

CTHULHU Gloom

DESIGNER'S NOTES ...

The logo for 'Cthulhu Gloom' features the word 'Cthulhu' in a simple, outlined font above the word 'Gloom' in a larger, red, serif font with a white outline. A spiderweb is integrated into the letter 'G' of 'Gloom'. Below the title, the words 'DESIGNER'S NOTES ...' are written in a white, serif font. A spider is positioned at the bottom of a vertical line that descends from the 'G' of 'Gloom'.

In *Cthulhu Gloom*, you guide your Characters down a path of horror and madness to an untimely death, while keeping your opponents happy, healthy, and annoyingly alive. Here are a few tips from designer Keith Baker on how to get the most madness for your money!

CTHULHU GLOOM STRATEGY

The cruel whims of fate play a major role in *Cthulhu Gloom*, and at times it may seem as though luck is your only chance at victory. In those moments, consider these tactics!

- **Don't Put All Your Spores In One Basket.** Spread your misery around! If you focus all your attention on a single Character, it's very easy for your opponents to cheer you up.
- **It Isn't That Bad.** Cards with weak negative values — such as Visited Vermont, which has values of -5/-5 — are often best used against your opponents. Those -5 scores aren't worth much to you, but if you're able to cover over a -30 score on your opponent, it's quite valuable!
- **When Good Things Happen To Bad People.** Generally you want to play cards with positive scores on your opponents and cards with negative scores on your own family. However, cards with negative scores often have negative effects, and vice versa. Early in the game, it can be useful to play a positive Modifier on one of your own Characters to increase your draw limit or gain another benefit. Likewise, late in the game you may find it useful to play a card that forces a hand discard on an opponent, even if it gives significant negative points. Such a play will force your victim to miss a turn and could prevent his victory — while buying you and the other players time to cheer him up!
- **Kill With Kindness.** You can play Untimely Deaths on any character with a negative Self Worth score. Killing an opponent's Character that has a weak negative value of -5 or -10 prevents that Character from suffering any further tragedy; this can be an effective strategy for minimizing an opponent's score.
- **Kill While You're Ahead.** The game ends when one family is eliminated. Living characters have no effect on your final score, though. If you find yourself with a commanding lead but saddled by a few Characters with high positive scores, you may be able to end the game and win by killing an opponent's last Character.



CTHULHU GLOOM VARIANTS

Is your time in short supply? Do you have too many friends? Have you played the game so often that you've run out of stories to tell? Here are a few ideas to help you get more mileage from *Cthulhu Gloom*.

- **Change the number of Stories.** *Cthulhu Gloom* comes with five story cards. The rules suggest that you only use two of these per game. If you reduce this to one card, the icons associated with it will become more valuable and competition will be fiercer. Playing with more Stories means that there will be less competition, and more chance for each player to have a Story.
- **Change the number of Characters.** For a shorter game, reduce the number of Characters in each family. Playing with three Characters per family will dramatically reduce the length of the game, for example. However, this can make it very difficult for players to catch up if someone gets a commanding lead!
- **Play with five players.** So, you want to play with five players, but you don't own any expansions? Remove one Character from each of the four families and use it to create a fifth family formed of bitter, mismatched outcasts. Each player ends up with four Characters, which is as many as you want in a five player game anyway!
- **Murder!** A normal game of *Cthulhu Gloom* ends when the first family is completely eliminated. Using Murder rules, the game ends when there's only one family left; other players simply drop out as their families are eliminated. The victory conditions are the same; at the end of the game, the family with the lowest score wins. What this means is that there's a greater motive to play Untimely Deaths on your opponent's Characters. You can only play an Untimely Death on a Character with a negative Self Worth — but if you can catch a Character at a weak value of -5 or -10, you can keep a family's net Self Worth (its Family Value) quite minimal.

MIXING GLOOM & CTHULHU GLOOM

Cthulhu Gloom is fully compatible with the original *Gloom* game and all of its expansions. However, there are a few things to bear in mind when mixing cards from the two games.

The original Untimely Deaths have you flip the base Character card over, while those in *Cthulhu Gloom* have an obscuring image instead. If a Character has a Transformation Modifier such as Felt Rather Fishy, an old Untimely Death will leave the Transformation image and reminder text visible. This is fine; you just need to remember that the Character is dead and that the effect of the Transformation no longer applies.

Cthulhu Gloom uses a specific subset of the story icons from *Gloom*, and adds Magic and Madness. If you mix too many new cards in, the cards that respond to these icons will be weaker. As a result, you may want to pick and choose the Modifiers you add — avoiding those with the Duck icon, Lucre icon, or any others that aren't used in *Cthulhu Gloom*.

