Gloom

SECOND EDITION

The Game of Inauspicious Incidents & Grave Consequences

The world of *Gloom* is a sad and benighted place. The sky is gray, the tea is cold, and a new tragedy lies around every corner. Debt, disease, heartache, and packs of rabid flesh-eating mice — just when it seems things can't get any worse, they do. The only consolation comes from the knowledge that yours really is the most tragic tale of them all, and there's some satisfaction in putting others' travails to shame by telling your own morbid misadventures.

OBJECTIVE

In the *Gloom* card game, you control the fate of an eccentric family of misfits and misanthropes. Your goal is sad, but simple: you want your Characters to suffer the greatest tragedies possible before passing on to the well-deserved respite of death, while keeping your opponents' Characters happy, healthy, and annoyingly alive. And along the way you'll detail the unfortunate incidents resulting in their miserable demise.

You'll play Modifiers from your hand on top of Character cards, describing the horrible mishaps you inflict on your own Characters to lower their Self-Worth scores, while trying to cheer your opponents' Characters with happy occasions that pile on positive points. When one of your family members finally suffers an Untimely Death, that Character and all the tragic circumstances leading to his passing are set aside until the end of the game.

The game ends the instant an entire family is dead. You then add up the *visible* Self-Worth points on your own *dead* Characters. The player whose Characters have suffered the most — the one with the *lowest* total Family Value — wins the game.

COMPONENTS

Gloom is a card game for 2 to 5 players, ages 13 years and up. Game play takes about an hour. In addition to this rules sheet, *Gloom* includes 20 Character cards, 2 reference cards, 57 Modifier cards, 11 Event cards, and 20 Untimely Death cards.

SETUP

Before play begins, separate the Character cards from the rest of the deck. Each player then *chooses a family* and *draws a starting hand*.

Choose a Family

Each player chooses a family and takes the 5 Character cards with that family's symbol below their illustrations.

FAMILY SYMBOLS

Castle Slogar | Hemlock Hall | Dark's Den of Deformity | Blackwater Watch

Place your Character cards face up on the table in front of you. Characters that aren't chosen by a player are set to the side for the duration of the game.

In a 4-player game, each player chooses 1 Character to discard; this keeps the game from running long. To play with 5 players, make a new misfit family from these extra Characters.

Draw a Starting Hand

The rest of the cards (Modifiers, Events, and Untimely Deaths) are shuffled together and placed face down in a stack at the center of the table to form the draw pile. Each player then draws 5 cards as a starting hand.

When you discard cards, set them face up next to the draw pile, creating a discard pile. If the draw pile ever runs out, reshuffle the discard pile to create a new one.

Now you're ready to torment your Characters! The player who's had the worst day goes first; if you've all had equally miserable days, the owner of the game takes the first turn. Play continues in a clockwise direction.

GAME PLAY

When it's your turn, you *make 2 plays* then *draw back up* to your hand limit, in that order.

Make 2 Plays

First, make 2 of the following plays. It's fine to make the same play twice (except Untimely Deaths).

Play a Modifier: As either play, place a Modifier card from your hand on any living Character, even if it's not your own. If the Modifier has an immediate effect, resolve it right away. Modifiers also add a story icon and/or contribute the Self-Worth points along their left edge to the Character's Self-Worth score. You'll usually want to play Modifiers with positive points on your opponents, and those with negative points on yourself.

Play an Event: As either play, reveal an Event card from your hand, follow the effect instructions, then discard it.

Play an Untimely Death: As your first play, place an Untimely Death card from your hand on any living Character *with a negative Self-Worth score*, even if it's not yours. You can't play an Untimely Death as your second play, but a Modifier or Event may let you use it as a "free play." The game ends when the last Character in any family dies.

Discard Your Hand: As either play, you may discard your entire hand. However, you don't get new cards until the end of your turn; if you discard as your first play, you won't have any cards to use for your second play!

Pass: You don't have to make one or both plays if you don't want to.

Draw Back Up

After you've made your 2 plays, draw until the number of cards in your hand is equal to your current draw limit. Unless it's altered by card effects, *your draw limit is 5 cards*.

You aren't forced to discard cards; if you end up with 7 cards in your hand and your draw limit is 5, you simply don't draw until you have fewer than 5 cards.

Once you've drawn, the player to your left begins his turn.

Free Plays

Some Modifier and Event cards allow you to play additional cards as "free plays" that don't count toward your 2 standard plays. If a card lets you use an Untimely Death card as a free play, it doesn't matter if it's your first play or second.

STORYTELLING

Half the fun of *Gloom* is the stories that unfold as the game progresses. On your turn, it's up to you to explain the effects of your plays and how these tragic events have come to pass.

For example, you play Was Trapped On A Train on Professor Helena Slogar. Why was she on the train? How was she trapped? And if your opponent later decides Helena Was Married Magnificently, how did she meet her future spouse while imprisoned there?

There are no right answers to these questions, and it's up to you how deeply you delve into these tales of tragedy. But when you play a card, try to explain how it fits that Character's story … you'll have more fun if you do!

THE CARDS

The basic *Gloom* game uses 4 types of cards: *Characters, Modifiers, Events,* and *Untimely Deaths*. Cards are resolved in the order in which they're played.

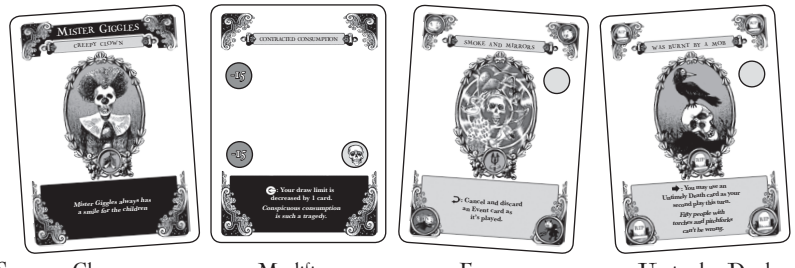
The cardinal rule of the game is that *you only pay attention to card elements you can actually see*. Ignore those you can't. So a Character's Self-Worth score is the sum of its visible points. A continuous effect continues until its effect text is covered. And while a persistent effect is harder to remove, as soon as both its upper right icon and center illustration are obscured, the effect ends.

Common Card Elements

Cards include one or more of the following elements:

Self-Worth Points: These are the numbers on the left side of the card, and there are 3 spaces for them. Combine all of the *visible* points on a Character to determine its Self-Worth score. Add the scores of your *dead* Characters together to get your total Family Value. Remember: living Characters never contribute to your Family Value.

BASIC CARD TYPES



Character | Modifier | Event | Untimely Death

Story Icons: Story icons are located on the right side of a card. They have no effect on their own, but frequently trigger or interact with other cards.

Beast: This icon usually indicates the presence of dangerous animals.

Blank: This opaque block covers up a previous icon, nullifing its effect.

Death: Modifiers with this icon are concerned with disease or supernatural horror — ghosts, curses, catching consumption, and so on.

Duck: Sometimes jokes can hurt; beware the morbid waterfowl!

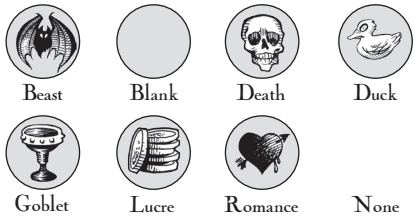
Goblet: This Modifier deals with feasts, poison, and other food-related events.

Lucre: This Modifier involves money.

Romance: This icon deals with relationships, both good and bad.

None: A clear space that lets a previous icon show through means that the icon is still in effect.

STORY ICONS



Character Requirements: These appear only in *Gloom* expansions. They must be met by the Character the card is played on for its effect to trigger. For example, a card that says "If Character has 🍷" means its target Character must have that story icon showing when it's played or else the effect doesn't work. The card can still be played on a Character without the right icon(s) — its effect just doesn't happen unless the required icons are visible when it's first played. Some cards have a standard effect given before a Character requirement effect; the standard effect triggers independently from the requirement effect.

Flavor Text: Characters, Modifiers, and Untimely Deaths typically have italicized text in the main text plate. This has no effect on the game, but is fun to read aloud.

Effects: Most cards have a game effect. These are divided into categories.

Immediate Effects: These effects trigger as soon as the card is played from your hand. If the card is later shifted to another Character, this doesn't trigger the effect again. Most Modifiers have immediate effects. Example: "Draw 1 card."

Response Effects: These are the only cards that are used during another player's turn as a response to a play, instead of being played on your turn. Example: "Cancel an Event card as it's played."

Continuous Effects: These trigger when the card is played and remain in effect as long as the effect text is visible. If an effect's Modifier card is moved to another Character, the effect then applies to the new Character as long as its text is visible. Example: "Your draw limit is increased by 1 card."

Persistent Effects: These appear only in *Gloom* expansions. They trigger when the card is played, but remain in effect even after the card and its effect text is buried; an icon in the top right story icon space signifies this, along with a text reminder in the center of the card under the illustration. The effect remains active as long as the icon and text reminder are visible, and applies to the new Character if its Modifier card is moved.

EFFECT ICONS

Effects always apply to and are resolved by the player controlling the Character the card is played on, not the person who played it, unless the card says otherwise. So if you play a Modifier with the immediate effect "Draw 2 cards" on an opponent's Character, he draws 2 cards, not you. Likewise, any card text that says "you" or "your" refers to the person controlling the affected Character.

Character Cards

Character cards have a black text plate with white text, like Modifiers; they can be identified by the Character portrait in the center of the card and the family symbol beneath it. Character cards have no story icons, effects, or Self-Worth points — Characters start with no Self-Worth, as they're the basic foundation on which you build your tragic tale.

Modifier Cards

A Modifier card has a black text plate with white text, like Characters. Modifiers always have Self-Worth points, and many have story icons. Modifiers with persistent effects include a central image, but most don't.

Playing Modifier cards is how you inflict misfortune on your own Characters and cheer up your enemies. You can only play Modifier cards on living Characters, unless a card effect specifically says otherwise. But you may play Modifiers either on your own Characters, or on Characters controlled by other players. Generally speaking, you'll want to play Modifiers with negative points on your own family and those with positive points on your opponents, but the effect of the card may give you a reason to break this guideline.

SAMPLE FAMILY IN MID-GAME

Multiple Modifier cards can be played on the same Character; if a new Modifier covers up the Self-Worth points, story icon, or effect of a prior Modifier, that element is overridden.

Event Cards

An Event card has a grey text plate with red text, and a red central image showing all the story icons. An Event is a single-use card that's played from your hand and then discarded as soon as its effect is resolved.

Untimely Death Cards

An Untimely Death (and in *Gloom*, all deaths are untimely) has a grey text plate with black text, and a skull image in the center that covers the portrait of the Character it's played on. Untimely Death cards turn worthless living Characters into valuable dead ones.

On your first play, you may place an Untimely Death card on your own Character or on one belonging to another player. However, you may only play an Untimely Death on a Character with a *negative Self-Worth score,* even if the Untimely Death has a negative score on it. Only miserable Characters can die!

Some cards also have effects that can cause a death to occur on another player's turn, or as a free play; such cards are the only way you play an Untimely Death as part of your second play.

When an Untimely Death is played on a Character, set aside that Character card along with all the cards that have been played on it. Players can't play additional Modifier cards on a dead Character, and only a few Event cards affect dead Characters.

WINNING

The game ends the instant the last Character in any family dies. Add up the *visible* Self-Worth points of all your own *dead* Characters to get their Self-Worth scores, and total those to get your final Family Value. The player with the *lowest* Family Value wins the game.

Only visible Self-Worth points count toward a Character's Self-Worth score; those that have been covered are ignored. You receive Self-Worth points at the end of the game only for your own dead Characters; your living Characters, and the dead Characters of your opponents, don't contribute to your total Family Value.

FOR BEGINNERS

To simplify play, just ignore the effects of cards. Most of the strategy of the game is tied to card effects, as Modifiers with better values have negative effects. But ignoring them can be a good way to learn the basics.

MORE INFO

For more information about *Gloom* — including strategies, downloads, and expansions — please visit us at:

atlas-games.com/gloom

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