

# Grand Guignol

A game of corruption and redemption  
Inspired by the music of Alice Cooper

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Berin Kinsman. I stole the definitions for the attributes from his "Alternate Buttons."  
Available for download at [www.unclebear.com](http://www.unclebear.com)

Alice Cooper. For obvious reasons.

Chuck Garric. For the pick.

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# Grand Guignol

## A Role-Playing Game Primer

You are an Alice Cooper fan first, and a Role-player second. If not, skip this section. If you are a fan first though, read on! An RPG (gamer talk for Role-Playing Game) is played with some pencils, some dice, some paper, and some friends. One will take the roll of The Maestro. The Maestro is the director, producer, narrator, and many of the actors. It is The Maestro's job to make such characters as The Showman and Daniel come alive. All the other friends are The Players. The Players all create a single character, and just like cops and robbers when we were all kids, play that roll like an actor. They are the protagonists of the tale. While The Maestro plays the part of the antagonists. See?

Many, many people have played computer and console games now, so think of it this way. The Players are players, while The Maestro is the computer, the programmers, and the game.

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## The Game World

Grand Guignol is set in a place called Dragontown. Dragontown is halfway to hell on the road that everyone talks about being paved with good intentions. It is ruled over by an organization called The Asylum. The agents of The Asylum will collect you if you deviate too much from the norm. The norm is sin. It's a no win situation, since we know where sinners go.

The other power of Dragontown is an entity called The Showman. Some have connected him to The Dark Prince of Hell, but no one really knows what his real intentions or origins are. He will encourage you to sin. After all, that's what the people of Dragontown are made of. Here comes The Showman now...

Welcome to Dragontown, kiddies!

Now how do you suppose you ended up here? You were always good to your mother, you pet your dog and cat, and you always had good intentions. Well, you know the old saying about "the road to hell." Well, this is the truck stop along that road.

Are you dead? Oh, make no mistake you are very dead. You just haven't found your way yet. I am The Showman and I am your guide. Think of me as Virgil to your Dante see? Let me show you around my little slice of perdition.

Up there on the hill is The Asylum. They're sort of the law in this town... if such a thing exists. You don't want to run afoul of them, believe me!

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I've been up that hill myself but I escaped! There are a lot of gangs, and you have to watch out for every one of them! And there is The Black Widow! Definitely not a fellow you want to cross. Rumor says he surrounds himself with the bones of the people he has devoured. You'll recognize him if you meet him. There are only so many men who can get away with fishnets, even here!

Across the street there we have Ethyl's Brothel. She may be a little cold, but if you have a desire to be fulfilled she can fulfill it. Right here, this is where most folks arrive! This is the Frankenstein Diner. The food here is to die for, or was that from? Well, you needn't concern yourself with that; you're already dead, aren't you?

Stay on the roads too, friend. The desert around Dragontown is full of scorpions, spiders, and snakes. You might run in to The Desperado while you're out there. Better a serpent or spider than a bullet from The Desperado! Ah! Here's Sister Sara. No, no! She isn't concerned about your soul. You see, she's here isn't she? Always on this street corner, forever and forever after.

Ooooo, look! Over there is a carnival! Let's go see! Now I feel at home! Creepy carnies! Rigged games of skill! The rides! The food (don't mind the smell. Those? Protein.)! And look here! They have a freak show, but here there are real freaks! No dime store mirrors and smoke here! And my favorite, The House of Horrors! Who's this coming out now? One of Daniel's little friends no doubt! Ah! Stephen! Still want to stay and play with us? No?

Well you better run along now before they come down and get you again, eh?

So that's the highlights and the low lights kiddies! Drop by the Brutal Planet Bar and Grille. All the famous corpses hang there, or whatever their pleasure. I think The King is performing tonight! I have to go now, I have a son to visit up the hill. Burn victim, quite tragic. I won't say goodbye, because you will see me later!

My name is Daniel.

Have you been here long? No? Well, that's good. Safety in numbers, right? Stephen? Yes, he was a friend of mine, but I know better now. He's no better than The Zombies. A street gang. The Billion Dollar Babies, The Department of Youth, The Space Pirates, The Gutter Catz... Oh, there are a lot of them. Most of us who end up here are all teenagers. You know how we can be, right? He told you about The Asylum? Good. If they want you they'll send The Triggerman after you. I won't be able to help you if that happens. I'll teach you the rules, and if we stick together we can get through this.

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### The Rules (and Character Generation)

Everybody has seven primary attributes here.

**ANGER** is a strong feeling of displeasure or hostility.

**ENVY** is feeling of discontent and resentment aroused by and in conjunction with desire for the possessions or qualities of another.

**GLUTTONY** is an excess in eating or drinking.

**GREED** is an excessive desire to acquire or possess more than what one needs or deserves, especially with respect to material wealth.

**LUST** is to have an intense or obsessive desire, especially one that is sexual.

**PRIDE** in an excessively high opinion of oneself; conceit.

**SLOTH** is an aversion to work or exertion; laziness.

I trust I needn't explain these too thoroughly? Anytime you want to do something, you roll 2d6 (that's gamer for "two six-sided dice"). If the result is equal to or less than your rating you succeed! Roll higher than your rating and you fail.

If you want to commit an act of violence you might roll against your **ANGER**. If you want to resist a poison you might roll against your **GLUTTONY**. **ENVY** might be used by a pickpocket.

Each and every one of them starts at rank 7. You can add seven points wherever you please, but the highest you can raise any one attribute is rank 11. You have to spend all seven points!

Everybody has two secondary attributes.

**CONSCIENCE** represents the amount of physical trauma you can sustain in this strange place. It's important to remember you are already dead, a spirit in a purgatory of sorts. To determine your starting **CONSCIENCE**, subtract your largest primary attribute from twelve. If your **CONSCIENCE** is reduced to zero, you "die" again, and go to Hell.

**MADNESS** is an indicator of how much mental trauma you have endured since arriving in this world. It starts at 0. Whenever something particularly bad happens to you, it increases. The higher it is, the easier it is for servants of The Asylum like The Triggerman to track you. If your **MADNESS** ever reaches twelve, you can never leave Dragontown. In a very real sense, you become part of The Showman's Guignol. Hey, it's better than Hell, right?

### System

Everything comes down to those two six-sided dice. Anytime you want to do something you roll 2d6. If they are equal to or under the attribute you succeed. If you fail though, make a mark next to the attribute used. *When you have more marks than ranks in the attribute (example: I have an **ENVY** of 8*

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ranks, but just keep rolling lousy... I have nine marks next to it) tell your *Maestro*. Rolling "Snake-eyes" (2) is always a success, rolling "Boxcars" (12) is always a failure.

## Background

When making a character determine your attributes, name your character and come up with a background. To do this you'll have to ask yourself a few questions.

Why would I be here?  
How did I die?  
Do I want to escape?  
How do I think I can escape?  
Can I escape?  
Am I damned?  
What do I fear?  
How old am I?

Think of it as writing a short story about your character. Even if you don't actually write it down, it is helpful. Finally your character will need a name. That's it. Get some dice, determine who the *Maestro* will be, and start playing.

## Example Character

Name: "Robbie" Christopher

<b>ANGER</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ENVY</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>GLUTTONY</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>GREED</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>LUST</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PRIDE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>SLOTH</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CONSCIENCE</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>MADNESS</b>	<b>0</b>

Robbie was a good kid. Ate a little too much, a little lazy, but a good kid. He liked rock and roll, and he tried to dress the part.

Let's face it though, you spend twelve hours a day with your ass glued to the sofa, and your eyes glued to the TV... Well, you don't exactly develop the physique to match the part, do you?

So Robbie wore his Sabbath and Slayer t-shirts. Around Halloween he always went as Alice Cooper. In fact it was on a fateful Halloween night under a bloody red harvest moon that Robbie booked his passage to Dragontown, and met his fate.

He was a freshman and desperate to fit in he took the seniors dare. He streaked across crazy old lady Festerwick's lawn. Well out she came like a banshee. Unfortunately for Robbie. The widow Festerwick was a crack shot with a shotgun...

Welcome to The Grand Guignol, kid. Step right up... You aren't afraid are you?

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The Maestro Only Section:  
Players Avert Your Eyes

The Maestro usually gathers together his Players, finds a place to play, and is usually the host. So you've got a lot of work ahead of you.

You should know the rules of the game backwards and forwards. That shouldn't be too, too hard. I mean there sure aren't a lot of rules are there?

Well, as The Maestro you have a few extra rules to consider. First of all you're probably wondering why The Players have to record their attribute check failures. Well, if you fail to sin, what might the opposite of that be, eh?

There are seven more attributes, but these only develop under specific circumstances in Dragontown.

**COMPASSION** is a deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it.

**ENCOURAGEMENT** is the expression of approval and support to someone else.

**MODERATION** is being within reasonable limits; not excessive or extreme.

**CHARITY** is a feeling of benevolence or generosity toward others or toward humanity.

**CHASTITY** is an influence that inhibits or restrains.

**HUMILITY** is a sense of one's own proper dignity or value; modesty.

**AMBITION** is eagerness; a strong drive for success.

Each corresponds to one of the "seven deadly" attributes.

ANGER VS. COMPASSION  
ENVY VS. ENCOURAGEMENT  
GLUTTONY VS. MODERATION  
GREED VS. CHARITY  
LUST VS. CHASTITY  
PRIDE VS. HUMILITY  
SLOTH VS. AMBITION

When the Players tell you they have accumulated enough marks to exceed their ranks in a given attribute, tell them they have gained a new attribute. This new attribute is the one that corresponds to the one that they have accumulated so many failures in.

The new attribute starts at 2. It can be used in the same manner as the original, but...

Failures in a "virtue" attribute accumulate marks the same way as failures in a "seven deadly" attribute with similar results. In either case, each time the total tops the attribute add another point to it.

Following the example I used earlier, I have an ENVY of 8 ranks, but just keep rolling lousy. When I have nine marks next to it I tell The Maestro.

The Maestro then tells me I now have the ENCOURAGEMENT attribute at 2. I try to use it, but fail so consistently I soon accumulate three marks. That means I have to add a rank to my Envy bringing it up to 9 ranks.

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“Why,” you ask, “ On earth, would I ever use my ‘virtue’ attributes?” Each “seven deadly” attribute that reaches 12 RANKS removes one point of CONSCIENCE!

Each “virtue” attribute that reaches 7 ranks adds a point of CONSCIENCE! Reach twelve points of CONSCIENCE, and you escape Dragontown.

That’s the only way to do it really. A lost soul can eek out an existence in Dragontown avoiding MADNESS, and preserving their CONSCIENCE from the likes of The Showman, but the only real escape is virtuousness in a world that literally wears away at your soul.

Virtue has its other rewards

Some people new to RPGs think of Experience Points as a way of keeping score. In *Grand Guignol* there isn’t an Experience Point system. Instead The Maestro marks progress on The Players’ quest for escape from Dragontown by giving out CONSCIENCE and *removing* MADNESS.

If The Players accomplish something major, like busting a sane person out of The Asylum, or redeeming a gang member they each get a point of CONSCIENCE. If they do this without taking too much damage themselves, *remove* a point of MADNESS from each. If they did all this in an extraordinarily creative and/or virtuous manner these single points might be two!

Generous Maestros might reward players by increasing or decreasing failure counts as appropriate. Much of this reward system depends on how many sessions of play The Maestro envisions running.

The rules and setting of *Grand Guignol* are not intended for long-term gaming, more of a pre-concert warm up, or a post-concert cool down.

It’s a long, long way to Paradise, and you are all alone... You’re lost...

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## Citizens and Institutions of Dragontown

Some of the character's listed below have a SIN attribute. This is to represent the demons and irredeemable permanent residents of Dragontown. When SIN is reduced to zero, these characters disincorporate and turn up later to plague The Player's intrepid characters.

### Dwight & Betty

<b>ANGER</b>	<b>8/7</b>
<b>ENVY</b>	<b>9/10</b>
<b>GLUTTONY</b>	<b>7/7</b>
<b>GREED</b>	<b>9/9</b>
<b>LUST</b>	<b>9/10</b>
<b>PRIDE</b>	<b>11/10</b>
<b>SLOTH</b>	<b>7/7</b>

<b>CONSCIENCE</b>	<b>3/2</b>
<b>MADNESS</b>	<b>7/3</b>

Dwight and Betty were never good kids like Robbie. They were bad seeds from when they were seeds, and they were damned proud of it...

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## The Monster Dog

<b>ANGER</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>ENVY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>GLUTTONY</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>GREED</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>LUST</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PRIDE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>SLOTH</b>	<b>7</b>

<b>SIN</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>MADNESS</b>	<b>0</b>

Surely a being The Showman would just as soon forget existed. This may be the only creature in Dragontown that both The Asylum and The Showman fear...

### Daniel

<b>ANGER</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>COMPASSION</b>		<b>5</b>
<b>ENVY</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>ENCOURAGEMENT</b>		
<b>GLUTTONY</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>GREED</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>LUST</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>PRIDE</b>	<b>11</b>	
<b>SLOTH</b>	<b>9</b>	
<b>CONSCIENCE</b>	<b>10</b>	
<b>MADNESS</b>	<b>3</b>	

Daniel is close. His conscience is strong, and some how he has retained his sanity. Yet he seems content to help others like himself along on their paths to salvation...

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The Showman

<b>ANGER</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>ENVY</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>GLUTTONY</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>GREED</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>LUST</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>PRIDE</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>SLOTH</b>	<b>6</b>

<b>SIN</b>	<b>??</b>
<b>MADNESS</b>	<b>??</b>

He is the tempter, a devil in fool's clothing. His silver tongue could make the foulest act seem pure and innocent. He lurks around The Carnival and preys on the most vulnerable souls...

The Shadow of Blood

<b>ANGER</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>ENVY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>GLUTTONY</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>GREED</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>LUST</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>PRIDE</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>SLOTH</b>	<b>8</b>

<b>SIN</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>MADNESS</b>	<b>5</b>

A mysterious force of carnage that seems to control several of the gangs that roam the streets of Dragontown.

The Black Widow

<b>ANGER</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ENVY</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>GLUTTONY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>GREED</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>LUST</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>PRIDE</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>SLOTH</b>	<b>8</b>

<b>SIN</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>MADNESS</b>	<b>9</b>

A subtle sexual predator, he lurks in the closest thing to an upscale neighborhood that Dragontown has. There he seduces the very powerful, and destroys their lives over and over again...

Ethyl (and Ethyl's Brothel)

<b>ANGER</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ENVY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>GLUTTONY</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>GREED</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>LUST</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>PRIDE</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SLOTH</b>	<b>7</b>

<b>SIN</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>MADNESS</b>	<b>9</b>

Let's face it; we all have needs. No matter what that need might be, Ethyl has what you need. Don't hurt any of her girls though. They may be deader than you, but they can still make you very, very sorry...

Sister Sara

<b>ANGER</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ENVY</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>ENCOURAGEMENT</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>GLUTTONY</b>	<b>7</b>

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<b>GREED</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>LUST</b>	<b>12</b>	
<b>CHASTITY</b>		<b>2</b>
<b>PRIDE</b>	<b>10</b>	
<b>SLOTH</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>CONSCIENCE</b>	<b>2</b>	
<b>MADNESS</b>	<b>0</b>	

Every city has its street corner preacher, and this one is no different. She may look like a streetwalker catering to men with nun fetishes, but rest assured it really is your soul she's after... I mean *concerned* for...