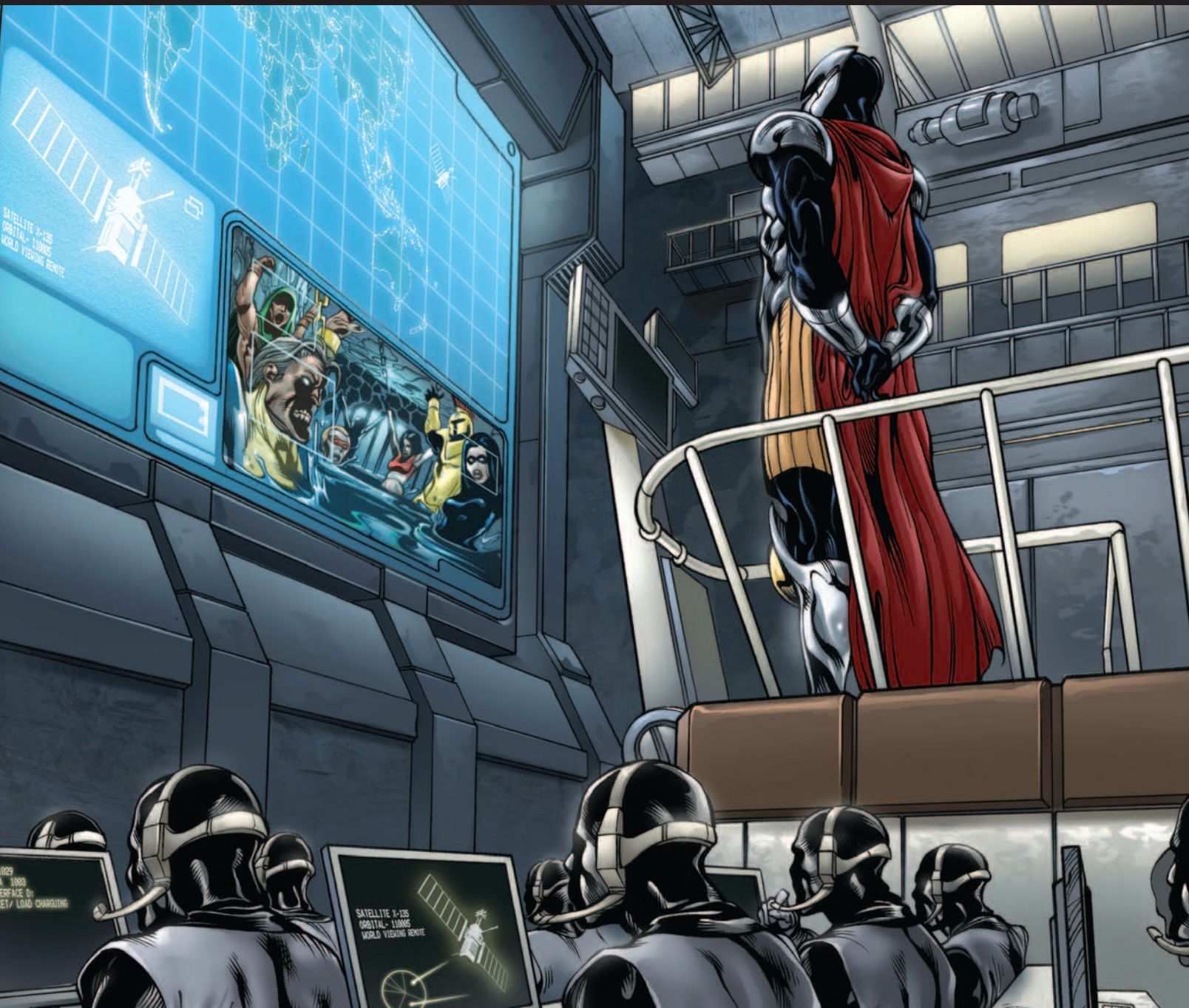


Villainous Lairs

AMUSEMENT PARK



While some super-criminals make do with a flophouse, cheap motel, or abandoned squat in the heart of the city, having a true *lair* is a sign you have truly arrived in the world of supervillainy. Master-criminals often have complexes to rival powerful nations, hidden away in mysterious and inaccessible parts of the world, or else hidden in plain sight, right under the heroes' noses, perhaps even out in the open, protected by diplomatic immunity or a façade of innocence.

The *Villainous Lair* series for the *Mutants & Masterminds* superhero roleplaying game looks at different types of lairs used by the colorful and creative foes of the forces of good. Each release provides a complete criminal hideout, with game information, a map, and adventure ideas, everything you need for an exciting set piece in your own *M&M* game!

VILLAINOUS LAIRS: THE AMUSEMENT PARK

A staple for villains with funhouse, circus, or arcade themes is the abandoned amusement park, either closed down for the season or shut down for good because of hard times or changes in entertainment interests. The villain either buys the place for a song or moves in when nobody is looking and modifies things to suit, usually by "upgrading" the harmless carnival games and rides and making them into dangerous weapons and deathtraps.

AMUSEMENT PARK

HEADQUARTERS

Colossal size • Toughness 5 (typically) • Features: Deathtraps, Living Quarters, Power System, Secret, Workshop

Cost: 10 points

FEATURES

The main features of an Amusement Park lair are the various rides and attractions, turned into tools of villainy!

FERRIS WHEEL

The primary role of the Ferris wheel in an amusement park lair is a big object to break or hit someone with, although if there are any customers in the park (see **Behind the Scenes** under **Variations**), then a fully loaded Ferris wheel will almost inevitably break loose from its moorings, requiring a hero to come to the rescue (and earn a hero point for doing so). The top of the Ferris wheel also provides an excellent vantage point for either a lookout or a sniper.

A 30-foot Ferris wheel weighs around 60 tons and carries a maximum of 120 riders (adding another approximately 12 tons, fully loaded). It takes an effective lifting Strength of 62 to hold up an empty one as a heavy load (Str 63, fully loaded). Lesser lifting Strength can still hold it up as a maximum load, and bracing and extra-effort can enhance this. Larger and more complex Ferris wheels are proportionally heavier and harder to lift.

THE HALL OF MIRRORS

The classic hall of funhouse mirrors is often a place where the villain will lure heroes or flee when pursued. The dozens of confusing reflections provide characters in the place with visual concealment (*M&M*, page 161) allowing for, among other things, Stealth checks and surprise attacks, as well as a miss chance for attacks. The mirrors can reflect light-based effects, making them suitable for certain power stunts or to cause complications for characters with light-based powers.

A more exotic hall-of-mirrors trap causes the funhouse mirrors to create distorted duplicates of the characters, which step out of the mirrors to attack: a Summon effect that creates a near-exact duplicate of the onlooker. It is commonly magical, although the duplicates can be products of super-science as well: "hard-light" holograms, synthetic beings, and so forth.

HAUNTED HOUSE

A scare ride with various special effects, a haunted house may be modified with robotic or "live" versions of classic movie monsters

to attack trespassers (zombies, skeletons, giant spiders, werewolves, etc., all from **Chapter 11** of *M&M*). It could also have realistic illusions (as the power, with an appropriate Will save for the series power level) or fear-causing devices (**Emotion Control**, with a similar save DC).

SHOOTING GALLERY

One of the classic carnival games, this booth for target-shooting might be turned into a lethal back-and-forth where helpless heroes are shot at, having a certain amount of time to escape. Perhaps one of the heroes' teammates or loved ones is mesmerized into being the shooter! For heroes immune to ordinary bullets, the "gallery" might use specialized ammo (silver or wooden bullets, for example) or specific weaknesses instead.

THRILL RIDES

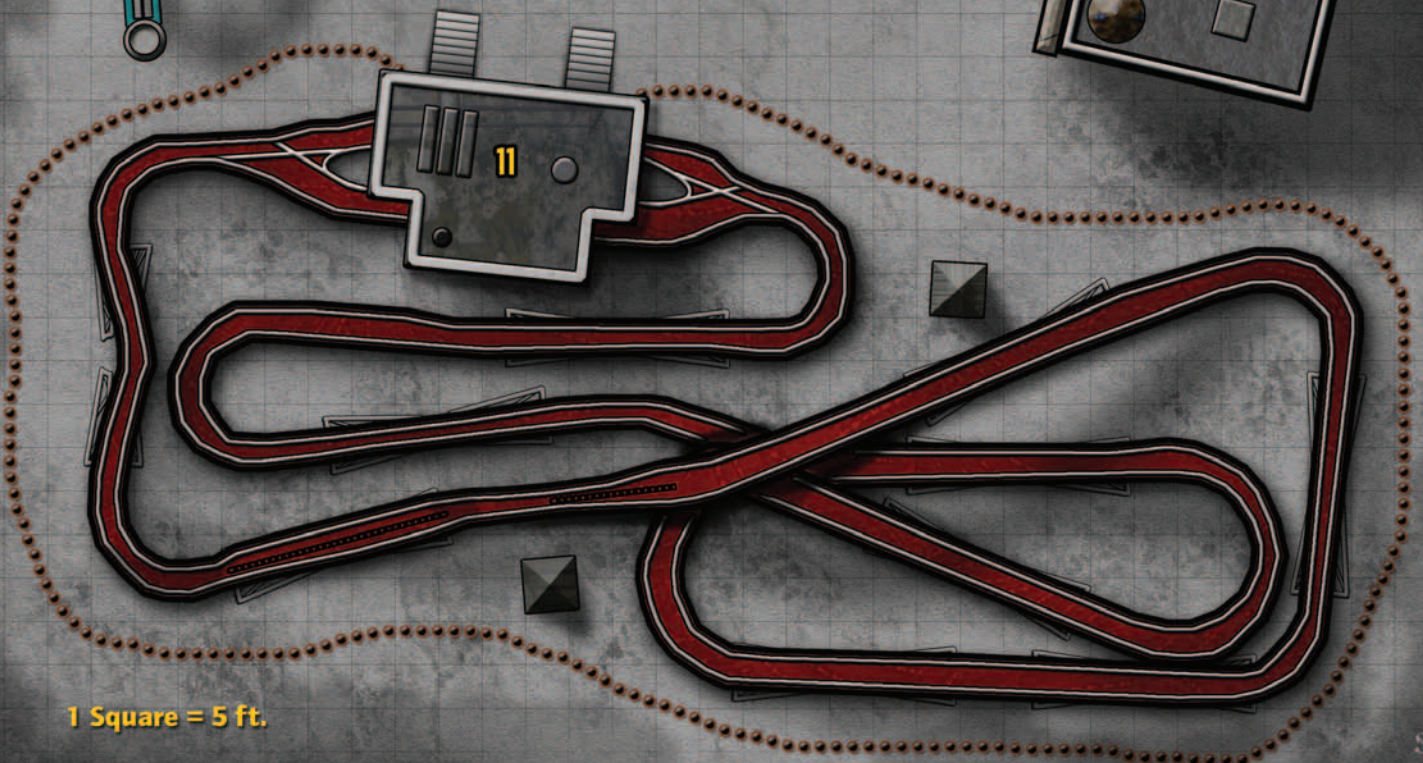
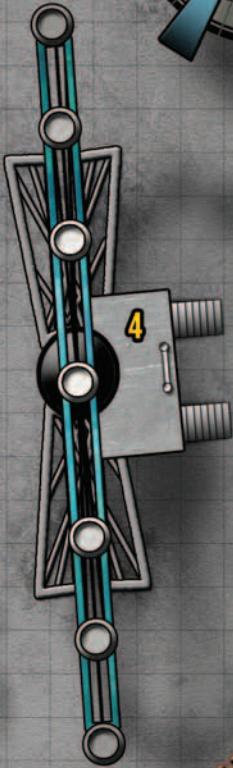
This includes roller coasters, tilt-a-whirls, and various other rides intended to induce terror and nausea in their screaming "victims." Villains often convert them into deathtraps, spinning or caroming off into terrible crashes as the heroes struggle to get loose. You can treat the ride's effects like a continuous **Nauseate** power (*M&M*, page 94). The heroes might need to escape from "safety" restraints (requiring a Strength or Escape Artist check of an appropriate DC for your series) while struggling against the side effects to get free of the ride before it is too late.

TUNNEL OF LOVE

The clichéd romantic boat ride could become a series of deadly traps involving things like showers of "Cupid's arrows" with steel, explosive, or electrified arrowheads, cellophane "hearts" that attempt to smother victims (a **Suffocate** effect), or some of the effects of the thrill ride section, previously. Alternately, the Tunnel of Love might introduce a mystical or chemical concoction to induce feelings of love and attraction to those partaking in the ride (an **Emotion Control** effect). This is especially suitable for a comedy of errors adventure where different characters fall in love with each other, leading to misunderstandings, rivalries, and perhaps even new relationships once the effect has worn off and things are set right.

Amusement Park

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Ticket Booth | 8. Bean Bag Toss |
| 2. Concession Stand | 9. Water Pistols |
| 3. Gravitron | 10. Horse Racing |
| 4. Ferris Wheel | 11. Roller Coaster |
| 5. Balloon Darts | 12. Haunted House |
| 6. Ring Toss | 13. Hall of Mirrors |
| 7. Pitching Booth | 14. Merry-Go-Round |



1 Square = 5 ft.

VARIATIONS

Variations on the Amusement Park lair may include:

BEHIND THE SCENES

In this scenario, the amusement park is *not* abandoned, but continues to operate while also serving as cover for the villain's activities. The bad guy might hide in plain sight as one of the acts or operators of the park, or stay out of sight. He might be pulling the strings of everyone else working at the park, or remain hidden even from them, save for a select few allies or henchmen. Exactly why the villain hides out in a functioning amusement park depends on the villain. For some it is the only game in town; others might need the fairgoers in some way, whether to feed off their psychic energy, to use them as mesmerized pawns, or simply to be close to the life and fun and laughter they can never have. Whatever the case, having a park full of innocent people can pose all sorts of complications for the heroes as they try to deal with the bad guy without anyone getting caught in the crossfire.

THE PHANTOM OF THE FAIR

Rather than the lair of a conventional supervillain, a dangerous ghost or spirit haunts the amusement park. It may be a vengeful former owner, manager, or designer, or perhaps a park-goer who suffered a tragic fate. The phantom controls the various rides and attractions, perhaps even infusing them with sufficient supernatural

power to make them effective against superheroes. It traps people in the park in order to torment and eventually kill them, feeding off the psychic energy of their terror. If the amusement park is still operating, then the current owners might be desperate to cover up rumors of strange happenings. If it is abandoned, the authorities (and the heroes) might be investigating a series of disappearances surrounding the park.

The Silver Scream from *Freedom City* (page 218) is a good basis for a vengeful ghost, simply substitute an amusement park theme for her obsession with films.

UNDER THE BIG TOP

Rather than an amusement park, the villain's lair is a circus, with a similar midway hosting carnival games and the like, but also a big top with clowns, acrobats, and trained animals such as lions and elephants, any or all of which could be part of the villain's overall theme. The master villain might style himself "the Ringmaster" or could be another member of the circus troupe like the Clown or the Strong Man. Maybe the lion they call "the King of Beasts" is smarter than anyone thinks and a "king" in truth, with the power to control the minds of humans and animals! Maybe the clown all the kids find scary is something *really* scary, like a demon in human form. The possibilities are many. See page 231 of *M&M* for game information on elephants and lions, along with other animals suitable as additional features for a circus lair.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The following are some adventure ideas suitable for use with the amusement park lair.

A NIGHT ON THE MIDWAY

The heroes and their friends are simply out for an evening at the amusement park, the good guys likely in their secret identities. This is a great opportunity for some roleplaying and development of character subplots: a date with that special someone, competition with a rival, spending time with family, and so forth. It's ideal for a teen heroes series, with the characters and their friends, classmates, and perhaps even foes mingling at the park.

Over the course of the evening, the heroes pick up on some hints that something is just not right at the amusement park. See the suggestions under **Behind the Scenes** for some ideas. Perhaps one or more of their supporting characters stumble upon the villain's scheme and are abducted. Whatever the case, the good guys have to balance protecting their friends and families, and the numerous innocent people at the park, and investigating what is really going on. The whole thing can be played out as a complex game of cat-and-mouse, with the heroes trying to ditch their suspicious escorts long enough to use their powers to defeat the bad guy.

FREAKSHOW

The sinister amusement park is home to a nightmarish collection of freaks, many with powers of their own. Some may be designed along the lines of classic sideshow freaks: the circus strongman, the wolf-boy, the mermaid, conjoined twins, the rubber-man, and so forth, while others could simply be performers, sideshow attractions, perhaps even animals or "games" with an intelligence of their own!

The park itself could be a supernatural collective, moving from place to place in the physical world while existing primarily in the realm of nightmares and human fears. Alternately, for settings focused on mutants, evolution, or "people with powers" (like the *Paragons* campaign setting), the Freakshow might be a dark reflection of the player characters; examples of people as much cursed by their powers, and peoples' perceptions of them, as the characters are blessed by theirs. Will the inhabitants of the Freakshow consider their fellow superhumans natural allies, or mortal enemies?

CARNEY OF CRIME

The amusement park is actually a cover for a criminal organization that trains hired muscle for other criminal clients. The various park

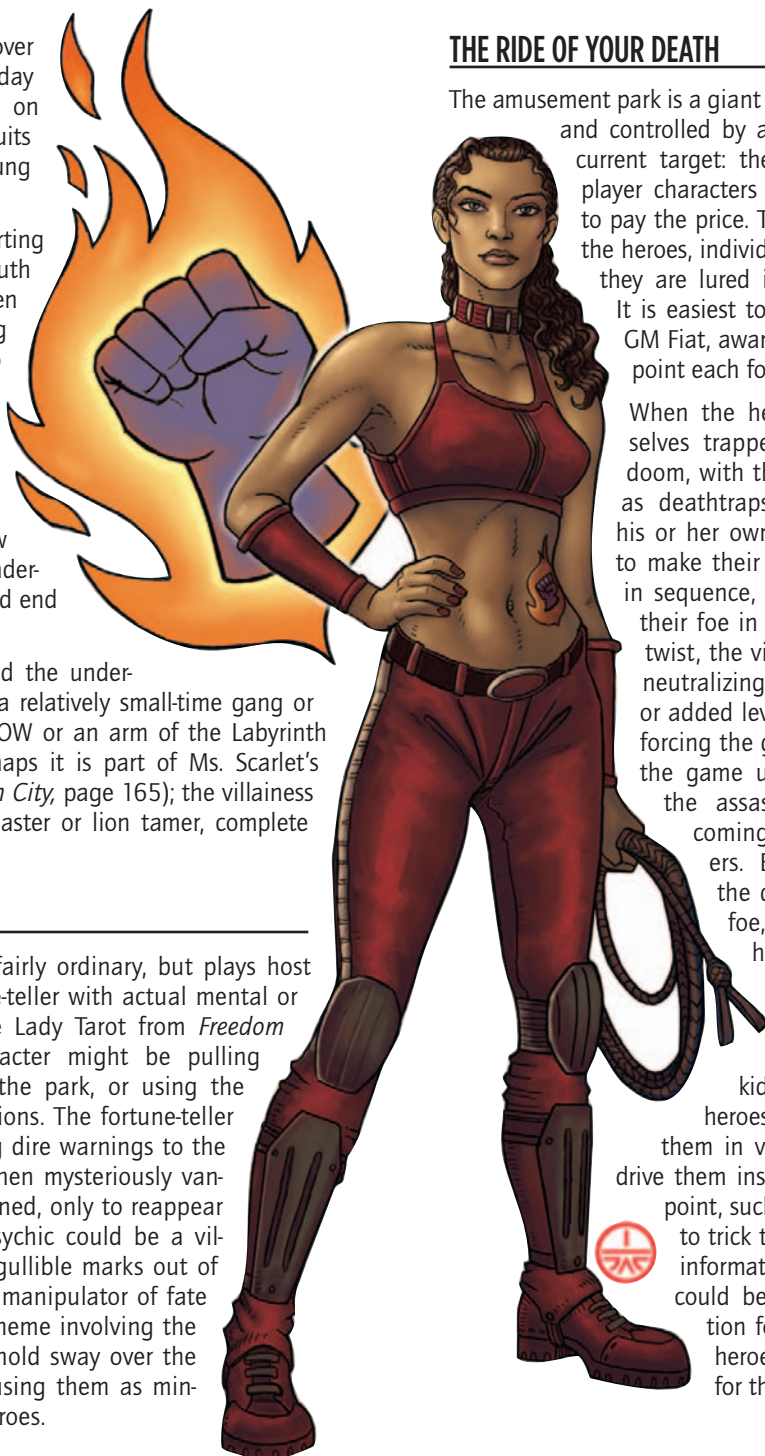
employees are actually undercover criminals, working the park by day and training at night, while on the lookout for potential recruits among the layabouts and young toughs who loiter at the park.

A hero or member of the supporting cast might stumble upon the truth about the park, perhaps even trying to infiltrate the training program in order to find out who is behind it. A character with a questionable reputation (in or out of costume) might also be approached for recruitment, allowing a similar opportunity. Intrepid reporters and law enforcement types could go undercover looking for information and end up captured.

The criminal mastermind behind the undercover training program can be a relatively small-time gang or a super-organization like SHADOW or an arm of the Labyrinth (both from *Freedom City*). Perhaps it is part of Ms. Scarlet's indoctrination program (*Freedom City*, page 165); the villainess would make an effective ringmaster or lion tamer, complete with her signature bullwhip.

I FORESEE ... YOUR DOOM!

The amusement park itself is fairly ordinary, but plays host to a carnival psychic or fortune-teller with actual mental or mystical powers (someone like Lady Tarot from *Freedom City*, for example). This character might be pulling strings behind the scenes at the park, or using the place as cover for other operations. The fortune-teller may be a potential ally, issuing dire warnings to the heroes about coming threats then mysteriously vanishing when their backs are turned, only to reappear again later. Alternately, the psychic could be a villain, from a con artist bilking gullible marks out of their life-savings to a powerful manipulator of fate and fortune with a complex scheme involving the heroes. A mentalist may even hold sway over the other employees of the park, using them as minions or hostages against the heroes.



THE RIDE OF YOUR DEATH

The amusement park is a giant collection of deathtraps created and controlled by an assassin-for-hire. The villain's current target: the heroes! Someone wants the player characters out of the way and is willing to pay the price. The assassin arranges to kidnap the heroes, individually or as a group. Most likely, they are lured into a trap and incapacitated. It is easiest to handle this as an instance of GM Fiat, awarding the players and extra hero point each for the setback.

When the heroes recover, they find themselves trapped in an amusement park of doom, with the rides and attractions rigged as deathtraps. Each character might face his or her own trap, or the group may have to make their way through a series of traps in sequence, playing a complex game with their foe in order to escape. For an added twist, the villain may have some means of neutralizing or limiting the heroes' powers, or added leverage in the form of hostages, forcing the good guys to "play along" with the game until they can find out where the assassin's remote broadcasts are coming from and rescue the prisoners. Even once the heroes defeat the deathtraps and deal with their foe, there's still the matter of who hired the assassin in the first place...

As a variation on the death-trap theme, perhaps the kidnapper isn't trying to kill the heroes, but instead wants to place them in various psycho-dramas to either drive them insane (for revenge or to prove a point, such as heroism is truly a sham), or to trick them into revealing some secret information. The whole "deathtrap" could be a cunning form of interrogation for a master villain to assess the heroes' capabilities and weaknesses for the real scheme.

Design **Steve Kenson** Development and Editing **Jon Leitheusser** Art Direction and Graphic Design **Hal Mangold** Interior Art **Jeff Carlisle** Cartography **Sean MacDonald** Green Ronin President **Chris Pramas**

Green Ronin Staff **Bill Bodden, Steve Kenson, Jon Leitheusser, Nicole Lindroos, Hal Mangold, Chris Pramas, Evan Sass, Marc Schmalz**

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Green Ronin Publishing 3815 S. Othello St., Suite 100 #304 Seattle, WA 98118
Email: custserv@greenronin.com Web Site: www.greenronin.com www.mutantsandmasterminds.com

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