

Microfronts

Custom Fronts by Marshall Miller
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What is a Microfront?

Microfronts are a type of custom front for prepping interstitial scenes during a campaign. Ultimately, microfronts are a basic front that has been hammered down to its most compact state. Microfronts act as interludes in a longer campaign by providing a short diversion between story arcs. While they could be extended to form a whole front, they are designed to be resolved in a single scene.

Writing your own Microfronts...

Microfronts are just like a regular front. They have all the same parts: A description, a danger, grim portents, an impending doom, and perhaps a custom move, item, or monster. The trick is to write them with such immediacy that they resolve in a single scene. This means that the description needs to drive toward direct threat, the grim portents need to be all but givens, and the impending doom needs to directly impact the players right here and very much right now! Could you expand a microfront into full front if things get interesting, sure, you're almost obligated to. Writing a full front just isn't what you're setting out to do.

To really ratchet up the tension...

Put microfronts envelopes and write the fictional triggers on the outside. Hand them to the players at the beginning of the session and let them decide if and when they want to activate the microfronts.

Gloch the River Giant

When you **undertake a perilous journey and roll a 6 or less**, ask the GM to unlock this microfront.

Description: The river stretches as far as you can see in both directions and the old bridge, a remnant of empires past, spans the width of the gulch. As you approach, a giant hand emerges from beneath the bridge. What do you do?

Danger: Gloch the river giant

□ **Grim Portent:** Gloch blocks the bridge

□ **Grim Portent:** Gloch demands tribute

□ **Grim Portent:** Gloch makes threats

Impending Doom: Gloch the River Giant is coming for you!

Stake: What will they give up to cross the bridge?

Stake: What will they do to escape from the angry giant?

River Giant

Swat (10 Damage, 2 Pierce) 20 HP 2 Armor

Its something about their unquenchable thirst for fresh water that keeps these giants near rivers.

Instinct: To harass those near the river

- Hit them with giant hands
- Blow them down
- Make them pay

When you **flee from a giant**, roll+STR. On a 10+, you disappear among the places the giant cannot follow. On a 7-9, choose 1 place to find:

- A space too small for the giant to reach you
- A high ground on which to make a stand
- A settled place that will always remember who led the giant to their homes

The Sirens' Call

When you **undertake a perilous journey across the open water and roll a 6 or less**, ask the GM to unlock this microfront.

Description: The straights are rife with jagged stone outcroppings. It is among these granite spires and protrusions that you see them. They call out to you, "Help us, help us!" What do you do? [GM note: Ask each PC to describe the most beautiful person they can imagine – that is what they see]

Danger: The siren

□ **Grim Portent:** The sailors will not leave

□ **Grim Portent:** The sailors disembark

□ **Grim Portent:** The siren beckon, closer, closer...

Impending Doom: Siren feast on their blood

Stake: Will they be able to resist the temptation?

Stake: What will they do to the siren if they can?

Siren

Claw and bite (3 Damage) 8 HP 0 Armor

The siren call them from the seas, the siren beckon and they tease, the siren drink as much as they please. *Instinct:* To draw them near

- Call to them with song
- Feed on their blood
- Ward off their blows

When you **hear the siren's call**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, you cover your ears and try to block them from your mind. Describe the most tedious chore you've ever performed. On a 7-9, take the bond: When you do as they please, mark XP.

Siren's Choker

Worn, 1 Weight

When you don the Siren's Choker, exchange your race move for **Arcane Art** until removed.

Sadie's Tavern

When you **Carouse and you roll a 6 or less**, ask the GM to unlock this microfront.

Description: No sooner had you stepped inside Sadie's Tavern than you realized you were in a less than friendly situation. Everyone is looking at you and they don't look happy, you didn't even see who threw the first bottle. What do you do?

Danger: The patrons

□ **Grim Portent:** The door shuts behind them

□ **Grim Portent:** The crowd surrounds them

□ **Grim Portent:** The weapons come out

Impending Doom: They run you out of town!

Stake: Can they win over the crowd?

Stake: Can they leave with their shirts?

Patrons

Bottles and chairs (3 Damage) 8 HP 0 Armor

Maybe they think you're someone else or maybe its just you. Its been a long night and the patrons are deep in their drink. *Instinct:* To give it to these smug bastards

- Hurl insults
- Hurl objects
- Hurl

When you **tap a keg in the face of adversity**, roll+INT. On a 10+, the stream of suds blinds them and sends them scampering. On a 7-9, the whole area is doused in ale and everyone hits the floor.

When you **swing on a chandelier**, roll+Weight. On a 10+, you pull it down on top of you. On a 7-9, you pull it down on them. On a miss, you swing to safety.

A Midsummer's Night

When you **make camp in a dangerous location and you roll a 6 or less**, ask the GM to unlock this microfront.

Description: Maybe the breeze is too cold or maybe the ground is too hard but this is far from the best place you've chosen to sleep. [GM note: Ask each character what they do to try and sleep] Before you can actually fall asleep, the sound of music fills the air and a party of sylvan musicians and dancers surround you. What do you do?

Danger: The revelers

□ **Grim Portent:** The revelers are watching

□ **Grim Portent:** The revelers take their things

□ **Grim Portent:** The revelers taunt them

Impending Doom: It was all a dream!

Stake: Will they realize it's all a dream in time to take advantage of their time in the dreamworld?

Stake: When will they escape the dreamworld?

The Revelers

Pinches (1 Damage) 6 HP 0 Armor

The revelers come at night to haunt the dreams of those who sleep in their special place. *Instinct:* To take their things

- Taunt them with jibes
- Pinch them and dance away
- Pinch their things

When you **realize that you are in the dreamworld**, roll+WIS. On a 10+, you can remain here until the dice hit the table 3 times. On a 7-9, you emerge from the dreamworld rested but unsettled.

Halt Traveler!

When you **undertake a perilous journey and roll a 6 or less**, ask the GM to unlock this microfront.

Description: As you make your way down the road, you see an older man sitting in the road. He's wearing dirty clothes and a seemingly homemade crown adorns his balding head. When he sees you, he hops up and says, "Please sirs, could you spare some food for a fellow highwayman. For a gold I'll guide you to wherever you need to go." What do you do?

Danger: The bandits

Grim Portent: Demands are made

Grim Portent: Bandits make themselves known

Grim Portent: Ways fore and back are blocked

Impending Doom: Bandits descend upon them

Stake: Will they give in to the Bandits' demands?

Stake: What can they extract from the Bandits?

Bandits

Clubs and knives (5 damage) 8 HP 0 Armor

What the bandits in this part of the land make up for in armaments they make up for in enthusiasm. *Instinct:* To strip them bare

- Pile on them
- Beat them down
- Leverage by taking hostages

Bandit's Crown

Worn, 1

Weight

This tin crown is roughly snipped from scrap metal and decorated with broken bits of colored glass. When you **present the Bandit's Crown to a local lord or merchant**, they will grant you services worth up to 20 Gold.

The Shakedown

When you **enter a city and aren't doing anything in particular**, ask the GM to unlock a microfront.

Description: As you idle in the street, a pair of guards approach you. "Well, well, what do we have here," one of them says. "They don't look like they're around from these parts," says the other. "Have you lot paid the immigration taxes yet?" the first one asks. "Well? Have you?" inquires the second. What do you do?

Danger: Petty Guards

Grim Portent: The guards me threats

Grim Portent: The guards demand surrender

Grim Portent: Reinforcements are called for

Impending Doom: Apprehension is attempted

Stakes: Will they pay the bribe?

Stakes: How will they escape the law?

City Guards

Spears (5 damage) 8 HP 0 Armor

Wearing shiny helms and carrying shiny spears, the city guard are as corrupt as they are pompous.

Instinct: To throw their weight around

- Keep them at bay
- Call in reinforcements
- Stomp and smash

When you **flee from the guards**, its your guilt is obvious to all - roll for outstanding warrants.

Trappings of Authority

Worn

When you **wear the trappings of authority**, at first glance, only the well to do will know you for a fraud.

The Shrine

When you **undertake a perilous journey and roll a 10+**, you may ask the GM to unlock this microfront.

Description: As you near your destination, you come upon a roadside shrine to an almost forgotten god. Its stone features are all but worn away from years of exposure to the elements. A roughly carved wooden bowl laying at its base contains a small pile of gold. What do you do?

Danger: Nagging guilt

Grim Portent: The shrine quietly looks on

Grim Portent: The shrine quietly looks on

Grim Portent: The shrine quietly looks on

Impending Doom: The shrine sheds a single tear

Stakes: Will they make or take offerings?

Stakes: Will they sin against the land?

When you **take from the offerings left at a roadside shrine**, you turn the land against you – gain 5 gold but roll again to **undertake a perilous journey**.

When **an offering is left to the god of this place**, roll+gold spent. On a 10+, the god of this place will come to you and beg a simple boon of you. If you grant the boon, mark XP - this route will never be perilous to you again. On a 7-9, you are filled with an inner peace, take +1 forward. On a miss, the shrine looks quietly on and a gentle breeze ruffles your hair.

When you **uproot or destroy a roadside shrine**, you catch a glimpse of what lies beyond this place (the GM will describe it), then roll. On a hit, a chill fills the air but the visions pass. On a miss, the god of this place will offer you a hard bargain. If you take it, you will be free to continue on your way but if you refuse it the god of this place turn your days into weeks – consume double rations.

Mister, Mister!

When you undertake a perilous journey and roll a 7-9, you may ask the GM to unlock this microfront.

Description: After only a short time on the road, you hear cries of, "Mister! Hey mister! Wait!" Presently, a young boy approaches you. Out of breath, he says, "Mister, please help me. My brother Dimmy has fallen in the well! He's not so bright and he doesn't know how to swim. Its just over the hill there, come quick!" What do you do?

Danger: The deep, deep well

Grim Portent: Dimmy calls for help

Grim Portent: The splashing intensifies

Grim Portent: The splashing stops

Impending Doom: Dimmy drowns

Stakes: Will they turn a blind eye to his plight?

Stakes: What will they ask of the boy's parents?

Drowning Child

Desperation (1 Damage) 4 HP 0 Armor

A drowning child will do anything to keep air in their lungs and something solid in hand. *Instinct:* To keep their head above water

- Claw frantically
- Kick mercilessly
- Dunk with abandon

When you **rescue a child from certain death**, their parents will do all that is within their power to repay you.

When you **ignore the distress of a child**, you may shift your alignment toward evil, what's it to you?

When you **hold your breath and search the bottom of an old well**, describe its darkest depths. You find your CON in gold.

When _____,
ask the GM to unlock this microfront.

Description:

Danger: _____

Grim Portent: _____

Grim Portent: _____

Grim Portent: _____

Impending Doom: _____

Stakes: _____

Stakes: _____

A microfront by: _____