

# **Abomination!**

*The Game of Mad Science and Bad Business*

*game design by Pete Butler*

*v. 1.2, 6/2/14*

It's not easy playing God and making a cruel mockery of the laws of nature, but it sure is fun. Building monsters always is. Gather up body parts, build monsters, make money, build *more* monsters, and thwart your rivals. With monsters. Become the most infamous mad scientist of them all! Build your **Abomination!**

## ***Players***

Abomination! is a game for 2-4 players. During playtesting, 5+ players seemed to be the breakpoint where the game really started to drag. You can try playing with more if you want, but if the pacing sucks, you were warned.

## ***Components***

- 128 Body Parts cards
- 54 Contract cards
- 54 Nefarious Schemes cards
- 12 Igor cards
- 4 Cheat Sheet player guides
- 3 or 4 Breeding Vats per player
- Big ol' pile of poker chips
- A pencil with eraser for every player

## ***Print-N-Play Instructions***

Four of the decks -- Body Parts, Contracts, Nefarious Schemes, and Igor -- have fronts and backs. You should be able to print one side (preferably on light cardstock), flip the pages, and just feed them back into the printer and print the backs. If that's more of a nuisance than what you want to deal with, you might be able to get away with slightly different cardstock colors for each of the decks to tell them apart that way. Hopefully, the cards will still be readable.

The Cheat Sheets don't need printing on the back, and neither do the Breeding Vats. Note that the Breeding Vat file produces twenty cards. Breeding Vats aren't reusable, and are expended during game play. (In fact, you don't need cardstock for the Breeding Vats; paper will work fine.) Twenty of them should definitely take you through at least two games, more if you're playing with fewer than four people.

Once everything's printed, cut along the solid lines.

You'll also need poker chips for money. (Do *not* use paper Monopoly-style money; it's annoying, and this game will totally wreck it.) The playtest set used 40 white chips (representing \$1 each), 20 red chips (\$5), and 20 blue chips (\$10), and running out of money was never an issue, even with four players. Do what you like, just as long as everybody

knows which chips are which denomination.

You'll also need one pencil, preferably with an eraser, for each player.

### Goal

To win, you must have five filled Contracts sitting in front of you at the start of your turn. To pull that off, you're going to need to make some monsters. Make 'em good.

Each monster will be defined by four stats -- Adorable, Nimble, Smart, and Violent. Those stats will be based on the Body Parts that went into each monster, and possibly some Nefarious Scheme cards that you (or your dastardly rivals) threw into the mix. Each Contract will specify what stats a monster will need to have in order to fill it, and a Prime stat that defines which monster will fill it *best*.

We'll explain the details in just a moment. That's what rules are for, after all.

### Setup

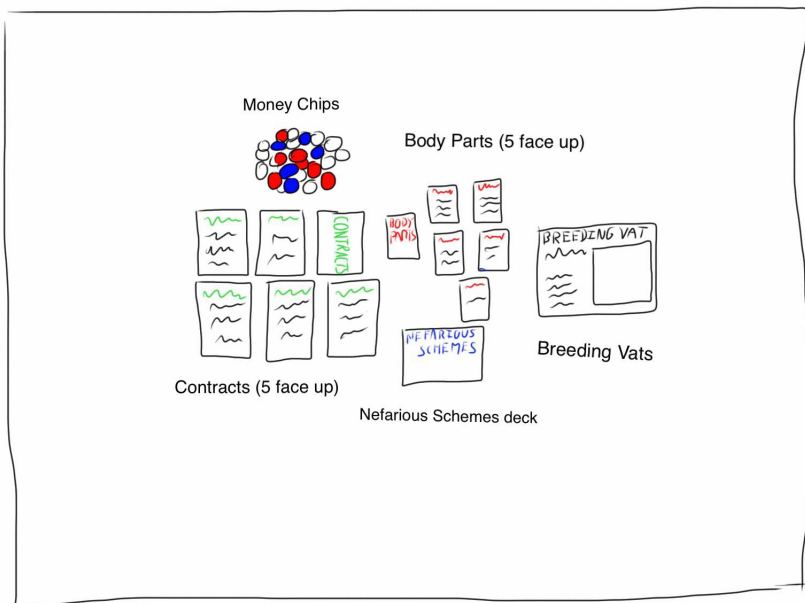
Shuffle the Contracts deck. Put the Contracts deck in the center of the table, and turn five Contracts face-up. These are the Open Contracts. You'll be competing with the other players for them. Also shuffle the Nefarious Schemes deck and the Body Parts deck.

When set up to play, the game's common area should look like the diagram on the right. Only, you know, not crudely rendered on the designer's iPad. What? I'm bad at art. Shut up.

Please note, before the game begins, you will *not* have five Body Parts cards face-up; you'll have two per player. But once the game gets rolling, there will indeed be five face-up Body Parts cards.

Each player gets:

- **A Cheat Sheet.** Those things that look like player aids? Are totally player aids. Hand 'em out.
- **A pencil.** Important for when you're creating monsters. You may wind up tweaking your creation after the initial build, so erasers are generally a good thing.
- **\$10.** We recommend giving everybody ten \$1 chips.



*I drew it myself! Yaaay!*

- **Five face-down Nefarious Schemes cards.** This is your hand of Nefarious Schemes. Feel free to look at it. Cackle evilly at your discretion.
- **A single complete set of Igor cards** -- one Igor Head, one Igor Torso, one Igor Limbs. You may use Igor parts in monsters that you create -- they're not very good, but they'll do. Think of Igor as the cheap filler of the mad science world.

## ***Zoo Graveyard Gold Rush***

Before the game begins, you and your fellow mad scientists need to bum-rush the local zoo, grab what you can, and get the heck out of there before the cops show. Yeah, sure, Igor is very nice and all, but to get your career in mad science started, you need some *interesting* Body Parts.

Turn over two Body Parts for each player. Decide who's going to open the bidding by whoever has most recently done science. Ties go to whoever's science was madder.

Bidding works like this:

- If it's your turn, announce which Body Part everybody is bidding on.
- Everybody *simultaneously* and *secretly* makes their bid. The best way to do this is to put the chips representing your bid in your hand (while hiding the rest of your chips with your other hand, or under a piece of paper or something), and shove your closed fist full of chips over the middle of the table. When everybody has their fist in, everybody reveals!

(Note that you are not required to make an actual bid, but we highly encourage you to bluff and make like you have actual chips in your hand. The more money you can sucker your opponents into spending, the less they'll have to bid on something you actually want.)

- Highest bid gets the Body Part! Winning player pays the money to the bank, all losing player keep their bids. In the event of a tie, if it's your turn, you decide which of the tied players gets the Body Part (and pays the money).

**This is how bidding works throughout the game.** One player chooses a part, everybody bids secretly and simultaneously, winner pays, the player whose turn it is breaks ties. However, once the game proper begins, bidding will happen at the end of each player's turn. Here during the Zoo Graveyard Gold Rush, once a Body Part has been sold off, the player sitting to the left of whoever started the bidding then chooses a part for everybody to bid on,

### **What Do I Want?**

#### *A Newb's Guide to the Gruesome Art of Bidding On Critter Bits*

New to the game? Worried about how you should spend your money? Here are some general guidelines to help you out.

- **More stats means MOAR BETTAR!**  
As a general rule, the more high numbers a Body Part provides, the more job opportunities will exist for your monster. (Though do note, that's not universally true; some contracts will specify that one or more stats must be a certain number or *lower*.)
- **Heads, Torsos, and Limbs are more valuable than Tails and Accessories.**  
To make a monster, you need a Head, a Torso, and a set of Limbs. Tails and Accessories are potentially nice but optional.

Happy shopping!

and so on around the table, until all of the starting Body Parts have been accounted for.

**After this special beginning-of-game bidding round, whoever has the most money left will get to go first and start the game.** Spend wisely.

(However, if you get the right Body Parts, you might be able to build a monster and gobble-up a contract on your very first turn! So, what's your strategy? Go for some quick cheapie contracts? Try and stock up on parts you'll need to get the big money deals? Hold off on bidding, and hoard your resources until something *really* tasty is up for auction? Your call, Doc. Run your lab the way you want.)

Note that you are not required to display the Body Parts you have acquired. Put them face down if you like.

### ***Stock the Body Parts***

Once the Zoo Graveyard Gold Rush is complete, place the Body Parts deck in the middle of the table, and flip the top five cards face-up.

You are now ready to begin the actual game.

### ***Determine First Player***

Whoever has the most money gets to go first. If there's a tie, whoever has the fewest Body Parts gets to go first. If there's still a tie, determine first player randomly.

### ***Game Flow***

On your turn, you'll complete the following four steps in order:

- 1. Check to see if you won.** You need to be filling five Contracts, placed face-up in front of you. Note the timing of this step: you must have the five Contracts at the *beginning* of your turn. So when you get that vital fifth Contract, all the other players at the table will get one whack at you before you can properly declare victory.
- 2. Take two actions.** This is the meat of the game. Make monsters, fill contracts, enact schemes, sell junk you don't want, brood in your lair and hatch diabolical schemes, whatever. The details of what all you can do are just a bit further down in this rulebook; this is where the good stuff lives.
- 3. Collect income.** Collect money from the bank for every Contract in front of you. Each Contract will specify how much money you earn each turn from filling it. No Contracts, no free money. (If you're broke and have no Contracts, the best way to get money is to have an Evil Garage Sale during the previous step.)
- 4. Bid on a Body Part.** At the end of your turn, select one Body Part for everybody to bid on and everybody simultaneously and secretly places a bid, with you deciding who wins ties. This works exactly as described in the Starting Bidding Round, save that you'll only bid on one Body Part before play passes to the next player.

Once you've done all four steps, play proceeds to the player on your left. The game

continues until somebody hits step one and says "Five Contracts! Boom!" Evil laughter will likely ensue.

(Note: You are not required to point out to your opponents that you've nabbed that precious fifth Contract and they now have exactly one turn to prevent your world domination. This isn't Uno. If you catch 'em sleeping, more power to you.)

(Other Note: **HOWEVER**. You are *not* allowed to hide your filled Contracts. All your filled Contracts *must* be face-up in front of you at all times, not stacked hidden under anything or hidden under each other.)

### ***Actions***

The "Take two actions" part of your turn is the bulk of the fun stuff. When you get to this part of your turn, you either take two of the following actions or do the same action twice. Your choices are:

- **Build a Monster:** The best part. Take a head, a torso, a set of limbs, and possibly some other stuff you have lying around the lab, and make you a critter.
- **Enact Nefarious Scheme:** Some of your Nefarious Scheme cards specify that they may be used "as an action." This would be that.
- **Evil Garage Sale:** Turn unwanted Nefarious Schemes and Body Parts into money.
- **Plot Nefariously:** Replenish your Nefarious Schemes.
- **Purge Graveyard:** Do all the Body Parts up for bid suck? Get rid of them all.
- **Fill a Contract:** Is there anything better than making money?
- **Steal a Contract:** Yeah, actually. Stealing that money from the pockets of your competitors.

Here's the details of what all that stuff means:

### **Build a Monster**

Yes! The heart of the game! Build an unholy, loathsome monstrosity! Behold your genius!

To build a monster, you need:

- One head
- One torso
- One set of limbs

You may also add one tail, but tails are always optional. In addition, there are accessories amongst the Body Parts that may be added to a Body Part but do not count as Body Parts themselves. For instance, the Razor Fangs are labeled as "Accessory (Head)". They do not count as a head, and your creature must already have a head in order to add them.\* You can stack as many accessories on the same Body Part as you like.

\* -- "Wait, didn't you just say all monsters must have heads? How can it not have a head?" There are Nefarious Scheme cards that will let you omit some pieces. However, if you do that, you can't add accessories to a part you didn't actually include.

Note that you start the game with three Igor parts -- head, torso, and limbs. You can definitely use these in your monsters if you would like. Should you ever get rid of a monster with Igor parts, you must reclaim the Igor parts and return them to your stockpile.

If you have the requisite Body Parts you need, grab a fresh Breeding Vat and start building. Each non-Igor Body Part will add or subtract a number to one or more stats. Go through the stats one at a time and tally-up the numbers associated with the Body Parts you're using. Write that number next to the stat in the Breeding Vat. Note that these numbers can vary, very definitely wind up being negative!

There are certain Nefarious Schemes that can add or subtract to your critter's stats. You can play them on yourself. After you tally-up your critter's stats, give everybody at the table a chance to play such cards from their own hands and screw with you. If they do, you're allowed to play similar cards out of your own hand in response. (And they're allowed to do the same. And so on.)

Once all the stat-tweaking Nefarious Schemes have been played, record your monster's final numbers. Place all the cards, Body Parts and Nefarious Schemes alike, face-down under the monster's Breeding Vat. These cards are effectively out of the game for now. You should be able to accurately re-calculate a monster's stats based on these cards.

Give your monster a name. "Tufted Scorperoo." "GoreTek Industries Combat Model 2." "Fred." Whatever. Have fun.

Sketch your monster -- possibly during turns when somebody else is dithering. Do not worry if you can't draw. That just makes the resulting monster funnier.

You may have any number of monsters active, as long as you have the parts to build them.

Note that you may only ever have one Igor. A given Igor part can only be in one monster; Igor's head can't be two places at once. Igor parts are never discarded; if you get rid of a monster, or get a Nefarious Scheme that lets you upgrade a monster and swap-out Igor parts, return the Igor parts to your stockpile.

### **Enact Nefarious Scheme**

Some of your Nefarious Scheme cards will say "Use When: As an action" on them. That means just what you probably think it does; playing that card will count as one of your two actions, and you do it during the "Take two actions" phase. Do whatever the card says, then discard the card.

Nefarious Schemes that do *not* say "Play as an action" may be played when the card says they may be played. Many Nefarious Schemes do *not* require you to use an action to play them.

### **Evil Garage Sale**

You may discard any number of Nefarious Schemes and Body Part cards (but *not* Igor parts). For each card you discard this way, collect \$2 from the bank. If you're flat broke, combining this with Plot Nefariously (below) is a great way to give yourself a revenue stream.

If you don't have any idea what else to do, do this and Plot Nefariously, below.

## Plot Nefariously

Discard any number of Nefarious Scheme cards. If you have fewer than five Nefarious Schemes, draw Nefarious Scheme cards until you have a hand of five Nefarious Schemes.

Note that this is the only way to add new Nefarious Scheme cards to your hand; you do not get to draw new Nefarious Schemes unless you use this action to do it.

## Purge Graveyard

Discard the five face-up Body Parts cards, and turn over five new cards to replace them.

## Fill a Contract

Choose one of the five Open Contracts sitting in the middle of the table. If you have a monster in your stable that fits its prerequisites, place it face-up in front of you. Draw a new Contract face-up in the middle of the table to replace it. There should be five Contracts face-up in the middle of the table at all times.

Each monster you build will have four attributes -- Adorable, Nimble, Smart, and Violent. Each Contract will specify two or more attributes describing the monster it needs. If your monster fits all\* the requirements, your monster can fill that Contract.

\* -- Unless you use a Nefarious Scheme card that lets you cheat.

Note that sometimes a Contract will specify an attribute must be this much or *more*; other times, a Contract will specify an attribute must be this much or *less*. For instance, a Contract may specify it needs a monster with a "Smart" of 3 or more, meaning it needs a fairly clever critter to get the job done; a monster with a Smart of 2 or less isn't bright enough. Or, a Contract might specify it needs a Smart of 0 or less, meaning it wants something pretty dang stupid; a Smart of 1 or more means the monster is too cunning for the Contract's needs.

Not all Contracts care about all stats. If a Contract doesn't list a stat, that particular Contract doesn't really give a hoot one way or the other, and that stat can be any number.

Note that Contracts will specify a "Prime" attribute. This comes into play when you "Steal a Contract"; see that section below.

## Steal a Contract

Stealing a Contract works exactly like Fill a Contract above, but with a twist -- you're swiping a Contract from another player. When you try to Steal a Contract, you and the other player each indicate what monster you're nominating to fill the Contract. If one of you doesn't actually have a monster that can fill the Contract, the other player automatically gets the Contract. (If the player who has the Contract doesn't have a monster that can fill it, that probably means they *used* to but since redesigned or retired that monster; how careless. If the player trying to steal the Contract doesn't have a monster that can fill it, they are a very silly person and are not going to win at any mad science until they stop wasting everybody's time.)

Assuming both of you have a monster that can fill the Contract, note that the Contract will call

out a Prime stat. Whichever player's monster has the higher number for the stat listed as Prime wins! (Ties go to whoever already has the Contract. To get the employer to shift loyalties, you actually have to be better than whoever you're replacing.)

If you have the better monster, the Contract is now yours. Take it and put it face-up in front of you.

## ***Information***

During the game, you're going to have money, monsters, Body Parts, Contracts, and Nefarious Schemes. What are your opponents entitled to know?

- **Money:** Your opponents are entitled to know how much money you have **EXCEPT** for the time during "Bid on a Body Part" phase between somebody deciding which Body Part you're bidding on and everybody revealing how much they bid. (In other words, you can't be a dick and force everybody to count their money after they've already decided how much they're going to bid.) So if you ask how much money your opponents have before you announce you'll be bidding on that Gorilla Head, they have to tell you. If you ask *after* you announce you're all bidding on the Gorilla Head, they may snicker, point at this rule, and lie their butts off to you.
- **Monsters:** Your opponents are always entitled to know what monsters you've built, and what their stats are. They're also allowed to see the components that went in to the monster and double-check your math.
- **Body Parts:** You're allowed to keep your Body Parts in a face-down stack. Your opponents aren't entitled to knowing what they are or how many you have.
- **Nefarious Schemes:** Your opponents are allowed to know how many Nefarious Schemes you have, but not what they are.
- **Contracts:** Any Contracts you're filling must be displayed prominently in front of you, face-up, at all times. Hiding your Contracts is definitely, definitely, game-breaking cheating.

## ***FAQ***

**Q:** I start the game with enough Igor parts to build a complete monster. Can I just go ahead and build Igor but with an aggressive disposition or something like that from a Nefarious Scheme I just happen to have?

**A:** Sure! Granted, a monster that's just basically Igor-with-a-'tude isn't liable to be very *good* at much, and don't forget your opponents can still screw with you with their own Nefarious Scheme cards. But what the heck, if you have the cards to pull it off and there's an el cheapo Contract to be nabbed quickly, by all means, put Igor to work.

**Q:** Can I trade stuff with other players?

**A:** Officially, nope. In playtesting, allowing trading didn't add much of value. Just slowed things down, and dragged-out the endgame by dogpiling the leader. Though if you want to



experiment with it as a house rule, hey, it's your game.

**Q:** I'm quadriplegic and can't make a fist full of chips, you ablist swine! How am I supposed to bid on stuff?

**A:** The important element of the bidding is that it is 1) simultaneous and 2) secret. The fist-fulla-chips approach worked very well during playtesting, but if it's not a good fit for your group for whatever reason, feel free to come up with alternatives. Just as long as the bidding is simultaneous (everybody reveals their bid at the same time) and secret (nobody knows for certain what anybody else is bidding until the bids are revealed), you're still playing the same game.

If you REALLY want, you can switch to a more traditional bidding mechanism where you go around the table and make bids until everybody but one player has dropped out. That's how the first incarnation of the game worked. But the official way is both faster and more interesting.

**Q:** Hey, I bid \$15 for that orphan head, but the next highest bid was just \$2! Shouldn't I only have to pay \$3?

**A:** No. The winning bid is the winning bid. Next time, read the market better.

**Q:** Why do so many of the Contracts want monsters that suck at certain things?

**A:** Mostly for game balance. I'm trying to encourage people to create lots of monsters to fill a variety of niches. Without that mechanism, the best strategy is to build a single uber-monster, and that's no fun.

That, and it was funnier to have Contracts that explicitly want monsters that are stupid, or meek, or ugly, or clumsy.

**Q:** May I have more than five Contracts?

**A:** Absolutely! If circumstances allow, you can crank your Contract count as high as you want. (If you start your turn with four Contracts, have the right Nefarious Scheme, and have the right combination of monsters and open/stealable Contracts, you could finish your turn with as many as seven.) By all means, make it hard for your jealous rivals to peel off enough of your Contracts to stop you from winning.

**Q:** Help! It's my turn, and I don't know what to do!

**A:** When in doubt, use the Plot Nefariously/Evil Garage Sale combo to get more money. More money is always good.

As a general rule, it's not smart to clog your hand with Nefarious Schemes that you think you *might* someday have a use for but can't use right away. Mad science waits for nobody. Use 'em or lose 'em.

**Q:** One of my opponents redesigned a monster, and now has a Contract that none of his monsters can fill. Does he have to get rid of it?

**A:** Nope! But he sure has opened the door nice and wide for somebody to swoop in and steal that Contract out from under him, hasn't he. What are you waiting for?

**Q:** Can I use the "Good Marketing" Nefarious Scheme to ignore a Contract's Prime stat?

**A:** Yes, but note that "can" and "should" are two different words. You can get a Contract that way, but the Prime stat remains the Prime stat; the first player who creates a monster who can actually fill the Contract's basic criteria will be able to steal it out from under you with no problem.

**Q:** May I sell Igor parts at an Evil Garage Sale?

**A:** Definitely not. At all times, your three starting Igor parts should always be either 1) embedded in your monsters or 2) in your stockpile of Body Parts. If an Igor part winds up in the discard pile, somebody goofed, and is entitled to fish it back out when they realize their mistake.

**Q:** The available Body Parts and the open Contracts are totally mismatched! The game is at a standstill! What do we do?

**A:** Purge Graveyard. That's what it's there for. (That, and spite.) Seriously, cycle Body Parts until you get some that are relevant for what you need.

There are also a couple of Nefarious Schemes that cycle the Contracts, but those are, by design, a bit harder to come by. The Contracts are meant to be relatively stable, so players can actually make plans.

**Q:** If a deck runs out, what do we do? Reshuffle?

**A:** Yup. This is most likely to happen with the Nefarious Schemes deck; the Contracts tend to not cycle quickly enough for the deck to run out, and there's a ton of Body Parts. But, yes, if a deck runs out, reshuffle the discards and draw from them.

**Q:** I don't have anything to do. May I pass my actions?

**A:** Sure, that's perfectly legal. You're going to lose, though. Seriously. Those Nefarious Schemes you're holding on to but can't actually use yet? Garage Sale. When in doubt, go for the money.

## ***Feedback***

Got something you'd like to say? Some rule that's unclear or could be improved? Just want

to tell me what you thought of the game? Any particularly bad-ass monsters you'd like to share? Please contact me at [pete@blairhippo.com](mailto:pete@blairhippo.com) and sound off.

***Legal***

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