

The Funhouse

A KIDS ON BIKES MYSTERY



Inspired by Strange Adventures vol. 1
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THIS story is one of a festival that comes to your kids' town every summer. The strange bit: No one knows who owns or runs the Summer Festival. It's come to the town every year for over fifty years now. People just stopped looking for answers and started accepting it, as it brought in fun and seasonal work. But no one goes into the Hall of Mirrors in the center of the fairgrounds. There haven't been any... terrible things associated, until last year, at least, just a general uneasiness about entering. Like something is drawing them in, but in a way that makes whoever's close want to stay out.

Last year, though, Rebecca Garber, a high school student, went in. And didn't come back out.



THE SECRET

The Hall of Mirrors is a creature, not a building. It is the summer festival, and it brings itself to the town every year, hoping to draw people into its halls to sate its hunger. It usually manages to pull in people no one will miss. Last year, it messed up. Pulled in someone it shouldn't have. But it's too hungry to resist coming back. And that's where the story comes in.



THE NPCs

There are several NPCs you can bring into this: MR HODGES, the 8th grade English teacher who everyone has had at some point, runs the AV club, and is essentially a sanctuary for outcasts or just someone who needs a sympathetic ear; DARLENE EVANS, a librarian in the town who is excellent at her job and loves spreading knowledge; HERB LEWIS, a worker at the summer festival who runs an attraction of your choice and, during the off season, works at the convenience store, but might have some helpful intel.

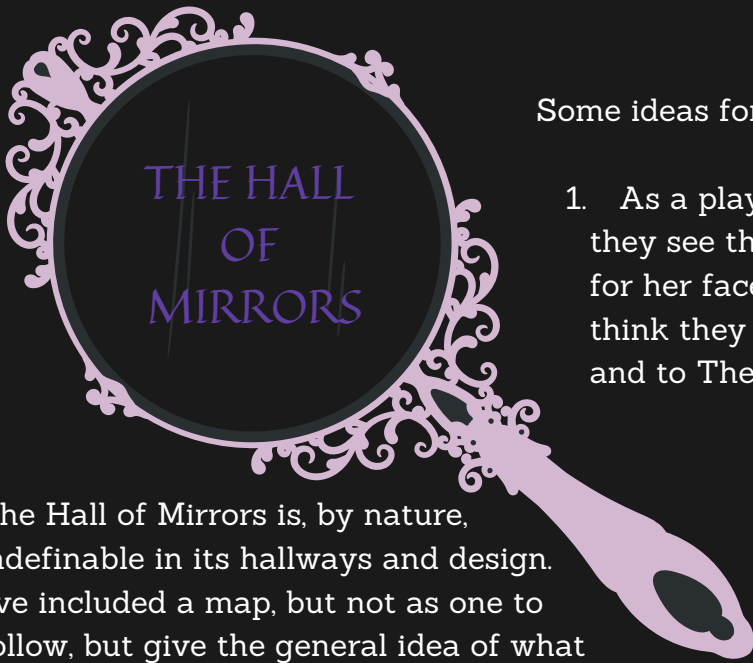
But the most important one is CAL MORRISON. He should be the same age as your party, and serves as a sort of inciting incident, should you need one. He gets the same relationship questions the rest of the party gets. And if your party needs it, once his relationship has been solidified with the party, he'll go into the Hall of Mirrors.



THE PLOT HOOK

The way this happens (Cal entering the Hall of Mirrors) is up to you: Maybe Cal gets dared by a group of upper classmen, maybe a kid or a pet runs in and he runs after them—maybe he just doesn't believe the rumors and goes in!

As for me, my players did something very helpful: One of them separated from the rest of the group and I made the entire party get stuck in a throng of festival goers as they tried to find their friend. When they finally emerged from the crowd, they saw Cal heading into the Hall after being dared by a group of jocks (this was set in 2003, so high school stereotypes were very much in play). Feel free to use this hook if you'd like, or try a different one!



Some ideas for scares throughout the hallways:

1. As a player looks into a mirror, they don't see themselves—they see the dead classmate. She smiles a smile that's too big for her face and beckons them in. The player rolls what they think they can do best to resist it or get pulled into the mirror and to The Stomach.

2. As the players approach a long hallway, it seems endless. A light is emanating from a mirror ahead of them, but they can't seem to reach it. They perform what check they think is appropriate to resist their mind breaking and push through to reach the end of the hallway—otherwise, they believe the hallway will never end and take harm from their mind being stretched beyond its capacity.

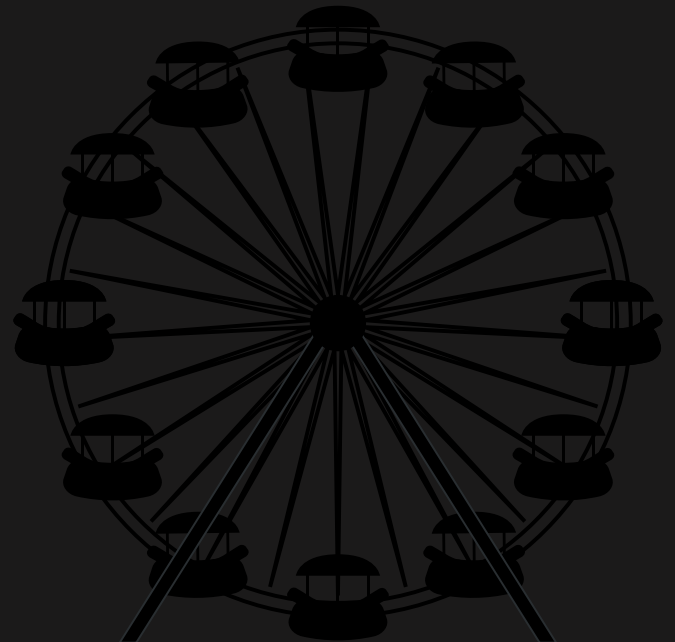
3. One of the players hears the voice of their classmate, only in their head. She laughs, then the voice seems like it comes from one mirror, then another, then another. Of course, the classmate is dead, her consciousness swallowed by The Creature and now used as it pleases, but the players won't know that unless they interrogate the voice.

4. A player faces a mirror that stretches their body into a strange shape, as funhouse mirrors often do—but the shape shifts even further, into something terrifying, that emerges from the mirror and fights the party unless the mirror is destroyed in time.

The Hall of Mirrors is, by nature, indefinable in its hallways and design. I've included a map, but not as one to follow, but give the general idea of what it could be like. When YOU run it, the layout should be dictated by intuition and the pacing your players have set. In terms of vibe: Think hallways that disappear behind the players, sometimes literally pushing behind them as they watch it rush towards them; the feeling of being constantly watched; long, endless hallways with mirrors that light far in the distance. The concept of "bigger on the inside than appears on the outside" should be communicated, like this place is endless and expansive and, in many ways, eternal.

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AT ANY POINT where you feel like the adventure has reached a good point for the climax, or if the players figure this out, a passageway should be revealed that is unlike the funhouse hallways filled with mirrors that they've been experiencing up to that point. The passageway, revealed by breaking a mirror, is small, tight and winding, and feels warm and wet: It's a digestion tract, essentially, and the first hint that whatever the hunters are in is not a building, but in fact the inside of the creature. This passageway will lead to THE STOMACH, where the final confrontation will take place.



THE FINAL CONFRONTATION

Before the game, gather information from your player's about their character's **GREATEST FEARS**. This is what they will face in the mirrors of The Stomach, giving them a -1 to the checks made in this room.

As the players make their way through the digestive tract, they reach an end that seems open to them, revealing the Stomach room and Cal lying on the floor, before the opening begins to close. They must make checks to get through in time, and otherwise find a way to make it open again. Once they reach the inside, a mirror will slot down over the opening, and the mirrors will, in turn, begin to show the characters their greatest fears.

If they succumb to them, their souls are subsumed by the creature. However, the players can break out by breaking a mirror and escaping through a new exit, OR break out and defeat it for good by smashing all the mirrors in the stomach (let your players make their cases about what checks are necessary here, but keep the reality of the scene in mind). If the last option is taken, the players escape through a rumbling passageway, escaping just in time to watch the ground open up and swallow this entire building, leaving a gaping hole and shocked festival attendees.

AND THAT'S THE ADVENTURE!