Scene 2: Escalation

Marcus I say we confront the Key-Sister directly. Maybe we can explain ourselves. Body + Command.

Risky position, DV 2. You're approaching someone who's clearly hostile to intruders.

Marcus Rolling Body 4 + Command 1 = 5 dice. 57, 6, 4, 3, 1 3 1

Success & Cost

You step out confidently and call out to the dwarf. She spins, drawing a ritual dagger, and begins chanting in a language that makes your teeth ache. The air grows thick and oppressive. 1: Your bold approach has definitely marked you as hostile rather than lost travelers.

Warden Search clock jumps by 2 (now she knows exactly where you are and is actively hostile).

Warden Search Clock (6 segments)

□ 3/6

Elena Seeing her ritual, I'll try to counter it with my knowledge of ancient Aelerian practices. Wits + Arcana.

Desperate position, DV 3. You're trying to counter an active ritual you barely understand.

Elena Rolling Wits 4 + Arcana 1 = 5 dice. 59, 6, 3, 2, 1 2 1

Success & Cost

You manage to disrupt her chant by shouting the traditional Aelerian counter-phrase. She stumbles back, surprised, but her ritual dagger begins to glow ominously. 1: The magical backlash leaves you momentarily dizzy.

But here's where Forbidden Knowledge comes in - you've engaged with the dangerous secrets, so I'll tick that clock by 2.

Forbidden Knowledge Clock (4 segments)

☐ 2/4

Scene 3: Consequences and Resolution

GM Let's check our clock status:

Environmental Collapse Clock (8 segments)

☐ 2/8

Warden Search Clock (6 segments)

☐ 3/6

Forbidden Knowledge Clock (4 segments)

☐ 2/4

None are filled yet, but they're all advancing. The tension is building.

Sariel I think we should retreat and find another way in. I'll scout for a safer route while the others create a distraction. Wits + Survival.

Risky position, DV 2. You're trying to navigate unstable ancient stonework while being hunted.

Sariel Rolling Wits 3 + Survival 3 = 6 dice. 610, 7, 5, 4, 2, 1 4 1

Success & Cost

You spot a partially collapsed side passage that might lead around to the back of the cistern. But 1: As you point it out, more stones shift ominously above you.

Environmental Collapse clock ticks up by 1.

Environmental Collapse Clock (8 segments)

☐ 3/8

Marcus I'll create that distraction - charge the Key-Sister to give Sariel time. Body + Melee.

Desperate position, DV 3. You're charging a ritualist in close quarters in an unstable structure.

Marcus Rolling Body 4 + Melee 3 = 7 dice. 78, 6, 5, 4, 3, 1, 1 4 2

Success & Cost

You leap forward with a fierce yell, and the Key-Sister barely gets her glowing dagger up in time. Your blade clashes against hers with a shower of sparks. 1: The impact sends more debris raining down. 2: Your attack has fully committed you to this fight - there's no easy exit now.

Environmental Collapse jumps by 2, and Warden Search by 1 (she's now fully engaged with you).

Environmental Collapse Clock (8 segments)☐ 5/8**Warden Search Clock** (6 segments)☐ 4/6**Scene 4: Clock Resolution**

GM We're getting close to clock resolution. Let's see what happens next:

Elena The structure is coming down! I'll try to use my knowledge to stabilize the area with geomantic principles. Wits + Arcana.

Pressured position, DV 3. You're trying complex magic while dodging falling masonry.

Elena Rolling Wits 4 + Arcana 1 = 5 dice. 57, 5, 4, 3, 1 3 1

Success & Cost

You manage to channel some stabilizing energy into the walls, and several dangerous-looking cracks stop spreading. But 1: The magical effort exhausts you, and you feel drained.

I'll reduce the Environmental Collapse clock by 2 (your stabilization) but tick the Forbidden Knowledge clock by 1 (using advanced geomancy).

Environmental Collapse Clock (8 segments)☐ 3/8**Forbidden Knowledge Clock** (4 segments)☐ 3/4

Sariel While they're distracted, I'll slip through that side passage I found. Wits + Stealth.

Controlled position (the others are creating a perfect distraction), DV 1.

Sariel Rolling Wits 3 + Stealth 3 = 6 dice. 69, 7, 6, 4, 2, 1 4 1

Success & Cost

You slip away unnoticed and find the side passage leads to a hidden chamber filled with ancient scrolls and artifacts. But 1: As you enter, you accidentally trigger an old alarm system - a low gong sounds in the distance.

The Warden Search clock jumps by 2! She now knows exactly where you've gone.

Warden Search Clock (6 segments)☐ 6/6 **FILLED!****Clock Resolution: Warden Search Filled**

The Warden Search clock is filled! This triggers a major consequence. The Key-Sister shouts in dwarven and you hear her running toward the hidden chamber. She's bringing reinforcements and her ritual dagger is now blazing with eldritch fire.

Marcus I'm right behind her - I'll pursue through the passage to back up Sariel. Body + Athletics.

Risky position, DV 2. You're chasing someone through unknown passages while the structure groans around you.

Marcus Rolling Body 4 + Athletics 2 = 6 dice. 68, 6, 5, 4, 2, 1 3 1

Success & Cost

You reach the hidden chamber just as the Key-Sister arrives, but she's not alone - two stone guardians have awakened and are blocking the entrance. 1: The chase has winded you slightly.

Environmental Collapse clock ticks up by 1 due to the magical awakening.

Environmental Collapse Clock (8 segments)☐ 4/8

Final Scene: Multiple Clock Management

GM Now we have multiple active threats. The Warden Search has reset but the situation is worse. The Forbidden Knowledge clock continues to tick as you're now in the heart of the ancient archive. The Environmental Collapse is advancing due to the awakened guardians.

Elena I need to understand what these guardians are protecting. I'll examine the central artifact in the chamber. Wits + Lore.

Pressured position, DV 3. You're researching while being hunted by stone constructs.

Elena Rolling Wits 4 + Lore 3 = 7 dice. 710, 8, 6, 4, 3, 1, 1 4 2

Success & Cost

You recognize the artifact as a prison seal - the entire cistern was built to contain something that's been trying to escape for centuries. The guardians exist to keep it bound. 1: Your research reveals that breaking the seal would be catastrophic. 2: But the knowledge also shows you how to strengthen it - at great personal risk.

Forbidden Knowledge clock fills completely!

Forbidden Knowledge Clock (4 segments)

□ 4/4 **FILLED!**

Clock Resolution: Forbidden Knowledge Filled

The Forbidden Knowledge clock fills! You now understand too much - the ancient entity is aware of your presence and is trying to influence you. You must make a choice: flee and leave the seal weakened, or risk everything to strengthen it.

Sariel I say we strengthen it. What's the worst that could happen? Wits + Sway.

Desperate position, DV 3. You're trying to convince allies to take a massive risk while stone guardians approach.

Sariel Rolling Wits 3 + Sway 2 = 5 dice. 57, 5, 4, 2, 1 2 1

Success & Cost

You manage to convince Elena that strengthening the seal is the right choice, but Marcus remains unconvinced. 1: The debate has cost you precious seconds - the guardians are almost upon you.

Tutorial Conclusion: Clock Management Lessons

GM Let's pause here to discuss what we've learned about clock management:

Clock Creation Guidelines

1. **Announce Clearly:** Always tell players what each clock represents and how it advances.
2. **Logical Triggers:** Clock advancement should follow from player actions and fictional events.
3. **Visible Progression:** Use visual tracking so everyone can see tension building.
4. **Meaningful Consequences:** When clocks fill, the consequences should change the story significantly.

Clock Advancement Rules

- **1 CP:** Minor advancement (1 segment)
- **2-3 CP:** Moderate advancement (2 segments)

- **4+ CP:** Major advancement (3+ segments) or fill smaller clocks
- **Multiple Clocks:** Distribute CP across relevant clocks rather than overfilling one

Clock Resolution Strategies

1. **Fill for Consequences:** When a clock fills, introduce a significant story turn.
2. **Reset with Changes:** After resolution, reset clocks but change the situation.
3. **Cascade Effects:** Filled clocks can trigger advancement in other clocks.
4. **Player Agency:** Give players meaningful choices in how they deal with filling clocks.

Common Clock Types and Uses

Environmental Clocks (4-8 segments): Building collapse, weather, fire, flood

Social Clocks (4-6 segments): Escalating tensions, public opinion, scandal

Pursuit Clocks (6 segments): Chase scenes, investigations, hunts

Preparation Clocks (4-6 segments): Ritual casting, crafting, planning

Corruption Clocks (4-6 segments): Moral decay, magical taint, addiction

GM Tips for Clock Management

- Start scenes with 1-2 clocks to establish tension
- Advance clocks through CP spends rather than arbitrary GM fiat
- Let players see the connection between their actions and clock advancement
- Use clocks to telegraph rising stakes and consequences
- Don't be afraid to let clocks fill - that's when interesting things happen
- Reset clocks when situations fundamentally change, rather than just emptying them

In our session, we saw how clocks create escalating tension: Environmental Collapse made the location dangerous, Warden Search brought active opposition, and Forbidden Knowledge raised the stakes of what the PCs were dealing with. When Forbidden Knowledge filled, it fundamentally changed the situation from a simple exploration to a moral dilemma with world-shaking implications.

The key is that clocks don't just track time - they track the accumulation of tension, stakes, and consequences. Every tick should feel earned and meaningful.

4.1 Campaign Design and Long-Term Play

In **Fate's Edge**, campaigns are not just a string of adventures—they are **living narratives** shaped by player choices, faction dynamics, and the slow accumulation of influence. As the GM, you are the architect of long-term tension, guiding the story from its first spark to its final reckoning. This chapter introduces the tools that help you build and sustain that tension: the **Campaign Clocks**, the **Crown Spread**, and how to scale play for mixed-tier parties.

Campaign Clocks: Tracking Influence and Pressure

The **Campaign Clocks** are two dials that track the ebb and flow of player power and opposition over the course of a campaign. They are not mechanical scoreboards—they are **narrative thermometers**, showing how the world reacts to the PCs' actions.

Mandate (0–6)

Mandate represents the table's **public legitimacy and buy-in**. It tracks how much the world accepts the PCs' authority, influence, or mission.

- **High Mandate:** The PCs are recognized, respected, or feared. Doors open. Allies rally.
- **Low Mandate:** The PCs are ignored, questioned, or hunted. Every step is harder.

Crisis (0–6)

Crisis tracks the **opposition engine**—rivals, pressure rails, attrition. It shows how much the world pushes back.

- **High Crisis:** Enemies rise. Clocks tick. The world tightens around the PCs.
- **Low Crisis:** The PCs have breathing room. Opportunities bloom.

Advancing the Clocks

At the end of each major scene, you may advance one or both clocks based on:

- **Clean loss:** Rival codifies or escapes with leverage.
- **Public cost paid:** Feast, free day, penance.
- **Asset neglect:** Flagged Major degrades.
- **Evidence shifts:** Immaculate → Scorched.

Calling or Forcing the Crown

The campaign reaches its crescendo when one of two thresholds is met:

- **Player-Called Finale:** When **Mandate 6** and **Crisis 3**, the table may schedule the Finale at the next opportune site.
- **Forced Finale:** When **Crisis 6** (regardless of Mandate), the Rival forces a decision next arc.

A **Balanced Finale** occurs when both dials sit in the mid-band (4–5). Start both rails at +1; CP budget as normal.

The Crown Spread: Seeding the Campaign

At **Session 0**, draw the **Crown Spread**—a five-card ritual that seeds the campaign's themes, rivals, and finale conditions.

Drawing the Spread

Draw one card each of:

- **Spade:** Crown Site (where the monument is decided).
- **Heart:** Crown Rival (who can still stop it).
- **Club:** Crown Pressure (the rail that will bite if the table turtles).
- **Diamond:** Crown Leverage (the payoff that can be codified).
- **Wild:** Reveal last—Face = hidden patron steps out; Ace = the site becomes a 10-clock.

Interpreting the Spread

- **Spade (Site):** A fortress? A shrine? A battlefield? The setting of the finale.
- **Heart (Rival):** A noble? A cult? A spirit? Generate full motives for them (, ,).
- **Club (Pressure):** Crowd, Hazard, Escape Net—pick one and name it now.
- **Diamond (Leverage):** Seasonal endorsement, city license, doctrinal clause—never rolls, only changes position.
- **Wild (Hidden Force):** A wildcard element—ally, enemy, or omen.

Example: Spade = High-Mist Pass (Aeler); Heart = Margrave of Acasia (Face); Club = Curfew; Diamond = Seasonal Endorsement; Wild = Hidden Patron (Face).

The Finale Procedure

When the Crown is called, run the three-beat finale:

1. **Reckoning:** Defend or sanctify the record. Draw the Rival's motives. Place the Pressure rail.
2. **Crossing:** Stage the kinetic rail (Escape/Hunt/Hazard) that threatens to end the scene.
3. **Coronation:** Use the Diamond Leverage to sign, seal, or oath the monument.

Twist Collision (Finale Clause)

Exactly once, when the Rival's Twist contradicts their Belief, the table chooses:

- GM +1 CP, or
- Players reduce two ticks total across the rails.

Legacy Conversion: Epilogue

After the Finale, each PC draws 2 cards and answers epilogue prompts by suit. Then convert:

- **Major Asset** → **Institution** (12 XP): Permanent setting change.
- **Seasonal Endorsement** → **Doctrine Rider** (4 XP): Fold into the base Accord.
- **Follower (Cap 3+)** → **Stationed NPC** (0 XP): Promote to Custodian/Deputy Chair.
- **Rival** → **Fixture**: If they survive, they auto-tick the relevant rail whenever your style shows.

Scaling for Mixed-Tier Parties

As characters grow, their investments may diverge. One may be a blade-master, another a network architect. Keep scenes tense with these tools:

- **Structural Advantages:** Active buff, venue pennant, Follower Initiative unused, etc.
- **Over-Stack Rule:** If the crew enters with 2+ advantages, start rails at +1 OR GM banks +1 CP.
- **CP Floor:** Set minimum CP based on Tier = Obstacle Highest PC Tier.

GM Tip: Let lanes matter. Enforce one assistant max, +3 dice cap. Target consequences fairly—endangering a follower should escalate stakes, not punish creativity.

Campaign Combat Integration

Extended conflicts and war-level events require special handling to maintain narrative tension while scaling the mechanical scope.

War Clocks

Large-scale conflicts are tracked through persistent war-level clocks:

- **Supply Lines** (8): Logistics and reinforcement flow
- **Morale** (6): Troop effectiveness and desertion risk
- **Political Support** (6): Civilian and noble backing
- **Strategic Position** (8): Control of key locations and routes

Faction Combat

When player factions engage in large-scale conflict:

- **Follower Armies:** Cap 5 followers can represent military units
- **Asset Leverage:** Off-screen assets provide strategic advantages
- **Campaign Clock Impact:** Major battles shift Mandate and Crisis dials

Siege Conditions

Extended combat scenarios create persistent conditions:

- **Resource Depletion:** Supply clock fills rapidly
- **Fatigue Accumulation:** Characters gain Fatigue each day
- **Environmental Hazards:** Weather, disease, or magical effects

Narrative First: Let the World React

Campaign design in Fate's Edge is not about railroading—it's about **responding to player choices** with escalating consequences. Let the world shift. Let factions rise. Let the dice sing. And when the Crown is crowned—let the echo be heard across the Amaranthine.

4.2 Between Sessions: GM Responsibilities

Between game sessions, the Game Master has crucial preparation and administrative tasks to ensure continuity, challenge, and narrative coherence. This downtime is essential for maintaining the campaign's momentum and preparing meaningful challenges for the players.

4.2.1 Mandatory Preparation

The GM must complete the following essential tasks before the next session:

Campaign Clock Updates: Advance Mandate and Crisis clocks based on session outcomes and player actions. Track significant developments that affect the overall campaign trajectory.

Complication Debt Management: Calculate starting CP for the session based on:

- Banked CP from previous sessions (maximum 2 CP carryover)
- Active character complications (+1 CP per character with complications)
- Asset-generated complications
- Epic Hooks spending

Thread Management: Review active complication threads and determine which are escalating, resolving, or requiring attention. Ensure no more than (Tier + 1) active threads per scene.

Resource Tracking: Update NPC statuses, faction relationships, and world conditions based on player actions.

4.2.2 Session Planning

Prepare the following elements for the upcoming session:

Scene Preparation: Design scenes with appropriate CP spending budgets:

- Standard Scenes: Maximum 12 CP spending
- Climactic Scenes: Maximum 16 CP spending
- Session Budget: Maximum 20 CP total

Complication Hooks: Develop 3-5 potential complications that connect to player backgrounds, current threads, and campaign themes.

Tactical Considerations: Prepare for expected combat encounters, social challenges, and exploration scenes with appropriate difficulties and positioning.

Deck Preparation: Ensure Consequences Deck is ready with appropriate cards for expected complication types.

4.2.3 Narrative Development

Advance the overarching story elements:

Character Integration: Review each player's complications, bonds, and flags to create personalized challenges and opportunities.

World Response: Determine how the game world reacts to player actions. Allies may offer new opportunities; enemies may escalate their responses.

Plot Thread Advancement: Move major campaign arcs forward, introducing new elements or escalating existing tensions.

Foreshadowing: Plant seeds for future complications and story developments that will pay off in later sessions.

4.2.4 Administrative Tasks

Complete necessary record-keeping:

XP Award Calculation: Tally session awards for each player:

- Table Attendance: +2 XP
- Major Objectives: +2-4 XP
- Discoveries: +1-2 XP
- Hard Choices: +1-2 XP
- Complication Spotlight: +1-3 XP
- Bond/Flag Play: +1-2 XP
- GM Curveballs: +0-3 XP
- Complication Dividends: Face cards (+1 XP), Aces (+2 XP)

Asset and Follower Updates: Track any changes to player assets, followers, and off-screen resources based on session events.

Session Zero Integration: If applicable, incorporate elements from the Crown Spread and campaign seeds into upcoming scenes.

4.2.5 Strategic Considerations

Plan with the following factors in mind:

Pacing Management: Balance high-tension scenes with recovery opportunities. Avoid spending maximum CP every scene to maintain dramatic impact.

Player Agency: Ensure complications create interesting choices rather than simple obstacles. Every CP spend should offer meaningful player responses.

Group Dynamics: Consider how complications affect different players and maintain equitable challenge distribution.

Teaching Moments: For new groups or experimental rules (like high complication debt), prepare appropriate scaffolding and support.

Remember: Your preparation directly impacts player enjoyment and engagement. Thorough session planning allows you to focus on collaborative storytelling during the game rather than scrambling for content. The investment in downtime preparation pays dividends in session quality and narrative coherence.

5 Advanced GM Techniques

In **Fate's Edge**, as the campaign deepens and the stakes rise, the GM must evolve from storyteller to **architect of tension**. This chapter explores advanced techniques for managing complex scenes, faction interplay, and custom content creation. These tools will help you keep the world dynamic, the choices meaningful, and the consequences **echoing**.

5.1 Complication Point Management

The GM should manage Complication Point (CP) spending to maintain dramatic tension while preserving player agency and game flow. CP spending scales with character tier but is subject to hard limits to ensure playability.

5.1.1 Core Principles

- **Narrative Coherence:** All CP spends within a scene should connect thematically
- **Player Agency:** Complications create interesting choices, not insurmountable obstacles
- **Progressive Escalation:** Higher tier characters naturally attract greater consequences
- **Resolution Paths:** Every complication thread should have potential resolution

5.1.2 Spending Formula

Base CP = 4 + Character Tier

- **Tier I (Rookie):** 5 CP base
- **Tier II (Seasoned):** 6 CP base
- **Tier III (Veteran):** 7 CP base
- **Tier IV (Paragon):** 8 CP base
- **Tier V (Mythic):** 9 CP base

5.1.3 Hard Limits

- **Standard Scenes:** Maximum 12 CP spending
- **Climactic Scenes:** Maximum 16 CP spending
- **Active Threads:** Maximum (Tier + 1) concurrent threads
- **Session Budget:** Maximum 20 CP total per session

5.1.4 Banked CP Integration

Banked CP from character complications count toward scene spending limits rather than adding to available CP. This prevents exponential complication stacking while honoring narrative debt.

5.1.5 Thread Management

Complication threads follow a natural escalation pattern:

- **First Exposure:** 1-2 CP (Minor inconvenience)
- **Second Occurrence:** 2-4 CP (Moderate setback)
- **Third Strike:** 3-6 CP (Major consequence)
- **Resolution:** Thread concludes with narrative payoff

Table 5.1: Complication Point Management by Tier

Tier	Base CP	Max Threads	Scene Cap	Climax Cap	Session Budget
I (0-40 XP)	5 CP	2 threads	12 CP	16 CP	20 CP
II (41-90 XP)	6 CP	3 threads	12 CP	16 CP	20 CP
III (91-150 XP)	7 CP	4 threads	12 CP	16 CP	20 CP
IV (151-220 XP)	8 CP	5 threads	12 CP	16 CP	20 CP
V (221+ XP)	9 CP	6 threads	12 CP	16 CP	20 CP

Table 5.2: Complication Spending Safety Guidelines

Scenario	Guidance
Standard Scenes	Spend 50-75% of available CP budget; preserve some for escalation
Climactic Scenes	May use full CP allocation; ensure resolution opportunities
Teaching Moments	Explicit player consent required; time-limited; debrief afterward
New Players	Reduce CP spending by 25-50%; focus on clear, actionable complications
Grimdark Mode	Reserved for veteran groups; explicit session zero discussion; safety tools active

Table 5.3: Complication Thread Management

Thread Level	CP Escalation
First Exposure	1-2 CP (Minor inconvenience)
Second Occurrence	2-4 CP (Moderate setback)
Third Strike	3-6 CP (Major consequence)
Resolution	Thread concludes; narrative payoff provided

Using the Deck of Consequences

The **Deck of Consequences** is more than a randomizer—it is a **thematic engine** that externalizes risk and ensures that setbacks feel consistent and fair.

Two Deck Systems (Compatibility)

Fate's Edge uses two distinct card tools:

Travel Decks (regional, 52-card). *Spade*=Place, *Heart*=Actor, *Club*=Pressure, *Diamond*=Leverage. These power journeys and gates.

Deck of Consequences (scene drama). *Hearts*=social fallout, *Spades*=harm/escalation, *Clubs*=material cost, *Diamonds*=magical/spiritual disturbance.

Guidance: Never mix suit meanings across decks. When a rule references “Spade/Club/Diamond,” it means *Travel*. When it says “Hearts/Spades/Clubs/Diamonds,” it means *Consequences*.

When to Draw

After a roll generates Complication Points, the GM may choose to:

- **Direct Spend:** Translate CP into consequences/rail ticks immediately.
- **Deck Draw:** Draw up to **min(CP, 3)** cards and **synthesize a single twist** guided by suit and highest rank.

Never do both for the same roll. If a drawn card contradicts established fiction, reinterpret or redraw to fit the suit and tone.

Structure of the Deck

- **Suits** = Domains of Complications
 - Hearts: Emotional, social, or relational fallout.
 - Spades: Harm, danger, or escalation of conflict.
 - Clubs: Resource strain, economic or material cost.
 - Diamonds: Magical, spiritual, or cosmic disturbances.
- **Ranks** = Severity of Complications
 - Ace-3: Minor inconvenience or flavor complication.
 - 4-6: Moderate setback with some narrative teeth.
 - 7-9: Significant consequence altering the course of action.
 - 10-King: Major fallout, introducing new problems or lasting scars.

Travel and Exploration

Travel in Fate's Edge is not a downtime skip—it is a **narrative layer** filled with tension, discovery, and risk. Use the card-based travel system to seed each leg with place, people, pressure, and leverage.

Core Travel Procedure

For each leg of a journey, draw 3–4 cards using the decks for your destination and controlling authority:

- Spade from the destination deck: sets the scene (place).
- Heart from the destination deck: introduces the local actor or faction.

- Club from the Wilds (general hazards) or destination (if strongly policed): brings pressure.
- Diamond from the authority that gates the route: papers, escorts, rights, or exceptions.

Set a travel clock by the highest rank:

- **2–5** → 4 segments
- **6–10** → 6 segments
- **J/Q/K** → 8 segments
- **Ace** → 10 segments

Example: Traveling the **Aelerian Passes**, the PCs draw: Spade (Avalanche gallery), Heart (Geometer), Club (Engineer requisition), Diamond (Underway Pass). Clock: 8. On failure, the GM spends CP to trigger a rockslide—Hazard +2.

Faction Dynamics

Factions are **living entities** with goals, rivals, and shifting loyalties. They are not static backdrops—they are **players in the story**.

Creating Factions

Each faction should have:

- **Core Motive:** What do they want?
- **Key Figures:** Who leads or represents them?
- **Resources:** What can they bring to bear?
- **Weaknesses:** What makes them vulnerable?

Faction Clocks

Track factional pressure with clocks:

- **Rising Influence** (6): Gaining power, allies, or territory.
- **Internal Strife** (6): Leadership challenged, morale low.
- **Public Scandal** (4): Reputation damaged, support wanes.

Example: The **Viterra Dawn Knights** gain Rising Influence as they rally to the new Queen—but suffer Internal Strife as old commanders resist her reforms.

Creating Custom Content

Fate's Edge thrives on **player agency** and **world customization**. When designing new Talents, Assets, or Prestige Abilities, follow these principles:

- **Narrative First:** Does it reinforce a theme or culture?
- **Mechanical Balance:** Does it fit within the XP economy?
- **Fictional Integration:** Can it be explained in-world?

Designing Talents

- **General Talents:**
 - Battle Instincts (Cost: 6 XP): Once per scene, re-roll a failed defense roll.
 - Silver Tongue (Cost: 4 XP): Gain +1 die when persuading or deceiving through speech.
 - Iron Stomach (Cost: 3 XP): Immune to mundane poisons and spoiled food; halve Complications from toxic sources.
 - Exceptional Coordination (Cost: 8 XP): One follower can provide +4 assist dice.
- **Racial or Cultural Talents:**
 - Stone-Sense (Dwarves, Cost: 5 XP): Detect flaws in stone or earth; gain +1 die on Engineering or Craft rolls underground.
 - Backlash Soothing (Wood Elves, Cost: 6 XP): Once per session, reduce a magical Backlash Complication by 2 points when in natural terrain.
 - Blood Memory (Ykrul, Cost: 5 XP): After a battle, meditate to gain one temporary Skill die reflecting a foe's tactics for the next scene.
- **Prestige Abilities:**
 - Echo-Walker's Step (High Elf, Cost: 20 XP; Req: Wits 5, Arcana 4): 1/arc, *observe* a perfect echo of a past event at your location (no retconning). GM immediately banks +2 CP; scenes touching that memory carry an omen. Grants DV 1 on one action that uses the revealed truth.
 - Warglord (Ykrul, Cost: 18 XP; Req: Body 5, Command 3): Once per campaign, unify scattered warbands into a single host for a season. Start a *Logistics* clock and a *Grudge* clock; either one filling fractures the host.
 - Spirit-Shield (Aeler, Cost: 15 XP; Req: Spirit 4, Insight 3): 1/session, erase up to 3 CP from an ally's *current* roll; you immediately mark Fatigue +1 and the GM banks +1 CP as backlash.

Designing Assets

- **Minor (4 XP):** Safehouse, Petty Title.
- **Standard (8 XP):** Spy Ring, Charter.
- **Major (12 XP):** Fortress Lease, Mercantile Network.

Each Asset should have:

- **Activation Cost:** 1 Boon.
- **Scope:** What can it plausibly do?
- **Fictional Hook:** Why does it exist in the world?

Running Complex Scenarios

Heists and Infiltration

- **Positioning:** Controlled entries, distractions, asset use.
- **Social Rails:** Curfew, Crowd, Sanctity.

- **Physical Rails:** Hazard, Hunt, Escape.

GM Tip: Let the PCs plan—but make the world react. A guard changes shift. A noble arrives early. The lock is newer than expected.

Battles and Skirmishes

- **Group Actions:** Use the Lead system to coordinate.
- **Follower Risk:** Helpers can be endangered on 2+ CP spends.
- **Clocks:** Hazard (terrain), Hunt (enemy approach), Escape (retreat).

Political Intrigue

- **Leverage:** Diamonds and social rails determine influence.
- **Allies and Rivals:** Represented by Assets and Followers.
- **Public Image:** Tied to Mandate and Crisis clocks.

Advanced Combat Techniques

As campaigns progress, combat encounters become more complex and stakes higher. These advanced techniques help manage sophisticated tactical situations.

Environmental Combat

Terrain and environmental factors create dynamic combat scenarios:

- **Environmental Clocks:** Building collapse, fire spread, flooding
- **Positional Advantages:** High ground, cover, choke points
- **Hazard Integration:** Environmental dangers that generate CP

Mass Combat

Large-scale battles require special handling:

- **Follower Units:** Cap 5 followers represent military forces
- **War Clocks:** Supply Lines, Morale, Strategic Position
- **Command Actions:** Leaders can coordinate multiple units

Siege Warfare

Extended combat scenarios create persistent conditions:

- **Resource Management:** Rapid Supply clock filling
- **Fatigue Accumulation:** Characters gain Fatigue each day
- **Morale Effects:** Hearts consequences affect entire forces

Magic Duels

High-stakes magical combat requires special considerations:

- **Counterspelling:** Interrupting opponent's Casting Loop
- **Backlash Cascade:** Multiple sources of CP generation
- **Environmental Magic:** Terrain-altering spells

Narrative First: The World Reacts

In Fate's Edge, the world is not a puzzle to be solved—it is a **living system** that responds to player choices. Let factions shift. Let consequences ripple. And above all—let the story unfold.

Because in the end, it is not the GM who writes the legend.

It is the players.

You simply hold the quill.

6 Tier IV and V Play

As characters reach Tier IV (Paragon) and Tier V (Mythic) levels, the scope of play expands dramatically. What once were local concerns become matters of regional, national, or even world-shaking importance. This chapter provides guidance for managing the unique challenges and opportunities that come with high-tier play.

6.1 The Nature of High-Tier Play

At Tier IV and V, characters are no longer operating on the margins—they are movers and shakers. Their actions have visible, lasting impacts on the world. This shift requires the GM to think bigger, plan longer, and embrace the cascading consequences of player choices.

Key Characteristics

- **Wider Scope:** Actions affect cities, regions, or nations
- **Longer Timelines:** Consequences unfold over weeks, months, or years
- **Greater Stakes:** Failure means more than personal loss
- **Complex Alliances:** Multiple factions with competing interests
- **Legacy Impact:** Choices create lasting changes to the world

6.2 Deck-Based Campaign Management

High-tier play benefits from structured campaign management using the Deck of Consequences and Travel Decks to track large-scale developments.

Campaign Clock Expansion

Expand beyond Mandate and Crisis to include:

- **Faction Influence** (6): Track major faction relationships
- **Public Opinion** (8): Regional perception of the PCs
- **Resource Network** (6): Economic and logistical reach
- **Legacy Projects** (10): Long-term initiatives with lasting impact

Using Cards for World Events

Draw cards periodically to introduce world events:

- **Spades:** Geographic/political changes
- **Hearts:** Social/cultural shifts

- **Clubs:** Economic/resource developments
- **Diamonds:** Opportunities/leverage points

6.3 Managing Multiple Assets and Followers

Tier IV+ characters often command extensive networks. Use these techniques to keep management manageable:

Asset Clustering

Group related assets into portfolios:

- **Economic:** Trade routes, businesses, investments
- **Political:** Titles, contacts, influence networks
- **Military:** Mercenaries, fortifications, strategic positions
- **Intelligence:** Spies, informants, research facilities

Follower Hierarchies

Create chains of command:

- **Lieutenants** (Cap 4-5): Direct reports who manage others
- **Commanders** (Cap 3): Mid-level managers of specific portfolios
- **Agents** (Cap 2): Field operatives and specialists

6.4 High-Stakes Consequences

Complication Points at high tiers should reflect the expanded scope of play:

High-Tier CP Sinks

- **3-4 CP:** Regional setback, major asset compromised
- **5-6 CP:** Faction relationship damaged, public scandal
- **7-8 CP:** Strategic position lost, major ally turned
- **9+ CP:** Paradigm shift, fundamental world change

Deck-Driven Consequences

Use the Deck of Consequences for major setbacks:

- **Face Cards:** Major faction leaders or institutions affected
- **Aces:** Foundational assumptions challenged
- **Multiple Cards:** Cascade effects across multiple domains

6.5 Running Epic Campaigns

High-tier play often involves extended campaigns with multiple acts and lasting consequences.

Act Structure

- **Act I - Establishment** (Sessions 1-3): Set the stage, establish stakes
- **Act II - Escalation** (Sessions 4-8): Complications multiply, alliances shift
- **Act III - Resolution** (Sessions 9-12): Climactic confrontations, lasting changes
- **Epilogue** (Session 13+): Legacy assessment, new beginnings

Campaign Seeds

Use the full 4-card draw for major campaign hooks:

- **Spade**: Primary location/region of conflict
- **Heart**: Key faction/leader driving events
- **Club**: Major complication/threat
- **Diamond**: Opportunity/resource to exploit

6.6 Mass Combat and Warfare

Tier IV+ characters often find themselves commanding armies or influencing wars.

Army Scale Combat

Simplify large-scale battles:

- Treat armies as Cap 5 followers with specialized skills
- Use clocks to track morale, supply, and strategic position
- Focus rolls on leadership and tactical decisions, not individual combat

War Campaigns

Structure extended conflicts:

- **Strategic Phase**: Resource management, alliance building
- **Tactical Phase**: Key battles, covert operations
- **Political Phase**: Negotiations, aftermath management

6.7 Mythic Challenges

At Tier V, characters approach legendary status. Create challenges that match their stature:

Existential Threats

- Cosmic entities beyond normal understanding
- Reality-altering phenomena
- Threats to entire civilizations or ways of life

Legacy Missions

Missions that will be remembered for generations:

- Founding or destroying nations
- Ending or beginning ages
- Reshaping fundamental aspects of the world

6.8 Managing Player Agency

With great power comes the need for great GM flexibility:

Player-Driven Narratives

- Let player choices genuinely reshape the world
- Honor long-term commitments and consequences
- Provide meaningful opposition that matches their scale

World Reactivity

- Factions respond realistically to player actions
- Economic and political systems show cause-and-effect
- NPCs remember and react to past interactions

6.9 Rivals and Counterpoints

High-tier characters attract attention—both positive and negative:

Creating Worthy Opponents

- Mirror player capabilities and resources
- Give them their own networks and influence
- Create personal connections and history with PCs

Dynamic Rivalry

- Rivals evolve based on player actions
- Competition across multiple domains (political, economic, social)
- Occasional cooperation against greater threats

6.10 Campaign Legacy

Help players see the lasting impact of their choices:

Legacy Tracking

- Document major world changes initiated by the PCs
- Track faction relationships and their evolution
- Record personal legacies and how they're remembered

Epilogue Framework

Use cards to determine long-term outcomes:

- Draw 2-3 cards from each suit
- Interpret results as 5-10 year outcomes
- Let players narrate their characters' final fates

6.11 GM Preparation Tips

Think in Campaign Arcs

- Plan 3-5 major story arcs per tier
- Each arc should have lasting world impact
- Connect arcs through recurring themes or NPCs

Prepare Flexible Frameworks

- Create faction relationship matrices
- Develop economic and political systems that respond to actions
- Build modular locations that can evolve

Embrace Player Creativity

- Let player assets genuinely solve problems
- Reward creative use of influence and resources
- Say "yes" to ambitious player plans, then make them interesting

6.12 Sample High-Tier Scenario

The Shattered Crown Crisis

A Tier IV campaign seed:

- **Spade (King's Rest):** Ancient royal crypts beneath the capital
- **Heart (The Usurper):** A noble house claiming the vacant throne
- **Club (Fractured Loyalties):** Regional lords choosing sides
- **Diamond (The Crown's Secret):** Hidden royal treasures and alliances

Clocks: Succession Crisis (8), Noble Conspiracy (6), Public Unrest (6)

This scenario can evolve based on player choices—supporting the usurper, finding the true heir, or establishing a new form of government.

6.13 Conclusion

Tier IV and V play represents the pinnacle of Fate's Edge storytelling. Embrace the epic scope, honor player agency, and let the world truly respond to their legendary actions. Remember: these characters don't just participate in history—they make it.

The dice still matter, consequences still flow, and every choice still carries weight. But now, those choices echo across nations and generations.

Make it legendary.

7 Enhanced GM Play

The Crown system becomes truly collaborative when the GM manages resources just like players, creating shared stakes and mutual investment in the narrative outcome.

7.1 Resource Management

Track these key resources to enhance your GM experience and create more balanced gameplay.

7.1.1 GM Relationship Management

Just as players track relationship dice with NPCs, you should track relationship dice with major factions and key NPCs. This creates bidirectional engagement where both sides have stakes in interactions.

Starting GM Relationships

Begin each campaign with 1-2 relationship dice per major faction:

- Political factions (nobility, merchants, clergy)
- Criminal organizations (guilds, syndicates, pirates)
- Military/civic authorities (guard, military, bureaucracy)
- Supernatural entities (fae, undead, spirits)

Relationship Shifts

GM relationship dice change based on player actions:

- Successful player interaction with faction: GM may gain/lose relationship dice
- Player betrayal of faction: GM gains relationship dice with antagonistic factions
- Player aid to faction: GM may lose relationship dice with enemy factions

Bidirectional Rolls

When players interact with NPCs, both sides roll:

- Player rolls their relationship dice with the NPC
- GM rolls their relationship dice with that faction
- Results determine the **quality** of interaction, not just success/failure

7.1.2 Shared Leverage Pool

Create a collaborative economy where helping each other becomes strategic.

Pool Management

- Players contribute 1 leverage each to shared pool at session start
- GM can spend from pool to enhance player successes or create interesting complications
- Players can spend to bypass GM complications or enhance their own actions
- Pool refreshes each session

Spending Options

GM Spending:

- 1 leverage: Add interesting detail to player success
- 2 leverage: Create beneficial coincidence
- 3+ leverage: Introduce major plot hook

Player Spending:

- 1 leverage: Avoid minor complication
- 2 leverage: Gain advantage on next roll
- 3+ leverage: Rewrite recent unfavorable outcome

7.2 Campaign Tracking Systems

Simple tracking mechanisms that enhance long-term play without complex bookkeeping.

7.2.1 Faction Loyalty Tracker

Track persistent world state through faction relationships.

Loyalty Scale

Use a simple -3 to +3 scale for each major faction:

-3 Enemy: Actively working against player interests

-2 Hostile: Will cause trouble when possible

-1 Unfriendly: Suspicious, unhelpful

0 Neutral: Indifferent to player actions

+1 Friendly: Helpful when convenient

+2 Supportive: Actively assist player goals

+3 Ally: Will sacrifice for player interests

Loyalty Shifts

Player actions shift faction loyalty:

- Major help: +1 to +2 loyalty
- Minor help: +1 loyalty
- Neutral actions: No change
- Minor harm: -1 loyalty

- Major harm: -1 to -2 loyalty
- Betrayal: -2 to -3 loyalty

7.2.2 Revelation Economy

Control information flow through mechanical budgeting.

Budget Management

- Each clock segment = 1 revelation point
- Major discoveries cost 1-3 revelation points
- Players can "bank" unused revelation for future sessions
- GM can "save" revelation for climax moments

Revelation Costs

1 Point: Basic facts, surface details

2 Points: Strategic insights, tactical advantages

3 Points: Major revelations, plot-critical information

7.2.3 Escalation Economy

Make tension management a player choice rather than imposed obstacle.

Point System

- Start with 3 escalation points per conflict
- Each escalation costs 1 point:
 - Add +1 dice to opposition
 - Introduce new threat
 - Complicate existing situation
- Players can spend to de-escalate or redirect
- Points refresh per new conflict

7.3 Collaborative Mechanics

Mechanics that make players active participants in narrative creation.

7.3.1 Complication Trading

Allow players to request specific challenge types, making them active participants in narrative creation.

7.3.2 Relationship Investment Tracking

Track how Bond-Driven Resource Generation affects player engagement with relationship mechanics. Players who frequently use this mechanic demonstrate investment in collaborative storytelling and character connections.

Player Challenge Requests

Players can request specific complication types:

- Social complications (feuds, negotiations, diplomacy)
- Physical challenges (combat, exploration, survival)
- Mystery elements (investigation, puzzles, hidden information)
- Moral dilemmas (ethical conflicts, difficult choices)

Bargaining Process

1. Player declares desired complication type and spends leverage (1-2)
2. GM draws from appropriate deck but allows player modification
3. GM can spend relationship dice to enhance complications
4. Both sides benefit from engaging, invested complications

7.3.3 Cross-Deck Synergy

Encourage creative cross-cultural storytelling through mechanical rewards.

Synergy Bonuses

- Using elements from 2+ decks in same scene = +1 to relevant rolls
- "Perfect match" (e.g., maritime + criminal) = bonus leverage or relationship die
- Track "deck diversity" for session bonus

7.3.4 Momentum Banking

Reward efficient play and strategic pacing through saved resources.

Banking Rules

- Each segment under "standard" resolution = 1 momentum point
- Banked momentum can be spent for:
 - +1 to any relationship roll
 - 1 free leverage
 - Reroll one diamond draw
- Momentum decays if not used within 3 sessions

7.4 Session Management

Procedures for managing enhanced gameplay elements during sessions.

7.4.1 Pre-Session Setup

1. Review active decks for session
2. Check familiarity points for each deck
3. Set GM relationship dice for major factions
4. Note any momentum carryover from previous sessions
5. Refresh shared leverage pool

7.4.2 During Session Management

- Track relationship shifts through player actions
- Monitor shared leverage pool spending
- Facilitate information trading through leveraged negotiation
- Manage familiarity points for deck optimization
- Track faction loyalty changes
- Monitor revelation economy spending

7.4.3 Post-Session Wrap-up

1. Adjust momentum based on clock resolution
2. Update familiarity points for used decks
3. Note relationship changes for next session
4. Bank unused revelation points
5. Track session investment ratings
6. Plan any carryover elements

7.5 Implementation Timeline

Gradual implementation to avoid overwhelming players or yourself.

7.5.1 Quick Start (Sessions 1-3)

- Introduce Shared Leverage Pool (1 leverage each)
- Start Faction Loyalty Tracker (simple -3 to +3 scale)
- Use Complication Trading ("Want to make this more interesting?")
- Track basic relationship shifts

7.5.2 Intermediate (Sessions 4-6)

- Add Momentum Banking (track under/over segments)
- Implement Revelation Economy (clock segments = discovery budget)
- Introduce Cross-Deck Synergy tracking
- Begin Escalation Economy for conflicts

7.5.3 Advanced (Sessions 7+)

- Full Cultural Familiarity system
- Complete Session Investment tracking
- Cultural Immersion Bonus system
- Player-GM Relationship Mirror

These enhancements transform the Crown system from a tool for scenario generation into a complete collaborative storytelling framework where everyone at the table has meaningful stakes and resources to manage.

8 Setting Lore and Worldbuilding

The world of **Fate's Edge** is vast, ancient, and **alive with stories**. From the mist-shrouded fens of the Mistlands to the sun-scorched marches of Acasia, every region carries the weight of history, ambition, and forgotten oaths. As the GM, your role is not just to present this world—but to **breathe life into it**, letting it respond to the players' choices with texture, consequence, and mystery.

The Amaranthine Sea Region: The Remnants of the Past

The Ancient Hyro viewed the Amaranthine Sea as the center of the known world. The **Amaranthine Sea** is a vast inland sea ringed by successor states, nomad confederacies, and forgotten ruins. Once the heart of the **Utar Empire**, it now pulses with the legacy of that fallen power, its roads still traveled, its laws still whispered, its ghosts still watching.

Major Regions

- **Ecktoria**: The marble heart of imperial memory. Gladiators, coin-houses, and the Everflame faith still hold sway.
- **Vhasia**: A fractured sun—petty crowns, noble houses, and the ghost of kings who never quite died.
- **Viterra**: The last kingdom—lawful, proud, and wary of ambition. Knights of the Dawn patrol the highways.
- **Acasia**: Broken marches and the cosmopolitan port of **Silkstrand**—where coin speaks louder than crowns.
- **Ubral**: Highland clans and dwarven allies. A land of oaths, axes, and the quiet strength of the hill-folk.
- **The Mistlands**: Fog-drenched fens under dwarven protectorate. Bells, salt, and breath keep the old things at bay.
- **Thepyrgos**: City of stairs and scholars. High-elves, synods, and the last lanterns of old knowledge.
- **Kahfagia**: Maritime oligarchy of storms and krakens. Pilots, privateers, and the Tempest rites that bless them.

Cultures and Peoples

In Fate's Edge, culture is not just background—it is **identity**. Each people carries its own **Affinity**, shaping how they interact with magic, society, and the world itself.

Humans

- **Versatility:** Humans adapt. They learn fast, spread wide, and leave marks.
- **Subcultures:** Ecktorians (imperial), Vhasians (noble), Viterrans (lawful), Acasians (mercantile), Ubral (clannish), Tulkani (nomadic).

Dwarves (Aeler)

- **Affinity:** Stone-Sense. They read stone like scripture.
- **Types:** Mountain Dwarves (deep kings), Hill Dwarves (surface allies), Spirit Shields (ancestral warriors).

Elves (Lethai)

- **Wood Elves (Lethai-al):** Mist people. Druidic, fey-touched, cycle-bound.
- **High Elves (Lethai-thora):** Memory-keepers. Sequestered, scholarly, haunted by exile.

Ykrul

- **Affinity:** Blood Memory. After battle, they recall the foe's tactics.
- **Types:** Steppe Riders, Mountain Clans, River Raiders.

Other Cultures

- **Tulkani:** Shadowbinders and wanderers. Whisper-cant and hidden networks.
- **Linn:** Skerry raiders. Storm-oaths, mist-pilots, and whale-road kings.
- **Aelinnel:** Stone and bough. Gnomes who count the world in numbers and names.
- **Aelaerem:** Hearth-folk. Halflings who remember the old ways.

Magic and the Arcane

Magic in Fate's Edge is not a science—it is a **pact**, a **rite**, a **risk**. Each school of magic is tied to a cultural or elemental philosophy.

Schools of Magic (Arts)

- **Pyromancy:** Fire, light, transformation.
- **Hydromancy:** Water, flow, restoration.
- **Geomancy:** Earth, structure, resonance.
- **Umbramancy:** Shadow, silence, misdirection.
- **Vitalism:** Life, healing, growth.
- **Thaumaturgy:** Holy force, sanctity, divine law.

Cultural Traditions

- **Dwarves:** Geomancy, ritual forging, ancestral communion.
- **Wood Elves:** Umbramancy, nature rites, Backlash Soothing.
- **High Elves:** Memory-weaving, arcane theory, Echo-Walking.
- **Ykrul Shamans:** Vitalism, blood-rites, spirit-talking.
- **Tulkani:** Shadowbinding, forbidden pacts, taboo magic.

Religion and Power Structures

Faith in Fate's Edge is not abstract—it is **active**, **political**, and often **dangerous**.

The Everflame

The dominant faith of Ecktoria and the western shores. Fire is holy—Adar, Odur, Akilesh as facets of one flame. Zealots, inquisitors, and gladiators all serve the same god.

The Light

A reformation of the Everflame, rooted in Viterra. Emphasizes mercy, literacy, and lawful order. Less fire, more parchment.

Dwarven Ancestor Worship

The Stone remembers. Dwarves commune with the dead through ritual, runes, and the deep silence of the mountain.

Ykrul Shamanism

Spirits walk among the living. Shamans read omens, call the hunt, and speak for the Sky-Spirit with voice and blade.

Local Cults and Heresies

- **Ikasha, She Who Sleeps:** Whispered matron of the Tulkani.
- **The Pale Shepherd:** A figure from Aelaerem folklore—comes when lambs are born, and when people go missing.
- **The Cursed Child of Silkstrand:** A rumor more than a person—whose laughter ends sieges.

Echoes of Empire

The **Utar Empire** is gone—but its shadow lingers. Roads still bear its mile-stones. Laws still echo in courts. And in the ruins, something waits.

- **Imperial Relics:** Functional, dangerous, often cursed.
- **Broken Laws:** Old edicts still enforced by zealots or spirits.
- **Lost Provinces:** Places where the map ends, and the world begins to breathe.

Building Your World

Fate's Edge is a **collaborative world**. You don't need to build everything—just enough to **spark wonder** and **invite choice**.

- **Start Local:** A village, a keep, a shrine. Let it breathe.
- **Tie to Culture:** Every place should reflect the people who built it.
- **Add a Secret:** Every place should hide something—lore, danger, or opportunity.

Example: The **Salt Gate** in Silkstrand is a customs quay—but beneath it lies a sealed vault where the old Utar mages once stored forbidden salts. A whisper, a tide, and the vault may breathe again.

Let the World Breathe

In Fate's Edge, the world is not a backdrop—it is a **character**. It watches. It remembers. And it **responds**.

Let the bells ring. Let the mist rise. And let the players write their names in the ledger of fate.

9 Running Specific Scenarios

In **Fate's Edge**, no two scenes play out the same way. The dice shift. The world reacts. And the players shape the story through bold choices and desperate gambits. This chapter offers guidance for running the most common—and most crucial—types of scenes in the game: **heists**, **battles**, **political intrigue**, **exploration**, and **mysteries**. Each is a lens into the world's tension, and each rewards the GM who leans into narrative and consequence.

Heists and Infiltration

A heist is not about perfect plans—it's about **controlled chaos**. The PCs are not ghosts—they are **agents of disruption**, and the world will respond.

Scene Setup

- **Entry Position:** Controlled, Risky, or Desperate?
- **Social Rails:** Curfew, Crowd, Sanctity.
- **Physical Rails:** Hazard, Hunt, Escape.
- **Assets and Followers:** Can they create distractions or bypass security?

Example Scene: Infiltrating the Vhasian Château

The PCs seek to steal a sealed charter from a noble's vault. The GM frames the scene:

- **Position:** Risky (guards patrol, windows shuttered).
- **Social Rail:** Curfew (the lord has ordered all gates barred by dusk).
- **Physical Rail:** Hunt (bloodhounds circle the grounds).

The PCs split up: one charms a servant for key access (Presence + Sway), another distracts the guards with a fake alarm (Wits + Skullduggery), and a third scales the wall (Body + Athletics). Each roll adds tension—successes advance the plan, but Complication Points trigger new dangers.

GM Tips

- **Let the world respond:** A guard changes shift. A noble returns early.
- **Use clocks to escalate:** Hunt +1 when an alarm sounds. Curfew tightens as bells ring.
- **Offer forks:** Partial success means progress—but at a cost. Let players choose.

Battles and Skirmishes

Combat in Fate's Edge follows the same core procedures as all other actions, but with specific applications for violent conflict. Every combat action generates potential for both triumph and complication, with consequences that cascade through the same economy as all other challenges.

Scene Setup

- **Position:** Set Controlled, Risky, or Desperate based on tactical situation.
- **Group Actions:** Use the Lead system to coordinate.
- **Follower Risk:** 2+ CP spent in combat can endanger assisting followers.
- **Tactical Clocks:** Mob Overwhelm, Fatigue Spiral, Morale Collapse, Environmental Collapse.

Example Scene: Clash in the Mistlands

A reaver band ambushes the PCs on a foggy causeway. The GM sets:

- **Position:** Desperate (fog limits vision, reavers surround).
- **Mob Overwhelm Clock:** 6 segments (enemy numbers become advantage).
- **Environmental Collapse Clock:** 8 segments (terrain/fire/building failure).

The PCs fight, rally, and retreat—but not without cost. A follower takes Harm 1. The mist hides them—for now.

GM Tips

- **Focus on stakes:** What happens if the PCs lose? What if they win ugly?
- **Use tactical clocks to escalate tension:** Mob Overwhelm advances as reinforcements arrive.
- **Let followers matter:** They are not stat blocks—they are story agents. Let them act, suffer, and grow.
- **Apply harm integration:** Minor harm generates 1 CP on next 2 rolls; Moderate harm generates 1 CP next roll with -1 die.

Political Intrigue

Intrigue is a **dance of leverage, lies, and legacy**. It rewards patience, perception, and the courage to **burn bridges** for greater gains.

Scene Setup

- **Social Rails:** Crowd (public opinion), Curfew (timing), Sanctity (reputation).
- **Leverage:** Diamonds and Assets shape influence.
- **Allies and Rivals:** Represented by Followers and Factions.

Example Scene: Council of the Three Greens

The PCs seek to sway the moot in their favor. The GM sets:

- **Crowd Rail:** 6 segments (tempers flare, factions shout).
- **Sanctity Rail:** 4 segments (accusations of heresy fly).
- **Diamonds:** A sealed charter, a noble's favor, a scandalous letter.

The PCs must navigate shifting loyalties, whispered betrayals, and the ever-present threat of exile.

GM Tips

- **Let words carry weight:** A well-timed insult can shift a rail as fast as a blade.
- **Use the Deck of Consequences:** Hearts and Diamonds bring social fallout and leverage traps.
- **Offer moral choices:** Who will you betray? Who will you save?

Exploration and Mysteries

Exploration is not just about maps—it's about **discovery**, **danger**, and the **unknown**. Mysteries reward curiosity, caution, and the willingness to **dig deeper**.

Scene Setup

- **Environmental Pressure:** Weather, terrain, supernatural forces.
- **Lore Rewards:** Boons, Assets, or narrative hooks.
- **Clocks:** Supply, Fatigue, Hazard.

Example Scene: The Root Gallery Beneath the Oak Hill

The PCs descend into a fae-haunted ruin. The GM sets:

- **Hazard Clock:** 6 segments (roots shift, light fails).
- **Supply:** Low—no food, strange water.
- **Mystical Pressure:** Umbramancy twists the path.

Each roll reveals a new danger—or a hidden truth. A failed roll might trigger a fae encounter. A success might uncover a lost relic.

GM Tips

- **Let the environment tell the story:** Roots whisper. Stones bleed. Light lies.
- **Tie lore to player choices:** A glyph only activates if the PCs speak the old tongue.
- **Offer legacy hooks:** What will the PCs do with what they find?

Let the Dice Guide You

In Fate's Edge, every scene is a chance to **push the story forward**. Let the dice sing. Let the world respond. And above all—let the players **own the consequences**.

Because in the end, it is not the GM who writes the legend.

It is the players.

You simply hold the quill.

10 Appendix: Tools and Tables

This appendix provides quick-reference tools, sample content, and interpretive guides to support your game. Whether you're running a quick session or a long campaign, these tables and tips will help you keep the world alive and the tension high.

Quick Reference Sheets

Outcome Matrix

Case	Name	Guidance
$S \geq DV$ and $C = 0$	Clean Success	Deliver the intent crisply.
$S \geq DV$ and $C > 0$	Success & Cost	Grant the intent; spend/bank CP for complications.
$0 < S < DV$	Partial	Progress with a fork.
$S = 0$	Miss	No progress. Cash/bank CP or offer Devil's Bargain.

Complication Point (CP) Spend Menu

- **1 CP:** Minor pressure: noise, trace, +1 Supply segment.
- **2 CP:** Moderate setback: alarm raised, lose position/cover, lesser foe or lock.
- **3 CP:** Serious trouble: reinforcements, key gear breaks, rail tick.
- **4+ CP:** Major turn: trap springs, authority arrives, scene shifts.

Position Descriptions

- **Controlled:** You act on your terms.
- **Risky:** You act under pressure.
- **Desperate:** The odds are stacked against you.

Difficulty Ladder (Set Before the Roll)

DV	Name	When to Use
1	Routine	Clear intent, modest stakes, controlled environment.
2	Pressured	Time pressure, mild resistance, partial info.
3	Hard	Hostile conditions, active opposition, precise timing.
4+	Extreme	Multiple constraints, high precision, dramatic failure.

Sample NPCs

Encounters

- **Bandit Skirmisher:** Body 2, Wits 2. Melee 2, Stealth 1. Light armor, opportunistic.
- **Ykrul Rider:** Body 4, Wits 3. Riding 3, Melee 3. Mobile, brutal.
- **Street Bravo:** Presence 3, Body 2. Dueling 3. Quick to anger.

Foils & Rivals

- **Ambitious Scribe:** Wits 3, Presence 3. Intrigue 3, Lore 2. Always knows a rumor.
- **Mercenary Captain:** Body 4, Spirit 3. Command 3, Melee 4. Pragmatic, dangerous ally.
- **Flame Preacher:** Presence 4, Spirit 3. Oratory 4, Faith 3. Incites mobs.

Prestige NPCs

- **High Elf Loremaster:** Wits 5, Spirit 4. Lore 5, Arcana 4. Knows secrets older than nations.
- **Dwarven Forge-Patriarch:** Body 5, Spirit 4. Craft 5, Command 4. Commands stone and steel.
- **Ykrul Warglord:** Body 5, Presence 4. Command 4, Melee 5. Unites clans with blood and will.

Deck of Consequences Interpretation Guide

Two Deck Systems

Deck of Consequences (scene drama). *Hearts*=social fallout, *Spades*=harm/escalation, *Clubs*=material cost, *Diamonds*=magical/spiritual disturbance.

Travel Decks (regional, 52-card). *Spade*=Place, *Heart*=Actor, *Club*=Pressure, *Diamond*=Leverage.

Hearts (Emotional/Social)

- **Ace–3:** Minor offense, awkward moment.
- **4–6:** Relationship strain, public embarrassment.
- **7–9:** Betrayal, scandal, loss of trust.
- **10–King:** Heartbreak, exile, shattered alliance.

Spades (Harm/Escalation)

- **Ace–3:** Bruise, scrape, fatigue.
- **4–6:** Wound, gear damaged, position lost.
- **7–9:** Severe injury, ally down, structural collapse.
- **10–King:** Death, dismemberment, permanent loss.

Clubs (Material/Cost)

- **Ace–3:** Minor loss, delayed payment.
- **4–6:** Gear failure, debt incurred.
- **7–9:** Major asset lost, bankruptcy.
- **10–King:** Total ruin, legacy debt.

Diamonds (Magical/Spiritual)

- **Ace–3:** Omen, whisper, strange coincidence.
- **4–6:** Curse triggered, spirit appears, past returns.
- **7–9:** Arcane backlash, forbidden knowledge revealed.
- **10–King:** Reality bends, godlike force intervenes.

Campaign Clock Examples

Mandate Advancement Triggers

- Public victory in battle or debate.
- Successful resolution of a major crisis.
- Recognition by a powerful faction or ruler.

Crisis Advancement Triggers

- Rival faction gains influence or territory.
- Asset neglect or betrayal.
- Scandal or public loss of trust.

Travel Clock Sizes

- **2–5:** 4 segments (short leg, low risk).
- **6–10:** 6 segments (standard journey).
- **J/Q/K:** 8 segments (long or dangerous route).
- **Ace:** 10 segments (epic or supernatural travel).

Follower and Asset Condition States

- **Maintained:** Full capability.
- **Neglected:** -1 die penalty; narrative wear.
- **Compromised:** Unavailable until repaired or recovered.

Boon Economy Quick Guide

- **Holding cap:** You can hold at most 5 Boons.
- **Conversion:** Once per session, in downtime, you may convert 2 Boons → 1 XP (max 2 XP via conversion per session).
- **Using Boons:** Re-roll one die after seeing the pool; Activate an Off-Screen Asset.

Mechanical Constraints

- **ASSIST MAX:** +3 dice total per roll, regardless of helpers. Exception: The "Exceptional Coordination" Talent allows one follower to provide +4 assist dice.
- **BOON MAX:** 5 total, 2→1 XP conversion once/session (max 2 XP via conversion per session).
- **INITIATIVE:** 1 Follower Action per scene crew-wide.
- **OVER-STACK:** 2+ structural advantages = start rails +1 OR GM banks +1 CP.
- **POSITION:** Controlled | Risky | Desperate (affects success/failure texture).

Let the World Sing

These tools are not meant to constrain your game—they are meant to **support your vision**. Use them to keep tension high, consequences real, and the story moving forward.

Because in the end, it is not the GM who writes the legend.

It is the players.

You simply hold the quill.

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