

The Carnival of Echoes

A Fate's Edge Adventure for Tiers I–II

Adventure Overview

Title: The Carnival of Echoes
Level: Tiers I–II
Length: 3-4 Sessions
Theme: Psychological horror, identity, memory, the price of desire

1 Core Premise

1.1 What is happening?

A traveling carnival that grants wishes is stealing memories and identities from visitors, leaving hollow shells behind.

1.2 Why now?

The carnival arrives in town tonight for a three-day festival, and its malevolent attraction grows stronger with each victim—it plans to consume the entire town's collective memories by the final night.

1.3 Why the PCs?

Each PC received a mysterious invitation to the carnival, and one of them has been having prophetic dreams about it. Local authorities are mysteriously absent or unresponsive.

2 Setting & Tone

2.1 Location: Millhaven

A riverside town during its annual Harvest Festival:

- **Smell:** Cinnamon and roasting chestnuts mixed with something metallic
- **Sound:** Calliope music that sounds slightly off-key, distant carnival barker's voice
- **Architecture:** Victorian-era buildings with paper lanterns, black-and-gold tents on outskirts
- **Culture:** Close-knit farming community with superstitions about "traveling folk"
- **Sight:** Strange shadows that don't match their owners in evening light

2.2 Tone and Theme

Psychological horror with elements of wonder and melancholy. Themes of identity, memory, and the price of desire.

2.3 Environmental Pressures

- The carnival only operates at night
- Town curfew enforced by mysterious carnival "security"
- Increasing difficulty distinguishing real memories from false ones
- Growing paranoia as townspeople become "hollowed"

3 Key NPCs

3.1 Mayor Elena Vasquez

Mayor Elena Vasquez

Role: Quest-giver, desperate mother

Goal: Save her town and her missing daughter

Fear: Losing her remaining family and reputation

Method: Gathering evidence while maintaining public order

Secret: Made a wish 20 years ago that started this curse

Connection: Knows one PC's family or has information they need

Skills: Command 3, Insight 2, Sway 3

Position: Desperate (missing daughter), Controlled with player help

DV for Help: 3 (mutual benefit), 4 (neutral), 5+ (suspicious)

3.2 Granny Moira Thornfield

Granny Moira Thornfield

Role: Local ally, keeper of old knowledge

Age: 153 (appears 70s)

Goal: Protect town's children and uncover truth

Fear: Becoming like her hollowed neighbors

Method: Folk magic and local knowledge

Secret: Has seen this carnival before, centuries old

Connection: Offers sanctuary and information to PCs

Skills: Lore 4, Arcana 3, Insight 3

Position: Dominant (ancient knowledge), Controlled under direct threat

DV for Information: 4 (proper respect), 5 (neutral), 6+ (hostile)

3.3 Hollowed Townsfolk

Hollowed Townsfolk

Type: Afflicted NPCs (Cap 2)

Tags: [HOLLOW], [CONFUSED], [LOYAL]

Description: Former townspeople with stolen memories

Behavior:

- Speak in fragmented sentences about "beautiful dreams"
- Protect carnival without understanding why
- Fear return of painful memories

Weaknesses: Vulnerable to memory restoration, confused by contradiction

Tactics: Subtle sabotage, misinformation, emotional manipulation

Position: Controlled (normal), Desperate when threatened

3.4 Carnival Master (Mr. Dram)

Carnival Master (Mr. Dram)

Type: Ancient Outsider (Cap 5)

Tags: [DREAM], [MEMORY], [ILLUSION], [FEED]

Description: Construct of collective forgotten memories

Goal: Collect 1000 souls' memories to ascend to godhood

Fear: Being forgotten himself

Method: Manipulation through desire and fear

Secret: Made from previous victims' forgotten dreams

Connection: Knows each PC's deepest desires and fears

Abilities:

- Memory manipulation and theft
- Illusion creation based on desires
- Feed on forgotten dreams
- Partial existence outside normal reality

Position: Dominant (carnival domain), Controlled when plan disrupted

DV for Confrontation: 6 (direct), 5 (ritual), 4 (preparation)

4 Carnival Lieutenants

4.1 Madame Zara - The Fortune Teller

Madame Zara

Role: Desire reader and wish trap creator

Skills: Insight 4, Sway 3, Arcana 2

Abilities: Reads victims' desires, creates perfect wish traps

Position: Controlled (carnival operations), Desperate when exposed

DV for Information: 4 (proper approach), 5 (neutral), 6+ (hostile)

4.2 Bull Carson - The Strongman

Bull Carson

Role: Enforcer through intimidation and violence

Skills: Skirmish 4, Command 2, Athletics 3

Abilities: Physical intimidation, memory suppression through fear

Position: Dominant (physical threat), Controlled under strategy

DV for Combat: 5 (direct), 4 (tactical), 3 (tricked)

4.3 The Twins - Carousel Operators

The Twins

Role: Memory thieves through hypnotic rides

Skills: Craft 3, Arcana 3, Subterfuge 2

Abilities: Literally spin memories away, hypnotic influence

Position: Controlled (carnival operations), Desperate when machinery threatened

DV for Sabotage: 4 (technical), 5 (direct), 3 (misdirection)

5 Villain's Plan

5.1 Ultimate Goal

To collect 1,000 souls' worth of memories to ascend to godhood, becoming the eternal keeper of forgotten dreams.

5.2 Why Not Easily Stopped

The carnival exists partially outside normal reality and feeds on the desires that draw people to it. Destroying it requires breaking the collective belief in its magic.

5.3 Plan Phases

Setup (Night 1): Carnival arrives, begins subtle memory collection through "free" wishes. Victims seem happier but lose small memories.

- Advance Hollowing Clock +1
- Gain 2-3 Memory Fragments
- Establish carnival presence in town

Escalation (Night 2): More aggressive collection, "hollowed" townspeople begin to act strangely. The carnival expands, offering more tempting wishes.

- Advance Hollowing Clock +2
- Hollow 3-5 key townspeople
- Introduce Midpoint Twist (PC memory compromise)

Crisis (Night 3): Final ritual to consume all remaining memories in town. Hollowed townsfolk become actively hostile to interference.

- Advance Hollowing Clock to Full
- Final confrontation with Carnival Master
- Resolution choice determines ending

6 Player Choices

6.1 First Three Meaningful Choices

1. Investigate the carnival's arrival and strange effects (Investigation + Notice vs DV 3)
2. Confront a hollowed friend/family member for information (Social challenge, DV 4)
3. Accept a tempting wish from the carnival to gain an advantage (Command + Spirit vs DV 4)

6.2 Secondary Choices

- Rescue specific townspeople before they're fully hollowed (Extended challenge, DV 5)
- Choose which memories to sacrifice to gain carnival knowledge (Lore + Insight vs DV 4)
- Decide whether to destroy the carnival or try to reform it (Moral choice with consequences)

6.3 Choice Consequences

- Accepting wishes makes PCs more vulnerable to memory manipulation (+1 SB on memory-related rolls)
- Rescuing townspeople gains allies but alerts the carnival (Advance Hollowing Clock +1)
- Destroying without understanding may leave fragments (New adventure seed)

7 Core Mystery

7.1 Central Unknown

How the carnival steals memories and what happens to them, plus the Carnival Master's true identity and weakness.

7.2 Investigation Clues

Three Clue Rule - The Carnival's True Nature:

1. **Investigation:** Research reveals pattern of memory-theft across different towns (Lore + Investigation vs DV 5)
2. **Social:** Partially hollowed NPC reveals carnival feeds on forgotten dreams (Sway + Insight vs DV 4)
3. **Occult:** Magical investigation shows partial existence in dream realm (Arcana vs DV 5)

8 Key Encounters

8.1 Tactical Combat Encounter

Battle with Bull Carson and Hollowed Townsfolk

Location: Strongman tent with memory manipulation effects

Challenge: Fighting while resisting memory theft (Spirit vs DV 4 each round)

Complications: • Allies among enemies (hollowed friends/family)

- Environmental hazards (falling weights, crowd control)
- Memory confusion effects (-1 die to recognition rolls)

Position: Desperate (surrounded), may improve with strategy

DV: 5 (combat), 4 (tactical approach)

8.2 Exploration Scene

Navigating Ever-Shifting Carnival Grounds

Challenge: Paths loop and landmarks become threatening

Skills: Survival + Notice vs DV 4 to navigate successfully

Hazards: • Spatial disorientation (lose 1 Move per failed check)

- Hidden threats in familiar areas
- Time distortion effects (actions take longer)

Rewards: Shortcuts to key areas, hidden items, escape routes

8.3 Social Negotiation

Negotiating with Madame Zara

Challenge: Gain information while avoiding wish traps

Skills: Sway + Insight vs DV 5

Dangers:

- Subtle wish temptation (mark 1 Wish Corruption)
- Misinformation leading to traps
- Emotional manipulation based on PC fears

Success Rewards: Carnival operational knowledge, lieutenant weaknesses

8.4 Set-Piece Challenge

Carousel of Echoes Escape

Challenge: Race against time to escape memory theft

Mechanics: Extended Athletics + Wits challenge, DV 5

Effects:

- Memory loss per failed check (lose 1 skill temporarily)
- Physical strain (mark 1 Fatigue)
- Time pressure (Hollowing Clock advances +1)

Complications: Carousel speeds up, exits move, illusions confuse

8.5 Skill Challenge

Disabling Dream-Weaving Machinery

Location: Carnival back areas with supernatural security

Challenge: Technical sabotage under pressure

Skills: Tinker + Arcana vs DV 6

Security Measures:

- Supernatural guardians (outsider constructs)
- Illusory defenses (false layouts, hidden dangers)
- Time constraints (Hollowing Clock +1 per failed attempt)

Success Effects: Weaken carnival, gain inside knowledge, rescue victims

9 Key Mechanics

9.1 Hollowing Clock [6]

Advance +1: Carnival operates normally, minor memory theft

Advance +1: Townspeople show first signs of hollowing

Advance +2: Hollowed townsfolk become active threats

Advance +1: PCs accept wishes or fail to stop memory theft

Advance +1: Carnival Master grows stronger

When Full: Town's collective memories consumed, carnival ascends

9.2 Memory Fragments Track

Collection: PCs can collect stolen memories as assets

Benefits:

- Gain insights into carnival operations
- Temporary skill boosts related to memory content
- Leverage against hollowed townspeople

Costs:

- Emotional baggage (-1 die to related social rolls)
- Identity confusion (difficulty distinguishing real memories)
- Vulnerability to memory manipulation

Maximum: 5 fragments per PC (reduce to 2 at scene end)

9.3 Wish Corruption

Gains: Each wish grants power but creates weakness

Effects:

- +1 die to one skill for scene
- Gain specific supernatural ability temporarily
- Improved Position for related actions

Corruption:

- Corresponding vulnerability or moral compromise
- Mark 1 segment on Corruption Clock
- Increased susceptibility to carnival influence

Limit: Maximum 3 wishes per PC per adventure

9.4 Dream Echoes

Manifestation: PCs experience dreams of other victims' memories

Benefits:

- Gain insight into carnival's methods
- Forewarning of dangers
- Understanding of victims' motivations

Risks:

- Risk to own identity (confusion between real and borrowed memories)
- Emotional trauma from victims' experiences
- Vulnerability to carnival influence during dreams

Control: Requires Spirit + Resolve vs DV 4 to maintain self during echoes

10 Stakes and Consequences

10.1 Success Outcomes

- Carnival destroyed or reformed
- Memories restored to willing victims
- Town left with trauma but intact
- PCs gain reputation as protectors
- Potential allies in Granny Moira and Mayor Vasquez

10.2 Failure Outcomes

- Carnival consumes town's memories
- Everyone becomes hollow shells
- Carnival moves on with increased power
- PCs lose hometown connections
- New recurring supernatural threat

10.3 Walk Away Outcomes

- Carnival succeeds in Millhaven
- Grows stronger for future encounters
- PCs' hometown connections lost
- Moral weight of abandonment
- Adventure becomes ongoing campaign thread

11 Midpoint Twist

11.1 The Revelation

Halfway through Night 2, PCs discover that one of their own has been making wishes at the carnival, and their memories are already compromised.

11.2 Immediate Consequences

- Compromised PC gains Wish Corruption segment
- Other PCs must decide whether to trust this PC
- Carnival now has inside knowledge of party dynamics
- Hollowing Clock advances +1 due to betrayal

11.3 Resolution Options

- Confront and potentially exclude compromised PC
- Work together to overcome the compromise
- Use compromise as tactical advantage against carnival
- Allow PC to make redemption choice

12 Player Spotlights

12.1 Investigator/Tracker PC

- Use skills to uncover carnival's pattern of previous victims
- Connect current events to historical records
- Identify key operational patterns and weaknesses
- Opportunity for extended investigation scenes

12.2 Magic User PC

- Face moral dilemma about using carnival magic against carnival
- Potential for corruption or power gain
- Unique insights into supernatural nature of threat
- Opportunity to directly combat Carnival Master

12.3 Social/Charismatic PC

- Convince hollowed loved ones to remember true selves
- Navigate complex emotional negotiations
- Potential to turn enemies into allies
- Handle key social encounters with lieutenants

12.4 Combat Specialist PC

- Direct confrontation with supernatural threats
- Protect civilians from hollowed townsfolk
- Opportunity for tactical combat encounters
- Physical challenges against Bull Carson

12.5 Stealth/Skill PC

- Infiltrate backstage areas undetected
- Disable memory-stealing machinery
- Gather intelligence without alerting enemies
- Handle technical challenges and traps

13 Final Confrontation

13.1 Set-Piece: Dream Consumption Ritual

- Location: Central carnival tent with swirling vortex of stolen memories
- Effect: Carnival Master grows more powerful as townspeople drawn in
- Challenge: Multiple simultaneous threats (Master, hollowed townsfolk, environmental hazards)
- Time Pressure: Hollowing Clock fills during encounter

13.2 Defining Choice

To destroy the carnival completely (saving town but losing power) or make one final wish to become carnival's new masters (gaining power but unknown cost to humanity).

13.3 Resolution Paths

- **Destruction:** Complex ritual requiring sacrifice, memory restoration, breaking collective belief
- **Mastery:** Temptation requiring moral compromise, potential for future corruption
- **Reformation:** Transform carnival into force for good, ongoing responsibility
- **Escape:** Save some townspeople but leave threat unresolved

14 Aftermath and Ripple Effects

14.1 Character Changes

- PCs gain or lose memories based on choices
- Hollowed townspeople slowly recover (or don't, becoming NPCs)
- Granny Moira reveals more of her true nature and age
- Mayor Vasquez deals with political fallout

14.2 Alliance Shifts

- Strong bond with Granny Moira if she survives
- Tension with townspeople who made regretted wishes
- Potential rivalry with other monster hunters arriving late
- New understanding of supernatural threats

14.3 Adventure Seeds

- Other carnival fragments survived elsewhere
- Granny Moira's past with similar threats
- Carnival Master's origins in realm of forgotten dreams
- PCs' compromised memories resurface later
- New carnival appears in different location

15 Session Structure

15.1 Session 1: The Carnival Arrives (Night 1)

- PCs receive mysterious invitations
- Investigate carnival's arrival and initial effects
- Meet key NPCs (Mayor, Granny Moira)
- Experience first minor memory thefts
- Advance Hollowing Clock +1

15.2 Session 2: Deeper Involvement (Night 2)

- Investigate carnival operations more deeply
- Confront hollowed townspeople
- Introduce Midpoint Twist (compromised PC)
- Major combat or skill challenge encounter
- Advance Hollowing Clock +2

15.3 Session 3: Crisis Point (Night 3)

- Final preparations for carnival's climax
- Rescue remaining townspeople
- Confront lieutenants and disable key machinery
- Advance Hollowing Clock toward full

15.4 Session 4: Final Confrontation

- Dream Consumption Ritual in central tent
- Defining choice about carnival's fate
- Resolution of all major plot threads
- Determine long-term consequences
- Set up future adventure seeds

16 GM Notes

16.1 Atmosphere Guidance

- Emphasize sensory details: off-key music, metallic smells, wrong shadows
- Create cognitive dissonance: beautiful carnival masking horror
- Use lighting effects: increasing darkness, flickering lanterns
- Make time feel distorted: nights that seem too long

16.2 Memory Mechanics

- Players may forget real details about their characters
- Distinguish between real and false memories becomes challenging
- Use confusion to create tension without frustrating players
- Provide clear mechanical indicators of memory compromise

16.3 Horror Elements

- Psychological horror over gore
- Loss of identity more frightening than death
- Familiar becoming threatening
- Moral ambiguity in choices

16.4 Scaling for Tiers

- **Tier I:** Reduce entity Caps, simplify ritual requirements, provide more NPC assistance
- **Tier II:** Standard challenges, full complexity, moderate supernatural threats
- **Tier III+:** Add political complications, increase entity power, complicate resolution