DREADFUL CIRCUS

Something wicked isn't coming—it has arrived. In the dead of night, the gloom rolls in. Melodies susurrate in slow rhythms as children wake from their slumber. Leaping from their beds, they rush to their parents and startle them awake. The mix of fear and excitement fills the room. The lure of exotic sweets waft in on the warm summer wind. The lives of this dull, small town are revitalized with the anticipation of this dreadful circus.

You are the ringmaster of this frightful sight, the bringer of thrills! You're here to rouse the masses from their meager existence with your terrific and bizarre attractions! But you're not the only show in town—you'll have to compete with the absurdities of neighboring spectacles by collecting and trading the best and most beguiling exhibits.

Make sure your wondrous and ridiculous attractions outperform your competition!

GOAL OF THE GAME

Create the most successful Circus!

At the end of the game you receive victory points for your Circus for: Coins (⬤), Contracts (◻), and Victory Points (VP) gained from Attraction (🎪) cards (including Collections).

8 PLAYER SCREENS

55 CONTRACTS (◻)
(11 of each type).

24 COPPER COINS (⬤)
(value: 1 VP)

16 SILVER COINS (⬤)
(value: 2 VP)

8 GOLD COINS (⬤)
(value: 3 VP)

8 CARDBOARD WAGONS
(bottom and cover each)

CONTRACTS BAG

1ST SELLER TOKEN
2ND SELLER TOKEN

63 CIRCUS CARDS
including:

43 Attraction (🎪) cards

20 Performance (🎩) cards

— 1 —

·SETUP·

1. Each player takes a Player screen in their chosen color and places it directly in front of them.

2. Each player takes the Wagon in the color matching their Player screen and places it in front of them.

3. Each player takes 3 Copper, 2 Silver, 1 Gold coins ⚪ and places them behind their Player screen, hidden from the other players.

4. Place all the Contracts into the Contract bag (4A). Each player then draws 6 random Contracts ▢, and places them behind their Player screen without revealing them, hidden from the other players (4B). Place the Contract bag in the center of the play area. Leave space for a shared discard pile.

5. Prepare the Circus deck depending on the number of players: Add all the cards that do not have a player count icon in the lower left corner for a 4 player game. Add cards with the 🎲 icon in the lower left-hand corner for 5-6 player game. When playing with 7-8 players, use all the cards, including those with the 🎲 icon.

   Shuffle the cards together to create the Circus deck, and place it in the center of the play area. Return any cards not added to the deck back to the box.

   For example: in a 6 player game, shuffle all the cards with no icon, and add all cards with the 🎲 icon to create a Circus deck. Return all cards with 🎲 back to the box.

6. Depending on the player count, each player is dealt the following:
   - In a 4 to 6 player game: 8 Circus cards.
   - In a 7 to 8 player game: 7 Circus cards.

Note: It is rare, but if a player does not receive any Attraction (🎪) cards, they must discard all their cards and draw again.

7. Each player chooses 1 Attraction (🎪) card and places it directly in front of their Player screen.

Note: Cards placed in front of a Player's screen are part of their Tableau.

8. The Player who last visited a Circus becomes the 1st Seller, and they receive the 1st Seller token.

9. 4 player games have 1 Seller, and 5 to 8 player games have 2 Sellers. The player seated directly across from the 1st Seller becomes the 2nd Seller, and they receive the 2nd Seller token (see the following diagram).

🔴 1st Seller

🟡 2nd Seller

There's no 2nd Seller in a 4 player game

— 2 —

BEFORE YOUR FIRST GAME, ASSEMBLE THE WAGONS AS SHOWN:
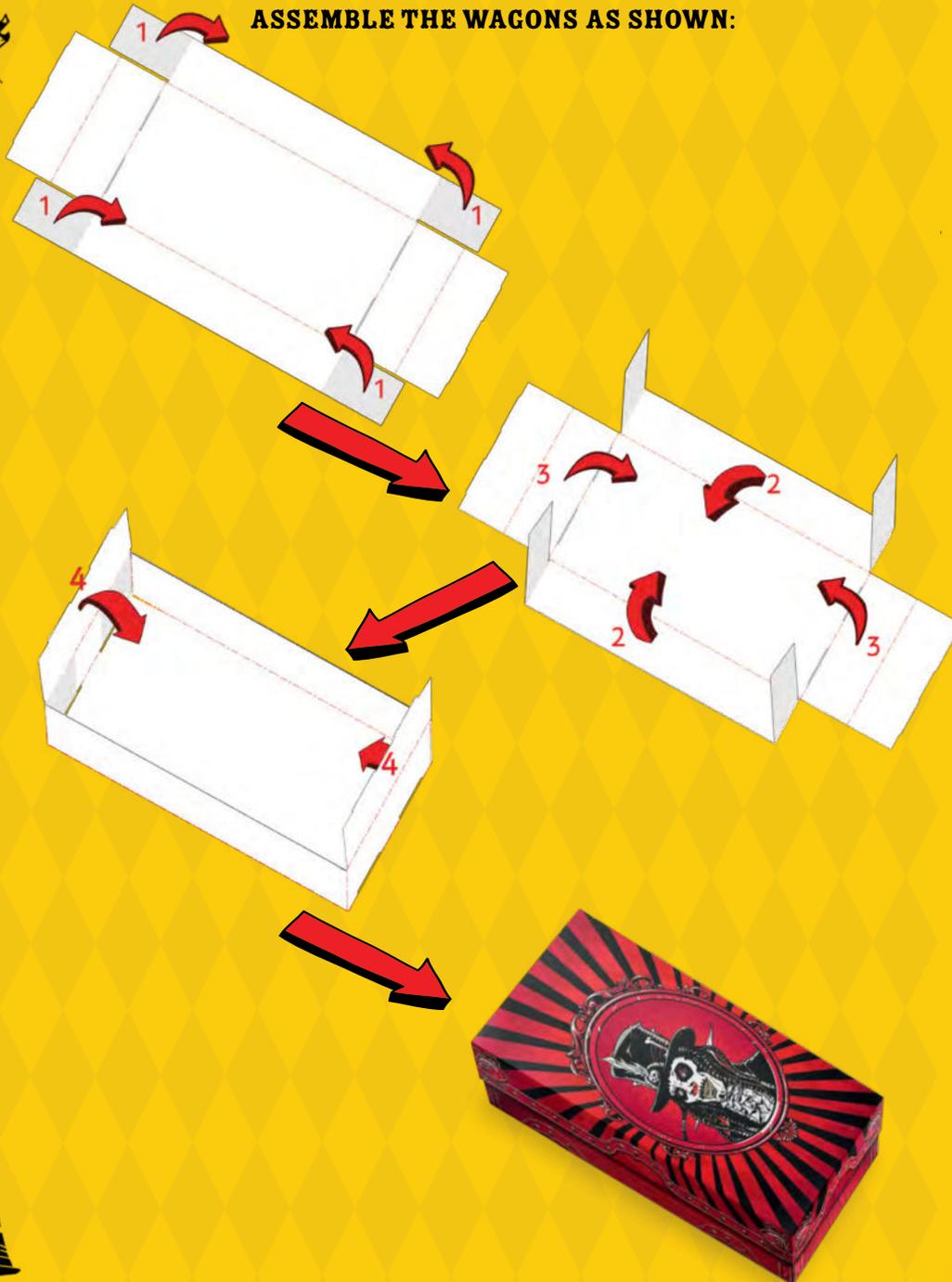
ACHIEVEMENT TILES

Your circus rolls in at dusk ready to thrill and outshine your opponents. But sometimes it's the wonders that lie outside the game that are the most rewarding! We offer you the following Achievement tiles, which... have no bearing on gameplay.

FIRST VICTORY!

"Are you just a carpet clown, or can you do it again?"

Give this tile to the first person who wins after opening this copy game.

WHAT A TEACH!

"We've never heard such a precise grind pitch!"

Give this tile to the person that taught you the game.

POINTS GALORE!

"What a performance, you should be showered with trengle!"

Give this tile to the player with the high score. When a player breaks your record, pass this tile to them.

DOUBLE TROUBLE!

"You're no stick and rag show!"

Give this tile to the first player to win 2 Dreadful Circus games in a row.

A THREE SPREE!

"We all aspire to be such an impresario!"

Give this tile to the first player to win 3 Dreadful Circus games in a row.

The game is played over a various number of rounds and ends once each player has 3 Circus cards left in their hand.

Each round is made up of the following steps:

1. Each Seller **makes an Offer by choosing a Circus card** from their hand and placing it face down in the center of the play area. These Circus cards are the Offers. Once the Seller(s) have placed their Offers, they are simultaneously revealed and are bid on by the other players.

   Note: Offered cards should be placed far from the players' Tableaux in order to eliminate any confusion about which card is up for auction.
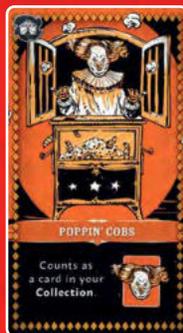
2. Each player **must bid for an Offer**. To bid, players secretly place any number of Coins ⬤ and/or Contracts ▢ from behind their Player screens into their **Wagons**. Then players cover their Wagons to keep the contents secret, and place them next to the Offers they are bidding for. Each player must place at least 1 ⬤ or ▢ in their Wagon, if possible. If a player has no ⬤ and no ▢, they bid with an empty wagon.

   Wagons are not placed in a specific order. Players may continue to move their Wagon between the available Offers until the last Wagon has been placed.

   ### SELLER BIDS

   A Seller may not place a bid on their own Offer. Therefore, in a 4 player game where there is only 1 Seller, the Seller does not place a bid. In a 5-8 player game, Sellers must bid for the other Seller's Offer.
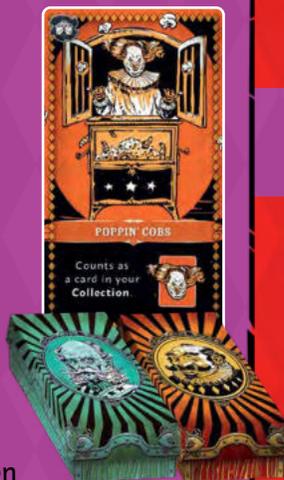
3. **The 1st Seller** resolves their Offer first. To **resolve the Offer**, they choose any Wagon next to their Offer and secretly check the contents of the Wagon. They may then choose to either accept or decline the bid.

   If the bid is accepted, the Seller takes the contents of the Wagon secretly, places it behind their Player screen, and returns the empty Wagon to its owner who also gains the Offered Circus card they've just won (do not play the card yet—see steps 6 and 7 below).

   If the bid is declined, the Seller returns the Wagon, with its contents, to its owner—once declined, this bid is no longer available to the Seller. The Seller then chooses another Wagon to check. If the Seller declines every bid, the Circus card that was Offered is discarded to a discard pile.

4. **The 2nd Seller then resolves their Offer** in the same manner as the 1st Seller.

5. Each player who didn't win a bid now returns their Coins ⬤ and/or Contracts ▢ back behind their Player screen.

6. **Attraction 🎪 cards** that were bought are now played. They are placed in the Tableau of the player that won the Offer and remain there until the end of the game unless moved or discarded through specific game effects. Their effect is either permanent or affects scoring.

7. **Performance 🎩 cards** that were bought are now played. When a player wins a bid for a 🎩 card, they must resolve its effect now. Then discard this card. If two 🎩 cards are bought, resolve the 1st Seller's Offered card, then the 2nd Seller's Offered card.

8. Finally, check if each player has exactly **3 cards left** in their hand. If they do, proceed to Scoring. Otherwise, Sellers pass their Seller tokens to the players to their left and a new round begins.

EXAMPLE ROUND: In a 5 player game, both Mike (1st Seller) and Erica (2nd Seller) select their Offers, and then flip them simultaneously. Mike reveals "Elastic Marcella" and Erica reveals "Frosty Cones."

Mike and Erica must bid for each other, and the remaining players choose which Offer they bid for. Mike, Tom, and Kate all place bids in their Wagons and place them near "Frosty Cones." Erica and Natalie do the same, but place their Wagons near "Elastic Marcella."

Mike resolves his Offer, "Elastic Marcella," first and begins by taking Natalie's Wagon behind his Player screen to check her bid, but denies it and returns the Wagon to Natalie for her to empty behind her Player screen. Mike then checks Erica's Wagon, accepts her bid, keeps the contents of the Wagon, and returns the empty Wagon, along with the "Elastic Marcella" card to Erica.

Erica resolves her Offer and checks each player's bids one by one. She declines Mike's, then Tom's, and finally also declines Kate's bid. After each declined bid, the Wagons' contents are returned back to behind the owners' Player screens. The "Frosty Cones" card, since no bid was accepted, is discarded.

No 🎪 card Offers were won, so Erica resolves the "Elastic Marcella" card effect. Players still have more than 3 cards in their hands, so Erica and Mike pass the Seller tokens to the players on their left, and the game continues.

NEGOTIATION

The life of the circus is one of manipulation and allure—use it to your advantage! Talk to your fellow players, make them know that what you're offering is far greater, that your bid is sweeter. Convince the Seller to pick your bid, or encourage players that your Offer is a worthier fit to their ensemble. This is the life, you've got to make them know what they're missing!

IMPORTANT TERMS

TABLEAU
🎪 cards placed in front of a Player's screen.

LOAD THE WAGON
When a card states to Load the Wagon, the indicated player(s) takes the indicated Coins ⬤ or Contracts ▭ from behind their Player screen, places them in their Wagon, covers it, and passes it to the player resolving the card. After the card is resolved, the Wagon and any remaining contents are returned to their owners and placed behind their Player screens.

COLLECTIONS

The Circus deck contains 4 different 🎪 cards that contain the keyword **Collection**. At the end of the game, players gain a number of points depending on the number of **different** Collection cards they have in their Tableau. A Collection may only contain up to 3 **different** cards. Players may have multiple sets of Collections.

For example: If you have 2 copies of each of the 4 different 🎪 cards with the keyword Collection, you have a total of 8 cards, which creates 2 sets of 3 cards and a set of 2 cards.

CARD COLORS

Card colors are designed to help you recognizing card types and how they work.

» Orange: Collection cards
» Red: interactive cards
» Yellow: coin-related cards
» Blue: various effect cards
» Grey/Purple/Green/Teal/Pink: Contract cards for each of 5 ▭ types.

Once each player has 3 Circus cards left in their hand, the game ends. Follow these steps to declare the winner:

1. Each player may **place 1 🎪 card** from their hand into their Tableau, and then must discard any remaining cards in their hand.

2. **Exposure**: Players reveal ⚪ and ⬜ they have behind their Player screens.

3. Players **count up their Victory Points** 🆅🅿.

4. A **winner** is declared.

VICTORY POINTS FOR COINS:

» 1 🆅🅿 for each Copper ⚪
» 2 🆅🅿 for each Silver ⚪
» 3 🆅🅿 for each Gold ⚪

VICTORY POINTS FOR CONTRACTS:

Important: Includes 🎪 cards that provide Contracts ⬜.

» 4 🆅🅿 for the most Contracts ⬜ of each type. In case of a tie, split points among the tied players (rounded down). Resolve for each type.

» 8 🆅🅿 for each set of 4 different types of Contracts ⬜.

VICTORY POINTS FOR 🎪 CARDS IN PLAYERS' TABLEAUX:

» Total 🆅🅿 indicated on the cards.
» Total points for each Collection according to the table below:

| Number of Different Collection cards	Number of Vp
1	2 🆅🅿
2	5 🆅🅿
3	9 🆅🅿

The player with the most 🆅🅿 has roused the imaginations more than any ever wished to be roused, and may call themselves the winner of this dreadful circus!

TIES

In the case of a tie, use the following tiebreakers, in order, to determine the winner:

The player with...

1. "Themis' Scale" card
2. The most 🎪 cards
3. The most Contracts ⬜
4. The most Coins ⚪
5. The 1st Seller token
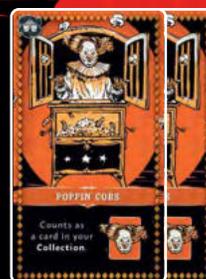
EXAMPLE OF END GAME SCORING: At the end of the game, all players may place a 🎪 card into their Tableau and discards the rest. Erica has 2 🎩 cards and the "Themis' Scale" 🎪 card, so she places the 🎪 into her Tableau and discard the remaining cards from her hand. Then all players reveal their Coins ⚪ and Contracts ⬜. Erica counts her Victory points:

» She gains 11 🆅🅿 for Coins ⚪: 3 Copper, 1 Silver, and 2 Gold.

» She gains 8 🆅🅿 for having the most Paris and Berlin ⬜.

» She gains 2 🆅🅿 for Vegas Contracts because she is tied with Mike.

» She does not have the most Prague or London Contracts so she gains no 🆅🅿 for those.

» She gains 16 🆅🅿 for having two sets of 4 ⬜ of different types.

» She gains 2 🆅🅿 for the Themis' Scale 🎪 card.

» She gains 12 VP for her Collections cards: 10 🆅🅿 for two sets of Poppin' Cobs and Sweet Clouds (each set worth 5 🆅🅿), and 2 🆅🅿 for a single Sweet Clouds in her 3rd set.

RESOLVING CARDS

In the rare case that resolving cards conflict and impact gameplay during the scoring (*Distorted Mirrors* and *Crystal Balls*, *Twisted Corridors* and *Rainbow Bridge*), the player with the 1st Seller token always resolves their cards first, and then the rest of the cards are resolved in clockwise order.

PLAYING A CARD

If an effect instructs you to play a card: if you pick a 🎪, you place it in your Tableau **OR** if you pick a 🎩, you resolve its effect immediately.

CARD CLARIFICATIONS

LOOPED WAGONS

When making a set of 5 different ▢, you gain 3 🎖 on top of the standard 8 🎖 rewarded for a set of 4 different ▢, for a total of 11 🎖. You may have multiple sets of 5 different ▢, scoring 11 🎖 each.

FLAMING ARROW

Coins in the set also provide their standard 🎖.

TWISTED CORRIDORS, DISTORTED MIRRORS

These cards cannot copy the effects of *Crystal Balls* or each other.

If you copy *Themis' Scale*, resolve Ties with the other player who has *Themis' Scale* as described in the Ties section of the rulebook.

DRAFT VARIANT

In order to reduce the randomness in dealing the initial hand of cards, players may perform drafting at the beginning of the game. After all players receive their Circus cards (step 6):

A. Each player chooses 1 card in their hand, and without revealing it, places it face down in front of themselves.

B. Once all players have picked a card, they pass the rest of their cards to the player on their left.

C. Players repeat these steps until all cards have been picked (including the last card, even though they will not have a choice).

ROUND SUMMARY

1. Sellers reveal Circus cards as Offers.

2. Players secretly place their bid of any number of ⚪ and / or ◼ in their Wagon, and place it next to the Offer they want to bid for (min. 1 ⚪/◼).

3. The 1st Seller chooses a Wagon and picks one of the following options:

   » Accept the bid: take the contents of the Wagon and give the Wagon back to its owner along with the Offered card that they won.

   » Decline the bid: give the Wagon with its contents back to its owner. This Wagon's bid is no longer available for the Seller to choose.

4. The Seller chooses Wagons until they accept a bid or decline all the bids (in this case the Offered card is discarded).

5. The 2nd Seller resolves their Offer in the same manner as the 1st Seller.

6. Each player who didn't win a bid now returns the contents of their Wagon back behind their Player screen.

7. 🎪 cards are placed in player Tableaux.

8. 🎩 cards are resolved in order and discarded.

9. If any player(s) has more than 3 cards in their hand, the Sellers pass their Seller tokens to the player on their left, and a new round begins. Otherwise, move on to End Game and Scoring.

END GAME:

1. Each player may place 1 🎪 from their hand to their Tableau.

2. Players Reveal their Screens.

3. Proceed with Scoring.

SCORING SUMMARY

VICTORY POINTS FOR COINS:

» 1 VP for each Copper ⚪
» 2 VP for each Silver ⚪
» 3 VP for each Gold ⚪

VICTORY POINTS FOR CONTRACTS:

Important: Includes 🎪 cards that provide Contracts ◼.

» 4 VP for the most Contracts ◼ of each type. In case of a tie, split points among the tied players (rounded down). Resolve for each type.

» 8 VP for each set of 4 different types of Contracts ◼.

VICTORY POINTS FOR 🎪 CARDS IN PLAYERS' TABLEAUX:

» Total VP indicated on the cards.

» Total points for each Collection according to the table below:

Number of Different Collection cards	Number of Vp
1	2 VP
2	5 VP
3	9 VP

The player with the most VP wins the game!