Fairytale Gloom

*The fairy tales with the most depressing endings teach the most valuable lessons.
In* Fairytale Gloom, *it's your job to create the most miserable tale of all time.*

OVERVIEW

In *Fairytale Gloom*, each player has a **FAMILY** of four **CHARACTERS**. Players try to make their own families the most miserable, while cheering up the other players' families.

Characters become sad or happy primarily by having **MODIFIER CARDS** played on them. Each Modifier affects the Self-Worth score of the Character it's played on. Players also play and discard **EVENT CARDS** for various immediate effects.

As the game continues, the Characters' individual stories end, one by one, as **UNHAPPY ENDING CARDS** are played on them. When one entire family has succumbed to Unhappy Endings, the game ends. Self-Worth scores are then tallied, and the most miserable player wins the game.

SET-UP

1. **Divide Into Families:** Spread the 20 Character cards out on the table where everyone can see them. Each player chooses four. All chosen cards are laid face up on the table in front of their owners, where the other players can also see and reach them. Return any unused Characters to the box. They won't be used.

Character cards have full-color portraits.

2. **Deal the Cards:** Set aside the Story cards and Reference cards. Shuffle the rest of the cards into a deck. Deal each player five face-down cards and put the rest of the deck in the center of the table. A discard pile will form next to it during play.

3. **Stories:** Choose two Story cards randomly and lay them face up where everyone can easily see and reach them, but where they won't be confused with the discard pile. Return the rest of the Story cards to the box. They won't be used.

Story cards have purple images.

4. **Begin!:** Each player briefly summarizes the misery of their day so far. The player with the most horrible story will take the first turn. The game's owner chooses which terrible tale is most miserable, if there's a disagreement.

QUICK-START RULES FOR TAKING TURNS

The rules in this section will get you started playing Fairytale Gloom right away. Refer to the rest of the rules (starting at "The Cardinal Rule") as questions come up.

On your turn, you take two actions. An action is almost always used to play a card from your hand. How that works depends on what kind of card you choose. Generally speaking (and with some exceptions)…

- **Events** have some immediate effect, and are then discarded.
- **Modifiers** are stacked on top of a Character and remain there. They alter that Character's Self-Worth score, may have additional effects as described on the card, and may bear **STORY ICONS**. You can play Modifier cards on anyone's Character, not just yours, as long as that Character doesn't have an Unhappy Ending yet.
- **Unhappy Endings** are played on a Character and bring that Character's tale to an end. You can only play an Unhappy Ending on a Character with a negative Self-Worth score. *An Unhappy Ending can't be played as the second action of your turn; it has to come first.*

After taking two actions, the player whose turn it is finishes by drawing back up to five cards. Play continues clockwise around the table.

That's it! Turns continue until one player's whole family has Unhappy Endings, and the game comes to a close. See "Winning the Game."

But That's Not All!

Fairytale Gloom is the most fun when the player taking an action tells or continues a brief story with each action.

Think of it this way: You're creating a fairy tale with the cards you play. How is it that Cinderella came to be Transformed Into a Toad? (Did she find a magic lamp with the cleaning supplies and rub it the wrong way? Did she become the object of a mad leprechaun's ire?) Why was Pinocchio Pursued by a Prince? (Blew his nose on his pocket square? Bested him in a duel?) *You decide*, and then tell the other players in an interesting way!

There are no formal rules for *Fairytale Gloom* storytelling, and no right answers, but that doesn't mean it's not important. Quite the opposite: Many *Gloom* players think of telling tales as very best part of the game!

THE CARDINAL RULE

Fairytale Gloom's cards are transparent in some areas and opaque in others. As the game goes on, cards are often stacked squarely on top of each other. For example, Modifier cards are placed on top of Character cards. (As well as on top of previous Modifiers, as the game continues.)

As Modifier cards stack up, different Self-Worth values, card effects, and story icons will be covered up, sometimes replaced and sometimes simply concealed. **The cardinal rule of *Fairytale Gloom* is that you only pay attention to what you can see.**

If Self-Worth points are concealed, they no longer affect that Character's score. If a story icon is covered, that Character no longer has it. If an effect is hidden, it no longer does anything. (Persistent effects are the single exception to this list. See "Effect Categories" for details.)

ANATOMY OF CARDS

Each area on a card has a particular use.

Name: What the card is called.

Self-Worth Points: Up to three point values in circles. Each Character's Self-Worth score is the sum of the point values currently showing in its stack.

Story Icons: Up to three icons that have no effect on their own, but which frequently trigger or interact with the effects of other cards.

Deck Icon: The rose on every card indicates it is from *Fairytale Gloom*, to help you sort it out from your other *Gloom* games if you wish.

Effects: Special rules that do whatever they say. There are four categories of effects: immediate, ongoing, persistent, and response. See "Effect Categories" for more information.

Flavor Text: Delightful or dreadful bits of story and commentary that provide entertaining ambiance. Flavor text is distinguished from effect text with italics.

Portrait: A disturbing, entertaining, or comic image, delightful to behold. Some illustrations make it easy to tell cards apart by type. For example, Modifiers almost never have illustrations, so it's easy to tell what they are. (Modifiers with persistent effects are the exception.) Other pictures make it easy to tell finished Characters from unfinished Characters: All Unhappy Endings bear the same image, so any Character showing that signature picture at the top of its stack must be finished.

Character Card

Name

Deck Icon

Modifier Card

Self-Worth Points

Story Icons

Story Card

Name

Story Icons

Event Card

Unhappy Ending

Effects (regular text) and Flavor Text (italics)

Not every element of every card shown is labeled. Character cards have flavor text, and Modifiers have effects, for example.
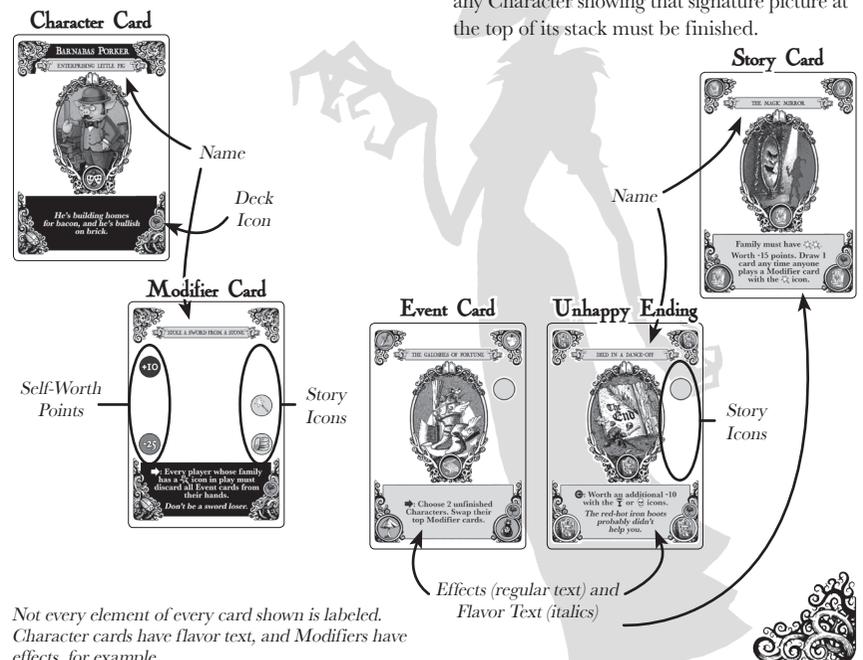
TYPES OF CARDS

Character Cards

Character cards have names, portraits, and flavor text. Character cards lack innate Self-Worth points or story icons. Rather, they're the basic foundations of your stories, where Modifiers stack up.

Choose Characters you think it would be fun to tell stories about. You could assemble a family that mirrors an existing tale, like Red Riding Hood, Grandmother, The Woodsman, and the Wolf. Or, you could decide that in *your* story, Snow White, Cinderella, and Rapunzel are all secret agents working for the mysterious "Prince." It's up to you!

Event Cards

Event cards have names and effects, and all share a common portrait image showing a pair of winged boots. These single-use cards are played from your hand, do what they say, and are discarded immediately.

Modifier Cards

Modifier cards always have names, and one to three Self-Worth values. Most Modifiers have one or more story icons, an effect, and some flavor text. But some Modifiers omit story icons, effects, and/or flavor text.

Playing Modifiers is how you inflict misfortune on your own family and bring cheer to your enemies. Generally speaking, you'll want to play Modifiers with negative Self-Worth on your own Characters and positive Self-Worth on other players' Characters, but sometimes a card's effect will make you want to do something else.

When you play a Modifier on a Character, stack it squarely on top of the Character you've chosen, and on top of any Modifiers previously played on that Character. **You can only play Modifiers on unfinished Characters** (that is, Characters without Unhappy Endings) unless a card's effect specifically says otherwise.

Modifiers with effects affect the player who owns the Character that the Modifier was played on, and not (necessarily) the player who played the card. So if you play a card that says "Draw two cards" on another player's Character, that player is the one who gets to draw.

Some unusual Modifiers — those with persistent effects — have portraits. These cards represent momentous changes in their Character's life. Their effects persist even when their effect text is covered up, which is the only exception to the cardinal rule of *Fairytale Gloom*. See "Effect Categories" for more detailed information about persistent effects.

Unhappy Ending Cards

Unhappy Ending cards have names, effects, and flavor text, and all share a common portrait image showing the final page of a book. An Unhappy Ending brings a Character's tale to a close, transitioning that Character from UNFINISHED to FINISHED.
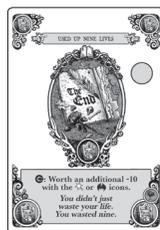
You can play Unhappy Endings on your own Characters or the Characters of others. However, there are two restrictions:

- **You can't play an Unhappy Ending as your second turn action**, and
- **You can only play Unhappy Endings on a Character with a negative Self-Worth score**. (That is, the sum of all of that Character's visible Self-Worth scores must be negative *before the effects of the Unhappy Ending are applied*. This is *Gloom* after all — you can't finish a tale unless its hero is miserable!)

Once a Character meets its Unhappy Ending, set it aside in a way that makes it clear that it's finished. A few Event cards can affect finished Characters, but not many.

Story Cards

Story cards have names and effects, and each one has a unique purple portrait. A special portion of each Story's effect is its REQUIREMENT: a type and quantity of story icons.

Story cards are never shuffled into the deck, and only two at a time are ever used in a single game.

A game's Story cards begin the game UNCONTROLLED — on the loose in the center of the table, not claimed by any player's family.

In the course of play, though, any player can CLAIM an uncontrolled Story card by spending an action to do so, as long as that player's family meets that Story's requirements. For example, Rumpelstiltskin's requirement is two Skull icons. If your family collectively shows two or more Skulls, you meet the requirements.

Players can also claim controlled story cards — cards that another player has previously claimed — by spending an action, meeting the requirements, and also exceeding the current controller in icons of the relevant type.

When you claim a Story card, place it near your family so everyone can see that it's yours. You enjoy its effects for as long as you control it.

You can only have one Story card at a time. If you have one and claim another, return the first one, uncontrolled, to the center of the table.

Story cards are optional: A less complicated version of *Fairytale Gloom* can be played with just one (instead of two), or by leaving them out entirely. If you do play a game without Stories, discard and replace any card you might draw — like "Movie Rights" — whose effect refers to them.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

In addition to the typical card-play actions (playing a Modifier, playing an Event, playing an Unhappy Ending, or claiming a Story), two special actions are available to players on their turns.

Discarding Your Hand: If you don't like your cards, you can discard your entire hand. But keep in mind that you don't get new cards until the end of your turn, so if you discard your hand as your first action, you won't have any cards to play on your second action.

Passing: You can always do nothing.

DRAWING CARDS

Some effects change your DRAW LIMIT. Your draw limit is simply the number of cards you draw up to at the end of your turn. If your draw limit is five (which is the default), you draw cards at the end of your turn until you have five cards in your hand.

If you somehow have more cards than your draw limit at the end of your turn, your turn simply ends without any drawing of cards.

FREE PLAYS

Some Modifiers and Events let you play additional cards as FREE PLAYS. Free plays don't count toward your two-action limit. If a card allows you to play an Unhappy Ending as a free play, you can do it whether the free play came from your turn's first or second action.

EFFECT CATEGORIES

There are four types of effects, which are identified by icons. An effect's category determines when it's resolved.

➡ **IMMEDIATE EFFECTS** are conclusively resolved right away when played. Example: "Draw one card."

⊖ **ONGOING EFFECTS** continue to affect the game for as long as their effect text is visible. When it's covered by another card, the effect ends. Example: "Your draw limit is increased by one card."

⟳ **PERSISTENT EFFECTS** represent a long-term change to a Character, such as being turned into a frog. All persistent effects have new portraits that cover a Character's normal portrait. As long as the new picture remains visible, the effect continues. Typically, the only ways to end a persistent effect are to play a different one above it, or play an Unhappy Ending on that Character.

⮌ **RESPONSES** can only be played during another player's turn in response to some action that player has just taken. Response cards are the only cards that can be played during another player's turn. Example: "Cancel an Event card as it is played."

WINNING THE GAME

The game ends immediately when all of the Characters in one family are finished — that is, when they all have Unhappy Endings on them.

When the game ends, each player adds up the Self-Worth scores of all their finished Characters. (Each Character's individual Self-Worth score is the sum of the point values currently showing in its stack.) The player with the lowest total — the one whose family is the most miserable — wins!

SOME ALTERNATE RULES

Assigning Characters: If you're having trouble figuring out which players can have which Characters, you can either deal each player four random Characters, or go around the table letting each player pick one at a time until everyone has four.

Choosing Stories: Rather than deciding randomly which Story cards to use, the players can simply agree among themselves which pair of cards to use.

Very Simple Fairytale Gloom: To play an extremely simple version of *Fairytale Gloom*, ignore every card's effect text. This can be a good way to learn the game for the first time, or to play with younger children.