

Terra Vista

A Modern Cosmic Horror TTRPG Setting

In the quiet hum of modern life, where smartphones glow and daily routines unfold, something is stirring. The world you know—the one of traffic jams, coffee shops, and streaming services—is merely a thin veneer over an ancient, incomprehensible reality. The fabric of existence is fraying, and through the cracks, the truly weird is beginning to seep in.

This is a world where the impossible whispers from the shadows of your living room, where logical explanations fail, and where the most terrifying truths are the ones that unravel your very sanity. From the unsettling glitch in your smart home to the impossible geometry glimpsed in a fleeting moment, the anomalies are subtle, insidious, and utterly alien.

Prepare to navigate a world that looks normal but feels increasingly wrong. Will you seek answers, fight for your sanity, or simply try to survive as the mundane turns sinister?

The silence is deceptive, and the anomalies are waking. Welcome to their slow intrusion.

"Terra Vista: Life as it should be: Almost perfect."

This setting plunges players into a modern world that is subtly and terrifyingly unraveling. Players are ordinary people with their everyday jobs and lives who stumble upon inexplicable events, cosmic horrors, and the slow erosion of reality. The game emphasizes psychological dread, investigation, and the personal cost of confronting the incomprehensible.

The World: A Thin Veneer

The current era is Present Day (roughly 2010s-2020s). Smartphones, social media, global finance, and rapid information flow define the human world. Yet, beneath this bustling surface, reality is fraying. Strange occurrences, impossible coincidences, and unsettling whispers are becoming more common. These aren't overt monsters, but subtle shifts that challenge sanity and logic. The "weird" is creeping in, slowly, insidiously, often unnoticed by the majority.

Technology is ubiquitous, offering both connection and new avenues for the anomalous to manifest. A glitch in a smart device, a corrupted file, or a strange signal on a forgotten frequency can be the first sign that something is terribly wrong. The comfort of modern life makes the intrusion of the inexplicable all the more terrifying.

The Characters: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Circumstances

Players are not trained agents or seasoned monster hunters. They are simply everyday people—teachers, baristas, office workers, delivery drivers, or anyone else—whose lives are disrupted by the inexplicable. Their strengths come from their existing skills, their personal connections, and their sheer will to understand (or survive) what's happening. The horror is amplified by the fact that they are just normal individuals thrust into abnormal circumstances.

Character Creation

Use the Infinite Horizons character creation guidelines.

Key Elements & Traditions

The world of Terra Vista operates under unsettling, unspoken rules.

The Subtle Manifestation

The anomalies are rarely overt at first. They begin as unsettling details: a strange smell that vanishes, a recurring dream, an impossible shadow, a glitch in technology, a fleeting glimpse of something that shouldn't be. The horror is in the slow, creeping realization that something is fundamentally wrong.

The Unseen Threat

The “enemy” is often unknowable, ancient, or beyond human comprehension. It’s not about fighting a monster with fists or guns, but understanding (or failing to understand) its influence, its motives (if any), and how to survive its presence. Direct confrontation is usually futile and devastating.

Information as a Curse

Knowledge of the anomalies is dangerous. The more you learn, the more you risk your sanity and your life. Every new piece of information might bring you closer to understanding, but also closer to madness or a terrible fate.

Ordinary Lives Interrupted

The characters have normal jobs, families, and bills. The weirdness intrudes on these lives, forcing difficult choices between protecting loved ones, maintaining normalcy, or pursuing the terrifying truth. This grounds the horror in relatable stakes.

The Veil of Normalcy

Most people remain blissfully oblivious, actively rationalizing away the weird. This makes the players feel isolated and makes it harder to get help or convince others of the truth. The world wants to be normal, and it will resist any evidence to the contrary.

The Fragility of Sanity

Exposure to the anomalous takes a toll on the mind. The game should feature a sanity mechanic where witnessing or comprehending the incomprehensible causes mental strain, leading to phobias, delusions, or even complete breakdown.

Key Locations: The Familiar Made Strange

The anomalies can appear anywhere, turning everyday places into scenes of dread.

The Suburban Home

A place of comfort and routine, now a potential locus for unsettling phenomena. A flickering light, a strange sound from the basement, a shadow in the corner of your eye—the horror begins at home.

The Local Archive

A dusty library, a forgotten historical society, or a university's special collections. These places hold the forgotten histories and obscure texts that might contain clues, but also dangerous knowledge.

The Digital Network

The internet, social media, and interconnected devices. Anomalies might manifest as corrupted files, strange viral videos, unsettling online communities, or impossible signals.

The Abandoned Place

An old factory, a derelict hospital, or a forgotten park. These places often serve as a magnet for the anomalous, holding dark secrets from the past or acting as a gateway to other realities.

The Commute

The daily drive, the bus route, the train ride. Mundane journeys become terrifying as strange figures appear in the periphery, impossible coincidences occur, or the landscape itself seems to shift. }}

Humanity's Role

The ordinary people of the world serve as

The Unaware

The vast majority of humanity, living their lives oblivious to the horrors lurking just beyond their perception. They are the background, the normalcy that the anomalies threaten to shatter.

The Skeptics

Those who witness strange events but immediately rationalize them away, often becoming unwitting obstacles or sources of frustration for the players.

The Victims

Those who fall prey to the anomalies, often disappearing without a trace, succumbing to madness, or suffering bizarre, inexplicable fates.

The Obsessed

A rare few who, like the players, glimpse the truth and become consumed by it, often dangerously so. They might be isolated researchers, conspiracy theorists, or cultists.

Threats & Conflicts

The Anomalies Themselves

Not always sentient, but terrifying in their incomprehensibility. They are the impossible phenomena, the breaches in reality, the things that defy logic and sanity.

Loss of Sanity

The internal battle against the psychological toll of witnessing the anomalous. This is a constant threat, driving characters to breakdown or obsession.

Disbelief & Isolation

The struggle to convince others of the truth, leading to social ostracization, ridicule, or even institutionalization.

Cults & Secret Societies

Human groups who have either succumbed to the influence of the anomalies, seek to exploit them, or are desperately trying to fight them in their own misguided ways.

Mundane Obstacles

Police investigations, nosy neighbors, skeptical authorities, and the demands of everyday life that constantly interfere with the pursuit of the truth.

Themes

The Fragility of Reality

The unsettling idea that the world we perceive is not as solid or as logical as we believe it to be.

The Cosmic Indifference

The horror of an uncaring universe, where humanity is insignificant and the anomalous operates beyond our understanding or concern.

The Price of Knowledge

The more you learn about the weird, the more dangerous it becomes to your mind and your life. Ignorance is bliss, but knowledge is a curse.

Isolation & Paranoia

The feeling of being alone with a terrible truth, unable to share it, and constantly questioning who might be affected or compromised.

The Mundane Turning Sinister

The transformation of everyday objects, places, and routines into sources of profound dread and terror.

Key Elements for Your Game

The Slow Burn

Start small. Don't throw a monster at the players in the first session. Begin with subtle, unsettling details—a recurring sound, a strange shadow, a forgotten object appearing where it shouldn't be. Build the dread gradually, allowing the players' own imaginations to fill in the terrifying blanks.

Sanity as a Resource

Implement a robust sanity mechanic. Every encounter with the anomalous, every piece of horrifying knowledge, should chip away at a character's mental well-being. This creates a ticking clock and forces players to weigh the cost of pursuing the truth.

Focus on Investigation

Most sessions should revolve around piecing together clues, researching obscure texts, interviewing unreliable witnesses, and exploring unsettling locations. Combat should be rare, desperate, and often futile against the true nature of the threats.

The Mundane as a Weapon

Use everyday locations and objects to heighten the horror. A child's drawing, a flickering streetlamp, a familiar song on the radio—these can become terrifying conduits for the anomalous. The horror comes from the corruption of the familiar.

Ambiguity is Key

Don't always provide clear answers. The true horror of cosmic entities is their incomprehensibility. Let players grapple with the unknown, the contradictory evidence, and the unsettling feeling that they can never fully grasp what they're up against. The less they understand, the more terrifying it often is.

Running Encounters

Encounters in Terra Vista are designed to erode sanity and challenge perception. A visit to a seemingly normal house might reveal impossible angles in its architecture, or a conversation with a friendly neighbor could expose unsettling, non-human mannerisms. Leverage sensory details: strange smells, unsettling sounds, fleeting visual distortions. Remember, in Terra Vista, the most terrifying thing isn't what you see, but what you almost see, and the dawning realization that the world isn't what you thought it was.

