

(1999) Risus Magic	7
(1999) The Stygiad	12
(2000) Hurrah for the next one to Die	14
(2001) PULP CLICHES	25
(2001) Risus Battletech	30
(2001) The 9th World	35
(2001) Vikings of the Caribbean	37
(2002) Doctor Who Risus	44
(2002) Dungholes and dunderheads	47
(2002) Risus Fantastic Fantasy	56
(2002) Risus Fantasy Bestiary	80
(2002) Risus Heroic Greece	94
(2002) Risus Heroic Greece (corrected)	103
(2002) Risus LINT	109
(2002) Risus Sardonicus	118
(2002) Risus Setting - BUGHUNTERS	125
(2003) A Risus American Hero!	142
(2003) Faery - The twilight land	144
(2003) Gen-Ex	152
(2003) One ring to rule them all	155
(2003) Risus PUNK	162
(2003) Risus Rogues Gallery	176
(2003) Risus Wild West	209
(2004) Adventure Street Omnibus	219
(2004) Fantastic Fantasy Adventures in Risusland	245
(2004) Fired and Forgotten	269
(2004) Risus Firefly	274
(2004) Risus in the Shell	277
(2004) Risus in the Shell - Life on the streets	306
(2004) Risus Star Wars	328

(2004) Risus Supers Version 1.1	340
(2004) Risus TECH	350
(2004) Schismatrix	356
(2004) Sleepwalkers	360
(2004) Wrestling for Risus	394
(2005) 30 Minute Delivery	397
(2005) A slightly crunchy bestiary	398
(2005) Agents of who	403
(2005) Cactus Gulch	406
(2005) Characters Only	412
(2005) Clone Wars	418
(2005) Gateway falls	424
(2005) Hard Roads02	436
(2005) Mystic High School	441
(2005) NORMAL	444
(2005) Perdition alley	445
(2005) Pulp adventures in a hard solar system	452
(2005) RiSummoner	462
(2005) RISUS Ironsides	467
(2005) Risus Royale	476
(2005) Risus Star Wars - Clone Wars	480
(2005) Smite!	489
(2005) The flame of risus	492
(2005) The Ligue of Exceptional Gentlemen	494
(2005) The Risoid Chronicles	496
(2006) Cthulhu Rising	497
(2006) edlbauer.de - Risus - R'lyeh	505
(2006) edlbauer.de - Risus - Roster	507
(2006) edlbauer.de - Risus - Rules	510
(2006) Risus JAPAN	511

(2006) Star Wars	512
(2006) Terra Tertia	524
(2007) Cliches generator	531
(2007) Cthulhu Risus	548
(2007) Dungeonautica	585
(2007) Gavigans Isle	606
(2007) GENERIKUS v1.0	611
(2007) Halloween spectacular	616
(2007) Incompetent denizens	617
(2007) Luck Fort	618
(2007) Risus Fantasy Cliches	619
(2007) Risus Magic Objects	622
(2007) Risus Martial Arts Cliches	624
(2007) Risus Swords and Sandals	626
(2007) The quiet agency	644
(2008) A QUICK GUIDE TO THE ANATOMY OF A CLICHE	650
(2008) Adventure Street Omnibus	653
(2008) Esi Darap	671
(2008) Master Cliché list	675
(2008) Mighty Sons of Risus	687
(2008) Mistborn	711
(2008) RISUS IRONSIDES	716
(2008) RISUS MIRROR TREK	731
(2008) Risus of Arabia - Risusiverse	738
(2009) Evens Up	745
(2009) Risus Playgrounds	747
(2010) Heavy Ordnance Lite	750
(2010) Risus Illuminati	766
(2010) Risus Matrix	769
(2010) Risus Troubleshooter	772

(2010) Risus Wargaming	776
(2010) Risus-HyraxCookie	778
(2010) Risus_DiaboloPuer2E	779
(2010) Sons of Risus	783
(2010) Stickfather, Stickposse and Sticksoldierarmy	817
(2010) WARRIORS for Risus	820
(2011) ARK II - In the land of lost	829
(2011) Be Good for Goodness Sake	830
(2011) Brave the Impossible Btl001	831
(2011) Call of the Wild CotW001	839
(2011) Collaborative Cthulhu	847
(2011) Curse of the Howling Caves	854
(2011) Future Imperfect FI001	855
(2011) Get My Damn Obelisk	863
(2011) Haunting of the Abandoned Amusement Park	864
(2011) I Spy Green Acres	865
(2011) Kaiju Shura	866
(2011) Karst Chantry	867
(2011) Kingfisher Down	868
(2011) Maximum Risus Fun	869
(2011) No Rest for the Wicked - Roster	873
(2011) Obelisk Park	878
(2011) Obelisk The Howling	879
(2011) Quest for The Golden Thong	880
(2011) Red Zone Intrusion	881
(2011) Return to the OBELISC	882
(2011) Risus fantasy	883
(2011) Risus-GalleryOfScoundrels	896
(2011) Showdown at Alice_s Daydream	901
(2011) Snowball Fright	902

(2011) Temple of the Howling Obelisk	903
(2011) The Love Star	904
(2011) The Obelisk at Dawn	905
(2012) Arthuria	906
(2012) Factions of the Citadel - Cards Print	907
(2012) Factions of the Citadel - The Second Age	908
(2012) Gears and Gaslights	909
(2012) News of the Empire a Steampunk Setting	910
(2012) Now there is only ice	911
(2012) Now there is only ice - print	912
(2012) Ozone Powered	913
(2012) Risus Challenge sheet	914
(2012) Risus Dragonborn	915
(2012) Risus-CoHNinjaBurgerV2	921
(2012) Risus-PvNpt2	923
(2012) Rule the Rails	924
(2012) Sixguns and Skyships	925
(2012) The Clockwork Crackdown in Halloweentown	926
(2012) The Orrery	927
(2012) Where Once We Stood On the Shoulders of Giants	928
(2012) Years of Woe	929
(2013) IaMMMMWW	930
(2013) Sweet Home CSS Alabama	931
(2013) Tempest - Risus Magical Non-Fantasy Setting	932
(2013) Wardens of Mars	933
(2014) Risus - Rex Stout_s Nero Wolfe Series	934
(2014) Risus Shadow Oops 2	935
(2015) hanoi hilton 1 page	936
(2017) Star Wars Risus Version 3.0	937
(2019) Funky Aggregators vs TNs	952

(2020) Captain's Serious Risus - Risusiverse	953
(2020) Ye good olde system - Risusiverse	954

The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20050830094458/http://www.intemperance.net:80/rpg/risus-magic.html>

# Risus Magic

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This article is an unofficial supplement for use with [Risus](#), the fast-and-loose freeware roleplaying game system by [S. John Ross](#). If you use this material in your own Risus game, please let me know how it goes.

## Introduction

A mage, by definition, is a character that has at least one die in a Cliche that allows her to produce supernatural effects of some kind. I'm using the term "mage" here for simplicity's sake; in any given campaign a character of this type may be called a wizard, a sorcerer, a superhero, a witch or a psi, among other things. Similarly, the cool flashy stuff that she can do may be called magic spells, psychic phenomena, or manifestations of the true power of the Great God Chuck. (In my [Stygiad](#) campaign, the "mages" are called "goths" and "spells" are "cool goth effects.") The name is window dressing; what we're concerned with here is that a character who invests dice in such a Cliche can do things that ordinary mortals can't.

I love the fact that Risus' relaxed framework makes it easy to create such characters without requiring detailed spell lists like most games. On the other hand, the first thing I noticed when GMing for such characters is that since there's no real-world analog, I desperately needed some way to define a) the boundaries of what they can and can't attempt to do, and b) how hard it is for them to do it, or (being the nice-guy GM that I am) they'd run roughshod over the obstacles I had oh-so-carefully laid in their paths. Here's what I came up with.

## Characters and Cliches

What kind of magic the character can attempt is of course defined by her Cliches. The Risus rules themselves suggest that in a game not centered around sorcerers, the simple Cliche "Sorcerer" is workable. Personally I'd find this *way* too broadly defined for a PC Cliche in most of my games: in a magic-heavy game there's little besides number of dice to distinguish one Sorcerer's abilities from another, making magic too homogeneous for my taste, and in a game with few mages the Sorcerer PC will end up as a combination walking hospital, arsenal, transport system and god knows what else, leaving the "mere mortal" types feeling a little left out.

Mage Cliches should instead incorporate some sort of specialty, as Risus suggests for a wizard-centric campaign. The specialty defines the realm over which the mage can exert mystical power, but there are multiple approaches you can take in deciding what sort of specialties you want for your characters.

Players are encouraged to personalize mage Cliches by giving them cooler names like Deranged Pyromancer instead of Fire-Mage. Mage Cliches can and do overlap areas of expertise, just like any other Cliches -- Necromancers and Shamans can both summon various sorts of spirits, for example, and Wise Women and Mind-Mages will each have their own versions of love spells, just as both Vikings and Knights are good at hitting things with swords.

Any mage Cliche can be bought as a Double-Pump Cliche during character creation.

## Creating Mage Cliches: The Mechanics-Over-Drama Approach

One possibility is to divide magic into areas like "fire magic," "divination," and "necromancy" that specify one physical or esoteric element of reality that the mage's spells cover (some RPGs call these "colleges" of magic). This is probably the way to go for a more serious or traditional swords-and-sorcery game, although there's no reason it wouldn't work for a silly campaign as well. (GURPS players will note that nearly any college from *GURPS Magic* or *Grimoire* can be neatly turned into this kind of mage Cliche, and that most of the Cliches on this list are roughly the equivalent of the One College Magery advantage.) This approach gives you Cliches like the following:

- **Beast-Wizard** (speaking with animals, summoning animals, turning into animals)
- **Cybermage** (controlling computers, surfing the Net without a deck)
- **Diviner/Clairvoyant** (reading Tarot cards, seeking missing persons, scrying out enemies' plans, sensing the great destinies of newborn princes)
- **Fire-Mage** (igniting torches, throwing fireballs, summoning fire elementals)
- **Gate-Mage** (teleporting people and things, opening portals through time and space)
- **Healer** (healing wounds, neutralizing poisons, maybe resurrecting the dead...)
- **Illusionist** (causing hallucinations, making things invisible, disguising people)
- **Meta-Mage** (spells that affect other spells: see "Universal Mage Abilities" below)
- **Necromancer** (summoning ghosts, raising zombies, draining life force)
- **Summoner/Demonologist** (calling up Things From Hell, controlling same)
- **Telekinetic** (picking locks, throwing things and strangling people by remote control, rigging slot machines)
- **Telepath/Mind-Mage** (enslaving the weak-willed, erasing memories, communicating by thought alone)

Characters can have more than one such mage Cliche if the GM permits.

## Creating Mage Cliches: The Drama-Over-Mechanics Approach

For this sort of wizardly Cliche, don't think in terms of "colleges of magic" like Healing and Necromancy. Think about the mage in terms of what he's supposed to do in the story. This can mean either his dramatic function: does he just provide comic relief, is he a wise mentor or a moustache-twirling villain -- or his personal role: is he a defender of nature, a slayer of undead or a village hedge-wizard? Figure that out, then assume he can attempt any sort of spell that furthers this function.

For example, take the Cliche "Sinister Assassin-Mage," for an evil wizard who's infiltrated the palace to slay the young prince before he comes of age. I'd say this kind of wizard can cast any kind of spell reasonably related to being sneaky, bumping off no-name NPC guards, baffling security and so on, but I wouldn't let him throw fireballs or summon demons.

A few more drama-over-mechanics-type mage Cliches:

- **Alchemist** (transmuting metals, inventing strange drugs, blowing up laboratory equipment)
- **Battle-Mage** (hurling blazing bolts of power, deflecting arrows)
- **Druid** (predicting weather, healing plants and animals)
- **Itinerant Bardic Conjuror** (juggling fire, creating flashy illusions, dramatic special effects and minor entertaining conjurations)
- **Jedi Knight** (clouding stormtroopers' minds, sensing friends' danger, telekinetically grabbing lightsabers out of the snow)
- **Priest-Wizard** (turning undead, healing wounds, removing curses) [Hey, kids! Combine this with a Knight Cliche to make your very own D&D-style; Paladin!]
- **Scheming Village Witch** (brewing malicious potions, causing livestock to be born with two heads)
- **Shaman** (speaking with spirits, traveling in the dreamlands, astrally projecting)
- **Urbane Villainous Court Wizard Who Whispers in the King's Ear** (hypnotizing people, casting entertaining illusions, keeping the weak-willed king pliable) [Thanks to S. John for this one]
- **Wise Woman** (blessing crops, curing livestock, brewing love potions)

Many, many mage Cliches will fall somewhere in between these two approaches, and several on each list could fit comfortably on either one. Some "college-based" Cliches like Healer and Necromancer have become such staples of fantasy fiction and gaming that they've become dramatic roles themselves. There's also no reason the drama-over-mechanics approach can't be combined with a college-type specialty, like Necromantic Shaman or Telepathic Spy, and characters created with either approach should be able to co-exist comfortably in most campaigns.

## Universal Mage Abilities

In some game worlds, mages might be able to do one or more of the following no matter what their magical specialties:

- Sensing magic items upon seeing or touching them
- Sensing other wizards on sight
- Sensing other wizards nearby, whether or not they're visible ("I feel a disturbance in the Force...")
- Sensing spells cast nearby
- Detecting the nature (necromancy, fire magic, good/evil/hostile/friendly magic) of magic items or spells in the area
- Dispelling other mages' spells
- etc.

As with any Cliche roll, the difficulty will be higher or lower depending on how closely the action matches the Cliche in question. A Druid might have no trouble sensing the magic of an enchanted oak tree, but have a tough time analyzing a magic cyberdeck.

The GM should have some idea of which universal abilities, if any, he wants to allow his mages. Too many such abilities could make mages overpowered; consider requiring players to buy mage Cliches as double-pumps in that case.

Another option is to allow a Meta-Mage Cliche that covers any direct manipulation of magic itself, and spells that affect other spells. A Meta-Mage can attempt to oppose just about any spell by blocking it, subverting it, taking control of it, or dispelling it; things like protective pentagrams and magical wards would also fall in this Cliche's area of expertise. If the Meta-Mage Cliche exists in a game world, most wizards will probably have at least one die in it.

## Tools of the Trade

Don't forget these! The obvious ones include Mystic Staves, Amulets, Books of Forbidden Lore and Loyal Familiars, but some Cliches suggest more specialized tools like Crystal Balls for Diviners, Packets of Brimstone for Fire-Wizards and Meditation Crystals for Telepaths or Mind-Mages.

## Wizardly Hooks

If you're using the optional Hooks and Tales rules, being a mage gives a character plenty of entertaining possibilities for Hooks. One obvious way to go is to give your mage a side effect of some kind when she uses magic. Examples: A Telepath who gives nosebleeds to those whose minds she reads; a Fire-Wizard who sets off random candle-flame-sized fires when she casts spells; an Illusionist who glows in the dark for ten minutes after creating illusions.

Another Hook is to limit the usefulness of the wizard's magic in some way, either by limiting when he can use it or by what he can use it on.

Examples: A Mind-Mage whose magic doesn't work on Elves; a Healer who can only cure during daylight hours; a dwarfish Diviner who must be underground or in a cave to cast accurate auguries.

Or pick some other way to inconvenience your mage that's related to his form of magic or to being a mage in general. Examples: A Shaman followed by mischievous spirits; a Priest-Mage who has undertaken a sacred vow to hunt down the undead; an Earth-Mage who must watch his back at all times for agents of the hated Aeromancer cult.

## Casting Spells

Spell difficulty is based on two linked principles: *Dramatic Necessity* and *Laws of Nature*. Tiny violations of the Laws of Nature are easy; spells that help the plot along are easy. Spells that thumb their noses at the universe AND the scenario tend to turn the offending wizard into Ground Chuck. So it goes. The GM decides on a case-by-case basis how strongly to apply each principle.

Difficulty	Laws of Nature	Dramatic Necessity
(Automatic success under most conditions): Trivial.	Any attempt to magically warm a beverage, open an unlocked door, tie shoelaces, or fill an ice-chest are Trivial. Trivial Magic is stuff that the mage could do himself if he weren't so darned lazy.	The spell has no practical effect to speak of.
5: Simple.	Any spell that helps the party achieve something as a whole, or acts as a tool to achieve an end, is Simple. Any spell that actually achieves something directly is probably Ordinary.	The spell will make things more fun for everybody.
10: Ordinary.	A spell is "ordinary" if it is meant to overcome a single obstacle that faces the mage, or the mage's share of an obstacle that faces the group. Unlocking a door, receiving divinatory insights and random clues, cleaning up a small building, summoning a brief summer rainfall (in the summer!), or a standard Fireball go here.	The spell would be nifty. Nothing special.
15: Complex.	Any attempts to shut off building power, extinguish a house-fire, feed a small army, teleport the mage long distances or the party short ones, or manipulate the emotions of a small gathering goes here.	The spell would hog the scene a bit.
20: Difficult.	The mage could visit Pluto by himself with this, or take the whole party to Los Angeles. Any one significant hidden fact can be revealed, and freakish, unseasonal weather is possible. In general, any attempt by the mage to act as a one-man party of adventurers is Difficult. Any attempt to create large animals or humanoid slaves with animal intelligence go here.	The spell would upstage the other characters.
30: Dangerous.	Teleporting the whole group to Pluto is Dangerous Magic. Looking for the complete solution to the week's mystery in a crystal ball is likewise Tempting the Wrath of the Gods. Any attempt to create an intelligent being, or a bigass beastie, is Dangerous.	The spell would upstage the whole scenario.
n/a: Impossible.	Any attempt to utterly wreck the campaign world or campaign plotline.	The spell would upstage the GM.

(This scale is for when the task being attempted suits the Cliche being used -- other Cliches might be able to attempt similar things at higher difficulty numbers.)

In a magical combat situation, of course, none of these numbers are likely to apply -- standard Risus combat rules remain in force.

Target numbers may be adjusted up or down at the GM's option by factors including: bonuses for especially entertaining or inventive spells; penalties for repetitive or uninspired ones; and bonuses for extensive preparation, greatly increased casting time, assistants and so forth.

## Success and Failure

If the spell roll either fails or succeeds by a reasonable margin, the GM simply tells the player "you've failed" or "you've succeeded," and describes the effects. If the roll succeeds by a significant amount, the GM may rule that the spell has some beneficial effect above and beyond its intent.

If the roll fails by a significant amount, the mage may suffer a backlash of some kind. Backlash effects can include: one or more dice of damage against the Cliche used to cast the spell, having the spell's intended effect backfire against the mage or his companions, loss of wizardly Tools of the Trade ("your staff cracks and splinters in your hand as you try to channel the arcane force"), or something else appropriately nasty. The more difficult the attempted spell and the worse the roll, the more severe and/or permanent the consequences are likely to be (see also the [Unlimited Mana Calamity Table](#) for many evil possibilities).

What constitutes a "significant amount" of success or failure in a given situation is always defined solely by the GM.

## Creating Magic Items

***Caution! Really Optional Unplaytested Material Ahead! Feedback Wanted!***

Magic items are a type of bonus-dice gear (see [Risus](#), "Proper Tools" section) found in many fantasy campaign worlds. Enchantment of such items is generally time-consuming, exhausting and risky, and GMs may disallow it altogether if they want to keep magic item creation out of the hands of PCs. Other types of magic items besides bonus-dice gear may exist, of course, created by other means.

Any mage may attempt to create a magic item appropriate to his Cliches. A Cybermage can enchant a LeFay 3000 laptop that gives bonus dice to hacking and programming rolls, but wouldn't have any luck creating magical Combat Boots of Kicking Ass.

The difficulty of enchanting a given magic item is determined like any other spell. Enchantment is often Complex to Difficult magic or worse (at a minimum it certainly "hogs the scene" since it's an attempt to create permanent, portable bonus dice), though mages may pump their dice as normal if the pumping rules are in play. An enchantment spell may require rare, hazardous or special ingredients.

Creating magic items is personally costly to the mage. Creating an item costs one die of the Cliche used, permanently, per bonus die of the created item. In other words, a Cryptic Elvish Diviner(4) who wishes to create a one-die Deck of Farseeing Tarot Cards rolls against the difficulty determined by the GM. If successful, he expends one die and becomes a Cryptic Elvish Diviner(3). This loss in dice is permanent, though lost dice can be regained through character advancement as normal.

If an enchantment attempt fails, the character loses the appropriate number of dice temporarily (just until "healed" normally), any special ingredients are consumed in the attempt, and the mage cannot try to create a similar item again for a period of time specified by the GM.

Depending on the campaign world, mages may be able to team up to create magic items, dividing the expenditure among themselves.

#### **Danger! Really Completely Experimental Unplaytested Material Ahead!**

Modifications to the "personal-die-for-an-item-die" rule are possible if the GM and players want to get funky. Some suggestions:

- Some magic items can actually give the user a Cliche he wouldn't otherwise be able to use. Example: a magic flute that makes anyone who plays it a Flutist(3), whether or not he knows how to play a note. To a character who already has a similar Cliche, it's just a "normal" bonus-dice item: if a Musician(3) plays the aforementioned magic flute, he becomes a Musician(6). Charge the enchanter one extra die to create such an item.
- A "flavored" magic item is one that grants bonus dice only under specific conditions. These items give *two* bonus dice for each *one* die spent by the mage, but are only usable under some limitation that makes the item useful only about half the time, such as only against a certain type of foe, only during certain phases of the moon, only when casting a certain type of spell, etc. Example: Miranda the Malicious, Battle-Mage(3), has just had a bad romantic breakup and decides to throw herself into her work to make herself feel better. She wishes to create a magic sword named Ballbreaker that gives two bonus dice when wielded by a female against a male opponent. The GM agrees that this is an acceptable limitation, so if Miranda's dice roll succeeds, Miranda becomes a Battle-Mage(2) until she earns back another Battle-Mage die through character advancement, and the deadly blade Ballbreaker is created as a two bonus-dice item, usable under the above conditions.

## Non-Dice-Based Magic Items

Some classic and/or cool magic items just don't do things that can be defined in terms of dice. Often this is an item that *automatically* succeeds at a given task: a pen that writes messages only descendants of the true Dwarven King's bloodline can read, or a portal that teleports those who pass through it into the Sinister Court Wizard's tower (or someplace unpleasant, if the wizard doesn't want company).

Determining the power and dice cost of this kind of item is much more subjective, of course. The GM and player take hold of the magical principles of Dramatic Necessity and Laws of Nature and sit down to haggle. Use the spell difficulty chart as a rough guideline: An item that has little to no practical effect, won't throw the campaign world into chaos, or in general would make things more fun, will be in the low range. A magic shoe-polisher is probably a one-die item. Stormbringer or Sauron's Ring is more than likely off the scale for PCs to create, unless it's a *very* unusual campaign. Any magic item that will completely derail the campaign is of course impossible to enchant, though interesting things might happen if somebody tried.

## Credits

The difficulty chart and much of the text under "Casting Spells" was adopted practically word-for-word from S. John Ross's excellent [Elemental Magic](#) article for GURPS; many thanks are due for his input.

Aside from Risus itself, [GURPS Magic](#), [GURPS Grimoire](#) and [GURPS Wizards](#) are excellent sources for spells and wizardly Cliches. All three books were instrumental in writing this article. [GURPS Magic Items I](#) is the compleat reference for the enchanter of magic items.

## Links

If you liked this, check out the following:

- [LordZamiel.is.Dreaming](#), "Fantastic Fantasy Adventures in RisusLand," a full fantasy supplement much in the spirit of Risus Magic. Also, several other Risus settings, character sheets, and many other cool things.

[Back to I, Game Geek](#)

Risus



The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20050403113345/http://www.intemperance.net:80/rpg/stygiad/>



# THE STYGIAD:

## Saga of the Pants



A [Risus](#) Campaign © 1999 [Jason Puckett](#)  
Last Revision: 3 June, 1999

### Introduction

*The Stygiad* is loosely inspired by the creative but apparently never-to-be-finished RPG [Goth: the Degeneration](#) by Jennie Kermode. I started with Jennie's idea of a game centered around goth characters, decided that it was an ideal use for the [Risus](#) system (which you should probably look at before going much further), and away we went. The first session was conceived as a one-shot game, but since GM and players alike had such a good time it has evolved into the start of a full-on campaign. (It's named for the Stygion, a Powerful and Ancient Gothic Artifact that my players discovered in our first game. This will make more sense when I get around to posting an adventure.)

Since the Stygiad itself is in its infancy, so is this page. Planned enhancements for the near future include the first 1-2 adventures of the campaign and perhaps an expanded list of goth Cliches, and maybe some descriptions of characters and magic items as they surface in our game. [Suggestions](#) and comments are welcome.

### Characters

Goths exist on the twilight fringes of reality, half in the harsh sunlight world of the norms (necessary but unfortunate) and half in the shadow realms of the unreal. This tightrope existence has odd effects on its subjects. Reality is liable to become slippery to the goth character, shifting her into a bizarre funhouse-mirror version of the normal world. Goths of sufficient power can tap this effect for their own benefit, however, creating minor paranormal effects ranging from subliminally disturbing a mundane, to lighting cloves and candles without a match, to shrouding one's form in dramatic shadows, to turning water into snakebite....

Create your character according to standard Risus rules, with all advanced options in play except Funky Dice. All characters must have at least one die in a "goth" cliche of some kind (defined as a Cliche with the word "goth" in it somewhere). As far as PCs are concerned, only goth Cliches are capable of supernatural effects (see "Goth Magic," below). Any goth Cliche may be bought as a double-pump Cliche.

#### Cliches:

Some goth Cliches (and what they're good for) include:

- **Fetishgoth** (pinching, biting, spanking)
- **Mopeygoth** (writing self-centered poetry, depressing people)
- **Perkygoth** (shopping, doing cartwheels)
- **Punkgoth** (slamdancing, punching, annoying cops)
- **Romantigoth** (wearing lace, quoting Baudelaire, entangling enemies in swirlly cloaks)
- **Wastergoth** (drinking, being unruly, brewing absinthe)

...and so on. You can, of course, have more than one goth Cliche if you want to. Characters can start with up to 4 dice in any one Cliche. Don't forget to specify the Tools of the Trade your goth is equipped with.

Some other, less gothic, Cliches we've enjoyed using so far:

- **Arcade Wizard** (fighting giant Japanese monsters)
- **Drunken Literati** (making obscure references to literary theory)
- **Mall Rat** (intuiting store locations)

### Goth Magic

What kind of half-assed game doesn't let you play a character who can perform cool superhuman feats? Not this half-assed game, that's for sure....

Any character with a goth Cliche can attempt to evoke a supernatural effect of some kind (sort of like what other games might call "casting a spell"). In game terms, the GM will specify a target number based on the "magical goth effect" you want to achieve, and you'll roll your goth Cliche against it. More powerful goths can achieve more difficult effects, obviously.

Some sample target numbers:

- 5: Disturb a normal. Light a clove or a candle with the power of your gothness.
- 10: Cloud the mind of a passerby so they don't notice you in the shadows.
- 15: Turn into a bat. Summon a dramatic storm.
- 20: Step into one shadow and out of another somewhere else (goth teleportation).

See Jason's [Risus Magic](#) article for more info about how the magic system runs. "Risus Magic" was written with a fantasy campaign in mind, so just replace "mage" with "goth" and "spell" with, um... "cool paranormal gothic effect" or something.

## Gothic Magic Items

*Being an incomplete list of paranormal artifacts encountered to date by the player characters of the Stygiad, and their known abilities*

- **Really Good Cloves:** A seemingly ordinary clove cigarette package, black trimmed with silver. Each pack, however, generally only contains one cigarette. When smoked, the cigarette will either heal a damaged goth Cliche by two dice, or pump a goth Cliche by two dice for one roll (player's choice).
- **The Stygion (Peter Murphy's Pants):** The power of these black velour stretch pants, worn by Peter Murphy during a 1982 Bauhaus tour, can be sensed by any goth who can see them, or any goth within a few feet of them whether they are visible or not. The Stygion is an Ancient Legendary Gothic Relic of great power. The possessor's highest goth Cliche is increased by four dice while he wears the Pants, though they can make stealth problematic. It seems likely that they have yet undiscovered qualities.

## Essential Resources

A few web pages were nigh-essential in the genesis of the Stygiad. First and foremost was S. John Ross's [Risus](#) roleplaying system. Risus is free, simple and fast, and can even be used for games that *don't* involve booze and clove cigarettes as plot points, if you're into that sort of thing for some reason.

[Goth: the Degeneration](#) provided the inspiration. As an added bonus, the Clans section and its [supplement](#) translate effortlessly into goth Cliches.

[Name That Goth](#) is *the* place to go for great character names, and the diumvirate motherlodes of goth Cliches are [Goth.Code 98](#) (sections 20 and 24) and [Types of Goths](#).

And finally, [Take a Bite 4](#), which includes the Tao of Goth, indispensable reading for players of goth characters. If you can get your hands on a tape of SNL's Goth Talk, that's even *more* indispensable.



(In compliance with the Goth Web Page Standard, the Stygiad pages use the [Morpheus](#) font, obtainable from [Fonts For Freaks](#), for section headings.)

[Back to I, Game Geek](#)

Risus

INTEMPERANCE.  
<http://www.intemperance.net/>

# Hurrah for the next one to Die!

By Dale C. Blessing -- Version 1.0 October 2000

Hurrah for the next one to Die!, is a World War I Aerial Combat Adventure for Risus, The Anything RPG by S. John Ross (copyright 1999 by [S. John Ross](#)). You will need five or six, six-sided dice (One Die must be different in color from all the others), pencils, paper, and a copy of [Risus](#) to play.

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## Characters

Characters are created using the standard 10 dice for Cliches. Characters should not have more than 4 dice in any one Cliche. Advanced Option I: Hooks and Tales, may be used to gain one or two extra dice to play with. Advanced Option II: Pumping Cliches, may be used during play. Advanced Option III: Double-Pumps, and Advanced Option IV: Funky Dice, are not used.

### Sample Characters

#### **Eric Von Schnossel**

Description: Tall, blond, aristocratic. Likes to abuse his social inferiors. Excellent pilot. Poor horseman. On the ground, he wears a monocle and carries a riding crop.

**Cliches:** Pilot (4), Abuse Social Inferiors (3) , Wein,Weib, und Gesong (2), Lie (2), Ride Horse...like a putz (1)

**Victories:** None.

**Decorations:** None.

**Special Equipment:** Flight suit, cloth helmet w/goggles, gloves, scarf, boots, monocle, riding crop, pistol.

**Familiar Aircraft:** All German single seat fighters. Will not fly a two seater; they are socially inferior.

**Hook:** Eric Von Schnossel is an un-chivalrous swine in air combat. Should proof of this come to light, he would be disgraced, and dismissed from the Imperial German Flying Corps.

**Tale:** First Lieutenant Eric Von Schnossel transferred to the Imperial German Flying Corps from the cavalry. His poor riding skill, and abusive behavior to the lower ranks, had put an end to his cavalry career. His regiment was glad to be rid of him. He is an excellent pilot. He goes out of his way to bully all those he considers social inferiors. He likes to drink, and is even more abusive when drunk. His comrades fear and dislike him.

**Note:** Starts with 12 Cliche Dice.

### **Charles "Chuck" Henley**

Description: Medium height, brown hair, easy going. He is an habitual practical joker. Natural pilot.

**Cliches:** Natural Pilot (4), Practical Joker (4), Amateur Photographer (2), Fast Talker (2)

**Victories:** None yet.

**Decorations:** Not yet.

**Special Equipment:** Flight suit, cloth helmet w/ goggles, gloves, scarf, boots, still camera, Hooter (horn from old motorcar).

**Familiar Aircraft:** Flies any and all aircraft. He is a natural pilot.

**Hook:** Charles' CO has had enough of his practical jokes. If one more VIP complains, it's off to the Cooler for 30 days. Charles loves flying, and wants to avoid this. But, he just can't resist a good practical joke.

**Tale:** Lieutenant Charles Henley, an American, had never flown before coming to France to enlist. He fast talked the enlistment officer into letting him take a flight test. He was a natural, and was immediately sent to flight training. Because he pulls his weight in combat, his squadron mates tolerate his practical jokes. He is well liked by almost everyone. Were it not for political pressure, the CO would forget about his practical jokes.

**Note:** Starts with 12 Cliche Dice.

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## **The Aircraft**

The pilots must have aircraft when dog fighting. Aircraft are "Tools of the Trade", and are required. If a pilot is forced to fly an unfamiliar aircraft his cliches operate at half-dice. When aircraft of like types dog fight each other, only the pilot's cliches count. There is no bonus die for the aircraft. BUT, if aircraft of unlike types dog fight, the superior aircraft gets a +1D bonus die. This bonus die is added to the pilot's cliche.

### **Examples**

Single Seat Fighter vs Single Seat Fighter No bonus die

Two Seater vs. Two Seater No bonus die

Single Seat Fighter vs. Two Seater +1 bonus die to Single Seat Fighter

### **Two Seaters**

Crews of Two Seaters must form a TEAM. They fight as a single unit, and are attacked as a single unit. The Pilot is always the "team leader". In some Two Seaters the observer/gunner has a second set of controls, and may fly the plane if the pilot is incapacitated/dead. In all other Two Seaters.....prayer.

## A Special Case

The Sopwith 1.5 Stutter. This aircraft was flown both as a single seater, and as a two seater. When it has two crew members, it is treated as a Two Seater. When only the pilot flies, it is treated as a Single Seat Fighter. If your observer becomes a casualty , and the pilot dumps the body (a despicable act); it is still treated as a TWO Seater, for the rest of that encounter.

(ff = forward firing guns. flx = flexible-mount guns, fire in almost any direction. mph = miles per hour)

## British Aircraft

### De Havilland 5

Single Seat Fighter  
Speed: 110 mph  
Ceiling: 16,000 feet  
One ff Vickers MG

### Sopwith Pup

Single Seat Fighter  
Speed: 110 mph  
Ceiling: 17,500 feet  
One ff Vickers MG

### Sopwith Camel

Single Seat Fighter  
Speed: 120 mph  
Ceiling: 22,000 feet  
Two ff Vickers MG

### S. E. 5a

Single Seat Fighter  
Speed: 130 mph  
Ceiling: 22,000 feet  
One ff Vickers MG  
One ff wing-mount Lewis MG

### Sopwith 1.5 Stutter

Single Seat or Two Seater  
Speed: 100 mph  
Ceiling: 15,500 feet  
One ff Vickers MG + One flx Lewis

### De Havilland 4

Two Seater (dual controls)  
Speed: 120 mph  
Ceiling: 16,000 feet  
One ff Vickers + One or Two flx Lewis

### De Havilland 9

Two Seater  
Speed: 120 mph  
Ceiling: 15,500 feet  
One ff Vickers + One or Two flx Lewis

## German Aircraft

### Albatros D II

Single Seat Fighter  
Speed: 100 mph  
Ceiling: 17,000 feet  
Two ff Spandau MG

### Albatros D III

Single Seat Fighter

### Fokker D VII

Single Seat Fighter  
Speed: 110 mph  
Ceiling: 19,600 feet  
Two ff Spandau MG

### Fokker D VIII

Single Seat Fighter

Speed: 100 mph  
Ceiling: 18,000 feet  
Two ff Spandau MG

#### Fokker Dr I (Triplane)

Single Seat Fighter  
Speed: 110 mph  
Ceiling: 19,600 feet  
Two ff Spandau MG

#### Rumpler C IV

Two Seater  
Speed: 110 mph  
Ceiling: 21,000 feet  
One ff Spandau + One flx  
Parabellum

#### Albatros C VII

Two Seater  
Speed: 100 mph  
Ceiling: 16,400 feet  
One ff Spandau + One flx  
Parabellum

Speed: 120 mph  
Ceiling: 21,000 feet  
Two ff Spandau MG

#### D.F.W. C V

Two Seater  
Speed: 100 mph  
Ceiling: 21,000 feet  
One ff Spandau + One flx  
Parabellum

#### Hannover CL IIIa

Two Seater  
Speed: 100 mph  
Ceiling: 24,600 feet  
One ff Spandau + One flx  
Parabellum

### French Aircraft:

#### Nieuport 17

Single Seat Fighter  
Speed: 100 mph  
Ceiling: 17,500 feet  
One ff Vickers MG or  
One ff wing Lewis or Both

#### S.P.A.D. VII

Single Seat Fighter  
Speed: 120 mph  
Ceiling: 18,000 feet  
One ff Vickers MG

#### S.P.A.D. XIII

Single Seat Fighter  
Speed: 130 mph  
Ceiling: 22,300 feet  
Two ff Vickers MG

#### Breguet 14

Two Seater  
Speed: 110 mph  
Ceiling: 19,600 feet  
One ff Vickers MG  
+ One or Two flx Lewis

#### S.P.A.D. XI

Two Seater (dual controls)  
Speed: 110 mph  
Ceiling: 23,000 feet  
One ff Vickers MG  
+ One or Two flx Lewis

Air combat in World War I was deadly. Given the numbers of pilots who flew, there were few survivors. This may be historically accurate, but it makes for poor role playing. All player character pilots should follow The Code of Chivalry (for WW I pilots).

Because of the way combat works in Risus, you don't really need to know any tactics. Of course you can describe your incredible flying maneuvers, and add to everyone's enjoyment of the game. Such maneuvers might include, climb, dive, bank, turn, circle, slip, roll, loop, Immelmann turn, fly inverted, split - S, barrel roll, and falling leaf. The only thing you need to remember is that your plane can not fly higher than its Ceiling. It is also useful to flee when confronted by a superior opponent.

### How to Flee

Roll Cliche Dice + ( Aircraft Speed divided by 10) vs Opponent's roll of Cliché Dice + (Aircraft Speed divided by 10).

If your total is higher, you have successfully escaped. If your Opponent rolls higher, you must turn and fight or surrender.

### Combat

Roll your Cliche Dice as in normal Risus combat. One of your dice must be different in color from all the others. This is your Gun Die. Whenever you fire your plane's guns you must roll the Gun Die as one of your Cliche Dice. If the Gun Die rolls a 1 the gun jams. If more than one gun is firing, the GM chooses which gun jams. To clear a jam you must make a Target Number 10 roll. If you have more than one gun, you can leave the jam uncleared and fire the others. You do not have to clear a jammed gun.

Once you have worn down your opponent (one of his Cliches is at 0 dice) , you get to decide his fate. OR, you can use these Handy Charts.

### Handy Charts

Now that you have worn down your opponent, you can use these charts to let FATE decide his fate. OR, you can have the hapless victim roll his own fate. That way he can't blame you for his horrible end. Start with Chart One, and follow the directions.

Chart One: The Plane (roll 1D6)

- 1 Minor Damage - Still Flies
- 2 Minor Damage - Still Flies
- 3 Major Damage - Crash!

Chart Two (roll 1D6)

- 1 Engine Still Runs
- 2 Engine Still Runs
- 3 Engine Still Runs -

Chart Three (roll 1D6)

- 1 Minor Wounds
- 2 Minor Wounds
- 3 Minor Wounds

	Fire!	
4 Major Damage - Crash!	4 Engine Quits	4 Major Wounds
5 Engine (roll on Chart Two)	5 Engine Quits - Fire!	5 Observer Dead / Major Wound
6 Crew (roll on Chart Three)	6 Petrol Tank Explodes	6 Pilot Dead

### Notes:

Still Flies - You "heal" to one half Cliche Dice. Fight, surrender, or flee. Plane is still damaged.

Crash! - roll 1D6. 1-3 you survive. 4-5 you survive w/wounds. 6 you are dead.

Fire! - Land Now! Pray that you get to the ground before the fire gets to you.

Minor Wounds - You "heal" to one half Cliche Dice. Fight, surrender, or flee. You are still wounded.

Major Wounds - Land Now! Pray that you get to the ground before you pass out and Crash.

Observer Dead/ Major Wounds - Observer is dead. If no Observer, Major Wounds to Pilot.

### Code of Chivalry

The Code of Chivalry states that it is despicable to take advantage of a helpless opponent -- aircraft with dead engines or on fire, pilots and observers with Major Wounds, landing planes, planes with jammed guns. You should let such helpless opponents go. BUT, deception is possible. Be on your guard.

If you get caught violating The Code of Chivalry, you will be broken in rank, stripped of your decorations, and dismissed from the Service in disgrace.

### NPC Aircrues

<u>Pilot</u>	<u>Observer</u>
Pilot (3)	Observer/Gunner (3), Aerial Photography (3) British, French only, add: Pilot (2)

### Combat Examples

#### Single Seat Fighter vs. Single Seat Fighter

Both pilots are Pilot (3). Frenchman flies S.P.A.D. VII. German flies Fokker D VII. Both want to fight.

Turn 1. Frenchman rolls 9. German 10(Gun Die 1 - gun jams). Frenchman loses 1 Cliche

Die.

Turn 2. Frenchman , Pilot (2), rolls 12. German, Pilot (3), leaves jam un-cleared. He has another gun. He

rolls 10. German loses 1 Cliche Die.

Turn 3. Both Pilot (2). Both roll 7. Frenchman's Gun Die 1 - gun jams. Tie, Cliche Dice don't change.

Turn 4. Both pilot (2). Frenchman tries to clear jammed gun. TN = 10. Rolls 6. Fails. He decides to flee.

Frenchman rolls  $8 + 12 = 20$ . German will pursue. He rolls  $7 + 11 = 18$ . Frenchman escapes.

### Two Seater vs. Two Seater

Both pilots are Pilot (3). Both observers are Observer/Gunner (3). British observer also Pilot (2). British fly De Havilland 4 (dual controls). Germans fly Rumpler C IV. Two Seater crews must form a TEAM. Both have Team (4). Pilots must be team leaders. Both planes are returning from photographing a railroad freight yard behind enemy lines. They see each other as the planes are crossing the front line trenches.

Turn 1. Both aircrews wave at each other and continue on their way, without firing a shot.

The GM tells both that they notice a camera mounted on the other plane. They must stop the

enemy from delivering the film. Both reluctantly decide to fight.

Turn 2. British Team rolls 14. German Team rolls 12. German Team loses 1 Die and the observer loses

1 Cliche Die.

Turn 3. British Team (4). German Team (3). German observer is Observer/Gunner (2).

British Team rolls

12(Gun Die 1 - the Lewis, they only have one, jams). German Team rolls 10. German Team

loses 1 Die and the observer loses 1 Cliche Die.

Turn 4. British Team (4). German Team (2) and Observer/Gunner (1). The Germans decide to Flee. The

British will pursue, and the observer will try to clear the jammed Lewis. TN = 10. Rolls 11. The

Lewis is cleared. Germans roll  $12 + 11 = 23$ . British roll  $11 + 12 = 23$ . Tie! The GM rules that

nobody has a shot this turn. Both planes jockey for position.

Turn 5. All Dice stay the same. The Germans will flee. The British will pursue. Germans roll  $12 + 11 =$

23 again. British roll  $14 + 12 = 26$ . The attempt to flee fails. Germans turn and fight.

Turn 6. German rolls 12. British roll 13 (Gun Die 1 - Vickers jams). The German Team loses 1 Die, and

the observer loses 1 Cliche Die. Because the observer is at 0 Dice, the Team loses another 1

Die. The German Team is at 0 Dice. Germans have been worn down. GM rolls on Chart One. A

2, Minor Damage - Still Flies. The German Team and Observer both "heal" to 2 Dice.

The dog

fight continues.

Turn 7. British Team (4). German Team (2). Germans will flee. The British will pursue, and attempt to

clear the Vickers. TN = 10. British pilot rolls 5. Vickers still jammed. To Flee Germans roll  $4 +$

$11 = 15$ . British roll  $12 + 12 = 24$ . Attempt to flee fails. Turn and fight.

Turn 8. British attempt to clear Vickers. TN = 10. Pilot rolls 13. Vickers is cleared. British Team rolls 13.

German Team rolls 2. Germans now Team (1). Observer is at Observer/ Gunner (1).

Turn 9. British roll 7. Germans roll 4. Germans at 0 Dice. GM rolls on Chart One. A 3.

Major Damage -

Crash!. Crash! roll is a 5. The German Crew survives w/wounds. They will fight another day.

### Single Seat Fighter vs. Two Seater

Both pilots are Pilot (3). French observer is Observer/Gunner (3), and Pilot (2). German Flies Fokker Dr I (Triplane). The German pilot receives +1 Bonus Die because the Fokker Dr I is a Single Seat Fighter. French fly S.P.A.D. XI (dual controls). Two Seaters must form a TEAM. Pilot is team leader. French are Team (4).

The Fokker Dr I is flying several hundred feet above the S.P.A.D. XI. He dives to the attack.

Turn 1. GM has the French Team roll for surprise. TN = 15. Roll 13. French are surprised. They will roll

one half Dice for first turn. They roll 9. German rolls Pilot (3) + 1 Bonus Die. He rolls 15. French

lose 1 Die. Now Team (3) and Observer/Gunner (2).

Turn 2. Both attack. French roll full Team Dice (3). Roll 11 (Gun Die 1 - flx Lewis jams. No problem they

have a double mount). German rolls Pilot (3) + 1 Bonus Die. Rolls 11 (Gun Die 1 - ff Spandau

jams. He has two.). Tie. Nobody loses any dice.

Turn 3. Both attack. French roll 8. German rolls 14. French lose 1 Die. Now Team (2) and

Observer/Gunner (2). Both decide not to clear jammed weapons.

Turn 4. French roll 7 (Gun Die 1 - Second Lewis jams). German rolls 12. French lose 1 Die. Now Team

(1), and Observer/Gunner (1).

Turn 5. French attempt to clear both Lewis guns. TN = 10. First gun roll (observer uses Pilot (2)) 12.

Success. Second gun roll 11. Success. Both Lewis guns are cleared. Both attack. French roll 5.

German rolls 10. French lose. They are reduced to 0 Dice. GM rolls on Chart One. A 6 - Crew.

GM rolls on Chart Three. A 6 - Pilot Dead.

Turn 6. French plane starts to lose altitude. Observer takes control. He is Pilot (2).

French will Flee. Roll 6

+ 11 = 17. German will pursue. He is Pilot (3) + 1 Bonus Die. Rolls 12 + 11 = 23.

Attempt to flee

fails. French turn and fight.

Turn 7. French pilot is dead. Observer - Pilot (2), flies and tries to fire Lewis guns. Rolls 8. German rolls

16. French reduced to Pilot (1).

Turn 8. French observer is Pilot (1). German is Pilot (3) + 1 Bonus Die. Frenchman surrenders.

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### Rewards (With the thanks of a grateful Nation...)

To slow down character inflation, character cliches should advance slowly. After every 3

to 5 missions, the players should apply the standard Risus Character Advancement rules, to see if their cliches have improved or if they have added a new cliche.

As the character's mission and victory totals climb they may be awarded decorations and medals by their grateful nation and its allies. Unfortunately, receiving awards depends greatly on politics, family connections, the current state of the war, and other bureaucratic factors. Many deserving pilots may go unrewarded. All awards must be diced for. There will be some disappointed characters. (m=missions; k=kills)

<u>Decorations and Metals</u>	<u>Requirements</u>	<u>Die Roll(1d6)</u>
<b>France</b>		
Croix de Guerre (C. de G.)	10m or 4k	1, 2
Medaille Militaire (M. M.)	6m & Brave Act	1, 2, 3
Legion d'Honneur (L. d'H.)	M. M. & Brave Act	1, 2 ,3
<b>Britain</b>		
Military Medal (M. M.)	12m or 5k	1, 2, 3, 4
Distinguished Flying Cross (D.F.C.)	12m or 5k & Brave Act	1, 2, 3, 4
Distinguished Service Medal (D.S.M.)	M. M. & Brave Act	1, 2
Victoria Cross (V.C.)	12m & Brave Act	1, 2 (1, 2, 3, if Ace w/25k)
<b>Germany</b>		
Military Merit Cross -Gold	12m or 10k & Brave Act	1, 2
Knight's Cross of the Royal House Order Of Hohenzollern	12k - Fighter Pilots 20m - Others & Brave Act (Both)	1, 2 (Both)
Orden Pour le Merite ("The Blue Max")	20k & Knight's Cross Hohenzollern	1, 2 (After each additional mission , roll 1 to actually receive award)

Note: Many\_ Orden Pour le Merite ("The Blue Max")\_ were never actually received.

## Sources

### Books

*Aces and Aircraft of World War I* by Christopher Campbell. Blandford Press Ltd. 1981.

*The Rand McNally Encyclopedia of Military Aircraft 1914 - 1980* by Enzo Angelucci.  
The Military Press  
1983.

*Biggles Pioneer Air Fighter* by Capt. W.E. Johns. Dean & Son Ltd. No date. Context indicates that it was published after WW I, probably in the 1920's. Capt. W.E. Johns was a WW I combat pilot. The stories are fiction. Each one is based on fact. This Chap was there, and lived to tell about it!

## Games

***Dawn Patrol, Aerial Combat RPG*** by Mike Carr. TSR Hobbies Inc. 1982.

***Risus, The Anything RPG*** by S. John Ross. ( Copyright 1999 by S. John Ross ).

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## **Concluding Remarks**

This is my adventure for Risus, The Anything RPG. I Hope you like it. Feedback is welcome.

Critical is good. Please be polite. Thank You.

Hals- und Beinbruch! (Break your neck and leg! -"Good Luck" Traditional German Pilot's saying)

See you at Angel's 10

Dale C. Blessing

Email: [Pineappleleader](mailto:Pineappleleader) or [Pineappleleader](http://Pineappleleader)

# PULP CLICHES FOR RISUS

Modified 10/02/01 All original content © Guy Hoyle 2001

From the 1920s to the 1950s, "pulps" were the action-packed staple of millions of readers every month. The term "pulp", derived from the cheap paper that these magazines were usually printed on, actually covered everything from detective stories to horror, from crusading avengers of justice to westerns and "spicy" romance stories. The one common factor of the genre was plenty of action, though ruthless criminals, strange locales, and forgotten civilizations cunning deathtraps, and cliffhanger endings were common components as well.

This is my attempt to capture the excitement of Pulp for **Risus: the Anything RPG**, © S. John Ross 1993-2001 ( <http://www.io.com/~sjohn/risus/> )

Feedback is always welcome! Please send it to me at <mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net>

## General Cliches

An exciting occupation or interesting background was a must for a pulp hero. Many times such a person would be drawn into an ongoing mystery or adventure, and only their unique skills make the difference between success and failure. It would not be unusual to find a stage magician who solves crimes in his spare time, or a daredevil archaeologist. These backgrounds can also be found in other pulp genres (a nosy reporter could try and find the true identity of a masked crusader, for example, or stow away on an experimental rocketship ); the lines between genres are often blurred.

- Stage Magician  
sleight of hand, misdirection, the hand is quicker than the eye, sawing people in half without hurting them, make dramatic gestures, wear tuxedo and top hat, pull rabbit out of hat
- Gold-digging Femme Fatale  
trade money for love, seduce the rich and elderly, disguise true nature, fall in love for real with hero.
- Jaded millionaire playboy/girl  
throws around lots of cash, seen it all, drink gallons of champagne, expect to be waited on
- Circus Performer  
walk tightrope, get shot out of cannon, swing from trapeze
- Shell-shocked Veteran  
Terrified by loud noises, use rifles and bayonettes, reminisce about the Great War, nightmares
- Great White Hunter  
shoot wild animals, interpret native drums, speak native languages, survive in the wild
- Movie Star  
look glamorous, idolized by millions, sign autograph, memorize lines/blocking, party into the wee small hours, seduce
- Stunt Man  
survive a great fall, throw fake punch, escape from crashing vehicle, slide along a bar, look kinda like a movie star
- Nosy Reporter  
sniff out a scoop, drink like fish, smoke like chimney, bang out a story, protect sources, transcribe conversation
- Wonder dog  
go get help, communicate by barking, protect master, sniff danger, track by smell
- Aviator/Aviatrix  
fly plane, tinker with engine, storm barns, make an emergency landing

- Football player  
tackle, kick, throw, catch, block
- Concert Pianist  
Virtuoso Performance, nimble fingers, impeccable evening wear
- Athlete  
run, swim, jump, throw, wrestle, be a good sport
- Daredevil  
Escape from crashing vehicle, drive or fly any vehicle, survive a great fall, leap across crevice, hang onto fedora
- Human Fly  
Climb skyscraper without gear, walk across tightrope, tip off photographers
- Policeman  
Arrest criminals, interrogate criminals, drink gallons of bad coffee, smoke like a chimney, find donut shop
- Linguist  
Know obscure languages, translate ancient inscriptions, pronounce the unpronounceable
- Hobo  
hop freight train, sing mournful songs, pahhandle, do odd jobs, hobo code, drink anything alcoholic
- Physician  
Diagnose illness, make house call, treat disease, stitch up wound, prescribe remedy
- Psychiatrist  
Ask pointless or infuriating questions, analyze neurosis, make everything relate to sex
- Soldier  
clean rifle, fire rifle, know about tactics and strategy, sleep whenever you can, stay awake during guard duty
- Clergyman  
long-winded, preachy, forgive sinners, sermonize
- University student  
Booze it up, chase girls, cram for test

## Western

Westerns were a very popular type of Pulp, moving from the Old West to the new, with automobiles and airplanes joining horses as time progressed. Cowboys sometimes crossed over into other genres, visiting the lost worlds of dinosaurs and venturing into space.

- World-weary gunslinger  
never refuse a challenge, shoot from the hip, never settle down, drink plenty o' redeye, ride the range
- Singing Cowboy  
Followed by unseen musicians, shoot gun from target's hand, train horse to rescue him, helps women and children
- Town Drunk  
Cadge drink, sleep in gutter, stagger, annoy bad guys
- Saloon Girl  
Have a heart of gold, "Buy a lady a drink, cowboy?", dance with ruffians, unspecified services, fall in love with handsome stranger
- School Marm  
Teach local kids and illiterate adults, hide true good looks, be prim and proper
- Sodbuster  
Protect ranch, hate cattlemen, hate sheepherders, widower, have beautiful daughter

who's in love with someone you hate

### **Crime Does Not Pay**

Hard-boiled detectives, crime-solving attorneys, gangsters and the like were very popular pulp characters. Many masked adventurers had some kind of background, and the underworld of the criminal sometimes crossed over into the supernatural underworld.

- Hard-Boiled Private Detective  
broke all the time, never give up on a case, drink gallons of bad coffee, incorruptible, doggedly pursue clues
- Criminal  
Pistol-whip victims, brutalize victims, take it on the lam, never squeal, plan heist, steal things
- Reformed Gangster  
Old contacts, streetwise, keep nose clean, frequently suspected by police, not trusted by other crooks
- Gun Moll  
Heavy makeup, sexy in a cheap and tawdry way, cynical
- Gangster  
Dark suit with black shirt & white tie, execute squealers, carry out the orders of Mr. Big
- G-Man  
Agent of FBI/Treasury Dept/Federal Bureau of Narcotics, smoke like a chimney, snappy black suit, trenchcoat,
- Policeman  
Direct traffic, walk beat, find donuts, drink stale coffee, chase fugitive
- Police Detective  
Interrogate suspect, deduce, flash badge, drink gallons of stale coffee
- Lawyer  
Make deal, interrogate, know the law, twist the law, find loophole, "Objection!"
- Informant  
Know dangerous secrets, trade information for money
- Fence  
Receive hot property, make deals with crooks

### **Weird Science**

Strange inventions, brains in tanks, rebellious robots, trips to other planets, these types of characters often straddle the razor-edge of science, and flirt with knowledge that man was not meant to flirt with.

- Jetpack Jockey  
weird helmet and leather jacket, noisy rocket pack, take a running leap, blast off, make a smooth landing, spot things from the sky
- Alien Princess  
Get kidnapped, fall in love with handsome earthman, scream piercingly, postpone "fate worse than death"
- Gadgeteer  
fix almost anything but it looks weird, invent half-baked contraptions, put together intricate gadgets out of common objects, stammer and sweat around women
- Rocket Pilot  
Count backwards, look good in uniform, make command decisions, snappy commands, seek out new worlds, carry out mission
- Ship's Engineer  
Fix engines, complain about engines, hide still, know every nut and bolt in ship

- Absent-minded professor  
forget head if it wasn't attached, invent miraculous but troublesome device or substance, leave isolation chamber doors ajar, accidentally shrink the kids
- Robot  
Made o metal, big metal pincers instead of hands, well-concealed “off” button, interpret all conversation literally, go berserk, susceptible to paradoxes

## Lost World

Impenetrable jungles, deep caverns, and distant polar reaches are often crawling with representatives of unknown or long-extinct cultures. Often, you will find prehistoric animals such as dinosaurs have survived against all odds.

- Unfrozen Caveman  
reminiscing about the Ice Age, hunt for mammoths, unfamiliar with modern world, spooked by modern gadgets, decorate apartment with cave paintings
- Jungle King/Queen  
raised by animals, keen sight and smell, great strength and agility, communicate with animals, survive in the wild, swing from vine, wrestle alligator
- Native Princess  
Fall in love with handsome explorer, scream piercingly, misinterpret handsome stranger's actions, have strange tribal custom
- Tribesman  
Throw spear, bear load, menace outsiders, sucker for cheap trinkets
- Gladiator  
Wear antiquated armor, speak Latin, “By Zeus!”, net and trident
- Rebellious Slave  
Get treated kindly by the outsiders, learn of freedom, rebel against your masters, incite other slaves to rebellion

## Villains

Not a Pulp genre unto themselves, villains can be found in almost any other sub-genre (though you don't find very many Oriental Mystics in Westerns).

- Bloodthirsty Fiend  
wield axe/knife/noose, surprise victim, hide from pursuers, insanely strong, break into locked rooms
- Sinister Warlord  
conquer the world, devise fiendish tortures, utilize exotic devices, create elaborate plots, explain plan to enemy before you kill him, hire henchman without explaining what happened to the dozens of other henchmen you hired, secret escape route, destroy secret base
- Oriental Mystic  
Hypnotize do-gooders, be inscrutable, create illusion, quote Confucius and Lao Tsu
- Snivelling Toady  
Cringe and kowtow before the Master, fulfill his bidding to the letter, apprehend hero's girlfriend, menace drooling, inadvertently give away the Master's plans, bungle job

## Weird Stories

Tales of strange monsters, eerie settings, nightmares, hauntings, and the occult. H.P. Lovecraft was a master of this form, and his close friends Clark Ashton Smith, R.E. Howard, and Richard Bloch were but a few who followed him into this strange realm. Florian Edelbauer's “Risus R'lyeh” page at <http://www.edelbauer.de/risus/rlyeh.html> is a good source for this kind of adventure.

- Ghost Chaser  
Know all about ghosts, set up cameras to catch ghosts on film, disprove fake ghosts,

- get rid of real ghosts
- Occult Scholar  
Know weird phenomena, remember strange names, find ancient incantation
- Bookshop owner  
Obtain obscure titles, dust shelves, know where any book in the shop is, know what's in all the books
- Antiquarian  
Quote from obscure authors, know obscure facts, cite reference
- Librarian  
Sort books, find newspaper articles, shh!, find obscure information, repair books
- Anthropologist  
Know aboriginal folktales, know tribal customs, eat disgusting things, speak obscure languages

## **Masked Crusaders**

Solving unusual crimes or unraveling bizarre mysteries, Masked Crusaders are the predecessors of the superhero. Though usually possessed of great strength and cunning, they may also have a strange, signature power (like the ability to cloud men's minds or immunity to pain) or a special gadget (anaesthetic dart gun, smoke grenades).

- Masked Adventurer  
wear strange costume, foil dastardly crime, track criminal to lair, duke it out, escape from certain death, protect secret identity, drive flashy vehicle, send clueless assistants on senseless tasks, rescue clueless assistants
- Clueless Assistant  
Perform senseless tasks for masked adventurer, wonder about senseless tasks, blunder into traps

## **PULP CAMPAIGN IDEAS**

### **The Odysseus League**

Not a typical social club, the Odysseus League's members all have one thing in common: they have all survived a shipwreck by their own wits and luck. Members are required to take some kind of journey once a year. Typical exploits involve oriental warlords, lost empires, mysteries of nature, secret agents, and criminal geniuses.

### **Friends of Prometheus**

Who is "Prometheus"? No one seems to know, but he has rescued each of his "friends" from blackmail, torture, and worse. In exchange, they act as his arms, his legs, his eyes in his war against crime and terror. Perhaps he is even one of them!

### **Adventures in Science**

Professor G. Gordon Genius is at it again! His giant computers tried to take over the world. His rocket ship stranded you on the Planet Just Around the Corner. His indestructible robot ran amuck. What can possibly go wrong this time?

# Die Like A Liao!:Risus Battletech

By Dale C. Blessing      Version 1.0      April 2001

Die Like A Liao!:Risus Battletech, is a Battle Mech (giant robot) Combat mini-sourcebook for Risus, The Anything RPG, by S. John Ross (©1999 by S. John Ross) (sjohn@io.com). Battletech was a boardgame/RPG published by FASA Corporation (© 1996 FASA Corporation) (<http://www.FASA.com>). All material is used without permission. No challenge to copyright is made or implied.

It is assumed that you are familiar with both Risus and the Battletech Universe.

You will need six, of each, six-sided, eight-sided, ten-sided, and twelve-sided dice,pencils, paper, and a copy of Risus (<http://www.io.com/~sjohn/risus.htm>) to play.

Battle Mechs (characters) are created using the standard 10 dice for Clichés. Beginner Battle Mechs should not have more than 4 dice in any one Cliché. Advanced Option I: Hooks and Tales, is not used. Advanced Option II: Pumping Clichés, may be used during play. Advanced Option III: Double-Pumps, is not used. Advanced Option IV: Funky Dice, is used in modified form, to create the different weight classes of Battle Mechs.

## **Battle Mech Creation (Character Creation)**

Battle Mechs are humanoid robots that walk on two legs. They are from 3 to 30 meters tall. Some have hands, but many have their hands replaced with weapons. They can walk and run like humans and some can Jump for short distances. These rules assume that the heavier Mechs have heavier weapons and armor. Weapons are figured into a Mech's Shoot Cliché. You can loot weapons descriptions from the Battletech book/game of your choise and list them on your character sheet if you want it to look extra cool. It is good role playing to describe how you just creamed your opponet with a medium laser, and a spread of SRM missles.

### Battle Mechs may be created in four weight classes

Light (10-35 tons). Use D6 for Resist Damage. Use D6 for Shoot. All other Clichés D6.

Medium (40-55 tons). Use D8 for Resist Damage. Use D8 for Shoot. All other Clichés D6.

Heavy (60- 75 tons). Use D10 for Resist Damage. Use D8 For Shoot. All other Clichés D6.

Assault(80-100+ tons). Use D12 for Resist Damage. Use D8 for Shoot. All other Clichés D6.

Every Battle Mech has 3 Clichés. If the Mech can Jump it has one additional Cliché, and three additional "jump dice". These are:

### Battle Mech

Resist Damage (4), Shoot (4), Pilot Eject (2)

### Battle Mech (Jump)

Resist Damage (4), Shoot (4), Pilot Eject (2), Jump (3)

Battle Mechs also have a Speed listing. This is used to out maneuver or run away from another Mech.

You should also give your creation a cool name. Such as, PNT-9R PANTHER, or DRG-1N DRAGON, or AS7-D ATLAS.

Battle mechs must also have a pilot. Pilots are considered "Proper Tools". If your Mech does not have a pilot, or the pilot is killed, your Mech can not move or fight.

### Pilots come in four classes

## Risus Battletech 1.0

Green (0)  
Rookie (+1)  
Veteran (+2)  
Elite (+3)

Every Mech starts the game with a Pilot: Green (0). If you survive your first adventure, you automatically become a Rookie (+1). Filling your boots in terror, and ejecting on Turn One of your First Battle does not count as surviving your first adventure (You are not Sun-Tzu Liao).

You may, subject to referee approval, become a Veteran (+2) any time after you have survived your 10th adventure. Elite (+3) should be very rare. Most Elites will be NPCs. Someone has to give the PC Mechs a hard time.

### Sample Battle Mechs

Light Mech COM-2D COMMANDO

25 tons

Speed: 97 kph

Jump: No

Hands: Yes

1 Shannon Six-Shooter Missile Pack

1 Coventry 4-Tube Missile System

1 Hesperus-B3M Medium Laser

Resist Damage (4D6), Shoot (4D6), Pilot Eject (2D6)

Pilot: Green (0)

Light Mech PNT-9R PANTHER

35 tons

Speed: 65 kph

Jump: 120 meters

Hands: Yes. One Hand Only.

1 Telos Four-Shot SRM Missile System

1 Lord's Light Particle Beam Weapon

Resist Damage (4D6), Shoot (4D6), Pilot Eject (2D6), Jump (3D6)

Pilot: Green (0)

Medium HCT-3F HATCHETMAN

45 tons

Speed: 65 kph

Jump: 120 meters

Hands: Yes. One Hand Only.

Melee Weapon: LARGE Metal Hatchet. Adds +3 to Melee Attacks

1 Defiance Killer Autocannon

2 Defiance B3M Medium Lasers

Resist Damage (4D8), Shoot (4D8), Pilot Eject (2D6), Jump (3D6)

Pilot: Green (0)

Medium HBK-4G HUNCHBACK

50 tons

Speed: 65 kph

Jump: No

Hands: Yes

1 Tomodzuru Type 20 Autocannon

2 Ichiba 2000 Medium Lasers

1 Diverse Optics Type 10 Small Laser

Resist Damage (4D8), Shoot (4D8), Pilot Eject (2D6)

Pilot: Green (0)

**Heavy Mech DRG-1N DRAGON**

60 tons

Speed: 86 kph

Jump: No

Hands: Yes. One Hand Only.

1 Telos DecaCluster LRM Missile System

2 Victory 23R Medium Lasers

Resist Damage (4D10), Shoot (4D8), Pilot Eject (2D6)

Pilot: Green (0)

**Assault Mech AS7-D ATLAS**

100 tons

Speed: 54 kph

Jump: No

Hands: Yes.

1 Defiance Mech Hunter Autocannon

1 FarFire Long-Range Missile 20-Rack

4 Defiance B3M Medium Lasers

1 TharHes Maxi Short-Range Missile 6-Rack

Resist Damage (4D12), Shoot (4D8), Pilot Eject (2D6)

Pilot: Green (0)

**The Game System**

Target Numbers (TN) are only used in Risus Battletech for shooting at things which do not have Clichés. Large Buildings, masses of Hapless Civilians. They should also be used to see if your Mech can perform a task. Such as, Two Mechs try to pick up and drag off a Downed Mech.

**Sample Tasks**

Target Number **5**: Mechs Shoot/Stomp Hapless Civilians. Fire missiles at a Shopping Mall.

Shoot a Downed Mech at Short Range. Jump in Clear Terrain.

Target Number **10**: Shoot a Downed Mech at Medium Range. Two Mechs pick up and drag off a Downed Mech.

Jump in Rough Terrain. Pilot Eject from a destroyed Mech.

Target Number **15**: Shoot/Stomp an Infantry Rocket Launcher Team. Shoot/Stomp an Ejecting Pilot who has made it safely to the ground. Shoot a Downed Mech at Long Range. Jump in Rough and Dangerous Terrain (A canyon filled with new lava flows). Shoot at a jumping Mech in the air.

Target Number **20**: Shoot a Downed Mech at Extreme Range. Shoot an Ejecting Pilot in the air.

Target Number **30**: Throwing a motorcycle or automobile.

Target Number **50**: Throwing a big rig truck and trailer, or a tank.

Target Number **70**: Throwing a train locomotive or train car.

**Proper Tools**

Pilots are proper tools for Battle Mechs. No pilot, or a dead pilot-No movement or fighting with your Mech.

**The Combat System**

The combat system is very simple. The bigger, heavier weight Mechs are tougher than the smaller, lighter weight Mechs. Battle Mechs fight until one of them has its Resist Damage Cliché reduced to 0D. Then the referee rolls on the Battle Mech Damage Chart, and announces what happens to the victim. Battle Mechs do not “heal” until repaired.

Battle Mechs may shoot each other from various distances, or (those that have hands or a melee weapon) fight hand-to-hand.

How to out maneuver or run away from another Mech

If you have a Mech that can jump, then jump out of harms way. This would be a good time to pump your Jump Cliché (See Advanced Option II: Pumping Clichés). If you can not jump, then you must out maneuver or run away from the other Mech. Compare the Mechs Speed listings. If one Mech is 10 kph faster than the other Mech, the faster Mech adds +1D when it rolls its Resist Damage Cliché to out maneuver or run away. The +1D is only added

to the Resist Damage Cliché when the Mech is maneuvering or running away. It is not added when the Mech is resisting damage.

#### Battle Mech Damage Chart ( Roll 1D6)

- 1 Mech's fusion engine explodes and the pilot dies. Mech totally destroyed.
- 2 Mech's fusion engine explodes. Make Pilot Eject Cliché roll. TN=10. Mech destroyed.
- 3 Mech's on board ammo and missiles explode. Make Pilot Eject Cliché roll. TN=10. Mech destroyed.
- 4 Mech shuts down due to heat overload. Stays standing. Make Pilot Eject Cliché roll. TN=10.
- 5 Mech falls down. Pilot trapped inside.
- 6 Mech falls down. Make Pilot Eject Cliché roll. TN=10

#### **Combat Example**

Two medium Mechs face each other. One is a HCT-3F HATCHETMAN. The other is a HBK-4G HUNCHBACK.

Turn 1 Both Mechs fire at each other. The HATCHETMAN rolls Shoot (4D8) and Resist Damage (4D8). The HUNCHBACK rolls Shoot (4D8) and Resist Damage (4D8). All rolls are 12. A tie. The referee rules that both miss.

Turn 2 Both fire again. HATCHETMAN rolls Shoot 11 and Resist Damage 16. HUNCHBACK rolls Shoot 26 and Resist Damage 21. The HATCHETMAN is hit and loses 1D to become Resist Damage (3D8).

Turn 3 The situation is critical. The HATCHETMAN jumps to melee range (TN=5, rolls 7), and attacks with his hatchet. The referee rules that the HUNCHBACK can shoot at the jumping Mech (TN=15) or punch with his hands. But not both. He will punch. HATCHETMAN rolls Shoot 17 (4D8+3 for hatchet), and Resist Damage 10. The HUNCHBACK rolls Shoot 18, and Resist Damage 16. Both Mechs lose 1D from the Resist Damage Cliché. The HATCHETMAN is Resist Damage (2D8). The HUNCHBACK is Resist Damage (3D8).

Turn 4 Both Mechs have a Speed of 65 kph, so the RUN AWAY bonus does not apply. The HATCHETMAN will jump out of harms way. He Pumps his Jump (3D6), by 2D, to Jump (5D6) and rolls a 30. The best he can do. The HUNCHBACK will attempt to punch the other Mech before it jumps. He rolls Shoot (4D8) for 31. The punch lands just as the other Mech leaves the ground. The HATCHETMAN loses 1D from his Resist Damage Cliché. He is at Resist Damage (1D). But, because he pumped his Jump Cliché, tried to jump and failed, the referee rules that he crashes. The referee rolls on the Battle Mech Damage Chart. The roll is a 3. The HATCHETMAN explodes. The pilot fails his Pilot Eject roll, and goes up with the Mech. The referee rules that the HUNCHBACK is too close to the exploding Mech and takes damage. He is reduced to Resist Damage (2D8). The HUNCHBACK looks for other prey.

#### **Inappropriate Clichés**

There does not seem to be any place for Inappropriate Clichés in Risus Battletech. BUT, the refree may give you a break if you role play it really, really well. It is up to the refree.

#### **Teaming Up**

Up to four Mechs (four Mechs is called a Lance) may gang up (team up) on a single opponent. This is the only way to take down a Heavy or Assault Mech with a group of lighter Mechs. The referee may ban Teaming Up if he wants. It is up to the referee.

#### **Conflicts That Aren't Combat**

A duel between Heavy or Assault Mechs would be a “single-action conflict”. The Mechs face off at twenty Mech paces. They target each other’s cockpits. They fire. The high roll wins. The other Mech’s cockpit is destroyed, and the pilot is dead. The losing Mech falls.

#### **When Somebody can't Participate**

This does not seem to apply to Risus Battletech. If you can’t participate, you are dead, or a Hapless Civilian.

#### **A Word Or Two About Scale**

Battle Mechs are BIG. They are from 3 to 30 meters tall, and can weigh 100+ tons. The average Mech has a pace of about 3 meters. Even a slow Assault Mech can move hundreds of meters in a short time. Each Combat Round should represent from 5 to 10 seconds.

#### **Battle Mech Advancement (Character Advancement)**

No Mech Cliché may be higher than Cliché (6). New Clichés may only be added with referee approval. You must

have a very, very good reason to add a new Cliché to your Mech.

Example

Congratulations! You have survived your first adventure. You are now Pilot: Rookie (+1). It is now time to improve your PNT 9R PANTHER's Jump Cliché. You roll your 3D6 Jump Cliché Dice. The dice land showing only EVEN numbers. Your Jump Cliché is now Jump (4D6). The referee may require you to role play or come up with a reason for the improvement to your Mech. (Through a combination of begging and bribery you have convinced your unit's master technician to fine tune the jump jets and improve their performance).

**Advanced Option II: Pumping Clichés**

Example

Your Light Mech (Jump) has come face-to-face with an Assault Mech. It is time to run (jump) away. You pump Jump(3D6) by 2 Dice to Jump (5D6). The Assault Mech fires on you with Shoot (4D8).

If you lose, your Mech is destroyed. You are hit in midair and have a spectacular crash. It is time to roll your Pilot Eject Cliché. Hope you make it.

If you WIN, you escape. Your Jump (3D6) drops, by 2D for the pump, to Jump (1D6). It is now low on fuel and should not be used again until refueled. If you try to use it you will probably blow your roll and crash. You are out of the Assault Mech's weapons range. On the next turn, you use your superior Speed to run away. The Assault Mech is unharmed, but the pilot will remember how you escaped him.

**Sources**

1. Risus, The Anything RPG. By S. John Ross. © 1999 by S. John Ross. (<http://www.io.com/~sjohn/risus.htm>)
2. Battletech Boardgame, 4th Edition. By FASA.© 1996 FASA Corporation. (<http://www.FASA.com>)
3. Battlepack, Fourth Succession War. By Randall N. Bills. © 1998 FASA Corporation.

**Concluding Remarks**

This is my mini-sourcebook for Risus, The Anything RPG. I hope you like it. Feedback is welcome.

Welcome to the 31st century. Fight with Honor. Enjoy!

Dale C. Blessing

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The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20010726205051/http://9thworld.tripod.com:80/>

## The 9th World Campaign Setting by Scott Dunlop, 2001

### Sections

#### Introduction

- [History](#)

- 

#### Geography

- 

#### People

- 

#### Technology

- 

#### Rulebook

- 

#### Sources

- 

Set in the far future, the Ninth World lives in a time where Mankind's technology has failed him, and been replaced with Magic.. Where the Faerie have returned from hiding to reclaim their rightful place on the face of the Urth, and a terrifying race known as the Elders look on with open disapproval and plot yet another cataclysmic downfall for man.

The Ninth World is a campaign setting for [Risus](#), It was inspired by [Gene Wolf's](#) excellent Book of the New Sun series, Neil Gaiman's recent fiction, and, to a far lesser degree by [Dream Pod 9's](#) Tribe 8 RPG, which, unfortunately, suffered from far too much angst for our purposes.

AUTHOR'S APOLOGY: The source material may seem a bit loose and scattered at the moment; it is currently in the process of being tuned and fleshed out from my own loose and scattered notes. Much of it is merely a placeholder to provide the reader with his own loose and scattered concept of the world we are creating.

This campaign is just beginning, to be honest, and is being played in the back rooms of [Timescape MUCK](#). Don't be offput by their website; Timescape is a haven of diversity, and an excellent place for roleplayers to congregate. If you are interested in joining, please, [send me an email](#). We will be starting our initial pre-session, where players sit down to discuss their characters, and form a group, on Saturday, July 14th, at 8 PM Eastern Time. If you are new to mucks, please, join Timescape a few days early so you can get familiar with the MUCK so there will be nothing distracting you on Saturday.

### News!

#### And Then There Were Six -- 07/10/01

There are at the moment six individuals who have voiced an interest in the campaign thus far. My goal is a healthy group of eight players, since usually 10% of a group is off at any given time with real life issues. Things are looking good for Saturday, gentlemen. If you can't make it to the pre-session, please get your character concepts to me, before Saturday, and I will see what I can do to weave you into the initial group concept.

Also, I have fleshed out the Technology section, giving more detail to all the types of Magic available in the Ninth World.. Some game mechanics have also been posted; these have not been set in stone, and may be tweaked as the campaign progresses for balance and gameplay purposes. Also, we have added the Faerie magical discipline, known as Eldritch.

#### Let Loose The Tide! -- 7/07/01

Let loose the tide! In just a week, we will be having our first pre-session. Suffice to say, I am extremely excited about all this, and I have been working night and day over the past week coming up with storyline ideas to carry us through the first couple story arcs. After that, I'm sure whatever mayhem our player group gets itself into will be more than enough to give me story hooks for a lifetime. ;) Please, come and join us on [Timescape MUCK](#), July 14th, at 8 PM Eastern time.

#### Rewritten: History -- 7/06/01

Okay. The history was just a timeline, and it was rather dull and uninteresting. We've scrapped the old document, and given a quick synopsis of the 9th World, as everyone knows it. Of course, History is like Language. It varies wherever you go. Also changed to match,

the Technology section got tweaked, the People section was actually written, this time, and I made pass through the whole thing, setting a default font and size for those of us whose browsers aren't configured to select the font we like by default.

**Updated: Technology -- 6/19/01**

In our ongoing goal of giving our players some concept of what kind of skills they can draw upon when designing their classes, we have added several new technologies: The Path, The Avatar and a quick summary of Medicine in the 9th world. Enjoy!

**Updated: Technology, Rulebook, Geography, History -- 6/18/01**

We have updated our Rulebook, and History sections with new content. The older, wretchedly phrased first-person stuff has been replaced with clearer, less flavorful text, and is more typical of what you would find in an RPG sourcebook than some mediocre fanfic. Those responsible have been shot.

You may have noticed a certain, er, dearth of information in Geography and People. These sections will come alive once we have had our pre-session, more on that later, and as we hold our campaign. I would like to lie to you, and say that we don't want to reveal things prematurely, but, to be honest, I'd rather create these realms as they are needed by the story.

As mentioned above, we are gearing up for our "pre-session." This is an RPG session where we do not intend to start a major part of the story. Instead, the players are invited to sit down, meet each other, and discuss their characters, how they want to form their group, and have a small one-shot adventure to work the kinks out. If you don't attend the pre-session, your selection of character concepts may be limited, and you'll have to wait for a good point for us to work you into whatever group the party decides to form. All this is done in the name of establishing a solid group, instead of lashing them together with poor plot mechanics.

--Scott Dunlop, GM, 9th World.

*This page has been degaussed, reduced in color, reshaped and written in vi for your viewing pleasure.  
Please, don't criticize the colors, it offends the resident Troglodytes something fierce.*

# VIKINGS OF THE CARIBBEAN

A campaign setting for Risus, the Anything RPG (By S. John Ross © 1993-2001

<http://www.io.com/~sjohn/risus.htm>

All original material ©2001 Guy Hoyle

This is a campaign set in a world where the Norse smashed Constantinople in the late 10<sup>th</sup> Century, pillaged the rest of Europe, and went on to establish a permanent presence in Vinland (the New World). The setting is based on “Midgard” from GURPS “Alternate Earths 2”, by Steve Jackson Games. Other gaming inspiration is drawn from the “Vikings Campaign Sourcebook” for Advanced Dungeons and Dragons, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, by TSR; “Vikings”, from ICE’s Campaign Classics series; and “Vikings: Nordic Roleplaying for RuneQuest”, a supplement for Avalon Hill’s RuneQuest, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. I also owe a lot of this material to Issaries, Inc.’s game “Hero Wars: Roleplaying in Glorantha”, and its supplements “Thunder Rebels” and “Storm Tribes”.

## VIKING CLICHÉS

These clichés could be used for any “Viking” campaign, set in this campaign or other Nordic campaigns. Other clichés more typical of this setting will follow. Note that some of these are occupations (some of which may or may not be useful for adventuring); some are dramatic roles, and some may be qualities or metaphors. Go figure.

### Thud and Blunder

Though most Norsemen know something of the spear and shield to defend their homes, most of them are not full-time warriors. Warriors typically know how to use a number of weapons, such as swords, spears, axes, and shields; in this setting, Black Powder weapons such as cannons and matchlock pistols and rifles are also found in Vinland, but they are considered unreliable and somewhat dangerous.

Warrior (Weapon & Shield ; Defend the Stead, Sleep Whenever You Can, Carouse).

These are full-time warriors who defend a local community, disdaining those who work with crafts or farms.

Viking (Weapon & Shield; Bypass Defenses; Rape, Pillage& Plunder; Ambush, Bail).

“Going a-Viking” is not uncommon amongst Norsemen; taking this cliché means that the character has some affinity for raiding.

Varangian (Weapon & Shield, Surtsspjót; Tactics, Strong & Tough, See Opponent’s Weakness, Loyalty to Employer/Plotting Against Employer, World Traveller).

Varangians are typically mercenaries in service to a foreign power, learning something of other places and peoples.

Huscarl (Weapon & Shield, Surtsspjót; Riding, Spot Ambush, Touchy Pride, Loyalty to King/Jarl). Huscarls were warriors permanently employed by a king or jarl, and fighting in his wars.

Shieldmaiden (Weapon & Shield; Better Than A Man, Don’t Grab Me, Piercing Shriek, Rally Women, Now I’m Angry, Last Ditch Effort, Valkyrie’s Countenance).

Women warriors were uncommon, but not unknown, even though they faced much pressure to take up a woman’s more proper roles.

### Toiling in the Woods and Fields

Farmer (Manage Stead, Plow Fields, Strong as an Ox, Talk About Crops, Talk About Weather, Honest Work, Fix Things,)  
 Fisherman (Go Fish, Keep Quiet, Make Traps, Make Nets, Swim, Know the Waters, Boating)  
 Herder (Care For Herd, Look For Herd, Train Dog, Stay Alert, Listen, Butcher, Bow or Sling, Run Long Distance)  
 Hunter (Bow or Javelin, Be Still & Hide, Know Prey, Stalk Prey, Slay Cleanly, Use Every Bit of Prey, Set Traps, Mimic Animal Sounds, Find Shelter, Know Wild Plants)

### Making and Baking

Brewer (Brew Ale or Mead, Keep Bees, Shake Off Hangover)  
 Woodcrafter (Make Things Out Of Wood, Make Good Lumber, Build Longship)  
 Smith (Make Things Out of Iron, Ignore Burns, Impressive Muscles, Evaluate Metal)  
 Crafter (Craft, Make Minor Equipment, Find Necessary Supplies, Haggle). Major equipment, such as ovens, kilns, looms, etc., are assumed to be available, and the person able to maintain them, unless otherwise specified. Pottery, baking, and weaving are often part of the household duties of someone on a stead, and may not be a full-time job except in towns.

### In The Town

Jarl or King (Look Imposing, Bluster, Debate, See Compromise, Keep Warriors Happy, Keep Factions Happy, Rally Followers, Sense Mood of Followers, Instill Pride, Lead Warriors, Intimidate Priest, Find Weakness in Argument, Negotiate)  
 Lawspeaker (Be Impartial, Cite Precedent, Interrogate Witness, Know Unseen Factors, Respect My Authority, Sense Dissent, Find Weakness in Argument, Talk for Hours, Know the Laws, Find Compromise, Memorize, Speak With Authority, Know History)  
 Redesman (Solid Citizen, Support Leader, Know the Law, Inspire the Community, Know Factions)  
 Godi (Viking Myths, Perform Sacrifice, Sense Gods Nearby, Sense Spirits Nearby, Tend Sacred Grove). These are “priests” of the Norse, but they don’t necessarily wield any kind of magic powers from the gods.  
 Healer (First Aid, Recognize Illness, Splint and Stitch, Bandage and Bind, Make Healing Broth, Dodge Attack, Carry Patient to Safety, Earsplitting Scream, Evade Pursuers, Hide Self, Survive Battle)  
 Herbalist (Brew Noxious Potions, Distill Ingredients, Find Healing Materials, Suck Poison)

### At Home

Steadholder (Happy Home, Intimidate Sons, Please Wife, “Yes Dear”)  
 Steadwife (Butchering, Domestic Chores, Gardening, Manage A Household, Weaving, Prepare Food, Store Food, First Aid, Tend Animals, Maintain Peace in the Stead, Run Household, Raise Children, Tend Hearth)  
 Midwife (Old Wives’ Tales, Spot Signs of Pregnancy, Tend Mother-to-Be, Advise Mothers-To-Be)

Thrall (Bear Heavy Burden, Go Without Food, Ignore Pain, Go Without Sleep, Work Till You Drop, Endure Shame)  
 Matchmaker (Assess Boy & Girl, Calm Ardor, Ignite Passion, Reconcile Parents, Kiss and Make Up, Negotiate)  
 Wise Friend (Boost Confidence, Resolve Argument, Prevent Anger, Reach Consensus, Sting Pride, Lift Others' Burdens, Lighten Heart)  
 Grandmother (Prepare Corpse, Genealogy, Old Wives' Tales, Hide Possessions, Here's a Treat, Know Secret)

### **On the Road**

Skald (Compose Poem, Sing & Play, Memorize, Learn Local History)  
 Vagabond (Carry Heavy Burden, Endure Bad Weather, Go Without Food, Running, Know Local Area, Hide Possessions)  
 Outlaw (Avoid Enemies, Find Food and Water, Improvise Shelter, Sense Danger, Wild Strength, Strike Secretly, Ambush)  
 Thief (Avoid Trap, Sneak, Remain Motionless, Eavesdrop, Find Escape Route)  
 Wayfarers (Wanderlust, Curiosity, Eavesdrop, Find A Way, Live Off The Land, Go Native, Remember Terrain, Communicate with Strangers)  
 Trader (Evaluate Goods, Drive Hard Bargain, Protect Goods, Organize Caravan, Communicate with Stranger)  
 Trollblood (Nightsight and Nightstrength, Endure the Elements, Hard to Cut; Tall, Grey, and Intimidating).  
 Performer (Amaze/Thrill/Amuse/Terrify/Move Audience, Sing Ditty, Clever Dance, Do Tricks, Cadge Meal, Entice Gratuities, Wanderlust)

### **Envied**

Lucky (Catch A Break, Right Place At The Right Time, Not As Bad As It Could Be)  
 Handsome or Beautiful (Attract Opposite Sex, Remarkable Features, Complimentary Nickname, Much-Envied)  
 Brave (Respect of the Warriors, Steadfast Comrades, Noticed by Skalds, Fearless, First in Battle)

### **Heroic and Magical Clichés (all use the Double Pump option)**

"Wise as Odin" (Staves of Wisdom, Come and Go Mysteriously, Grim Visage, Carve Runes, Bless Corpse, Lift Curse, Know Wyrd)  
 "Staunch as Tyr" (Word of Honor, Maintain Composure, Against All Odds, Recognize Lie, Shame Coward, Frightful Visage, Face Down Foe, Sacrifice Own Welfare, Rally Warriors, Commanding Presence)  
 "Mighty as Thor" (Tremendous Strength, Fling Hammer, Rebounding Hammer, Slay Giant, Drive Goat-Cart)  
 "Sneaky as Loki" (Lie Convincingly, Turn Things Around, Shift Blame, Find Advantage, Endure Misfortune, Invisible Hand, Walk Without Footprints, Squeeze Through Gap)  
 "Swift as Hermod" (Burst of Speed, Leave No Tracks, Swift as the Wind, Travel Safely)  
 "Eloquent as Bragi" (Compose Poetry, Smooth Tongue, Heroic Oration)  
 "Handsome as Baldur" (Soothe Anger, Make Friends, Offer Hope)

"Wise as Freya" (Calm Patient, Ease Birth, Bless Child, Increase Fecundity, Ignite Passion, Calm Ardor, Terrible Beauty, Manipulate Lover, Lift Curse)

"Cute and Furry as Ratatosk" (Amuse Children, Earn the Respect of the Aged, Attract Fleas)

"Steadfast as Heimdal" (Stay Awake, Hear Any Sound, Ignore Distraction, Awake and Alarm, Night Vision, See Far, Sleep With One Eye Open, Endure Cold)

"Wet as Njord" (Attract Good Catch, Enticing Fish Lure, Inescapable Net, Reel In Catch, Strengthen Fishing Line, Avoid Reef, Crest Waves, Keep Boat Afloat, Point to Nearest Land, Avoid Tides)

"Relentless as Ullr" (Attract Prey, Conceal Hunter, Hide Scent, Invisible Pitfall, Sure Throw, Avoid Claws, Run Up Tree)

"Capable as Frigga" (Midwife Lore, Mother's Magic, Bless Stead, Cheerful Song, Weave Without Flaws, Always Have Enough On Hand, Berate Family)

Second Sight (See Ghost, Know Wyrd, Farsighted, See Curse, Unavoidable Doom)

Berserker Fury (Ignore Wounds, Against All Odds, Terrifying Visage, Fight While Dying, Smash, Crush, Kill, Intimidate, Immune to Fire, Great Strength, Become Bear/Wolf, Single-Minded Slaughterer). Berserkers often sacrifice to either Odin or Freya.

Shaman (Sinister Countenance, Unmanly Acts, Climb Platform, Enter Trance, Blunt Edged Weapons, Sing Magic Songs, Visit the World of the Dead, Clairvoyance, Curses and Curse-Breaking, Scrying, Blunt Iron, Dying Gaze, Final Curse, Animate the Battle-Dead, Lay the Dead to Rest, Obscure Battlefield, Interfere with Other Shamans). Shamans are most often women; male shamans are seen as unmanly because of their reliance upon magic rather than martial prowess. Their magic is often called "platform magic" because they perform it upon a tall, gallows-like platform. Male shamans worship Odin, while females follow Freya.

Trollwise (Find Troll Mound, Trollfriend, Blunt Edged Weapons, Find Magic Ingredients, Tie Up/Release Wind and Waves/Fire/etc., Enchant Animal Skin, Brew Magic Potion). Trollfriends tie magic knots, brew potions, and can assume the shape of a wild animal by putting on an enchanted animal skin, which others can wear as well.

Runeshaper . A trained runeshaper starts out with the knowledge of one Rune (see the Rune Magic section, below). Anyone who knows one of the Runes automatically knows how to carve it is stone or wood or bone, stain it with his blood, and improvise a poem to enchant it.

### Vinland-Specific Clichés

(Gunpowder and ocean-going sailing technology are available to Vinlanders, which proves to be a great advantage to them in their new home. The most common types of firearms are cannons and black powder weapons such as matchlock pistols and rifles, or surtsspjóts, all of which are unreliable single-shot weapons.)

Vèlverker (Make Gunpowder, Forge Cannon, Make Matchlock Pistols/Rifles, Mining, Mineral Lore). These are the gunsmiths of the Norrsemen. Because their firearms are often touchy, it's not uncommon for a Vèlverker to me missing some fingers, teeth, hads, limbs, or even eyes.

Shipwright (Build Ship, Patch Leaks, Make Sails, Boil Pitch, Career Ship)

Sailor (Trim Rigging, Row Boat, Swab Deck, Endure Hardship, Eat Disgusting Food, Endure Seasickness, Batten Down Hatches, Step Lively Now, Sing Shanty, Tie Knots, Tattoo, Wenching, Carousing, Brawling, Girl In Every Port)

### **Other Clichés**

I still need to work on clichés for Christians (“Pious as a Saint”, etc.), Skraelings (native American tribes such as the Algonquin and Iroquois groups), Muslims from the area of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico area, Aztecs, etc.

### **Flaws**

Ugly: Scare Children, Disgust the Opposite Sex, Unflattering Feature, Uncomplimentary Nickname, Sour Milk

Coward: Hated By All, Slinker From Battle, No Friend of Dogs, Belittled and Abused

Blood Feud: Your family is at war with another family, and may have been so for generations. Sometimes the feud recedes into the background, but it flares up whenever your families interact too closely. Attempts at ending the feud often tend to end badly; marriage between the two clans is usually disastrous.

Missing limbs or eyes: especially for gunsmiths and sailors. Peg legs, patches, crutches, prosthetic hooks, and parrots may be appropriate.

Wyrd: Doom, Fate. Your character knows something about the manner in which he will die. Attempts to circumvent this will not be successful, and are often seen as cowardly. Meeting your fate bravely, knowing that your time is come, is very admirable.

Outlawed: All Norsemen typically enjoy the support of their kin, their comrades, and their patrons. In war and in law, a man's worth depends on how many will stand with him. An outlaw cannot seek redress, and can often be killed without penalty to his murderer. Incest, kinslaying, secret murder, and oathbreaking are typical reasons that someone may be outlawed; ignorance of the circumstances may be tragic, but do not mitigate the crime.

## **RUNE MAGIC**

Runes are hard to learn. Typically, one will learn a rune from somebody who already knows a rune, or from some magical occurrence (fasting and mortification, a bird whispers it in your ear, a divine revelation, etc.) Each rune must be learned separately; in effect, it is its own cliché.

The runes have to be carved carefully and artistically, dyed with the runeshaper's own blood and then enchanted with a poem which is improvised upon the spot. Anyone can try to carve a rune, but if a rune is miscarved or misenchanted, then it often rebounds disastrously upon the carver. In addition to the futhark, or runic alphabet, the runeshaper uses other artistic details such as ornamentation, depictions of the person or event, natural or mythic beasts, etc.

Runes are usually shaped for a specific target, time, event, or purpose; you cannot shape a rune ahead the time it will be used, or store them up. They can be shaped for the caster or whomever or whatever he wishes, as appropriate.

Typical places to put a rune, depending on the purpose, are:

- On an amulet, which stays in effect until the amulet is taken off;
- On a plank which is put in the target's bed, typically for love charms, causing or curing diseases, etc.;

- On a standing stone, stake or pole which is driven into an appropriate piece of ground (the target's property, a grave mound), which can be removed by the target;
- On a piece of hide, skin, or feathers of an appropriate type of animal;
- On a piece of wood which is thrown into a fire, the sea, etc., lasting until the event is over (voyage ends, sailor shipwrecked, fire is out)
- On an object to be used appropriately by the target (drinking vessel, shield, weapon, helmet, etc.).
- You can't carve a rune on a living being. (Well, you can, but it's messy, and the target often objects.)

### Typical Runes

- Ale: Vessel shatters when poison is poured in Rune lasts until cup is shattered..
- Bind: breaks fetters, unties knots, and opens locks. Can also be used to make unbreakable fetters, untieable knots, and unopenable locks (except for the target).
- Catch: Allows the wielder to catch spears, axes, knives, etc. when thrown at him, for a day.
- Beast: Speak with a specific, individual wild animal (e.g., the bear that killed Theyni last winter)
- Battle: Weapon prowess, until the weapon is put down or exchanged, or the character is asleep or unconscious.
- Shape: Assume the form of a wild animal, until character falls asleep or unconscious or wills it to end.
- Love: must be hidden in the bed of prospective lover; may anger lover if discovered.
- Dead: Converse with a specific dead individual, or keep him from afterganging. The dead cannot lie, but they are not always cooperative or helpless, and may not always lie easy afterwards.
- Disease: victim wastes away.
- Fortune: foretell the future, in a general fashion, which usually comes true.
- Cure: cures diseases, must be placed in the bed of one suffering from natural or non-runic diseases.
- Iron-Can't-Bite: protection from battle-runes.
- Limb: cures most battle injuries short of loss of a limb.
- Lore: seek the answers to a single question, summoning a prophetic dream within the week. If miscarved, visited by the unquiet dead.
- Luck: good or bad, in effect from sunrise to sunset.
- Curse: must have a good cause for the curse, and the rune is planted on the property of the victim. Curse cannot kill the victim directly. Lasts until either the victim or the curser is dead, have resolved their issues, or the rune is destroyed or negated.
- Quench: rune is carved on a piece of wood and cast into the fire.
- Sea: protects sea-voyagers. Carved into prow, rudder, oars, and mast of ship; lasts until any of these is destroyed.
- Sight: gives second sight to individual for on use.
- Speech: target is eloquent for half a day, while he wears the amulet.

- Shield: protects a warrior when carved inside his shield. Will only work for shield's owner; is negated when character is defeated in a duel or runs from battle.
- Strength: lasts a few hours.
- Triumph: lasts for a specific battle, or until the user drops or changes his weapon, goes unconscious, or is defeated.
- Water: Protection from drowning or exposure in the water.

The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20060520095108/http://www.geocities.com:80/karlaananen/DoctorWhoRisus.html>

Here are my first ideas for adapting the Doctor Who TV series to RISUS:

## Preliminary notes for RISUS DOCTOR WHO:

"RISUS: The Anything RPG" is a role-playing game created by S. John Ross. It is available COMPLETELY FREE at the Risus website:  
<http://www.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

This is a fan work created by a fan of the Doctor Who television series, and has not been created for profit. No challenge is meant to any person or entity holding any copyright relating to the Doctor Who television series. I greatly encourage everyone reading this to watch Doctor Who any chance they get, and purchase products licensed by the series.

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(None of this has been playtested, so I welcome feedback on these preliminary notes. Please e-mail me at [karlaananen@hotmail.com](mailto:karlaananen@hotmail.com) with your thoughts)

## Character generation:

I would suggest limiting starting characters to ten dice, but have the option of putting up to six dice in any one cliché. Starting characters should not have any funky dice. Double-pumps may be appropriate for some clichés. The GM can award extra dice for hooks.

However, I would suggest that giving bonus dice for "tales" is not appropriate for this genre. Characters in the Doctor Who TV series often had mysterious pasts that we learned more about as the series went on. This is most noticeable with the central character: "The Doctor". When we first met the Doctor, all we knew about him was that he was an elderly alien scientist who traveled with his granddaughter in a (probably stolen) time machine called the TARDIS. The series name "Doctor Who" alludes to the mystery surrounding this character. Throughout the 26 seasons the show was on the air, we learned a lot about the Doctor, but many questions still remained unanswered. We don't even know his real name.

Common PC clichés include:

### **Scientist**

(understanding advanced science, building high tech devices from available resources, operating and repairing high tech devices)

### **Army Officer**

(firing handguns, leading soldiers, keeping your head while all around are losing theirs and blaming it on you, understanding military protocol and regulations)

**Tools:** handgun

Most PC army officers will be assigned to UNIT (the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce)

### **Future Human**

(using futuristic technology, familiarity with advanced science, recognizing alien races that humans have come into contact with in the future, understanding future society)

### **Gallifreyan/Time Lord**

(living a long time, possessing alien anatomy, understanding advanced science, understanding time travel, speaking and understanding other languages, regenerating, identifying other Time Lords even after they have regenerated, being aware of own dark side, possessing other latent telepathic powers, participating in Gallifreyan politics)

NOTE: most Time Lords and other Gallifreyans need some form of technological aid to use their "other latent telepathic powers" See the Regeneration Rules below for more information on regenerating

### **Female Companion**

(looking pretty, wearing short skirts, screaming, surviving adventures)

### **Male Companion**

(brawling, running around corridors, surviving adventures, rescuing female companions)

## Incarnation of the Doctor

(everything listed for Time Lord, and for Scientist, plus: finding useful items in pockets; sharing Time Lord language gift with companions; resisting mind control, mind probes and hypnosis; extensive first hand knowledge of the history and cultures of the universe; stumbling across adventures throughout time and space; saving the universe; saving the earth; preventing Earth's past from being noticeably changed)

**Tools:** The Doctor uses a sonic screwdriver when building and repairing high tech equipment, without this tool he is at half his cliché score for these activities. The Doctor uses an old type 40 TARDIS to “stumble across adventures throughout time and space”, he has no ability to do this without the TARDIS (but could use half his cliché score if he used some other Time Lord’s TARDIS)

This list of clichés is by no means meant to be exhaustive, these are merely common clichés based on the major characters in the series.

## Special rules for regeneration:

Regeneration is a special Time Lord ability. Each Time Lord can only regenerate twelve times.

Time Lords usually regenerate voluntarily when they are late into old age, but before they get so old that they “must regenerate”. A regeneration attempt uses the character’s Time Lord cliché against a target number of 5. If this roll fails, then the Time Lord has used up one of their twelve regenerations. If the roll succeeds, then the player may redesign their character (provided the GM okays the new character, of course). The new character cannot be built on more dice than the old character. The new character must have the cliché “incarnation of [old character]”. This new cliché can be used as ANY cliché that was possessed by the old character. The player must allocate at least one dice to it, but this new cliché cannot start higher than the old character’s highest cliché plus one. The new character does not have to have the same hook or hooks as the old character, but can choose a new hook. The player must write a new description of the new character.

Finally, the player must offer the new character to one of the other players in the group to play. If you do not want players to have more than one character, you should give new incarnations to players who need replacement characters. Otherwise, the new character should become an NPC. But the GM should not allow players to retain characters after they regenerate.

EXAMPLE: Jack plays a Time Lord called “The Lawyer”. He decides to regenerate. The Lawyer’s stats are as follows:

Time Lord (4) Attorney (4) Experienced time and space traveler (2) Golf Player (1)

Hook: very elderly

Jack rolls the Lawyer’s four Time Lord dice and gets a fourteen, easily beating the TN of 5. So Jack begins redesigning the character. Since the Lawyer is a ten dice character (with an extra dice for the hook), the new character cannot be built on more than ten dice. Jack starts with the cliché “Incarnation of the Lawyer”. He must put at least one dice and cannot put more than five into this cliché, and the player decides to put the maximum of five into this cliché. This new cliché can be used as a “Time Lord” cliché, an “Attorney” cliché, a “Time Traveler” cliché and a “Golf Player” cliché. The player goes on to assign the other five dice to other clichés. He drops the “very elderly” hook (doing this was probably the main reason for regenerating), and with the GM’s okay picks a new hook, gaining an eleventh die for his new character. Jack writes a new description for the Lawyer’s new incarnation. Jack then asks another player, Tom, if he would like to play the incarnation of the Lawyer, since Tom’s last character stayed behind in the last adventure to help a planet rebuild after a Dalek invasion. Finally, Jack constructs a brand new character for himself to play, which the GM will introduce in the party’s next adventure.

### Additional Regeneration Rules:

If any of a regenerating character’s cliché dice have been lost due to injury, add five to the target number for each dice that has been lost. When regenerating, a character always rolls the full dice in their Time Lord cliché, even if this has been reduced due to injury.

A character can use regeneration to prevent death. If a Time Lord character is killed in a life or death contest such as combat, they automatically start to regenerate instead. The target number is five, plus an additional five for each dice they have lost, as above. If this roll is unsuccessful, then the character fails to regenerate, and dies. When a character regenerates to prevent death in this way, they do not have the level of control that they would for a “normal” regeneration. This is handled by allowing the GM to create the newly regenerated character instead of the player.

During a “controlled” regeneration, there is a brief period where the Time Lord can “try on” various bodies, checking themself in the mirror, asking the opinions of friends, and so on, before settling on the final form of the new incarnation. The form of a new incarnation can even be a duplicate (at least externally) of another person.

After an “uncontrolled” regeneration, there is a period of confusion and partial amnesia. Most clichés are at half score during this period.

A Time Lord can also create a psychic projection. This is a task using the Time Lord cliché at a target number of 10. A psychic projection has all of the same cliché scores as the character, but does not necessarily have the same hooks. After they have created a psychic projection, a character’s own cliché scores all drop to (1). The psychic projection remains separate from the Time Lord until the Time Lord next regenerates. At this time, the psychic projection merges with the Time Lord, guaranteeing an automatic success on their roll to regenerate.

**COMING SOON:** Cliches for Villains and Aliens!!!



# DUNGHOLES AND DUNDERHEADS

Assorted Fantasy-Based Cliches for [Risus: The Anything RPG](#) © 1993-2001 by S. John Ross

**Dungholes and Dunderheads (First Edition!) © 2002 Guy Gregory Hoyle**

*Do we really need more clichés for fantasy campaigns? After all, in addition to the ones in the Risus game itself, Jason Puckett's got some, Brandon Blackmoor's got some, Mark Whitley's got some, Hollis McCray's got some, Carl Hewitt's got some... you get the picture.*

*But that didn't stop me. What actually stopped me, after a week or so, was the fact that the campaign I was creating these clichés for has mutated into a completely different type of campaign. Rather than consign them to electronic oblivion, I decided to inflict these upon the Risus community and the World-Wide Web. So they're a tad... unfinished.*

*I don't claim that any of them are completely original, but anything that inspired me, I tried to scrape off the serial numbers and put my own little twist on. But all the guys I mentioned above spurred me on, even if they didn't know it. Thanks, guys!*

*Permission granted to use these as you will, but if you put 'em up on your website or use 'em in a game, be a pal and gimme a [holler](#). If you publish them as your own and make a million dollars off of it, I'll be sending the Mind Flayers and Brain Moles after you.*

**Suggestions and comments are also welcome.**

**Guy Hoyle (<mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net>)**

## FIGHTER CLICHÉS

**These guys all know how to kick ass and take names.**

### **Fighter**

Slay monsters, hew limbs, bash heads, clean gore off your weapons and armor

*Variations: Reluctant Warrior, Grim Humorless Veteran, Merry Swordsman, Grizzled Old Campaigner, Gullible Castle Guard, Doomed Champion, Philosophical Sargeant, Natural Leader, Sneaky Strategist*

### **Ranger**

Tramp stealthily through the wild, fight monsters, know nature lore, do trick arrow stunts, wear camouflage

*Variations: Guardian of the Forest, Beastmaster, Royal Falconer, Xenophobic Mountain Man, Wild Man*

### **Barbarian**

Glower menacingly at soft city dwellers, complain about the filthy streets, praise the virtues of living in a crude lean-to in your faraway homeland, forget to shower except when it rains, heft a mean battleaxe, perform amazing feats of martial prowess, have a *wyrd* or *geas*, leave a trail of destruction at a moment's notice, drink kegs of ale, punch out rude oxen

### **Gladiator**

Salute the emperor because you're about to die, fight with odd weapons and too little armor, please the crowd, flex muscles impressively, "it's just a scratch", kill opponents entertainingly, learn clever ways to "die" convincingly

*Variations: Enslaved Pit-Fighter, Famous Professional Gladiator, Overconfident Pit-Warrior*

### **Outlaw**

Spit in the face of authority, scoff at the law, rob wayfarers and passersby, live in unpleasant places, disguise yourself as harmless local, travel lightly, watch your back, brag about the bounty on your head

**Note: just about anybody can be an outlaw, so this is a great cliche to combine or pair with others.**

*Variations: Freedom-Loving Rebel, Fugitive from Justice, Reluctant Gangster,*

### **Pugilist**

Fight without weapons or armor, float like butterfly/sting like bee, get in lots of duels, register fists as deadly weapons

*Variation: Befuddled Bare-Knuckled Boxer, Romantic Kick-Boxer, Ascetic Martial Arts Monk,*

### Pirate

Sail the seas, attack ships, ransom wealthy prisoners, climb the rigging, say things like “Sink me fer a lubber!” and “Shiver me timbers!”, have an eyepatch or a peg leg or a hook

*Variations: Dashing Privateer, Grizzled Sea Dog, One-Eyed Buccaneer, Rum-Swilling Freebooter*

### Sharpshooter

Hit a fly’s eye at 100 yards, be rock-steady, be extremely protective of your equipment

*Variations: Eagle-eyed Archer, Craft Spellcaster, Trick Knife Thrower*

### Weapon Master

Single-minded devotion to mastering one type of weapon, not being able to master other types of weapons, being able to do cool things with the type of weapon that you can master

*Variations: World-weary Swordslinger, Eager Young Duellist, Lord of the Lash*

### Soldier of Fortune

Getting paid for fighting, getting tricked out of being paid by evil lord who hired you, looking to be hired by a non-evil lord, gambling and drinking and wenching your pay away

*Variations: Avaricious Mercenary, Idealistic Sellsword, Heartbroken Foothslogger*

### Soldier

Perform duty, esprit de corps, take orders from your superiors, give orders to your subordinates, know the regulations, complain about the food, stand watch, complain about “the brass”, maintain discipline on the battlefield, gamble and drink and wench off duty

*Variations: Grizzled Veteran, Green Young Recruit, Dashing Young Officer, Bumbling Old Campaigner, Pious Conquistador, Young Woman Disguised as a Soldier*

### Thug

Know every filthy street and alley on your turf, prey on the helpless, be loud and obnoxious, use violence as a negotiation tactic

*Variations: cocky bravo, belligerent mook, hired lackey, brutish lout, amoral henchman, enormous bouncer*

### Paladin

Smiting evil, ride big horse, being holy, being chivalrous, rebuffing undead creatures

*Variations: Defender of the Faith, Pious Templar, Compassionate Hospitaller, Disillusioned Knight Errant, Militant Priest, High-Handed Cavalier, Gallant Chevalier, Devout Crusader*

### Samurai

Follow code of *bushido*\*<sup>\*</sup>, use neat weapons, know some artsy skills, shout “kiai!” and fight impressively

*\*Obey your lord absolutely, be ready to die for your honor or your lord, avenge dishonor to your honor/lord/family, repay all debts honorably, don’t display cowardice at any time*

*Variation: Dishonored Samurai, Honorable Ronin*

### Cattle Raider

Sneak past patrols, quiet cattle, liberate herd, know lots of rope tricks

## ROGUISH CLICHES

**Thief**

Steal valuables, purloin treasure, filch a fortune, pilfer swag, cut purses, burgle shops, loot coffers, ransack vaults, slink warily, shadow victims, strike from behind, fence booty, bypass booby traps, scale obstacles

*Variations: Deft Cutpurse, Dashing Highwayman, Gentleman Jewel-Thief*

**Assassin**

Kill people for money, sneak around secret passages, wear cheesy disguises, use interesting poisons, obey the Assassin's Code\*

\*1) Get the gold up front; 2) No freebies; 3) It doesn't matter how they die, as long as you're paid for it; 4) He who stalks and runs away, lives to slay another day.

*Variation: Sly Ninja, Murderous Cutthroat, Surreptitious Strangler*

**Beggar**

Grovel convincingly, show crippling injury, flatter gullible passersby, spin tale of woe, collect juicy gossip, rummage through garbage heaps, eat stuff that would gag an orc, sleep in alleys and on doorsteps

*Variations: Vagabond, Tramp, Mendicant, Panhandler, Freeloader*

**Spy**

Sneak around, decode secret messages, eavesdrop, stay out of the way, disguise, know foreign languages, get back with information

*Variations: sleuth, informer*

**Amorous Scoundrel**

Go without sleep, run from enraged spouse, leap out window, caress passionately, endear with a look, virility under duress, be attractive and charming

**MAGIC CLICHÉS**

*Almost all magicians, unless otherwise noted, need to use material equipment, components, gestures, and incantations to cast spells; doing without these requirements raises the TN of the spell or makes a misfire more likely. Magicians traditionally shun weapons other than a dagger and staff, and usually wear no armor, since they tend to hinder a magician's spellcasting ability. However, magician/warriors are not unknown.*

*Magic-Users are generalists, not focusing on any one magical specialty; they have the widest range of magic at the cost of power and finesse. Magical specialists, such as the Abjurer or the Conjuror, are capable of very refined and subtle spells, but only in their own professions. Village crones, mediums, and hedge wizards are looked down upon by all wizards as untrained meddlers, dabbling in arts best left to the professionals.*

**Magic-User**

Tramp through dungeons and hostile wildernesses, be a magical jack-of-all-trades, cast spells with polysyllabic names and strange ingredients, have trouble casting esoteric and specialized spells

**Alchemist**

Brew useful but noxious potions, analyze somebody else's noxious potions, write recipes in a complex code, seek the philosopher's stone, find out how to turn lead into gold, blow up lab on a regular basis

**Village Crone**

Cackle menacingly, prepare corpse, tell how much better things used to be, hide valuables away, know secret

**Necromancer**

Summon spirits of the dead, reanimate corpse, command the undead, look good in black, be spooky, hang around in graveyards and ancient battlefields, exorcise ghosts, make flesh rot, make things die

**Hedge Wizard**

Find lost possessions, craft protective amulets, scare away vermin and unwelcome visitors, create sleeping potion, cure minor ills, use natural properties of plants and animals  
<file:///home/olivier/olivier3/JDR-RPG/TTRPG/Risus/RisusTalk/Files/Guy Hoyle/dunholesandunderheads.htm>

**Sorcerer**

Make trouble, afflict with boils, poison wells, afflict cattle, cause plague, pretend not to be a sorcer or

**Medium**

Hold seance, enter trance, contact spirit guide, contact the dead, speak in spooky voices, interpret knocks on the walls by spirits of the dear departed, speak in spooky voices

**Abjurer**

Cast spells which ward, discourage, dispel, eliminate, and hinder people, places, and things. Prevent and remove curses, protect against injury or misfortune, exorcise possessing demons, banish extraplanar creatures.

**Transmuter**

Turn things into other things, make things bigger/ smaller /heavier/ lighter/ etc., unlock doors (and vice versa), change sex, change stone into mud, change lead into gold

**Conjuror**

Bring forth living and non-living things, dispel conjured things, make circle of protection against the creatures you've conjured, know secret names of creatures, contact entities from other realms of existence.

**Spellbinder**

Change opinions, control minds, alter emotions, hypnotize, endow items or creatures with magical powers,

**Enchanter**

Make magical things, spend lots of time in the shop, know an appropriate crafting skill, stay at home a lot, get sought out by people on quests

**Diviner**

Cast horoscope, examine livers, read palms, interpret omens, gaze into crystal ball, examine head-bumps, read cards, read tea leaves, dowse for water, use ouija board, look in magic scrying pool, read runes, bibliomancy, interpret dreams, cast lots, psychometry

**Illusionist**

Create noises, make people think there's a monster attacking them, make things look like they're other things, make people think they've been attacked by something real, keep people from seeing things that are actually there

**Invoker**

Call upon supernatural entities for aid, shape magical forces, cast lightning bolts and fireballs, snare enemies in sticky webs, create walls of fog and mist, summon cloud of poisonous gas,

**Warlock**

Know how to use weapons and magic together, carry troops over walls, spy on enemy plans, undermine enemy defenses, detect enemy ambushes, hinder enemy's attacks

*(Yeah, I know I'm using "warlock" in the wrong sense, but I like it this way)*

**Demonologist**

Summon demons, compel or negotiate with demons, get rid of demons, smell faintly of brimstone

**PRIESTLY CLICHÉS****Cleric**

Use no edged weapons, advance the interests of your god, turn undead, read omens, beseech the gods to intercede, deliver sermons, mouth platitudes

**Village Priest**

Bless crops and cattle, perform marriages, bless newborns, perform funerals, serve the gods

**Druid**

Sacrifice prisoners (only when absolutely necessary), predict weather, answer questions with riddles, invoke the powers of nature, perform bizarre rituals

*Variations: Rebel Druid, Village Druid, Wandering Druid*

**Bloodthirsty Crone**

Appease the Earth, assure fertility, inflict curse on the wicked, lift curse from community, conduct human sacrifice (only when necessary), stop plague

**Mystic**

Seek enlightenment, meditate upon obscure philosophical dilemmas, avoid unnecessary confrontations (but not the necessary ones), use obscure quotations from dead philosophers and strange folk wisdom, feign death, leave body, levitate self, don't own more than you can carry

**Note:** Combine this with the Pugilist to get a martial arts Monk

**Houngan**

Make voodoo dolls, dance ecstatically, be possessed by *loa*

**MISCELLANEOUS CLICHES**

*I couldn't decide which category to put most of these in, so I lumped them all together.*

**Acrobat**

Juggle, walk tightrope, amuse audiences, wear funny clothes, be nimble, be sure-footed

**Amazon**

Stand up for yourself to any patronizing male, show women how to fend for themselves, show those bully-boys who's better

**Animal Master**

Talk to animals as if they understand you, listen to animals as if you can understand them, have a li'l animal buddy, spend a lot of time living with the animals, learn wisdom of the animals

**Diplomat**

Carry important messages, be an emissary, pal around with foreign courtiers, indulge in intrigue, keep your eyes and ears open, know what to kiss and when, know about what's in vogue

*Variations: envoy, ambassador*

**Explorer**

Get antsy when you're home too long, go somewhere nobody else has ever heard of, meet people you can't talk to, stumble on lost civilizations, collect exotic memorabilia, tell stories about how you got that scar, learn scandalous phrases in foreign languages

**Jester**

Wear bright colors and bells, talk in a high funny voice, make witty observations about people at the court who hopefully won't get mad and have you killed, embarrass that guy you don't like, make everybody realize just how witty you really are, take a pratfall, juggle as if your life depended on it, caper and prance

Variations: Sinister clown, insane trickster

**Mariner**

Live on a ship, never get seasick, say things like “arr, matey” and “landlubber”, wear little or no armor, batten down the hatches, swab the deck, climb the rigging, man the fo’c’sl, get tattoos, wear a ring in your ear, have a girl in every port, use cutlasses and belaying pins, dance a hornpipe

**Merchant**

Buy cheap and sell dear, haggle haggle haggle!, know what things cost, keep an eye on your stuff, organize caravan, carry heavy stuff, pick up the local gossip

**Aristocrat**

Live lavishly, be superior, command respect, have a lot of influence, keep the peasants in their place, demand the best things in life, go hunting and riding, wear fancy clothing

**Peasant Done Good**

Wax nostalgic about your grubby little home, long for the days you were slopping the hogs and milking the cows, “back there people take care of each other”, spout folksy wisdom, be a hometown hero

**Rider**

Be inseparable from mount, know each other’s location and general health, know what each other want, fight while mounted, have special mount.

**Primitive**

Be primitive, hunt and forage, wear skins and paint, know about animals and plants and spirits, sleep lightly, be perplexed by foreign ways

**Savage**

Live in dangerous or unusual environment, be exotic and unusual, remark frequently on how they do things back in your tribe, be completely comfortable in climates like the one you used to live in (swamps, snow, desert, jungle, whatever)

**Scholar**

Know lots of obscure lore, write down everything, be an expert on something, act as if you know something about everything else, criticize rivals, write flattering letters to patrons

**Scout**

Live in the wild, hunt game, trap small animals, know the lay of the land, watch enemy troop movements, size up danger, be self-reliant, be uncomfortable out of your element

*Variations: Pathfinder, Frontiersman*

**Smuggler**

Fence illicit goods, feign innocence, have connections, appraise goods, obtain forged documents, conceal identity, have an escape plan

**Spy**

Cross enemy lines, infiltrate enemy territory, collect vital information, attend swanky parties, sit in smoky taverns, collect latest rumors and gossip, use cover identities, plan escape route

**Swashbuckler**

Be witty, fight with panache, swing from chandeliers, vault over railings, dive through windows, hide from outraged spouses, know the derring-dos from the derring-don’ts, revel raucously, hobnob with the hoi polloi, defend the honor of yourself/your comrades/anyone you find attractive

**Smith**

Make things out of metal, ignore burns, impressive muscles, evaluate metalwork, snarl at lazy apprentice

*Variations: blacksmith, weaponsmith*

**Farmer**

Grow food, raise livestock, kill varmints, gripe about taxes, talk about weather

**Fisherman**

Fish, build boat, repair nets, make traps, know the local waters, brag about the one that got away

**Herder**

Care for herd, train dog, butcher herd animals, run long distance, listen to endless stream of off-color jokes about herders and their beasts

**Brewer**

Brew ale or mead, keep bees, work with a hangover

**Woodcrafter**

Find decent wood, make items out of wood

**Craftsperson**

Craft, make minor Equipment, Find Necessary Supplies, Haggle; Inspired, Patient

*Variations: Silversmith, jeweller, mason, potter, weaver, cook, baker, leatherworker, laundress*

**Ruler**

Look imposing, bluster, debate, compromise, rally followers, keep followers happy, find weakness in argument, negotiate

*Variations: Tribal Chieftain, Barbarian King, Crafty Usurper, Beloved Queen, Despised Tyrant, Reluctant Dictator, Puppet Monarch*

**Advisor**

Advise ruler, cite precedent, talk for hours, speak with authority, debate minutiae, know history and laws

*Variations: Scheming Kingmaker, Dedicated Public Servant, Self-Serving Bureaucrat*

**Healer**

Bind wounds, split broken bones, know herbal lore, treat illness

*Variations: Discrete Royal Physician, Crusty Old Sawbones, Rustic Herbalist, Embittered Combat Medic, Devout Faith Haler*

**Midwife**

Know signs of pregnancy, tend mother-to-be, spread old wive's tales, terminate pregnancy

**Shipwright**

Build Ship, Patch Leaks, Make Sails, Boil Pitch, Career Ship

**Berserker**

Ignore Wounds, Look Really Scary, Fight To The Death, Intimidate, Immune to Fire

**Innkeeper**

Keep a tidy inn, throw out ruffians, provide food and drink, keep valuables safe

*Variations: Nosy Landlord, Generous Taverner, King's Hosteler, Long-Suffering Bartender, Buxom Serving Wench, Burly Barmaid*

**Entertainer**

Juggle things, sing funny songs, tell lame jokes, do funny voices, imitate local celebrities

*Variations: Wacky Juggler, Lame Comedian, Sonorous Soliloquist, Nimble Prestidigitator, Exotic Dancer*

## Natural Philosopher

Be curious, know lots of obscure facts, carry around bundles of esoteric equipment, collect thousands of specimens, know when eclipses are going to happen

## Demigod

Be the child of a god, have gods meddling in your life, be unusually strong/good looking/tough to kill/nimble fingered/fleet footed/able to fly/etc (your choice, check with Referee), win lots of glory, die an unusual or horrible death (have your flesh eaten away by corrosive poison unknowingly administered on a robe by your wife, get torn apart by maenads, get hit by a lightning bolt, etc.)

## Pacifist

Resist passively, don't fight (even to defend yourself or others), tell others not to fight, resolve conflicts peaceably, don't wear armor, get beaten up a lot, get killed (usually only once)

## Shapeshifter

Change your shape, basically

*Variations: werewolf, wereboar, werebear, wererat, wereplatypus*

## CREATURE CLICHÉS

*Some of these would make good player characters; some would not. That's between you and the Referee.*

### Wood Elves

Live forever, wear earth tones, caper and frolic, shoot intruders, protect the forest, arrange flowers, sneak around the woods, harrass dwarves, hate orcs, be vulnerable to iron

### High Elves

Look ethereal, be wise, brew delicate herbal teas, lament for the days of yore, be understood even if the other guy doesn't understand Elvish, weave armor out of silk, be vulnerable to iron

### Dark Elves

Be evil, like sorcery, like spiders, hate daylight, dress in dark colors, be vulnerable to iron

### Half-Elves

Less frolicsome than elves, more pointy-eared than humans, never really get along with either one, don't be vulnerable to iron

### Half-Orcs

Be smarter than most orcs, be more apt to bite off a hunk of somebody than a human

### Lizard Man

Dwell in swamp, dream of the days when your ancestors ate humans for lunch

### Half-Giant

Have trouble finding a bed that's long enough, bang your head on doorjambs, crash through dilapidated floors, smash doors, crush puny humans

### Orc

Be strong, be brutish, be ugly, sharpen your fangs at dinner, eat anything remotely edible, break things, fight on any pretext, win by cheating, bully those weaker than you

*Variations: big strong orc, snivelling little orc*

### Gnoll

Be lazy, be vicious, be ill-tempered, be self-centered, be greedy, lay ambushes, track prey by scent, have a fondness for carrion

### **Halfling**

Walk upright under tables, look eagerly forward to your fifth meal of the day, avoid 'bigguns', seem innocent, pilfer casually,

### **Hill Dwarf**

Carry large axes, abhor orcs, make fun of elves, wear lederhosen, build quality cuckoo clocks, drink foaming tankards of ale, yodel

### **Mountain Dwarf**

Be short and stocky, fight fiercely when provoked, live in palatial caverns, never get lost underground, have a fondness for mining and intricate devices, dislike orcs, detest elves

### **Merman**

live underwater, make pets of fish, fall in love with land-dwellers, never use fire, know where all the cool wrecked ships are

### **Goblin**

Live in or near human households, be small, be ugly, be mischievous, become invisible, play malicious pranks, pinch naughty children, be obsessively neat

### **Kobold**

Be small, hang around in mines, make knocking noises, lead miners astray, move tools when they're not looking, fill in diggings overnight

### **Fairy**

Be tiny and winged, change people into other things, cast mischievous spells, become invisible, frolic in wooden glades and meadows, drink nectar from little flowery cups, love dance and music

### **Swan Maiden**

Change into swan when wearing the Swan Coat, take Swan Coat off and leave it unguarded when you bathe, marry the man who steals the Swan Coat, leave him and take (or murder) your children when you get the Swan Coat back

### **Nymph**

Be beautiful, live in river or forest or mountain or ocean, be friends with all the animals that live with you, seduce young handsome mortals, never get old or ugly

*Variations: Water Nymph, Wood Nymph, Oread, Oceanid, Dryad*

### **Crawling Claws**

Be a disembodied hand, crawl around, stick your fingers in their eyes and noses and ears

### **Manscorpion**

Sting people, claw people, discuss how people want to be stung and clawed

*Variation: Womanscorpion*

# FANTASTIC FANTASY ADVENTURES IN RISUSLAND (EXPANDED EDITION)

By Lord Zamiel Al'Shaitan



A Fantastic Fantasy Supplement for Risus: the Anything RPG by S. John Ross.



# Sourcebook Information

This sourcebook is a resource manual for a lighthearted high-fantasy campaign. It borrows ideas/concepts/text from Risus Magic by Jason Puckett and S. John Ross at <http://www.intemperance.net/rpg/risus-magic.html> as well as Coloured\*Skies by René Vernon at <http://www.webone.com.au/~rene/> and my Risus Fantasy Bestiary.

This campaign is set in a high-fantasy magic-rich world, where sorcerous duels in the street are not uncommon, and anything can be bought, for a price. The tone is not as dark as some games, nor as light as a typical Risus game.

## Character Creation

Character creation should follow the standard Risus: the Anything RPG handbook; 10 dice, +1 for hook, +1 for tale, pumps and double-pumps allowed. No more than 4 dice in any starting cliché and no funky dice.

There is a character sheet provided in the back of this manual for your use if so desired. It is double-sided, with large areas for cliché records as well as descriptions, hook, tale, notes and other such necessities.

# Common Cliché

The cliché list is divided into 2 tables, the first are racial templates for common fantasy races, and the next is a list of professional cliché.

Even though some of these creatures are normally exempt from the cliché dice limitations, player characters always follow the rules presented in the Risus handbook. A player-character dragon for example, may have no more than 4-dice (possibly double-pump) in their Dragon cliché to begin play (they will most likely begin play as a juvenile.) See the Fantasy Bestiary for more ideas for player character racial cliché.

## **Centaur**

Having the torso of a man and body of a horse, running fast, shooting arrows, not fitting into small places, having to sleep in the #\$\$@&! stables in every town you visit.

## **Dwarf**

Being gruff, seeing things in the dark very well, growing a big beard, wielding an ax menacingly, crafting fine stonework, drinking really strong ale but not getting terribly drunk from it.

## **Dragon**

Breathing fire, gas, acid, or another harmful substance, flying, hoarding treasure, kidnapping Beautiful Princesses, killing adventurers.

## **Elf**

Being tall, being thin, being snooty, seeing very far distances, seeing in the dark, shooting arrows from a longbow, having pointy ears, being good-looking, having a strange affinity for magic and nature.

## **Giant**

Being tall and strong, stepping on things, grinding englishman's bones to make his bread.

## **Gnome**

Being short, wearing a pointy hat, living in hollow trees or hills, building contraptions that (often unintentionally) endanger themselves and others.

## **Hafling**

Being short and round, liking pipes and tobacco, throwing rocks and using slings, being sneaky, stealing other people's property.

## **Minotaur**

Being tall, (very) strong, not getting lost in mazes, having a cow head, wielding a giant double-bladed ax, wearing bronze nose-jewelry.

## **Pixie**

Being short, winged, and (sometimes) invisible, making mischief, using a toothpick as a sword.

# Skill/Talent Cliché

## Acrobat

Tumbling, flipping, (hopefully) entertaining crowds of onlookers for spare change.

## Alchemist

Mixing arcane ingredients to make magical potions, poultices and ointments, smelling of incense, making scads of gold from adventurers out adventuring in need of healing juice.

TN for brewing magical potions is the same as casting a spell, see **Magic and Spells**.

## Animal Trainer

Training dogs for hunting or war, hawks for hunting, ferrets for stealing stuff, monkeys to dance and tip their hats when they take gold.

Difficulty is based on the difficulty of the trick, and time taken. For a simple trick and a week training, the base TN is 5. Difficult tricks are base TN 10 and 2 weeks time, and very difficult are 15 with a 1 month training period. An animal may be trained in half the normal time at a TN modifier of +10.

## Archer

Firing arrows at targets far away, standing on castle walls to shoot onrushing orc hordes. Knowing the quality of bows and arrows before being taken for a sucker by the local elf bow maker.

## Aristocrat

Being snooty, cutting through red tape, knowing who to bribe to get things done.

## Armorer

Making armor and weapons, determining the quality of armor and weapons, swinging a hammer, stoking a forge.

## Assassin

Being stealthy, using poisons, using blowguns, knives, garrotes and other easily hidden weapons.

## Baker

Baking breads, rolls, cakes, and pretty much anything else baked. Beware the bread knife.

## Bandit

Being thug-ish, mugging people, having exceptionally bad personal hygiene, trying to avoid the city guard. Being on a first name basis with every jailkeeper in the land.

## Barbarian

Being large and strong, wielding an exceptionally large ax or sword, wearing furs, going berserk in battle, eating their own fleas and body lice.

## Bard

Singing, writing epic songs about adventuring parties, singing, having connections to every seedy underbelly and den of iniquity in every town you happen to pass through.

**Beastmaster\***

Speaking with animals, calling animals to their aid, not being mauled by bears in the woods, casting animal-related magics such as assuming the abilities of animals (for example speed, flight, or natural attack form) for a while.

**Beggar**

Being dirty, smelling foul, looking pathetic, begging for money, getting thrown in jail for vagrancy.

**Blacksmith**

Making horseshoes and other metal objects, being really strong from swinging a metal hammer for hours on end. You can probably smash things real good with your hammer, too.

**Bookbinder**

Binding papers into books. Having paper cuts.

**Bounty Hunter**

Hunting people for money, tracking, trailing, information gathering.

**Bow Maker**

Making bows and arrows, judging the quality of bows and arrows.

**Brazier**

Making objects out of brass.

**Brewer**

Making beer and other spirits.

**Burglar**

Breaking and entering, not getting caught, appraising valuables, knowing how to fence stolen goods, knowing how to find the local thieves' guild (and knowing not to just walk into a bar and ask).

**Butcher**

Skinning animals, cutting meat.

**Carpenter**

Making objects from wood such as boxes, cabinets, bed frames and other utilitarian household items.

**Cartographer**

Making and reading maps, smelling like ink. (Mmmmm...)

**Carver**

Decorative carving of wooden objects.

**Cavalier**

Being holier-than-thou, swinging a big, shiny sword, wearing armor, doing everything "in <deity>'s name", riding a horse or other creature, jousting.

**Chandler**

Making candles, having wax burns.

**Charioteer**

Driving a chariot, fighting on/from a chariot.

**Cobbler**

Making and repairing shoes.

**Cook/Chef**

Making meals, preparing food, making GOOD meals, making edible meals from less-than-appetizing ingredients.

**Conjurer\***

Conjuring items, creatures or other things from nothing, keeping them around to do your bidding for a while before they dissolve into purple smoke or similar nothingness.

**Constable**

Policing city streets, catching lawbreakers, taking bribes, swinging a mean billy club.

**Crier**

Shouting the news, shouting very loud, shouting "It's 8 o' clock and all is well", shouting in general.

**Dairy Farmer**

Raising cows, milking cows, possibly liking cows in more than a platonic manner.

**Dancer**

Dancing, dancing WELL, getting paid to dance as a street performer or with a troupe.

**Diviner\***

Reading omens, seeing the future, past, or remote locations, finding misplaced or hidden objects or people.

**Dragoman**

Being a professional interpreter and guide, speaking many different languages, reading maps, not getting lost.

**Druid\***

Hugging trees, hugging animals, wearing natural products, shunning material wealth, casting "nature magic" and identifying/using herbs.

**Elementalist\* (Aeromancer/Geomancer/Pyromancer/Hydromancer)**

Casting magic spells related to 1 element, not being harmed by that element, generally feeling a grudge towards those who follow another elemental path.

**Farmer**

Growing plants for food, harvesting plants, wielding an ax, rake, shovel and the like with mastery.

**Fisherman**

Catching and preparing fish for food, tying knots, using fishing poles and nets.

**Furrier**

Trapping, skinning, and preparing animals for their furs. Making clothing from furs.

**Gambler**

Playing games of chance, cheating at games of chance, knowing when to grab your money and run.

**Gem Cutter**

Cutting and polishing raw gems for jewelry, appraising raw and finished gems.

**Gladiator**

Fighting in an arena, wearing hardly any armor, using any weapon you get your hands on.

**Glassblower**

Making both decorative and utilitarian bottles, jars, and other objects from glass.

**Guard**

Guarding castles, nobility, cities, or other people, places or things. Wearing armor, wielding a sword, taking orders, standing like you have a corncob up your.. um, nevermind.

**Healer\***

Healing the sick or wounded with magic, herbs, and medical knowledge.

**Henchman**

Never getting the spotlight, carrying tremendous amounts of loot for the rest of the party, never getting a fair share of the loot, being practically invisible to the rest of the world until the villain needs someone to kidnap to lure the heroes to their lair, or demonstrate how his new device/spell/monster works.

**Herbalist**

Knowing which herbs heal, which harm, and how to prepare salves, ointments, poisons, and antidotes for use.

TN for creating herbal preparations is the same as casting a spell, see **Magic and Spells**.

**Hunter**

Tracking game, using bows, setting snares and traps, not getting lost in the woods, avoiding poison ivy, knowing animal's habits, making animal calls and noises.

**Illusionist\***

Creating illusions of people, places, sounds, things or even spells. Making people believe your illusions.

**Jester**

Being silly, juggling, dancing, performing acrobatics.

**Jeweler**

Making, repairing and selling gems and jewelry, knowing the value and quality of gems and jewelry.

**Knight**

Wearing armor and wielding a sword, jousting, following a King's orders, riding a horse, putting armor on a horse, ordering a Squire around.

**Loremaster of (Something)**

Knowing a lot of *possibly useful* knowledge about a subject, such as animals, fairies, geniekind, monsters, spells, the Nether-Realm, or just about any other subject.

**Magician\***

Wearing pointy hats and robes, smelling of tobacco and incense, having animal familiars, casting magic spells, carrying giant books full of arcane phrases and other words of power.

**Mason**

Making walls and structures of brick, stone, and plaster.

**Mercenary**

Fighting other people's wars for money, guarding caravans for money, doing basically anything brutish for money.

**Merchant**

Bartering, haggling, getting the best deals, screwing people out of money, selling goods for far more than their worth, not accepting fake gold coins ;-)

**Monk**

Unarmed fighting, using sticks, using strange-looking weapons, jumping around, catching arrows with bare hands, acupressure/puncture healing (or harming), speaking in riddles.

**Mountaineer**

Climbing mountains, knowing how to survive in the mountains and extreme cold.

**Navigator**

Guiding a ship from one port to another, reading naval charts and maps, navigating by the stars.

**Necromancer\***

Raising the dead as your mindless necrotic minions, controlling said minions, smelling like dirt, knowing about dead stuff.

**Ninja**

Wearing black pajamas, throwing darts, stars, and knives, using ninja weapons, fighting unarmed, being stealthy, being hunted by samurai.

**Painter**

Painting portraits and other works of art, signs for buildings, etc.

**Pickpocket**

Stealing other people's belongings from their pockets without them knowing, knowing who to sell stolen objects to, blending into a crowd to get away from a score.

**Priest\***

Worshiping, wearing robes, smashing people's heads in using maces, staves and cudgels, praying, healing, channeling the divine energy of their deity to create magical effects.

**Psychic\***

Knowing the future, reading people's minds, melting brains with massive waves of crushing psychic energy, astral projecting, telepathic communication, moving stuff with their minds.

**Rancher**

Raising cattle, sheep, and other herd animals, hunting coyote and wolves, riding a horse, chewing tobacco and spitting it.

**Ranger**

Wearing woodland colors and a cloak, fighting with swords and bows, being stealthy in the woods, hating orcs, goblins, and/or other nasty little critters that ravage the natural surroundings, having animal friends.

**Sage**

Knowing a lot of *useless* knowledge on one or more subjects that practically nobody cares about (except adventurers that are trying to solve a riddle or kill a "Big Nasty™").

**Sailor**

Sailing a ship, swabbing the deck, saying "Yes Cap'n!" and "Aye aye Cap'n!"

**Samurai**

Carrying a pair of swords, using a long bow, riding a horse, being honorable, hunting down ninja, committing suicide if dishonored.

**Scout**

Going first and being a target, checking for traps, not getting lost in woods, dungeons, and other places that are easy to get lost in, climbing well, setting traps, being remarkably thief-like but rarely being accused of it.

**Scribe**

Writing documents, copying documents, getting paid for doing such things.

**Shaman\***

Speaking with spirits, healing the sick and wounded with spirit magic and herbs, smoking "magic herbs" to receive visions from the spirit world, reading omens, defending the village from supernatural threats, making talismans.

**Shipwright**

Making boats large and small, repairing boats.

**Squire**

Wanting to be a knight, taking orders from a knight, brushing horses, walking alongside the ^%#\$! knight's horse while he rides, helping a knight into/out of armor, polishing a knight's weapons and armor.

**Summoner\***

Summoning creatures from Erf, the Nether-Realm and planes beyond, controlling (or successfully pleading with) said creatures.

**Swashbuckler**

Swinging from ropes/chandeliers, speaking with a funny accent, fighting with thin swords and daggers, wearing "poofy clothes", being flamboyant and (almost) never being accused of being homosexual, charming ladies.

**Tanner**

Skinning, preparing, and making animal hides into leather.

**Teacher**

Teaching skills, trades, or knowledge to others.

**Transmuter\***

Changing lead to gold, water to wine, flesh to stone, lizards to ducks, or one object/form into another in general. Some deal only with objects, others with creatures, though most dabble in both.

**Viking**

Being large, strong, and scary-looking, wearing animal skins, wielding a biiiig weapon, sailing, drinking, singing drunken songs of battles and heroes.

**Warlock\***

Wearing a robe, carrying a staff or wand, casting elemental spells, having spooky hair, dating a witch.

**Warrior**

Wearing armor, using weapons, keeping their swords sharp and their armor polished, being oh-so-boring and bland.

**Witch\***

Wearing robes, having nose-warts, mixing potions in a big, iron cauldron, riding a flying broom, using a magic wand to zap people with magic spells, places hexes, vexes and curses on people, having a pet cat.

\* Denotes a traditionally "magic" cliché, allowing magical spells or effects to be created in one manner or another. Alchemists and Herbalists are not marked as magical, as they cannot cast spells, only create spell-like effects with material ingredients.

# Sample Hooks

## Code of Conduct

The character cannot attack an unarmed man, cannot kill, cannot eat meat, must remain chaste, cannot touch magic, cannot own property, cannot take a life (animal or otherwise), must help damsels in distress, a vow of silence, poverty or some other set of behaviors that must be observed at all times.

## Fear of [something]

The character has an overwhelming, crippling fear of some rather common object, creature, or circumstance, such as spiders, snakes, the dark, heights, closed spaces, water, etc.

## Social Stigma

The character might be from a tribe, race, or culture that is considered to be of a dramatically lower class than average. They may be a barbarian, or a kobold – but for some reason they are looked upon as less of a being because of it (and generally shown great prejudice).

## Superstitious

The character is VERY superstitious. They believe there are omens all around them and will act a certain way because of them. They may not go outdoors on a cloudless day because it is a bad omen, or they may leave half of each meal behind for the spirit world (dangerous in lean times..)

## Vow of [chastity/poverty/silence/other]

The character has taken a vow of some sort that limits their behavior much like a code of conduct, but it is one specific thing that is abstained from.

## Wizardly Hook

One obvious way to go is to give your mage a side effect of some kind when they use magic. Examples: A Psychic who gives nosebleeds to those whose minds she reads; a Pyromancer who sets off random candle-flame-sized fires when he casts spells; an Illusionist who glows in the dark for ten minutes after creating illusions.

Another Hook is to limit the usefulness of the wizard's magic in some way, either by limiting when he can use it or by what he can use it on. Examples: A Psychic whose magic doesn't work on non-humans; a Healer who can only cure during daylight hours; a dwarfish Diviner who must be underground or in a cave to cast accurate auguries.

Or pick some other way to inconvenience your mage that's related to their form of magic or to being a mage in general. Examples: A Shaman followed by mischievous spirits; a Priest-Mage who has undertaken a sacred vow to hunt down the undead; a Geomancer who must watch his back at all times for agents of the hated Aeromancer cult.

# Types of Conflicts

The most common types of conflicts found in this fantasy setting will be discussed briefly here, as the Game Master adds their own spin on such things when in play.

## **Bartering / Haggling**

Bartering or haggling is a rather common occurrence in a fantasy game, whether it be buying a loaf of bread, or selling the loot gained on the last dungeon raid. As such, many money-grubbing characters will attempt to weasel every last gold coin from the poor merchants and shopkeepers (and vice versa.)

## **Intimidation / Presence Conflict**

Sometimes a character can achieve their goal more readily with chest-puffing or dagger-juggling than actual combat. If two characters (player or otherwise) both attempt a combat-of-wills, this is the resulting conflict type.

## **Combat (Fantasy)**

Fantasy Combat is the most common life-or-death struggle in a fantasy game, wherein arrows, swords and sorcery collide on equal grounds in an attempt to defeat their opponents. Unless another type of combat is declared, it is assumed to be Fantasy Combat.

## **Combat (Sorcerous)**

Sorcerous Combat need not be lethal, however in many cases it is. In a sorcerous combat the dueling magi may simply pit their magic powers against one another's, while in other (more lethal) combat, their magics are pitted against their opponent's bodies. At the beginning of a Sorcerous Combat, it should be declared as lethal or nonlethal. Only those characters with an appropriate magic cliché can commonly compete in this type of combat, however inappropriate cliché rules still apply.

# Magic and Spells

Whether you call them wizards, mages, shaman, witches, warlocks, conjurers, transmuters, illusionists, pyromancers, necromancers, summoners, psionics or other, these are characters with at least 1 die in a cliché that allows them to produce supernatural effects. These effects may be referred to generically as “magic”, or as psychic abilities, deity-granted powers, the work of Nether-Realm spirits, geniekind, or even sheer luck.

Based on the cliché, a character may specialize in “general fantasy magic” as a mage, wizard or the like, or they may be more specific, such as a pyromancer, necromancer, or summoner. The more specific a cliché to the task being attempted, the easier it is to achieve a desired result. For example, it is easier for a pyromancer to cause a pile of logs to burst into flames than it is for a wizard, and the task may even prove to be impossible for a illusionist.

## Casting Spells

A mage has a spell pool with as many spell shots as they have applicable cliché dice. A character with Magician(4) gets four shots; a player with Necromancer(3) and Geomancer[2] would get five shots. Notice that double-pump cliché still count only as 1 shot. Each spell casting attempt consumes one shot, successful or not.

Spell shots are replenished during sleep. As long as the mage gets a good night’s sleep they’ll wake up in the morning ‘locked and loaded’.

The difficulty of casting a spell is represented by a Target Number (TN) based on the impact of the desired outcome, as well as the cliché involved. The more generic the cliché, the wider the range of possible effects, however it also results in higher TN’s.

At the GM’s discretion, spells directly cast on the minds, bodies, or held property of intelligent beings get a resistance roll, using an appropriate cliché against the spell’s TN. To make a spell harder to resist, a mage can attempt casting it at a TN higher than otherwise indicated.

### Base TN by Impact:

Difficulty	Game Impact	Reason
Trivial, 0 (Normally automatic)	Any attempt to magically warm a beverage, open an unlocked door, tie shoes, or fill an ice-chest are Trivial. Trivial Magic is stuff that the mage could do himself if he weren't so lazy.	The spell has no practical effect to speak of.
Simple, 5	Any spell that helps the party achieve something as a whole, or acts as a tool to achieve an end is Simple. Any spell that actually achieves something directly is probably Ordinary.	The spell will make things more fun for everybody.
Ordinary, 10	A spell is "ordinary" if it is meant to overcome a single obstacle that faces the mage, or the mage's share of an obstacle that faces the group. Unlocking a door, receiving divinatory insights and random clues, cleaning up a small building, creating a brief summer rainfall (in the summer), or a standard "flight" spell go here.	The spell would be nifty. Nothing special.
Complex, 15	Attempts to extinguish a house-fire, feed a small army, teleport the mage long distances or the party short ones, or manipulate the emotions of a small gathering goes here.	The spell would hog the scene a bit.
Difficult, 20	The mage could visit an alternate plane with this, or take the party to another city. Any one significant hidden fact can be revealed, and freakish weather is possible. In general, any attempt by the mage to act as a one-man party of adventurers is Difficult. Attempts to create/summon large animals or humanoid slaves with animal intelligence go here.	The spell would upstage the other characters.
Dangerous, 30	Teleporting the whole group to the Nether-Realm is Dangerous Magic. Looking for the complete solution to the week's mystery in a crystal ball is likewise Tempting the Wrath of the Gods. Any attempt to create/summon an intelligent being, or a big beastie, is Dangerous.	The spell would upstage the whole scenario.
Impossible, 50+	Any attempt to utterly wreck the campaign world or campaign plot line. Notice that even the 'impossible' is possible (with a VERY high TN.)	The spell would upstage the GM.

## TN Modifiers based on cliché relativity:

Specific	Close	Far	Remote	Inappropriate
+/-0	+5	+10	+15	+20

### Specific:

These are cliché that specialize in the spell effect desired, such as a Pyromancer starting a fire, or an Illusionist creating an illusion. Most likely, unless considered a “specialty” of the cliché, a spell will be close.

### Close:

A close cliché is one which is related to, but not specific to the desired outcome. A “wizard” or “mage” is normally considered a close cliché to all spell types.

### Far:

A cliché with a far relativity is one in which the cliché *could* be fathomed to do, but is unlikely. For example, a necromancer (who brings dead bodies back as mindless undead minions) could possibly bring a freshly-killed comrade back to life with all their faculties.

### Remote:

A remote cliché is one which is not geared toward the effect, but a similar effect. For example, a beastmaster who can normally speak to animals and call them to their aid, could speak to a monster, or an illusionist who knows how to create the illusion of a fireball may be able to create a real one with a remote modifier.

### Inappropriate:

At the GM's option, a spell can be attempted with the inappropriate modifier if the desired effect is contrary to the cliché, or even with a cliché which is not normally related to spellcasting but is reasonable. For example, a character with the Loremaster of Spells[3] cliché may be able to cast a simple dweomer with great difficulty - If such an attempt is allowed by the GM, consider the character to have only one spell shot, regardless of their cliché dice value.

Other TN modifiers may be assigned by the Game Master for particularly entertaining or detailed descriptions, extra (or insufficient) preparation time, material components, helpers/familiars, or other factors on a case-by-case basis.

## **So what exactly happens if a spellcasting roll is missed?**

If a roll is missed by less than 15 points, the spell shot is expended, but there is no worthwhile effect (maybe a little purple smoke, the smell of rotten eggs, or a spark). If the roll is missed by 15 or more points, something **TERRIBLE** happens.

## **What exactly happens when something **TERRIBLE** happens?**

Whatever first (or later) occurs to the GM unless manifestly incongruent with the rest of the campaign. Given first thoughts can fall short in terms of originality or elegance this might sound like a recipe for poor judgment. But it doesn't matter, does it? It's supposed to be something **TERRIBLE**.

Generally, if the spell attempted was Trivial, something minor, such as turning the character bright purple for a day or so would suffice. For a Simple spell something more appropriate may be causing a die of 'damage' due to magical backlash. Ordinary spells may well have an opposite effect of what was desired, or suffering multiple dice of 'damage', or even expending extra shots. Complex or Difficult spells may have more dramatic and dangerous results such as burning out all a character's shots for the day, causing damage, or even a permanent loss of cliché dice. Dangerous or Impossible difficulty spells require more creativity, as they can cause catastrophic damage (and lots of fun for the GM).

A reminder to GM's – Destroying characters, possessions, cities, heck, even entire worlds or planes is fun when a cocky player tries to cast something along the lines of "*Ascension to Über-Godhood*" and comes up with a roll of 7, but try to refrain from wrecking your entire campaign – If it's a central character, city, or world to the plot, just grin evilly at the offending player and think about it for a while – the result need not be immediate – the existing deities of your game world may be debating what to do with the pretentious worm that just tried to usurp their power. ;-)

# The World

The world of RisusLand is a wide and varied place, from the Fairie Isle to the Dragon Mountains to the Goblun Forests and the Elven Lands, there are places ruled and controlled by good, and those where no sane person would ever venture.

Herein I will attempt to describe some of the more popular areas of the realm, along with maps. Remember, the GM is faultless, so even if something is written here, it doesn't mean it is so – maybe the GM has changed it for a reason (or more likely, forgot what was written here, and is winging it) ;-)

On the planet Erf, in the Realm of RisusLand dwell many supernatural creatures, from the dwarves and gnomes to the flesh-eating fire-breathing dragons. In some places, these creatures all dwell in harmony, but in others, all is not so peaceful.



# Places of Note

## Centaur Lands

The centaur are a nomadic people, and do not build large cities. Many small towns and villages dot their forests and plains, though these are most often portable structures and move following the seasons. They do not have any centralized ruling society, but each town is ruled by their own council of elders.

The centaur have a complex spiritual worship system revering Mother Erf and the varied manifestations of her power, such as mountains, rivers, large boulders, lakes or volcanoes.

## Dragon Mountains

Dragons do not form societies, but do gather every few decades to discuss the state of affairs of the planet. During these meetings, even the most evil of dragons refrain from violence, as there are more pressing matters at hand. No other creature has ever witnessed one of these meetings. Outside of their council, dragons may be friendly or hostile, depending on the particular dragon's demeanor.

Dragons are as varied as humans, some worshiping nether-realm deities, while others revere nature. Yet others do not follow a religious path at all.

## Dwarven Mountains

The dwarven capital is Stonehome, built directly into (and under) the largest mountain of the largest mountain range on the continent. Home to over 10,000,000 dwarves, it is a massive city carved directly from the rock. Ruled by their King, it is the seat of power of the Dwarven Nation.

Elderrock Stonegnawer , the Dwarven King has ruled his empire for the last 400 years in relative peace, however their epic clashes with the goblins are the stuff of legends.

## **Elven Lands**

Silvertree is home to the Elven Queen, the supreme ruler of the elven people. Though they do not gather in great numbers, Silvertree is home to approximately 12,000 elves. Elven tree cities can be found dotting the forests of the continent, if one knows what to look for - for the untrained eye, they may pass through the heart of a city and never realize it.

Silverleaf Springwind is the current Elven Queen, however she is of great age and is soon to be relinquishing the throne to her daughter, the Princess Goldenrod.

## **Fairie Isles**

The Fairie Isles are home to many small faerie spirits, both in giant empires and small villages, found in massive numbers or solitary wanderers. These cities, just as the fairies themselves are normally invisible to all non-fairies, though outsiders may be granted the gift to see them by any Noble fairie. Rarely dangerous, the fairies are known for playing tricks on the unwary. They can be vicious foes if threatened.

The structure of fairie society is unbeknownst to outsiders, however they do have a very rigid social order. Ruled by a hidden source, the fairies may be raised in time of great need in tremendous numbers.

## **Gnomish Lands**

The gnomes do not gather in large numbers, as it seems as soon as they build a large establishment, they build some fantastic contraption that blows it to bits. Luckily it seems they have an uncanny knack for not blowing themselves up in these 'little accidents'. Smaller towns and villages are rather numerous, and traveling gnomish salesman can be found wandering the roads between settlements.

The gnomes have no royalty, and no real governing body, however those with the greatest inventions or greatest wealth are generally heeded.

## **Hafling Home**

Though the haflings seem an easy-going and relaxed people, living on the same continent as the Bad-Nasties™ has taught them to defend themselves effectively. Hafling slingers are unparalleled in their accuracy, and their city guards are unmatched in their ferocity. Goblins, orcs, kobolds and other horde creatures regularly try to raid these settlements (usually with limited success) for food and materials.

Hafling towns are ruled by a mayor, and the shiriff is the absolute law, though their services are rarely in demand.

## **Human Lands**

In the human lands, there are many small villages and cities, most notable is the human kingdom of Deepwater. It is the single most influential human establishment, being the largest. Home to over 10,000,000 people, it is a major cultural and economic hub.

King Reginald XXXVII is the current ruler, and his family is the oldest recorded. According to historical documents, his was the family to lay the first 2 bricks atop each other to build a home in Deepwater, on the spot where the castle now stands.

## **Land of the Bad-Nasties**

The Land of the Bad Nasties™ is a wild and uncivilized place, populated by all manner of evil creatures and blood-sucking baddies. The most notable place is the Goblun Forest, the goblun homeland. Hundreds of thousands, or even millions of gobluns live here, and plan their raids. The position of "Goblun King" is a tenuous one, often stolen by assassination or coup.

# The Nether-Realm

The Nether-Realm is where spirits find themselves after life. The world is topographically very similar to Erf, however their bodies, the cities and places are quite different.

When someone finds themselves in the Nether-Realm due to death, they appear much as they did in life, though slightly transparent. They seem to be completely alone, though there are buildings and other possibly familiar surroundings. Over the next week they will gradually fade farther and farther, until they are near invisible, while at the same time, others become more and more visible to them. After this point, they may never be raised back to their former life. At the end of the cycle, they have been transformed to reflect how others saw them in life, whether they were noble and upstanding, or dark and craven, and their strengths or weaknesses exaggerated.

Powerful magics are rumored to exist that can materialize a person's Nether-Form on Erf, and allow them to interact as they did in life, however such magics are all but unknown and quite possibly hazardous to cast. More known are those necromantic spells which can commune with these departed souls, and possibly trap them in this realm as spirit.

For those who summon people or creatures from the Nether-Realm, normally they will be of one cliché die higher than a "normal" creature of that variety.

The places of the Nether-Realm are caricatures of those in the real world, the cities of the elves are made of gold and crystal, the dwarven strongholds are all of polished marble, and the cities of man run the gamut of the worst slums imaginable to great white cities of marble and brick. The lands of the Hafling and Centaur are beautiful, unspoiled wildernesses populated by perfect animals. Those darker places such as those in the Land of the Bad Nasties, are a mirror image of that on Erf, as they are already the most evil places imaginable.

# References and Sources

## Risus: the Anything RPG by S. John Ross

<http://www.cumberlandgames.com/>

Without Risus, there would be no RisusLand. Many thanks to Mr. S. John Ross for his wonderful system, his wonderful fonts, as well as for being an all-around swell guy, and well, hm, I guess that's about it ;-)

Another feature of Cumberland Games & Diversions is 'the Fontworks', with free and low-cost fonts for writing, mapping, and even paper miniatures – I highly recommend a visit.

## Risus Magic by Jason Puckett and S. John Ross

<http://www.intemperance.net/rpg/risus-magic.html>

The magic system used in Fantastic Fantasy Adventures in RisusLand was inspired by and adapted from this supplement, as well as Coloured\*Skies, below.

## Coloured\*Skies by René Vernon

<http://www.webone.com.au/~rene/>

Coloured\*Skies holds a wealth of Risus-related material, I highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in Risus. Be forewarned though - Some of his optional (house) rules can become quite complicated (Yowza, lookit those spell tables!)

## LordZamiel.is.Dreaming

<http://lordzamiel.is.dreaming.org/>

All of my works are available from this site in PDF and PalmDOC format. Of particular interest for Fantasy Risus games would be my Risus Fantasy Bestiary (Expanded Edition arriving soon), a complimentary work to this one. Also featured on my site are a character sheet for OpenRPG use, a chatroom for online gaming (complete with DiceBOT) and other Risus-related materials such as my **BUGHUNTERS** sci-fi alien-bug-thing blasting sourcebook, the **It's LINT!** 'Life as LintKind' Mini-genre-sourcebook, and now-near-infamous **STOOOPER HEROES**, the stooperheroic campaign sourcebook.

Risus: the Anything RPG Character Record Sheet

Character Name:					
Height:	Weight:	Hair:	Eyes:		
Physical Description: _____ _____ _____ _____				(portrait / notes)	
Character Hook: _____ _____					
Cliché <i>What it's good for</i>	Dice		Cliché <i>What it's good for</i>	Dice	
Tools of the Trade and Other Gear:					

Notes:



# FANTASY BESTIARY

BY ZAMIEL AL'SHAITAN



THIS 'RISUS FANTASY BESTIARY' COPYRIGHT (C) 2002 BY ZAMIEL AL'SHAITAN. IT USES ONLY THE STANDARD DICE, WITH DOUBLE-PUMP OPTION. NO FUNKY DICE ARE USED, TO MAINTAIN COMPATIBILITY WITH STANDARD D6 (CRAPS) DICE.

THIS IS AN UNOFFICIAL SUPPLEMENT TO RISUS THE FAST-AND-LOOSE FREEWARE ROLE-PLAYING GAME SYSTEM BY S. JOHN ROSS. (C) 1999.

THE "RISUS: THE ANYTHING RPG" LOGO AT THE TOP OF THIS PAGE, AS WELL AS THE SKELETON GRAPHIC ABOVE, ARE BOTH CREATIONS OF S. JOHN ROSS. I HOPE HE DOESN'T KILL ME FOR USING THEM.

THE HOME OF "RISUS: THE ANYTHING RPG" IS AT  
<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

THIS MANUAL, AS WELL AS THE OTHER RISUS-RELATED WORKS BY ZAMIEL AL'SHAITAN CAN BE FOUND AT <http://lordzamiel.is.dreaming.org/>

## CONVENTIONS USED

THE ENTRIES HEREIN WILL BE IN THE FOLLOWING FORMAT:

**NAME** - THIS IS THE "COMMON NAME" OF THE CREATURE.

**DESCRIPTION**: - THIS IS A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE CREATURE, AND IT'S HABITS.

**LOCATION**: - THIS IS THE CREATURE'S NATIVE ENVIRONMENT.

**CLICHE'S**: - THESE ARE THE CREATURE'S CLICHE'S OF NOTE.

CLICHE'S WILL BE NOTED IN STANDARD RISUS FORMAT, WITH THE NAME, AND THEN THE DIE CODE. FOR EXAMPLE, "HEDGE WIZARD (3)" WOULD DENOTE 3 DICE IN THE CLICHE HEDGE WIZARD. DICE LISTED IN SQUARE BRACKETS, SUCH AS "HEDGE WIZARD [3]" WOULD DENOTE "DOUBLE-PUMP" DICE. NO "FUNKY DICE" (OPTION IV) ARE USED TO MAINTAIN SIMPLICITY AND COMPATIBILITY WITH COMMON "D6" DICE.

MANY CREATURES WILL BE EXCLUDED FROM THIS LIST, SOME POSSIBLY DUE TO NEGLECT, OTHERS DUE TO COPYRIGHT / TRADEMARK / "THE MAN". IF YOU HAVE A CREATURE YOU THINK SHOULD BE ADDED TO THIS LIST, SEND IT TO "LORDZAMIEL@HOTMAIL.COM" FOR REVISION AND POSSIBLE INCLUSION.

### BAT

**DESCRIPTION**: THESE ARE ANY COMMON, FLYING RODENT, AS WELL AS THEIR GIANT COUNTERPART.

**LOCATION**: CAVES AND OTHER DARK PLACES DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS, ANY AT NIGHT.

**CLICHE'S**:

BAT (/)

OR

BAT, GIANT [/]

### BEAR

**DESCRIPTION**: BROWN, BLACK, OR THE DREADED "TEDDY" SPECIES. OTHER THAN TEDDY, THE ONLY (GAME) DIFFERENCE IS LOCATION.

**LOCATION**: WOODLANDS, MOUNTAINS, OR CHILDREN'S BEDROOMS.

**CLICHE'S**:

BEAR (3)

OR

BEAR, TEDDY [2]

### BROWNIE

**DESCRIPTION**: BROWNIES ARE SHORT (2 FOOT TALL) FAERIE FOLK THAT APPEAR MUCH LIKE MINIATURE WOOD ELVES. DRESSED IN

## R/SUS FANTASY BESTIARY

BROWNS AND GREENS, THEY BLEND INTO THEIR SURROUNDINGS AND AVOID CONFLICT IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. WHEN THEIR FAMILIES OR HOMELAND ARE THREATENED HOWEVER, THEY CAN MAKE FOR VIOLENT ADVERSARIES.

LOCATION: FORESTS AND OTHER WOODLANDS.

CLICHE'S:

BROWNIE (2)

### CENTAUR

DESCRIPTION: CENTAUR HAVE THE UPPER BODY OF A HUMAN, JOINED TO THE SHOULDERS AND LOWER BODY OF A HORSE. EXCEPTIONAL ARCHERS, THEY RARELY ENTER MELEE RANGE WHEN POSSIBLE. THOUGH THEY HAVE THE LOWER BODY OF A HORSE, THEY RARELY ALLOW A HUMAN (OR OTHER FOLK) TO RIDE THEM.

LOCATION: DEEP FORESTS.

CLICHE'S:

CENTAUR (4)

### CHIMERA

DESCRIPTION: THE CHIMERA (KAI-MARE-UH) IS A CREATURE MADE FROM A MELTING OF VARIOUS ASPECTS OF DIFFERENT CREATURES. USUALLY A MAGICAL CONSTRUCT, CREATED BY MORTAL HANDS FROM A MIXTURE OF DIFFERENT BEINGS. OFTEN THEY ARE FOUND WITH 3 HEADS, ONE OF A GOAT, ONE OF A LION, AND ONE OF A DRAGON. MOST CHIMERA CAN BREATHE A DAMAGING FLAME, LIGHTNING, OR OTHER HARMFUL SUBSTANCE AS AN ATTACK.

LOCATION: ANY (UNNATURAL).

CLICHE'S:

CHIMERA (5)

BREATH ATTACK [4]

### DEMON

DESCRIPTION: DEMONS VARY IN DESCRIPTION BY NATURE, BUT THEY ARE (NORMALY) EVIL BEINGS FROM HELL WHO COME TO THIS PLANE OF EXISTENCE TO EITHER CORRUPT MORTAL SOULS, OR KILL THEM OUTRIGHT. SOME MAY APPEAR AS RED-SKINNED REPTILIAN HUMANOIDS WITH CURVING HORNS, BAT WINGS AND BACKWARDS POINTING KNEES WITH GOAT FEET, YET OTHERS MAY LOOK LIKE BOB IN ACCOUNTING.

LOCATION: ANY, MOST COMMONLY FOUND IN HELL.

CLICHE'S:

DEMON (3)

### DEMONLORD

**DESCRIPTION:** THESE ARE THE BIGGER, NASTIER DEMONS THAT BULLY AROUND THE SMALLER, NASTY DEMONS. THESE ARE THE ONES THAT EAT WHOLE PC GROUPS IN ONE BITE (OK, NOT QUITE, BUT THEY ARE BIGGER & NASTIER THAN "MUNDANE" DEMONS).

**LOCATION:** ANY, MOST COMMONLY FOUND IN HELL.

**CLICHE'S:**

DEMON (5)

MAGIC USE [3]

#### DM

**DESCRIPTION:** THE DM IS AN ENIGMATIC FIGURE, APPEARING AS A SHORT MAN 3' IN HEIGHT, WITH A RING OF WHITE HAIR, AND WEARING RED ROBES. THOUGH HE IS OFTEN HELPFUL BY GRANTING PEARLS OF WISDOM AND THE OCCASIONAL NUDGE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION WHEN THE PC'S BECOME LOST, HE HAS A VIOLENT TEMPER IF DISPLEASED, SMITING DOWN HEROES WITH HIS DREADED "SHOOKA-SHOOKA-SQUEEZE". AS "THE DM" HE CAN CREATE, DESTROY, OR ALTER ANYTHING IN THE UNIVERSE AT HIS WHIM.

**LOCATION:** ANY / ALL (OMNIPRESENT, OMNISCIENT, OMNIPOTENT)

**CLICHE'S:**

DM [20]

#### DOPPELGANGER

**DESCRIPTION:** THE DOPPELGANGER IS A SHAPE-CHANGER THAT CAN ASSUME THE APPEARANCE OF ANY CREATURE THEY HAVE PERSONALLY SEEN. MANY, IF NOT ALL DOPPELGANGERS ARE DRIVEN TO KILL WHATEVER CREATURE THEY HAVE MIMICKED THIS WAY.

**LOCATION:** ANY.

**CLICHE'S:**

DOPPELGANGER (2)

#### DRAGON

**DESCRIPTION:** THE DRAGON IS ONE OF THE MOST TERRIFYING CREATURES KNOWN TO EXIST. THEY ARE LARGE, (USUALLY) REPTILIAN CREATURES, CAPABLE OF FLIGHT (WITH OR WITHOUT WINGS), AND CAPABLE OF CASTING MAGIC SPELLS. THEY ARE FRIGHTENING PHYSICAL SPECIMEN, THOUGH THEIR TRUE MIGHT LIES IN THEIR INTELLIGENCE. MOST HOARD GOLD, GEMS AND MAGICAL ITEMS, HOWEVER SOME CRAVE THE COMPANY OF MORTALS MORE THAN MATERIAL THINGS SUCH AS PUFF (THE MAGICAL) AND FALCOR (THE IS-IT-A-GIANT-DOG-OR-A-FURRY-DRAGON OF LEGEND).

**LOCATION:** ANY.

**CLICHE'S:**

DRAGON [/O]

MAGIC USE [5]

## R/SUS FANTASY BESTIARY

### BREATH ATTACK [5]

#### DWARF

**DESCRIPTION:** THE DWARVES ARE AN ANCIENT RACE OF STONEWORKERS AND MINERS. THEIR LUST FOR RICHES IS SURPASSED ONLY BY THEIR LUST FOR GOOD DRINK. GOLD AND RUBIES ARE THE TREASURES OF THE DWARVES. DWARVES GENERALLY STAND ONLY 3 TO 4 FOOT TALL.

**LOCATION:** MOUNTAINS, CITIES.

#### CLICHE'S:

DWARF [3]

GLUTTONY (2)

#### ELEMENTAL

**DESCRIPTION:** ELEMENTALS ARE CREATURES MADE OF THE PURE ELEMENTS, AIR, EARTH, FIRE AND WATER. AS SUCH, THEY HAVE VERY LITTLE PHYSICAL SHAPE, THOUGH THEY TEND TO MAINTAIN AN UPRIGHT SEMI-HUMANOID APPEARANCE.

**LOCATION:** AREAS OF SPECTACULAR ELEMENTAL ACTION (VOLCANOES, EARTHQUAKES, TIDAL WAVES, TORNADOES), OR WHEREVER SUMMONED.

#### CLICHE'S:

ELEMENTAL [4]

#### ELF

**DESCRIPTION:** ELVES COME IN MANY SHAPES, SIZES AND COLORS, FROM THE LITHE PALE HIGH ELF, TO THE MUSCULAR WOOD ELF, TO THE SECRETIVE DARK ELF. THEY ALL HAVE A FEW THINGS IN COMMON: LONGEVITY, MAGIC USE, AND POINTY EARS.

**LOCATION:** ANY.

#### CLICHE'S:

ELF (2)

WIZARDRY (1)

#### ENT

**DESCRIPTION:** THE ENT IS A LARGE, SENTIENT, MOBILE TREE. AGED AND WISE, SOME ENTS HAVE LEARNED THE ARTS OF NATURE MAGIC. ENT ARE CAPABLE OF COMMANDING THE NORMAL TREES IN THEIR AREA TO MOVE AND ATTACK THEIR FOES.

**LOCATION:** FORESTS AND OTHER WOODLAND AREAS.

#### CLICHE'S:

ENT (3)

NATURE MAGIC [2]

ENT-CONTROLLED TREE (1)

**FAIRY**

**DESCRIPTION:** THIS IS THE COMMON NAME FOR MANY SMALL SPRITES, BOGIES AND OTHER FAERIE / FEY FOLK. THEIR MOST NOTABLE TRAITS ARE THEIR SMALL SIZE, CAPABILITY FOR FLIGHT, AND CAPABILITY FOR MISCHIEF.

**LOCATION:** ANY "NATURAL" SURROUNDINGS.

**CLICHE'S:**

FAIRY (2)

FAERIE MAGIC [/]

**GENIE**

**DESCRIPTION:** GENIES ARE CREATURES OF MAGIC, BORN OF THE ELEMENTS. THERE ARE GENIES OF THE AIR, WHICH APPEAR AS BLUE-SKINNED HUMANS WHO FLY. THE GENIES OF THE EARTH NORMALLY APPEAR AS DARK-SKINNED MUSCULAR GENIES. AND THE FIRE GENIES APPEAR AS RED-SKINNED DEMONIC BEINGS, WHO MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE FLAMES ABOUT THEM AT ALL TIMES. THE GENIES OF THE WATER (NORMALLY FEMALE) OFTEN APPEAR AS LITHE BLUE HUMANOIDS THAT ARE ALWAYS SURROUNDED WITH MIST. IF A GENIE IS DEFEATED IN COMBAT, IT MAY BE FORCED TO SERVE THE VICTOR (QUITE POSSIBLY UNWILLINGLY) FOR 100 DAYS, OR FOR 3 WISHES.

**LOCATION:** ANY.

**CLICHE'S:**

GENIE [4]

**GIANT**

**DESCRIPTION:** GIANTS APPEAR MUCH LIKE HUMANS, THAT STAND 9' OR TALLER. THE SMALLEST OF THE RACES, THE HILL GIANT, OFTEN WEARS SIMPLE FURS AND CARRIES A CLUB. THE MOUNTAIN GIANT IS SLIGHTLY LARGER, STANDING AT AROUND 12' TALL AND WIELDING A GIANT HAMMER, OR PICKAX. THE LARGEST OF THE GIANTS, THE TITAN, STANDS AT AROUND 20' TALL AND WIELDS A GIANT SWORD, AX, OR SPEAR.

**LOCATION:** ANY.

**CLICHE'S:**

GIANT, HILL (4)

OR

GIANT, MOUNTAIN (5)

OR

GIANT, TITAN (6)

**GNOME**

**DESCRIPTION:** GNOMES ARE SIMILAR IN APPEARANCE TO THEIR COUSIN, THE DWARF, THOUGH THEY ARE SMALLER IN STATURE (2.5 TO 3.5 FEET TALL) AND HAVE LARGE, BULBOUS NOSES. GNOMES DO NOT SUFFER THEIR COUSIN'S OBSESSIONS WITH GOLD AND DRINK, HOWEVER THEY TEND TO GET INTO MISCHIEF. THE

## RISUS FANTASY BESTIARY

HAMMER IS THE PREFERRED "WEAPON" OF THE GNOME, HOWEVER IT IS USUALLY USED FOR BUILDING HAIR-BRAINED CONTRAPCTIONS THAT USUALLY END IN CATASTROPHIC FAILURE (AND EXPLOSIONS). A GNOME UTTERING THE PHRASE "EUREKA!" HAS BEEN KNOWN TO SEND SEASONED VETERANS DIVING FOR COVER.

LOCATION: ANY CIVILIZED.

CLIQUE'S:

GNOME (2)

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING (2)

### GOBLIN

DESCRIPTION: GOBLINS ARE SHORT, GREEN-SKINNED HUMANOIDS THAT FEAR THE LIGHT. THEY FAVOR SWARM TACTICS, TRYING TO OVERWHELM THEIR OPPONENTS THROUGH SHEER NUMBERS. GOBLINS TASTE LIKE CHICKEN.

LOCATION: ANY NON-CITY.

CLIQUE'S:

GOBLIN (1)

### GOBLIN SHAMAN

DESCRIPTION: GOBLIN SHAMAN ARE THOSE THAT ACTUALLY EXHIBIT SOME INTELLECT. THEY ARE CAPABLE OF CASTING MINOR MAGICS, AND ARE USUALLY WELL RESPECTED (OR FEARED) IN THEIR TRIBES, OFTEN BECOMING THE LEADER, OR ADVISOR TO THE LEADER. (THEY ALSO TASTE LIKE CHICKEN.)

LOCATION: ANY NON-CITY.

CLIQUE'S:

GOBLIN (2)

HEDGE WIZARDRY [2]

### GOLEM

DESCRIPTION: A GOLEM IS AN AUTOMATON CREATED BY MAGIC TO SERVE A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. SOME ARE CREATED TO GUARD SPECIAL PLACES, OBJECTS OR PEOPLE, YET OTHERS ARE CREATED FOR MANUAL LABOR OR SIMPLY AS SOLDIERS. CREATING A GOLEM IS A COMPLEX TASK THAT TAKES MANY DAYS OF SPELLCASTING. UNLESS DESTROYED BY VIOLENCE, A GOLEM MAY LAST FOREVER.

LOCATION: ANY (UNNATURAL).

CLIQUE'S:

GOLEM (4)

### GRYPHON

DESCRIPTION: THE GRYPHON IS A WINGED BEAST THAT APPEARS TO BE THE FUSION OF AN EAGLE AND A LION. WITH THE HEAD, WINGS AND TALONS OF A GIANT EAGLE, AND THE BODY AND TAIL OF A LION, THEY CAN BE FEARSOME OPPONENTS, OR IF GAINED

EARLY ENOUGH AND TRAINED PROPERLY, LIFELONG COMPANIONS.

LOCATION: MOUNTAINOUS REGIONS, ESPECIALLY NEAR CLIFFS.

CLICHE'S:

GRYPHON (3)

FLIGHT (4)

### HAFLING (<-- TEE-HEE!)

DESCRIPTION: SHORT (2.5' - 3.5') TALL FAERIE FOLK THAT APPEAR AS SMALL, ROTUND ELVES. CITY HAFLINGS MAKE EXCEPTIONAL THIEVES, AND APPRECIATE THE FINER THINGS IN LIFE, WHEREAS COUNTRY HAFLINGS PREFER THE SIMPLER THINGS IN LIFE, OFTEN LIVING AS FARMERS, OR ACTING AS GUIDES OR SCOUTS.

LOCATION: CITIES, COUNTRY AREAS.

CLICHE'S:

HAFLING (1)

THIEF [1]

### HORSE

DESCRIPTION: A STANDARD RIDING HORSE, MAY OR MAY NOT BE TRAINED NOT TO SPOOK IN COMBAT. OFTEN REFERRED TO BY ADVENTURING PARTIES AS "WALKING BEEF".

LOCATION: NON-ARCTIC AND NON-DESERT.

CLICHE'S:

HORSE (2)

### IMP

DESCRIPTION: IMPS ARE SMALL, DEMONIC TROUBLEMAKERS. THOUGH THEY ARE OFTEN ANNOYING, THEY ARE RARELY OUTRIGHT VIOLENT. THESE INCLUDE GARGOYLE-ESQUE IMPS, GREMLINS, AND OTHER SUCH MALICIOUS LITTLE CRITTERS.

LOCATION: ANY.

CLICHE'S:

DEMONIC CRITTER (1)

TROUBLEMAKING [2]

### IT

DESCRIPTION: "IT" ARE DISEMBODIED HANDS WITH SIMPLE MENTAL AND COMPLEX MOTIVE FACULTIES. THEY ARE OFTEN FOUND WORKING IN WIZARD'S LABS, WHERE THEY CAN BE INVALUABLE RESEARCH AIDS, AS WELL AS ENTERTAINING. A "ROGUE IT" CAN BE A FRIGHTENING OPPONENT IN COMBAT, UNTIL YOU STEP ON IT. IT ARE CREATED THROUGH A RATHER SIMPLE NECROMANTIC SPELL.

LOCATION: ANY (UNNATURAL).

CLICHE'S:

IT (1)

## R/SUS FANTASY BESTIARY

### KOBOLD

**DESCRIPTION:** SMALL, FOUL DOG-FACED CREATURES, KOBOLDS ARE MORE OF AN ANNOYANCE TO THE TYPICAL ADVENTURER OR WARRIOR. THOUGH THEY ARE OF LOW HUMAN INTELLIGENCE, THEY ARE OFTEN VIEWED AS SIMPLE CREATURES. MAY BE FOUND RUMMAGING THROUGH CAMPSITES AT NIGHT FOR FOOD OR VALUABLES IF LEFT UNGUARDED.

**LOCATION:** WOODLANDS

**CLICHE'S:**

KOBOLD (1)

### LEPRECHAUN

**DESCRIPTION:** LEPRECHAUN ARE SHORT FAERIE FOLK WITH A PASSION FOR WEARING GREEN, SPEAKING WITH BAD IRISH ACCENTS, HIDING POTS OF GOLD AT THE ENDS OF RAINBOWS, AND TRICKING MEN INTO MAKING A 4<sup>TH</sup> WISH, THEREBY NULLIFYING THE 3 THEY WERE GRANTED FOR CATCHING THE LEPRECHAUN IN THE FIRST PLACE.

**LOCATION:** WOODLANDS.

**CLICHE'S:**

LEPRECHAUN [2]

FILTHY RICH (POT O' GOLD) (2)

### LYCANTHEROPE, WEREBAT

**DESCRIPTION:** WEREBATS ARE LYCANTHROPIES THAT CAN CHANGE BETWEEN A MAN AND A MAN-BAT HYBRID. IN THEIR HYBRID FORM, THEY APPEAR AS GIANT ELONGATED BATS, WITH FULLY FUNCTIONAL HANDS ON THEIR WINGS. ALL LYCANTHROPIES CAN INFECT ANY HUMANOID THEY DEFEAT IN COMBAT WITH LYCANTHROPY.

**LOCATION:** CAVES, OTHER REMOTE AREAS.

**CLICHE'S:**

WEREBAT [2]

### LYCANTHEROPE, WEREBEAR

**DESCRIPTION:** WEREBEARS ARE NORMALLY PEACEFUL UNLESS PROVOKED. THEY CAN TAKE THE FORM OF A LARGE MAN (USUALLY WORKING AS LUMBERJACKS, FARM HANDS, OR OTHER JOBS WHERE THEY CAN BE CLOSE TO NATURE AS WELL AS EXPLAIN THEIR GREAT STRENGTH.) IN ANIMAL FORM, THEY APPEAR AS LARGE BEARS, USUALLY GRIZZLY. ALL LYCANTHROPIES CAN INFECT ANY HUMANOID THEY DEFEAT IN COMBAT WITH LYCANTHROPY.

**LOCATION:** CAVES, FORESTS, OTHER WOODLAND AREAS.

**CLICHE'S:**

WEREBEAR [4]

**LYCANTHROPE, WERERAT**

**DESCRIPTION:** WERERATS ARE ONE OF THE MOST COMMON LYCANTHROPIES ENCOUNTERED. THEY BREED QUICKLY, AND LIVE CLOSE TO HUMAN SETTLEMENTS MUCH AS RATS DO. THEY APPEAR AS SPINDLY HUMANS, OFTEN WITH ELONGATED FACIAL FEATURES, AND CAN TAKE THE FORM OF A GIANT RAT (4' LONG BODY) OR A MAN-RAT HYBRID. ALL LYCANTHROPIES CAN INFECT ANY HUMANOID THEY DEFEAT IN COMBAT WITH LYCANTHROPY.

**LOCATION:** ANY, THOUGH MOST OFTEN SEWERS AND CITY STREETS AT NIGHT.

**CLICHE'S:**

WERERAT (2)

**LYCANTHROPE, WEREWOLF**

**DESCRIPTION:** WEREWOLVES ARE LYCANTHROPIES THAT CAN CHANGE BETWEEN A MAN, A WOLF, AND A WOLFMAN HYBRID. IN ANY FORM THEY ARE POWERFUL ADVERSARIES. ALL LYCANTHROPIES CAN INFECT ANY HUMANOID THEY DEFEAT IN COMBAT WITH LYCANTHROPY.

**LOCATION:** FORESTS AND OTHER WOODLAND AREAS.

**CLICHE'S:**

WEREWOLF (4)

**MEDUSA**

**DESCRIPTION:** PART WOMAN, PART SERPENT (OFTEN THE HAIR IS SNAKES, AND 1 OR TAIL INSTEAD OF LEGS) THE MEDUSA CAN TURN ANYONE WHO LOOKS UPON HER TO STONE. MANY MEDUSAS ARE ALSO GREAT ARCHERS. THE ONLY WAY A MEDUSAS CAN BE VIEWED SAFELY IS IN A REFLECTION, SUCH AS IN A SILVER MIRROR.

**LOCATION:** DUNGEONS, RUINS.

**CLICHE'S:**

MEDUSA (4)

**MINOTAUR**

**DESCRIPTION:** MINOTAUR APPEAR AS LARGE (9' TALL) MUSCULAR MEN, OR POSSIBLY HILL GIANTS WITH THE HEAD OF A BULL. MAGICALLY CURSED, THEY ARE NOT NORMAL CREATURES AND CANNOT REPRODUCE. MINOTAUR ARE INCAPABLE OF BECOMING LOST. A MINOTAUR IS CAPABLE OF GOING BERSERK DURING COMBAT (DOUBLE-PUMPED). THEIR WEAPON OF CHOICE IS A GIANT, DOUBLE-BLADED AX.

**LOCATION:** MAZES, DUNGEONS.

**CLICHE'S:**

MINOTAUR [4]

## R/SUS FANTASY BESTIARY

### PEGASUS

**DESCRIPTION:** THIS IS A LARGE WINGED, FLYING HORSE CAPABLE OF CARRYING A RIDER. MOST COMMON ARE WHITE PEGASI, WITH BIRDLIKE WINGS. LESS COMMON ARE THE BLACK PEGASI, WITH BAT-LIKE WINGS. THOUGH OFTEN REGARDED AS GOOD AND EVIL, PEGASI ARE SIMPLY (MAGICAL) ANIMALS, WITHOUT MORAL PERSUASION - REGARDLESS OF COLOR.

**LOCATION:** REMOTE CLIFFS, DEEP FORESTS.

**CLICHE'S:**

PEGASUS (3)

FLIGHT [3]

### QUIKLING

**DESCRIPTION:** QUIKLINGS ARE EVIL COUSINS TO BROWNIES, AND APPEAR VERY SIMILAR. WHEREAS BROWNIES ARE GENERALLY PEACEFUL FOLK, THE QUICKLING IS AN EVIL, MALICIOUS SPIRIT. QUICKLINGS ARE CALLED SO BECAUSE THEY MOVE INCREDIBLY FAST, BEING A BLUR WHEN RUNNING AT FULL SPEED. QUIKLINGS TASTE CHOCOLATEY GOOD IN MILK.

**LOCATION:** FORESTS AND OTHER WOODLANDS.

**CLICHE'S:**

QUIKLING (/)

INCREDIBLE SPEED [3]

### RAT

**DESCRIPTION:** THESE ARE BOTH NORMAL RATS, AS WELL AS THE GIANT VARIETY. THEY CAN BE FOUND INFESTING CITY SEWERS, OLD DUNGEONS, RUINS, OR ANYWHERE ELSE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTS ITSELF.

**LOCATION:** ANY.

**CLICHE'S:**

RAT (/)

OR

RAT, GIANT [/]

### SNAKE, COMMON

**DESCRIPTION:** THESE MAY BE CONSTRUCTORS OR POISONOUS, FROM 6" TO 6' IN LENGTH.

**LOCATION:** ANY.

**CLICHE'S:**

SNAKE (/)

### SNAKE, GIANT

**DESCRIPTION:** THESE ARE IDENTICAL TO THE COMMON SNAKE, ABOVE, EXCEPT IN SCALE. THESE ARE FROM 12' TO 30'. THE LARGEST CONSTRUCTORS CAN CRUSH WHOLE ELEPHANTS, AND

POISONOUS SNAKES CAN KILL EVEN THE HEARTIEST CREATURE WITH IT'S VENOM.

LOCATION: ANY UNINHABITED.

CLICHE'S:

SNAKE (3)

### SPIDER, GIANT

DESCRIPTION: A GREAT BIG 8-LEGGED BUGGER. CAN SPIN WEBS TO ENTRAP OR AMBUSH OPPONENTS. SUCKS THE JUICY INNARDS FROM THE CREATURES THEY'VE CAUGHT. (GOD SAVE THOSE WITH THE ARACHNOPHOBIA HOOK....)

LOCATION: CAVES, DUNGEONS, DEEP, DARK FORESTS.

CLICHE'S:

SPIDER (3)

WEBS (3)

### TANGLER

DESCRIPTION: TANGLERS ARE CARNIVOROUS PLANTS THAT USE THEIR LONG, VINE-LIKE PROTRUSIONS TO CAPTURE AND STRANGLE PREY. TANGLERS COME IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES, FROM MASSES OF VINES, TO SHRUBBERY, TO LARGE TREES.

LOCATION: ANY OUTDOOR OR CAVE.

CLICHE'S:

TANGLER TRUNK (4)

TANGLER VINES (4)

### UNDEAD, ANIMAL

DESCRIPTION: THESE ARE ANY MANNER OF SMALL CREATURE ANIMATED BY NECROMANTIC MAGIC, SUCH AS RATS, CATS, DOGS AND OTHER SMALL, NONMAGICAL (IN LIFE) CREATURES.

LOCATION: ANY (UNNATURAL).

CLICHE'S:

UNDEAD (1)

### UNDEAD, DRAGON

DESCRIPTION: THE UNDEAD DRAGON IS ONE OF THE MOST TERRIFYING CREATURES EVER TO WALK THE PLANET. THESE ARE THE EQUIVALENT TO A DRAGON LICH. WITH THEIR POWERFUL UNDEAD BODIES, AND MASTERY OF NECROMANCY, THEY ARE NEARLY UNSTOPPABLE. UNDEAD DRAGONS ARE UNIVERSALLY EVIL. DRAGONS LOSE THEIR BREATH ATTACK IN THE TRANSITION, HOWEVER THEY OFTEN MIMIC IT'S EFFECTS WITH THEIR MAGIC.

LOCATION: ANY (UNNATURAL)

CLICHE'S:

UNDEAD DRAGON [10]

NECROMANCY [6]

## R/SUS FANTASY BESTIARY

### UNDEAD, LICH

**DESCRIPTION:** NECROMANCERS, BROUGHT TO UNLIFE BY THEIR OWN DARK MAGICS ARE SOME OF THE MOST FEARED UNDEAD. THEIR POWERS BECOME MORE POWERFUL IN UNLIFE DUE TO THEIR CONNECTION WITH DEATH.

**LOCATION:** ANY (UNNATURAL).

**CLICHE'S:**

UNDEAD (5)

NECROMANCY [5]

### UNDEAD, MONSTER

**DESCRIPTION:** THESE ARE THE CORPSES OF MORE FANTASTIC CREATURES, BROUGHT BACK TO UNLIFE BY POWERFUL NECROMANCY. SUCH ANIMATES MAY BE CREATED FROM LARGE MAGICAL CREATURE CORPSES, OR ASSEMBLED GOLEM-STYLE FROM A MASS OF BONES.

**LOCATION:** ANY (UNNATURAL).

**CLICHE'S:**

UNDEAD (5)

### UNDEAD, MUMMY

**DESCRIPTION:** MUMMIES ARE THE BODIES OF PRIESTS BROUGHT BACK TO UNLIFE. THOUGH THEY LOSE MUCH OF THEIR MAGIC IN THE TRANSFORMATION, THEY GAIN THE ABILITY TO CAUSE A HORRIBLE ROT WITH THEIR TOUCH.

**LOCATION:** CRYPTS, TOMBS AND CATACOMBS.

**CLICHE'S:**

UNDEAD (4)

PRIESTLY MAGIC [2]

### UNDEAD, SKELETON

**DESCRIPTION:** THESE ARE THE MOST COMMONLY ENCOUNTERED UNDEAD. THEY ARE SIMPLY THE ANIMATE SKELETONS OF HUMANS AND OTHER HUMANOIDS. THEY MAY FIGHT UNARMED WITH THEIR BONY FINGERS, OR WITH THE WEAPONS THEY USED IN LIFE.

**LOCATION:** ANY (UNNATURAL).

**CLICHE'S:**

UNDEAD (2)

### UNDEAD, VAMPIRE

**DESCRIPTION:** VAMPIRES ARE SENTIENT UNDEAD THAT PREY UPON THE BLOOD OF LIVING CREATURES, MOST NOTABLY SENTIENT CREATURES. THEY ARE CAPABLE OF FLIGHT, CHARMING SENTIENT CREATURES, AND CHANGING INTO A BAT, MIST OR A WOLF.

**LOCATION:** ANY AT NIGHT (UNNATURAL), CRYPTS OR TOMBS DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS.

**CLICHE'S:**

UNDEAD (4)

CHARM [2]

**UNDEAD, ZOMBIE**

**DESCRIPTION:** ZOMBIES ARE MINDLESS UNDEAD, ONLY SLIGHTLY MORE POWERFUL THAN THEIR SKELETAL BRETHREN. THEY ATTACK WITH THEIR POWERFUL CLAWED HANDS, DRIVEN ONLY BY THEIR MASTER'S ORDERS AND THEIR INSANE LUST FOR BRAINS.

**LOCATION:** ANY (UNNATURAL).

**CLICHE'S:**

UNDEAD [2]

**WOLF**

**DESCRIPTION:** THESE ARE COMMON WOLVES OR WILD DOGS. KEEN SENSE OF SMELL, SHARP, POINTY TEETH, AND THEY RUN FAST. REAL FAST.

**LOCATION:** ANY OUTDOORS.

**CLICHE'S:**

WOLF (2)

# RISUS HEROIC GREECE

©2002, Guy Hoyle

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The myths of ancient Greece speak of heroes, gods, and monsters, of mighty quests and tragic fates. It differs from standard fantasy in many ways, yet much of it has found its way into our books, our movies, even our RPGs.

Fans of the popular "Hercules" and "Xena" TV series will find much that they recognize here, but many of my interpretations of various mythological characters will be based more on the myths themselves. However, "maximum game fun" is my goal, so don't look for a dry, scholastic dissertation, either.

To use this page you'll need a copy of [Risus: the Anything RPG](#), (copyright 1993-2001) by S. John Ross.

## CLICHES FOR HEROIC GREECE

### HEROES

Most heroes have a divine patron or parent, and have earned the displeasure of some god or another because of the circumstances of his conception (Hera despises the issue of Zeus' infidelities, for example), something they've done (such as stealing some god's sacred cattle, or cuckolding them), or something they didn't do (omitting an important sacrifice, especially if you promised one).

Note: many of the cliches below look as if they're pretty much interchangeable, and they are, pretty much. However, many of these terms are taken from Greek mythology and epic poetry, and are included to establish the proper atmosphere for the Age of Heroes.

- **Lover of Battle:** Slay monster, hew limbs, bash heads, clean gore off your armor, avenge insults to your honor,
- **Wild Spear-Fighter:** Fight fiercely, fling javelin, stab with spear, retaliate for dishonor
- **Spear-Famed Warrior:** Thrust expertly, fling javelin, strike target, prize fame
- **Wide-browed King:** Look regal, find compromise, keep factions happy, reward followers
- **Leader of Men:** Inspire confidence, make good decisions, rally aristocrats
- **Shepherd of the People:** Increase prosperity, rule generously, protect the people
- **Stalwart Charioteer :** Keep chariot upright, give advice, avoid obstacles, keep chariot out of danger, repair chariot, get hero to physician, bring back word of the hero's death
- **Sacker of Cities:** Besiege city, rally warriors, survive battle, maintain morale, command authoritatively, break enemy line, recognize valor
- **Spoil-taker:** raid cities, acquire loot, avoid defenders, mindful of glory
- **Leader of Battles:** Bolster morale, make tough decisions, plan wisely, listen to counsel, brook no affrontery
- **Son of Battle:** fight until victorious, seek glory, slaughter foes
- **Clean-limbed Athlete:** Flex muscles, oil body, compete for prizes, avenge slights
- **Rock-fisted Boxer:** Pummel opponent, pound face, swift uppercut, feint and dodge, mind reputation
- **Powerful Wrestler:** Break out of hold, pin foe, iron grip, shun modesty
- **High-vaulting Bull-leaper:** Train bull, leap gracefully, evade harm, please the crowds
- **Fleet-footed Runner:** Run swiftly, pace self, pull ahead
- **Long-armed Javelin-thrower:** Hit the mark, throw far, suffer no insults
- **Godlike Warrior:** Give no quarter, rage against foe, destroy shield, terrify opponent, delight in slaughter, avoid disgrace
- **Cattle Raider:** Sneak past patrols, quiet cattle, liberate herd, know lots of rope tricks, defend reputation

- **Far-Shooting Archer:** Hit distant target, be calm and steady, keep people from playing with your bows, make more arrows, object when people say that archers are cowards
- **Child of a God:** Call on Mom or dad for favors, have funky power (see Signature Abilities, below)
- **Antlike Myrmidon:** Fight in formation, work well with your fellow Myrmidons, obey orders absolutely
- **Horse-riding Amazon:** Fight as well as a man (or better), shoot from horseback, live off the land
- **Breaker of Horses:** tame horses, guide chariot, tend steeds

## COMMON FIGHTERS

These men fight for reasons other than glory: duty to their lord, personal gain, etc.

- **Freeborn Soldier:** Obey superiors, complain about food, stand watch, complain about superiors, gamble and drink and wench whenever possible
- **Gold-Greedy Pirate:** Sail the seas, attack ships, demand ransoms, climb the rigging, say things like "sink me fer a lubber" and "shiver me timbers"
- **Cowardly Bandit:** ambush passers-by, live off the land, retreat when overmatched
- **Cowardly Archer:** shun glory, strike from afar, defend self poorly

## CRAFTS, PROFESSIONS, CALLINGS

These vocations are primarily practiced by those of non-heroic stature, but many heroes also practice them as well at home or on campaign.

- **Pragmatic Priest:** butcher animal, interpret sacrifice, perform ritual, perform marriage
- **Blood-Spattered Chirurgeon:** ignore screams, amputate maimed limb, cauterize stump, stitch wound, tell them "this won't hurt a bit", bind ribs, splint broken bones
- **Gossipy Midwife:** tell old wives' tales, spot pregnancy, treat infertility, prescribe contraceptive, terminate pregnancy, tend mother-to-be, deliver child, save mother
- **Doting Herdsman:** keep herd safe, watch out for predators, run after animal, tend sick animal, butcher animal, stay awake
- **Hard-Working Farmer:** manage farm, plow fields, lift heavy burdens, talk about crops, complain about weather, fix things
- **Fisherman:** go fish, keep quiet, make traps, make nets, swim, know the waters, patch up boat
- **Honorless Thief:** skulk about, slink warily, wait for opportunity, pilfer swag, pocket valuables
- **Wide-Faring Poet:** compose poem, enrapture audiences, sing and play lyre, be welcome anywhere
- **Low-Born Entertainer:** entertain audience, sense mood of audience, have casual fling
- **Clever-tongued Bard:** compose spontaneously, travel widely, praise host, receive hospitality wherever you go
- **Slender-waisted Dancer:** dance gracefully, follow the rhythm, evade unwanted suitors
- **Sweet-throated Singer:** remember songs, find pitch, cover mistakes, attract lovers
- **High-vaulting Acrobat:** Tumble gracefully, leap high, keep balance, climb effortlessly
- **Craftsman:** make things, appraise things, find stuff to make things out
- **Meticulous Woodworker:** build furniture, carve decorations, make cabinets, appraise woodwork
- **Finger-stained Leatherworker:** flay cattle, tan hide, endure stench, work leather
- **Clay-daubed Potter:** find clay, spin wheel, shape pottery, decorate handiwork
- **Wealthy Goldsmith:** obtain gold, create jewelry, appraise works
- **Broad-Shouldered Metalsmith:** make things out of bronze, ignore burns, flex muscles impressively, evaluate metal
- **Clever-Handed Engineer:** build palace, drain swamp, build fortifications, build the occasional mechanical bull or strap-on wings
- **Swift-Stalking Hunter:** live in the wild, stalk prey, wait patiently, know nature lore, wise in the chase
- **Salt-stained Sailor:** man oars, set sail, follow the coastline, know landmarks, gossip and swear, keep a weather eye out, be superstitious, keep a girl in every port, brawl at a moment's notice
- **Wing-Worded Herald:** Memorize messages, walk long distances, travel under the protection of the gods
- **Labor-Weary Slave:** bear heavy burden, live on scraps, ignore pain, go without sleep, work until you drop, endure mistreatment

- **Far-Roving Trader:** Evaluate goods, drive hard bargain, protect goods, organize trading expedition, communicate with stranger
- **Battle-Hardened Medic:** Bandage injury, splint broken bone, carry patient, dodge attacker, survive battle
- **Unwashed Beggar:** Tell sad story, beg for scraps, flatter patron, show old wound, do amusing trick, swallow pride, sleep anywhere
- **Dutiful Wife:** Do chores, run household, prepare meals, welcome guests, obey husband, raise children, keep household gods happy
- **Grape-Stained Vintner:** Grows grapes, make wine, shake off hangover
- **Sleep-Wary Sentinel:** Challenge newcomers, defend wall, remain at post, withstand pain, go without sleep, stand fast, light beacon, sound alarm

## DRAMATIC ROLES

These aren't occupations or nationalities or races, but they're roles that come up frequently in Greek mythology. These all make great clichés.

- **Calm-browed Peacemaker:** End feud, forge alliance, put down weapons, see both sides, calm passions, find compromise
- **Favored by Aphrodite:** Be mysteriously attractive, caress passionately, perform under duress, demonstrate ardor, endear with a glance, stay awake, run from enraged spouse, jump out window
- **Wise Friend:** Boost confidence, resolve argument, prevent anger, sting pride, lift friend's burden, lighten heart
- **Steadfast Companion:** Fight to the death for friend, stand loyal, watch friend's back, avenge friend's honor, talk sense
- **Trustworthy Counsellor:** Be impartial, cite precedent, know unseen factors, sense dissent, find weakness in argument, talk for hours, know traditions, find compromise, memorize, speak with authority
- **Princess Chained to a Rock:** Have parents that tick off the gods, get chained to a rock waiting for a monster to eat you, marry the hero who rescues you, slays the monster, and kills your parents.
- **Wicked King:** be paranoid of mysterious visitors, arrange to have mysterious visitors killed, try and circumvent prophecy that you'll be killed by a mysterious stranger, get killed by mysterious stranger
- **Scheming Aristocrat:** Betray confidence, work for own gain, seek the throne, set impossible task, lust after princess
- **Implacable Avenger:** Seek revenge, right wrongs, protest against iniquity
- **Tireless Defender:** Defend the helpless, stand against odds, face hopeless odds
- **Giver of Wealth:** Be generous, inspire loyalty, react badly when generosity is called into question
- **Doom-shouting Soothsayer:** Bring evil tidings, warn against folly, deliver unpleasant truths, suffer in public
- **Devious Manipulative Priest:** scheme against your enemies, bring about disaster, curry favor, anger the gods

## RACES

There aren't any elves, dwarves, or orcs in the myths of the Greeks, but there were plenty of non-human intelligent beings. Very few of these will be player-characters; however, they often figure into the background of heroes. Many heroes were the sons of nymphs, and many of the greatest were trained by the centaur Chiron.

- **Lustful Satyrs:** Have the legs of a goat, be horny all the time, try to seduce anything female, shy away from confrontation, play panic song, play frolicsome tune  
*Note:* Satyrs are always male. How they reproduce is best left to the imagination.
- **Shape-shifting Empusae:** Look like a human, hindquarters of brass
- **Woman-Stealing Centaurs:** Be part-human/part horse, get rowdy when you drink wine, play the lyre, be an archer  
*Note:* Centaurs are always male. Lock up your women AND your mares.
- **Wild-Haired Wood Nymphs:** Live in forest, make friends with forest animals, know home territory, disdain cities, move easily through forest, etc.

*Note:* Nymphs are always female.

*Different Types of Wood Nymphs:*

- Alseids: Sacred groves in the midst of the forest
- Meliads: Ash Trees in particular, but not bound to one single tree like Hamadryads
- Hamadryads: Live as long as your tree does, protect and avenge your tree, merge with your tree

- **Deep-Dwelling Water Nymphs:** Live in river/ocean, speak to fish, know home territory, disdain cities, swim quickly, breathe in air and water equally well, etc.,

*Note:* Nymphs are always female.

- Naiads: clear springs and freshwater brooks, often the daughter of a river-god
- Nereids: live in grottoes and near shore, attend court of Poseidon.

## SIGNATURE ABILITIES

Many heroes have a special ability or quality that marks them as unique. These abilities are often the result of being the child of a god, or an object of the god's special interest. Take the "Child of a God" cliché above and choose a "signature ability" like the ones below to go with it (or make up one of your own). Generally, you should only have one signature ability or a very closely related set of signature abilities (e.g., a special way with horses: communicating with horses, calling horses to you, a special healing touch with horses).

- Godlike speed (run really fast, run over special surfaces e.g. over water, up a wall, over a field of grain, over the tops of trees, on the wind)
- Godlike strength (divert rivers, grab boulders, punch out horses)
- Godlike vitality (spend the night with the 50 daughters of a king)
- Godlike beauty (be adored by the opposite sex/envied by the same sex)
- Godlike agility (dodge arrows, leap over chariots)
- Godlike cunning (think of ways to get an army into a city, think of places to hide loot in plain sight)
- Bloody-Handed Slaughterer the death, inspire terror, face insurmountable odds)
- Wing-footed (have wings on your feet or back, fight from the air, etc.)
- Weather-wise (predict weather, read weather-omens)
- Keen-eyed as Lynceos (notice things too small or distant for others to see, see ghosts)
- Sharp-eared (Hear words spoken upwind, hear soft or distant sounds, eavesdrop)
- Shapechanger (any animal, certain types of animals, one animal only)
- Understand the speech of animals (all animals, one kind of animal only)
- Diviner (read entrails, examine livers, interpret dreams, know a bit about what the gods are planning)
- Sneaky as Autolycus (change appearance of stolen objects, fabricate truth)
- Vigilant as Argus (never sleep on duty, see clearly at night, sleep with open eyes)
- Impenetrable skin (except for a single vulnerable spot)
- Immortality (cannot be killed even from a mortal wound, though that may not be much fun)
- Son of a water deity: Function normally underwater, hold breath for a long time (or breathe underwater), swim very well, befriend water creatures
- Never suffer gastric distress
- Evil eye (cause illness or misfortune to befall the object of envy or jealousy)
- Prophetic trance
- Scrying in a pool of water, a mirror, a pond, etc.
- Earth-born Might: Great strength or size when standing barefooted on the unpaved ground
- Invisible in one type of environment or circumstances (the dark, the deep woods, the sea, etc.)
- A non-verbal mental connection to a special person or creature (your twin, a favored animal, your mother, etc.) The other person knows when you're badly hurt, in terrible trouble, dead, and so forth. The bond can be one-way or two-way.
- Storm-footed (run up walls, run on top of a wheatfield without bending the stalks, run tirelessly, etc.)
- Produce food: feed an entire army, always have enough food on hand, combat famines
- Thunderous Voice: get attention, always be heard over crowd, shout orders, surprise from behind
- Commanding Presence: make self understood, commanding voice, rally warriors, stand fast

- Unswerving Loyalty: sense disloyalty, fight to the death, stand loyal, fight to the death
- Traveler: Sleep unmolested, find shelter, evade bandits, locate trail, find escape route
- Raised by Bears: speak to bears, hibernate, forage, terrify prey, bear's strength, bear's hide
- Mighty hunter: run without tiring, disdain civilization, track by scent, invisible to prey
- Salt of the earth: sober up, strong as an ox, sway others with honesty, tireless laborer
- Son of Hephaistus: resist heat, keep fires burning, beat metal tirelessly, handle hot metal, create wondrous inventions
- Old Salt: avoid reefs, stay afloat, survive shipwreck, land safely
- Legendary Endurance: bear any burden, go without food, ignore pain, go without sleep, remain standing

## COMBINING CLICHES

Most of the cliches above can be combined easily. You can have Cattle-raiding Amazons, a Rock-fisted Sacker of Cities, a Wise Spear-famed Friend, a Silent-stalking Hunting Nymph, a Wing-footed Centaur Favored by Aphrodite, a Horse-taming Wife, or any combination agreeable to you and the gamemaster.

## TRAITS

These are not cliches in themselves, but may be used in conjunction with them, e.g. Silver-Tongued Counselor, Huge and Mighty Warrior, Impetuous Charioteer, Bright-Haired Huntress, etc.

- **Physical:** Mighty-thewed, strong-limbed, tough, stalwart, Herculean, vigorous, robust, brawny, well-built, muscular, huge and mighty, of the great war-cry, powerful, tall, mighty, ambidextrous, horse-like,
- **Mental:** Clever, wily, mighty in cunning, smart, wise, crafty, resourceful, sly, scheming, sly as a vixen, sure-sighted, good in counsel
- **Appearance:** Favored by Aphrodite, cow-eyed (F), fair-cheeked (F), white-armed (F), godlike, fair-haired, flowing-haired, bright-haired, bright-faced, bright, golden, flowering, grim-faced, shining
- **Behavior:** Brutal, reckless, overconfidant, generous, noble, fearless, valiant, proud, just, great-hearted, eyer of young girls, wild, goatish, untamed, warlike, impetuous, resolute, mighty in wrath, tender, lustful, blameless, loudly-bellowing, man-like (F), most pure, bull-killer, despoiler, merry, disdainful, fearless, tongue-tied, war-like, cheerful, muttering, grunting, grasping, greedy,
- **Luck:** lucky, luckless, unfortunate, fortunate, ill-omened
- **Famous:** Much-praised, justly famed, renowned, illustrious, renowned, praiseworthy, exalted, widely honored
- **Wealth:** rich in substance, profligate, impoverished, greedy, rich in cattle, golden
- **Eloquence:** wing-worded, silver-tongued, honey-tongued
- **Physical defects:** Sightless, smelling like a goat, warty,

## SORCERY

In ancient Greece, sorcery is primarily practiced by women. Sorceresses are women with divine blood in their ancestry, which enables them to work magic, often using magic herbs and other substances, words of power, and special equipment. In foreign lands such as Egypt or the Hittite Empire, sorcery is much more common than in Greece, and may be practiced by men and women without divine blood.

Unlike the magicians of most fantasy games, they do not teleport, cast fireballs or lightning bolts, fly (though they can change into a bird or summon a flock of them up), visit other planes of existence (except via an entrance to the Underworld), or become insubstantial. Invisibility is something that only the gods possess, though sometimes they place it upon an object for use by mortals. Spells often take some preparation time to cast properly.

Here are some things you might want to provide in your magical ceremony. (It adds to the atmosphere of the game and it might entertain the gamemaster.) Generally speaking, the more powerful the spell is, the longer it will take; the more props and ceremonies you use, the easier it will be to cast.

- A lead tablet, inscribed with the name of the victim, what was supposed to happen to them, the names of appropriate (or even inappropriate or foreign) gods or powerful magicians. The tablet is folded and put where the powers of the underworld can find it, buried in the grave of someone who died untimely or down a well. Sometimes a scrap of the victim's clothing or some of their hair or a wax doll labeled with their name is folded up inside the tablet.
- Magical herbs served in food.
- A wax doll, as above, with hair or clothing scraps attached, pierced with nails in the portion of the body the spell is supposed to affect.
- An engraved gem, useful for protective amulets and talismans.
- Names of powerful magicians and gods (especially foreign gods)
- Special times (midnight, dawn, twilight, when the moon is full, when the moon is new, a sacred day for a god, at a solstice or equinox, an anniversary, a holiday)
- Special places (graveyards, the home of the person you want to cast the spell on, sacred places, groves, caves, waterfalls, pools, the crest of a hill, the peak of a mountain)
- Magical instruments (flutes, drums, chimes, pipes, lyres) and dancing
- An animal to sacrifice
- Hand gestures (thumb between forefinger and midfinger, forefinger and midfinger placed on either side of the nose), facial expressions (the "gorgon face"), etc.

Here are some examples of spells you might be able to cast. The list is not complete, but it might provide you with a sense of the style of magic employed.

- Restoring and causing injuries, illness, blindness
- Casting illusions (they seem real, but disbelieving them doesn't make them go away)
- Scrying (using a mirror, a pool of water, a pond, etc.)
- The Evil Eye (causing illness or misfortune to the object of your envy or jealousy)
- Protection from injury on the battlefield or when traveling, malicious sorcery and ghosts
- Illusions, causing places to seem bright and cheery or cold and gloomy, causing unseen musicians to play
- Sharpening or dulling the senses
- Influencing emotions, particularly love and hate
- Keeping people from speaking against you
- Taking the form and abilities of an animal (or changing others into unintelligent animals)
- Call nearby creatures to you
- Communicate with animals or those who don't speak your language
- Fertility of people, beasts, and crops
- Calling forth spirits of the dead, awakening corpses, and banishing the same

## MAGIC ITEMS

Magic items did play a part in Greek mythology, but they were handled differently than they are in many fantasy role-playing games. Sometimes the gods lent their personal gear out to heroes, such as when Hades lent his helmet of invisibility to Perseus. The gods tend to want these items back, and will either drop by and pick them up in person, or arrange for something to happen to said items (say, blasting the hero who tries to hang on to them for too long). It wouldn't be a bad idea to drop them by an appropriate temple for disposal. Often, instead of just giving the item to the heroes, they'll tell them how to find it, which often entails journeying a long way and overcoming some needlessly-dangerous obstacle.

Sometimes the gods did have some special item made (usually by Hephaistos) for the heroes. The armor of Achilles is one example of these items, and it's just really really good armor. Really really good weapons are also given by the gods, as well. These items don't tend to have the pizzazz of helms of invisibility or Athene's aegis (a shield with the head of Medusa on it, which she sometimes lends out), but they tend to stay with the hero. They often come highly decorated with stories and scenes upon them, unmistakably the work of the gods.

Still another type of magic item is the type the hero makes for himself, e.g. Heracles dipping his arrows in the venomous blood of the Hydra, taking the pelt of the Nemean Lion as his armor, etc. This is not enchantment, as is commonly understood in other games; no ability to work magic is needed, but if any type of craft is needed to produce the item the hero should have the appropriate skills to accomplish it.

## HOOKS

There are plenty of great hooks in the Greek myths. Some are fairly common, while others are rather rare. Here are some ideas you can use when developing flaws and backstories.

- Most heroes tended to die on the battlefield or through accident or treachery rather than old age. Older kings tended to settle down and leave the wars to the young, though they often became fearful of being dethroned.
- Many heroes don't seem to know who their parents are. Gods, especially male gods, have a way of hiding their identities from the mortals they seduce, so their true natures are not revealed until later, as is the case with Heracles. Sometimes a hero is abandoned at birth because of some prophecy, as were Oedipus and Paris, to be rescued and raised by strangers; in these cases he may not even know he was abandoned. Theseus had two fathers,
- Passions tended to run high against the highly competitive warrior-nobles, so you often hear of them killing someone in a fit of anger. Quite often this would be a father or a brother, and would lead to exile. It is not uncommon to pay back what we would call petty insults with blood and war; any slight to someone's honor could be a cause for calamity (yet it happened often).
- Having a god for a parent would seem to be really really lucky, but it's really an invitation to a lifetime of trouble. Your divine progenitor might decide to swoop you off the field of battle just when you were getting ready to deliver that legendary blow that would bring you glory everlasting, or they might decide that you haven't had enough chances to prove your valor lately and fling some exciting challenges at him (usually by sending a monster to menace a village full of uppity peasants or a princess chained to a rock).
- Quite often, one of the gods is sufficiently peeved at a character to make his life difficult. Hera did this to several of Zeus' illegitimate offspring as well as his paramours. Poseidon raised storms and sent sea-monsters off the people who committed offenses against him. Ares tended to aid the enemies of the hero he hated, and hampered the blows he struck in combat. Aphrodite would interfere in a character's love life, perhaps getting him involved in a disastrous affair, breaking up his marriage, or any number of other disastrous affairs of the heart. Dionysus can send maenads and forest creatures after victims to drive them mad or tear them to pieces, or make the crops fail and seduce their women. Most of the gods don't want the offending heroes to die, they want them to suffer. Don't tick off Apollo or Artemis, though.
- Many heroes are impulsive, acting without considering the consequences of their actions (for example, Paris' abduction of Helen of Troy, Jason's rashly vowing to retrieve the Golden Fleece, Odysseus' revealing his true name to Polyphemos). Stubbornness, lechery, and jealousy are also common.
- Heroes often travel incognito, sometimes disguised as a beggar. Since there are no inns or hostels in Achaea, one often seeks out a nearby house or even a palace for lodging and refreshment. Having a guest show up unexpectedly is often considered a blessing from the gods. In spite of Zeus' command that houseguests are sacred, however, there's a distressing tendency for kings to feel threatened by any mystery guests in their households, especially if they are troubled by some family curse or mysterious prophecy; thus they trick them into leaving to perform an impossible task, or try and arrange a stealthy assassination or an unfortunate "accident". This trick almost never works, but it remains a popular way to deal with awkward social problems.

## THE GODS and other Supernatural Beings

Many times a character will want to contact a god to ask for help or a favor. Priests can try and contact a god during a sacrifice and request a special request that falls within the god's domain. The children of the gods can also appeal to their divine parents, who might answer if they happen to be looking in on their children. Listed below are the Gods and some areas they are usually interested in; some of them are rather obscure.

- **Zeus**: weather, sky, lightning, thunder, lightning, protecting fugitives, oracles
- **Hera**: women, childbirth
- **Apollo**: archery, healing, shepherds, music, athletics, prophecy, plagues
- **Artemis**: hunting, forests, she-bears, the moon, childbirth
- **Ares**: uncontrolled war, fear, terror
- **Athena**: wisdom, cunning, intelligent warfare, many crafts
- **Aphrodite**: all aspects of love
- **Hephaistos**: Metalcraft, beneficial fires, craftsmanship, volcanoes
- **Hestia**: Hearth, the home
- **Hermes**: flocks, travelers, profit, gambling, eloquence, thieves, traders, conducting the dead to the underworld
- **Dionysus**: wine, vegetation, pleasure, frenzy, madness
- **Poseidon**: the sea, seafarers, earthquakes, horses
- **Demeter**: fertility, growing things
- **Helios**: the sun, sight
- **Selene**: the moon
- **Eos**: The dawn
- **Eros**: Capricious love
- **Eilythyia**: Childbirth, often associated with Hera or Artemis
- **Leto**: Darkness and nature, mother of Apollo and Artemis
- **Mnemosyne**: Memory
- **Nemesis**: Revenge
- **Hades**: The underworld
- **Asterodeia**: the Sun
- **Budeia**: oxen
- **The Erinyes (Alecto, Megaera, Tisiphone)**: Avengers of crimes against one's family, especially against the mother
- **Persephone**: daughter of Demeter, wife of Hades, object of the Eleusinian Mysteries
- **Iris**: messenger of the Gods, rainbows
- **Hebe**: cup-bearer of the gods, youthfulness
- **Asklepios**: healing, incubation (healing dreams)
- **Hygeia**: health
- **Panacea**: healing
- **Hypnos**: sleep
- **Morpheus**: dreams
- **Themis**: Justice, law, order, the rights of hospitality
- **Hymen**: marriage
- **Leucothea and Palaimon**: mortals changed to sea deities.
- **Pan**: forests, pipes, sudden fear without apparent cause
- **Priapus**: fertility in crops, animals, humans; protection against the evil eye
- **Chloris**: spring and flowers; wife of Zephyros, the West Wind.
- **River gods**: many river gods had mighty powers over those who dwelled within and upon their banks.
- **the Winds**:
  - Eurus: East Wind
  - Zephyros: West Wind
  - Boreas: North Wind
  - Notus: South Wind
- **The Graces (Aglaea, Euphrosyne, Thalia)**: Associated with Aphrodite
- **Nereids**: daughters of the sea god Nereus, often part of Poseidon's reinue. Rescued sailors in distress, aided voyagers. Some famous ones include:
  - Amphitrite: wife of Poseidon
  - Thetis: mother of Achilles
  - Galatea: loved by Polyphemos
- **Moirae (the fates)**: determines the length of a mortal's life.

- Clotho: spins the thread of Life
- Lachesis: disposer of lots, measures the thread
- Atropos: the inevitable, cuts the thread
- **The Horae (Hours):** goddesses of agriculture and social and political order; guardians of the gates of heaven; the seasons.
  - Dike: Justice
  - Eunomia: Good Order
  - Eirene: Peace
  - Thallo: blossoms, spring flowers
  - Carpo: ripeness, summer fruits
- **The Muses:** patrons of the arts:
  - Calliope: epic poetry
  - Clio: history
  - Erato: lyric and love poetry
  - Euterpe: music and flute-playing
  - Melpomene: tragedy
  - Polyhymnia: sacred song
  - Terpsichore: dance
  - Thalia: comedy
  - Urania: astronomy

# RISUS HEROIC GREECE

©2002, Guy Hoyle

**Revised 5/9/2002**

The myths of ancient Greece speak of heroes, gods, and monsters, of mighty quests and tragic fates. It differs from standard fantasy in many ways, yet much of it has found its way into our books, our movies, even our RPGs.

Fans of the popular "Hercules" and "Xena" TV series will find much that they recognize here, but many of my interpretations of various mythological characters will be based more on the myths themselves. However, "maximum game fun" is my goal, so don't look for a dry, scholastic dissertation, either.

To use this page you'll need a copy of [Risus: the Anything RPG](#), (copyright 1993-2001) by S. John Ross. Note: I've often included variations on the cliches presented below. These can be used as synonyms for the cliches, although sometimes they might suggest something a little bit different.

## HEROES

Most heroes have a divine patron or parent, and have earned the displeasure of some god or another because of the circumstances of his conception (Hera despises the issue of Zeus' infidelities, for example), something they've done (such as stealing some god's sacred cattle, or cuckolding them), or something they didn't do (omitting an important sacrifice, especially if you promised one).

- **Lover of Battle:** Slay monster, hew limbs, bash heads, clean gore off your armor, avenge insults to your honor, have divine patron or parent  
*Variations:* Wild Spear-Fighter, Spear-Famed WarriorKing: Look regal, find compromise, keep factions happy, rally followers, sense mood of followers, instill pride, find weakness in argument, negotiate  
*Variations:* Leader of Men, Shepherd of the People  
**Stalwart Charioteer :** Keep chariot upright, give advice, avoid obstacles, keep chariot out of danger, repair chariot, get hero to physician, bring back word of the hero's death  
*Variations:*
- **Sacker of Cities:** Besiege city, rally warriors, survive battle, maintain morale, command authoritatively, break enemy line, recognize valor  
*Variations:* Leader of Battles  
*Note:* Agamemnon should have had more of this.
- **Athlete:** Flex muscles, oil body, compete for prizes  
*Variations:* Rock-fisted Boxer, Ungrabbable Wrestler, High-vaulting Bull-leaper, Fleet-footed Runner, Long-armed Javelin-thrower
- **Godlike Warrior:** Give no quarter, rage against foe, destroy shield, terrify opponent, delight in slaughter
- **Cattle Raider:** Sneak past patrols, quiet cattle, liberate heard, know lots of rope tricks
- **Far-Shooting Archer:** Hit distant target, be calm and steady, keep people from playing with your bows, make more arrows, object when people say that archers are cowards
- **Child of a God:** Call on Mom or dad for favors, have funky power (see Signature Abilities, below)
- **Antlike Myrmidons:** Fight in formation, work well with your fellow Myrmidons, obey orders absolutely
- **Horse-riding Amazons:** Fight as well as a man (or better), shoot from horseback, live off the land

## COMMON FIGHTERS

These men fight for reasons other than glory: duty to their lord, personal gain, etc.

- **Freeborn Soldier:** Obey superiors, complain about food, stand watch, complain about superiors, gamble and drink and wench whenever possible
- **Gold-Greedy Pirate:** Sail the seas, attack ships, demand ransoms, climb the rigging, say things like "sink me fer a lubber" and "shiver me timbers"
- **Bandits:** ambush passers-by, live off the land, retreat when overmatched

## CRAFTS, PROFESSIONS, CALLINGS

These vocations are primarily practiced by those of non-heroic stature, but many heroes practice them as well at home or on campaign.

- **Pragmatic Priest:** butcher animal, interpret sacrifice, perform ritual, perform marriage  
*Variation:* Doom-shouting Priest, Devious Manipulative Priest
- **Blood-Spattered Chirurgeon:** ignore screams, amputate maimed limb, cauterize stump, stitch wound, tell them "this won't hurt a bit", bind ribs, splint broken bones
- **Gossipy Midwife:** tell old wives' tales, spot pregnancy, treat infertility, prescribe contraceptive, terminate pregnancy, tend mother-to-be, deliver child, save mother
- **Doting Herdsman:** keep herd safe, watch out for predators, run after animal, tend sick animal, butcher animal, stay awake
- **Hard-Working Farmer:** manage farm, plow fields, lift heavy burdens, talk about crops, complain about weather, fix things
- **Fisherman:** go fish, keep quiet, make traps, make nets, swim, know the waters, boating
- **Honorless Thief:** skulk about, slink warily, wait for opportunity, pilfer swag, pocket valuables  
*Variations:* Adorable Street Urchin
- **Wide-Faring Poet:** compose poem, enrapture audiences, sing and play lyre, be welcome anywhere
- **Low-Born Entertainer:** entertain audience, sense mood of audience, have casual fling  
*Variations:* Somber Lyre-player, Slender-waisted Dancer, Sweet-throated Singer, High-vaulting Acrobat
- **Craftsman:** make things, appraise things, find stuff to make things out of  
*Variations:* Meticulous Woodworker, Finger-stained Leatherworker, Clay-daubed Potter, Wealthy Goldsmith
- **Broad-Shouldered Metalsmith:** make things out of bronze, ignore burns, flex muscles impressively, evaluate metal
- **Clever-Handed Engineer:** build palace, drain swamp, build fortifications, build the occasional mechanical bull or strap-on wings
- **Swift-Stalking Hunter:** live in the wild, stalk prey, wait patiently, know nature lore, wise in the chase
- **Sun-Darkened Sailor:** man oars, set sail, follow the coastline, know landmarks, gossip and swear, keep a weather eye out, be superstitious, keep a girl in every port
- **Wing-Worded Herald:** Memorize messages, walk long distances, travel under the protection of the gods
- **Labor-Weary Slave:** bear heavy burden, live on scraps, ignore pain, go without sleep, work until you drop, endure mistreatment
- **Far-Roving Trader:** Evaluate odds, drive hard bargain, protect goods, organize trading expedition, communicate with stranger
- **Battle-Hardened Medic:** Bandage injury, splint broken bone, carry patient, scream piercingly, dodge attacker, survive battle
- **Unwashed Beggar:** Tell sad story, beg for scraps, flatter patron, show old wound, do amusing trick, swallow pride, sleep anywhere
- **Dutiful Wife:** Do chores, run household, prepare meals, welcome guests, raise children, keep household gods happy
- **Grape-Stained Vintner:** Grows grapes, make wine, shake off hangover
- **Sleep-Wary Sentinel:** Challenge newcomers, defend wall, remain at post, withstand pain, go without sleep, stand fast, light beacon, sound alarm

## DRAMATIC ROLES

These aren't occupations or nationalities or races, but they're roles that come up frequently in Greek mythology.

- **Calm-browed Peacemaker:** End feud, forge alliance, put down weapons, see both sides, calm passions, find compromise
- **Favored by Aphrodite:** Be mysteriously attractive, caress passionately, perform under duress, demonstrate ardor, endear with a glance, stay awake, run from enraged spouse, jump out window
- **Wise Friend:** Boost confidence, resolve argument, prevent anger, sting pride, lift friend's burden, lighten heart
- **Steadfast Companion:** Fight to the death for friend, stand loyal, watch friend's back, avenge friend's honor, talk sense
- **Trustworthy Counsellor:** Be impartial, cite precedent, know unseen factors, sense dissent, find weakness in argument, talk for hours, know traditions, find compromise, memorize, speak with authority
- **Princess Chained to a Rock:** Have parents that tick off the gods, get chained to a rock waiting for a monster to eat you, marry the hero who rescues you, slays the monster, and kills your parents.

- **Wicked King:** be paranoid of mysterious visitors, arrange to have mysterious visitors killed, try and circumvent prophecy that you'll be killed by a mysterious stranger killed by mysterious stranger

## RACES

There aren't any elves, dwarves, or orcs in the myths of the Greeks, but there were plenty of non-human intelligent beings.

- **Lustful Satyrs:** Have the legs of a goat, be horny all the time, try to seduce anything female, shy away from confrontation, play panic song, play frolicsome tune

*Note:* Satyrs are always male.

- **Woman-Stealing Centaurs:** Be part-human/part horse, get rowdy when you drink wine, be an archer

*Note:* Centaurs are always male.

- **Wild-Haired Wood Nymphs:** Live in forest, make friends with forest animals, know home territory, disdain cities, move easily through forest, etc.

*Note:* Nymphs are always female.

*Different Types of Wood Nymphs:*

- Alseids: Sacred groves in the midst of the forest

- Meliads: Ash Trees in particular, but not bound to one single tree like Hamadryads

- Hamadryads: Live as long as your tree does, protect and avenge your tree, merge with your tree

- **Deep-Dwelling Water Nymphs:** Live in river/ocean, speak to fish, know home territory, disdain cities, swim quickly, breathe in air and water equally well, etc.,

*Note:* Nymphs are always female.

- Naiads: clear springs and freshwater brooks, often the daughter of a river-god

- Nereids: live in grottoes and near shore, attend court of Poseidon.

## SIGNATURE ABILITIES

Many heroes have a special ability or quality that marks them as unique. These abilities are often the result of being the child of a god, or an object of the god's special interest. Take the "Child of a God" cliché above and choose a "signature ability" like the ones below to go with it (or make up one of your own). Generally, you should only have one signature ability or a very closely related set of signature abilities (e.g., a special way with horses: communicating with horses, calling horses to you, a special healing touch with horses).

- Godlike speed (run really fast, run over special surfaces e.g. over water, up a wall, over a field of grain, over the tops of trees, on the wind)
- Godlike strength (divert rivers, grab boulders, punch out horses)
- Godlike vitality (spend the night with the 50 daughters of a king)
- Godlike beauty (be adored by the opposite sex/envied by the same sex)
- Godlike agility (dodge arrows, leap over chariots)
- Godlike cunning (think of ways to get an army into a city, think of places to hide loot in plain sight)
- Battle frenzy (ignore wounds, fight to the death, inspire terror, face insurmountable odds)
- Wing-footed (have wings on your feet or back)
- Weather-wise (predict weather, read weather-omens)
- Keen-eyed as Lynceos (notice things too small or distant for others to see, see ghosts)
- Sharp-eared (Hear words spoken upwind, hear soft or distant sounds, eavesdrop)
- Shapechanger (any animal, certain types of animals, one animal only)
- Understand the speech of animals (all animals, one kind of animal only)
- Diviner (read entrails, examine livers, interpret dreams)
- Sneaky as Autolycus (change appearance of stolen objects, fabricate truth)
- Vigilant as Argus (never sleep on duty, see clearly at night)
- Impenetrable skin (except for a single vulnerable spot)
- Immortality (cannot be killed even from a mortal wound, though that may not be much fun)
- Function normally underwater
- Inflict blindness (temporarily or permanently)
- Evil eye (cause illness or misfortune to befall the object of envy or jealousy)
- Prophetic trance
- Scrying in a pool of water, a mirror, a pond, etc.
- Great strength or size when standing barefooted on the unpaved ground
- Invisible in one type of environment or circumstances (the dark, the deep woods, the sea, etc.)
- Inflict emotions (love, hate, disgust, etc.)

- A non-verbal mental connection to a special person or creature (your twin, a favored animal, your mother, etc.) The other person knows when you're badly hurt, in terrible trouble, dead, and so forth. The bond can be one-way or two-way..

### COMBINING CLICHES

Most of the cliches above can be combined easily. You can have Cattle-raiding Amazons, a Rock-fisted Sacker of Cities, a Wise Spear-famed Friend, a Silent-stalking Hunting Nymph, a Wing-footed Centaur Favored by Aphrodite, a Horse-taming Wife, or any combination agreeable to you and the gamemaster.

### TRAITS

These are not cliches in themselves, but may be used in conjunction with them, e.g. Silver-Tongued Counselor, Huge and Mighty Warrior, etc.

- **Physical:** Mighty-thewed, strong-limbed, tough, stalwart, Herculean, vigorous, robust, brawny, well-built, muscular, huge and mighty, of the great war-cry, powerful, tall
- **Mental:** Clever, wily, cunning, smart, wise, crafty, resourceful, sly, scheming
- **Appearance:** Favored by Aphrodite, cow-eyed (F), fair-cheeked (F), white-armed (F), godlike, fair-haired, flowing-haired
- **Behavior:** Brutal, reckless, overconfidant, generous, noble, fearless, valiant, proud, just, great-hearted, eyer of young girls
- **Famous:** Much-praised, justly famed, renowned, illustrious
- **Wealthy:** rich in substance
- **Eloquence:** wing-worded, silver-tongued

### SORCERY

(Women only)

Sorceresses are women with divine blood in their ancestry, which enables them to work magic, often using magic herbs and other substances, words of power, and special equipment.

Unlike the magicians of most fantasy games, they do not teleport, cast fireballs or lightning bolts, fly (though they can change into a bird or summon a flock of them up), visit other planes of existence (except via an entrance to the Underworld), or become insubstantial. Invisibility is something that only the gods possess, though sometimes they place it upon an object for use by mortals. Spells often take some preparation time to cast properly.

Here are some things you might want to provide in your magical ceremony. (It adds to the atmosphere of the game and it might entertain the gamemaster.) Generally speaking, the more powerful the spell is, the longer it will take; the more props and ceremonies you use, the easier it will be to cast.

- A lead tablet, inscribed with the name of the victim, what was supposed to happen to them, the names of appropriate (or even inappropriate or foreign) gods or powerful magicians. The tablet is folded and put where the powers of the underworld can find it, buried in the grave of someone who died untimely or down a well. Sometimes a scrap of the victim's clothing or some of their hair or a wax doll labeled with their name is folded up inside the tablet.
- Magical herbs served in food.
- A wax doll, as above, with hair or clothing scraps attached, pierced with nails in the portion of the body the spell is supposed to affect.
- An engraved gem, useful for protective amulets and talismans.
- Names of powerful magicians and gods (especially foreign gods)
- Special times (midnight, dawn, twilight, when the moon is full, when the moon is new, a sacred day for a god, at a solstice or equinox, an anniversary, a holiday)
- Special places (graveyards, the home of the person you want to cast the spell on, sacred places, groves, caves, waterfalls, pools, the crest of a hill, the peak of a mountain)
- Magical instruments (flutes, drums, chimes, pipes, lyres) and dancing
- An animal to sacrifice
- Hand gestures (thumb between forefinger and midfinger, forefinger and midfinger placed on either side of the nose), facial expressions (the "gorgon face"), etc.

Here are some examples of spells you might be able to cast. The list is not complete, but it might provide you with a sense of the style of magic employed.

- Restoring and causing injuries, illness, blindness
- Casting illusions (they seem real, but disbelieving them doesn't make them go away)
- Scrying (using a mirror, a pool of water, a pond, etc.)
- The Evil Eye (causing illness or misfortune to the object of your envy or jealousy)
- Protection from injury on the battlefield or when traveling, malicious sorcery and ghosts
- Illusions, causing places to seem bright and cheery or cold and gloomy, causing unseen musicians to play
- Sharpening or dulling the senses
- Influencing emotions, particularly love and hate
- Keeping people from speaking against you
- Taking the form and abilities of an animal
- Call nearby creatures to you
- Communicate with animals or those who don't speak your language
- Fertility of people, beasts, and crops
- Calling forth spirits of the dead, awakening corpses, and banishing the same

## HOOKS

There are plenty of great hooks in the Greek myths. Some are fairly common, while others are rather rare. Here are some ideas you can use when developing flaws and backstories.

- Most heroes tended to die on the battlefield or through accident or treachery rather than old age. Older kings tended to settle down and leave the wars to the young.
- Passions tended to run high against the highly competitive warrior-nobles, so you often hear of them killing someone in a fit of anger. Quite often this would be a father or a brother, and would lead to exile.
- Quite often, one of the gods is sufficiently peeved at a character to make his life difficult. Hera did this to several of Zeus' illegitimate offspring as well as his paramours. Poseidon raised storms and sent sea-monsters off the people who committed offenses against him. Ares tended to aid the enemies of the hero he hated, and hampered the blows he struck in combat. Aphrodite would interfere in a character's love life, perhaps getting him involved in a disastrous affair, breaking up his marriage, or any number of other disastrous affairs of the heart. Dionysus can send maenads and forest creatures after victims to drive them mad or tear them to pieces, or make the crops fail and seduce their women. Most of the gods don't want the offending heroes to die, they want them to suffer. Don't tick off Apollo or Artemis, though.
- Many heroes are impulsive, acting without considering the consequences of their actions (for example, Paris' abduction of Helen of Troy, Jason's rashly vowing to retrieve the Golden Fleece, Odysseus' revealing his true name to Odysseus). Stubbornness, lechery, and jealousy are also common.
- Heroes often travel incognito, sometimes disguised as a beggar. Since there are no inns or hostels in Achaea, In spite of Zeus' command that houseguests are sacred, there's a distressing tendency for kings to feel threatened by any mystery guests in their households, and thus making an attempt to have them secretly bumped off.

## THE GODS

Many times a character will want to contact a god to ask for help or a favor. Priests can try and contact a god during a sacrifice. The children of the gods can also appeal to their divine parents, who might answer if they happen to be looking in on their children. Listed below are the Gods and some areas they are usually interested in.

- **Zeus**: weather, sky, lightning, thunder, lightning, protecting fugitives, oracles
- **Hera**: women, childbirth
- **Apollo**: archery, healing, shepherds, music, athletics, prophecy, plagues
- **Artemis**: hunting, forests, she-bears, the moon, childbirth
- **Ares**: uncontrolled war, fear, terror
- **Athena**: wisdom, cunning, intelligent warfare, many crafts
- **Aphrodite**: all aspects of love
- **Hephaistos**: Metalcraft, beneficial fires, craftsmanship, volcanoes
- **Hestia**: Hearth, the home

- **Hermes:** flocks, travelers, profit, gambling, eloquence, thieves, traders, conducting the dead to the underworld
- **Dionysus:** wine, vegetation, pleasure, frenzy, madness
- **Poseidon:** the sea, seafarers, earthquakes, horses
- **Demeter:** fertility, growing things
- **Helios:** the sun, sight
- **Selene:** the moon
- **Eos:** The dawn
- **Eros:** Capricious love
- **Eilythyia:** Childbirth
- **Leto:** Darkness and nature, mother of Apollo and Artemis
- **Mnemosyne:** Memory
- **Nemesis:** Revenge
- **Hades:** The underworld

# It's LINT!

A mini-Sourcebook for  
Risus: The Anything RPG by S. John Ross

by Zamiel Al'Shaitan

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This, and other sourcebooks by Zamiel Al'Shaitan can be found at <http://lordzamiel.is.dreaming.org>

## **Sourcebook Information:**

In *It's LINT!* you play the role of, you guessed it, lint. Lintforms (lint lifeforms) are constantly under persecution by those that inadvertently created them, the humans, as well as the minions of humans, such as cats, dogs, and gerbils. Your goal in *It's Lint!* is survival, but to thrive, aye, that's the prize.

## **Character Creation:**

Standard character creation as presented in the *Risus: the Anything RPG* handbook should be followed, 10 dice, pumps and double-pumps allowed. Hooks and tales may be used as well, granting +1 die. Funky dice are not used.

Most characters will select one of the lint "archetypes" for creating a character, however it is not mandatory; the character could just be "generic lint" ;-)

## **Common Cliché:**

The most common cliché will be related to the day-to-day (or even minute-to-minute) life of lint. From sneaking and hiding, to rolling and floating, to frightening the cat, it's all here.

### **\* Bellybutton Lint**

This is one of the 4 archetypes of lint, the others being sweater lint, dryer lint, and pocket lint. Bellybutton lint springs to life from the navels of humans, often those that are unwashed, and as such are considered the lowest form of lint-life. Bellybutton lint stinks, and as such it gains bonuses for frightening and disgusting, however it suffers in social relations and is generally "icky".

### **\* Dryer Lint**

This is one of the 4 archetypes of lint, the others being sweater lint, bellybutton lint, and pocket lint. Dryer lint is the largest and most hearty of lint. As dryer lint, you are capable of amazing feats of (lint-scale) strength, however you do suffer in the hiding and floating departments.

### **\* Frightening Things**

Frightening only works on non-humans, as to the humans you are nothing more than lint, which is to be destroyed. When used successfully against animals, dust bunnies, or other lint-beings, they will run in terror and not look back. This is the primary combat form for a lintform, as they are not very capable combatants.

### **\* Healing**

Healing allows the character to repair themselves (or others) if enough raw material (ie: non-sentient lint) is available. Healing amount may be determined by quality and quantity of lint.

### **\* Hiding**

This is an invaluable skill to lint of all ages, as it allows the lint to go unnoticed by those that would hunt them. Hiding only works if the lint remains immobile, and bonuses or penalties to the TN may be assigned for particularly good or poor hiding spot.

### \* **Pocket Lint**

This is one of the 4 archetypes of lint, the others being sweater lint, bellybutton lint, and dryer lint. As pocket lint, you are thin and lithe, able to hide in the smallest cracks and crevices, and even in the very pockets of those that would destroy you (that being the humans, for our Canadian friends.) Being so thin is not without its disadvantages however, as you suffer in the area of strength.

### \* **Spawning**

Spawning is bringing new lintforms to life from precious, nonsentient lint. This is a long, slow process, requiring the span of many days and a suitably large quantity of lint.

### \* **Sneaking**

Sneaking is moving about unnoticed. It is related to hiding, but focuses more on remaining unremarkable, therefore unnoticed, rather than attempting to conceal oneself from view. Sneaking DOES NOT work against cats.

## **Conflicts:**

The life of a lintform is full of conflict, both deep, moral turmoil, and being chased by the human's pet cat, Bootsies. Being made of lint, combat is hardly an option, but sometimes it's unavoidable...

### \* **Physical Conflicts, aka Combat**

Combat is rarely resorted to, as lint is not the most hearty of lifeforms. If a physical conflict is resorted to, a lintform is **ALWAYS** considered to be using an inappropriate cliché. The only exception to this is *Frightening Things* (see below).

### \* **Frightening Things**

This is in most respects identical to a physical conflict, however the lintform is not attempting to harm the opponent, only frighten them away. The lintform however DOES suffer physical damage in such conflicts.

## **Other Beings of Note:**

Though not lint, these lifeforms are sure to cross paths with you sometime...

### **\* Cat**

The cat is one of the most deadly of all animals, with it's hunter instincts and lightning-quick reflexes, your only hope is to stand your ground and frighten it away (possibly in a team) before it rips too many of you apart. There are 2 varieties, the domestic, or "house" cat, and the feral "wild" cat. Rarely will you cross a wild cat, as lint is native to indoor areas.

#### **Cliché:**

Cat(5)

### **\* Dog**

Dogs are larger than cats, but thankfully somewhat dim. Though they are ferocious, they are also quite easily startled.

#### **Cliché:**

Dog(4)

#### **Special Note:**

Dogs are susceptible to the *Frighten Things* cliché, suffering a loss of 2 dice in any round they lose.

### **\* Dust Bunny**

Though sometimes mistaken for lint, the dust bunny is evil. Made of stray hairs, cobwebs, dust, and other such nastiness, they hunt lint for sport. Dust Bunnies often travel in packs.

#### **Cliché:**

Dust Bunny(3)

### **\* Human**

The human is the most deadly of all creatures. Even though they created the great lint-life, they now seek to destroy it. Most humans (save the young ones) don't even seem to notice those they destroy as life at all!

#### **Cliché:**

Human(6)

#### **Special Equipment:**

Feather Duster(+2d)

Broom(+3d)

Vacuum Cleaner(+4d)

### **\* Human, Baby**

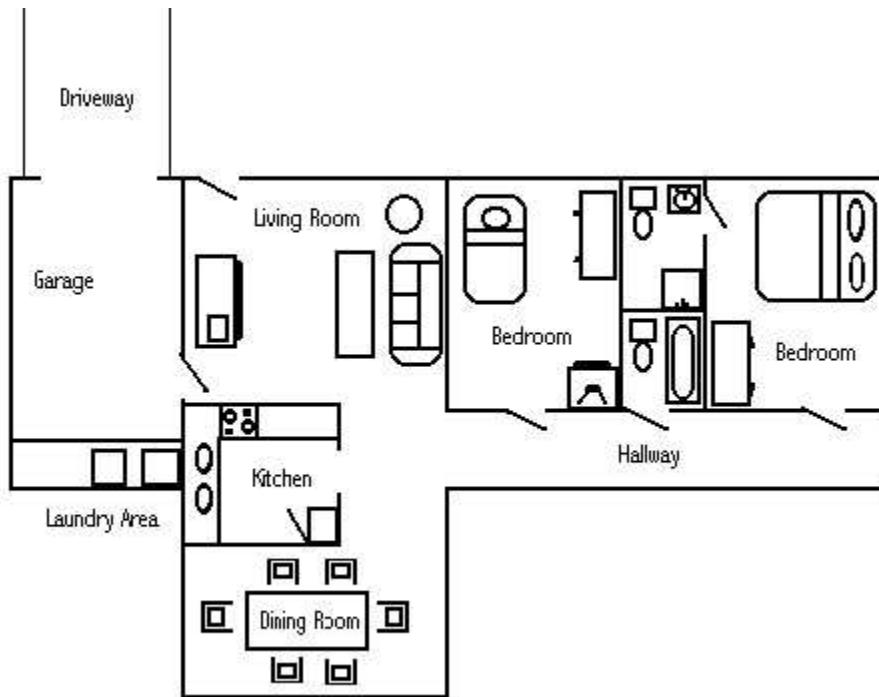
Though technically still human, these are more deadly in certain circumstances. A human baby may ingest a lintform in any conflict round they win by 3 or more points. Luckily (for the lintforms) the human baby moves very slowly, and can usually be avoided altogether.

#### **Cliché:**

Baby(5)

## The House:

This is a simple, sample house for use in a campaign. It is the equivalent of a city or even country in other genres, as it may be the only place the characters ever see.



### Garage

The garage is one of the safest places in the entire house for lint. It is rarely cleaned, and being the home of the dryer (in the laundry area) it is also source of healing. Lint thrives in this environment, unfortunately however, so do dust bunnies.

### Living Room

This is the lair of the man-folk humans. Content to sit on the sofa, (under which lint can find shelter) throw his feet up on the coffee table, and drink beer while watching football on the bigscreen TV, he couldn't care less about lint. **HOWEVER**, the female-folk humans are almost neurotically driven to clean this area, while complaining about the sloven habits of the man-folk.

## **Kitchen**

The kitchen is the haven of woman. Avoid it at all cost. Under the counters is the only safe area, however dust bunnies are known to inhabit these places as well - you have been warned.

## **Dining Room**

The dining room is a somewhat neutral location, it can be safely navigated on most occasions, though it should not be taken up as residence, for the vacuum doth cleaneth monthly.

## **Bedroom 1**

This bedroom is the smaller of the two bedrooms, is generally occupied by a teen-aged human. By their very nature the room is left in a constant state of disarray, making it generally safe for lint-kind.

## **Bedroom 2**

The larger of the two, this room is kept spotless by the woman-folk human. The only semi-safe haven in this room is under the bed, and even that gets vacuumed on occasion.

## **Bathroom 1**

This is the bathroom attached to the hallway. Bathrooms in general are not safe for lintforms. Their lack of carpeting makes them easy targets.

## **Bathroom 1**

This is the bathroom attached to bedroom 2. Bathrooms in general are not safe for lintforms. Their lack of carpeting makes them easy targets.

## **Hallway**

The hallway is a high-traffic area, making it suitable for lintforms, however it is vacuumed almost every week, making long-term stays unadvisable.

### **Final Thoughts:**

Well, that's about it for *It's LINT!*, I hope you find it as amusing as I did when I wrote it - Now I just hope S. John Ross and the rest of the *Risus: the Anything RPG* community forgive me ;)

The home of *Risus: the Anything RPG* is at:  
<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

The works of Lord Zamiel Al'Shaitan can be found at:  
<http://lordzamiel.is.dreaming.org>

RISUS

SARDONICVS

or, “Roman Hands, Thracian Fists, and Dacian Feet”

Misadventuring in the Roman Empire  
 with [Risus: The Anything RPG](#) © 1993-2001 by S. John Ross  
 Everything else © 2002 [Guy Gregory Hoyle](#)

### **Acrobat**

Juggle, walk tightrope, amuse audiences, wear funny clothes, be nimble, be sure-footed

**Variations:** Tumbler, contortionist

### **Advisor**

Advise ruler, cite precedent, talk for hours, speak with authority, debate minutiae, know history and laws

**Variations:** Scheming Kingmaker, Dedicated Public Servant, Self-Serving Bureaucrat

### **Amorous Scoundrel**

Go without sleep, run from enraged spouse, leap out window, caress passionately, endear with a look, virility under duress, be attractive and charming

**Variations:** Seductress, Libertine, Ladies’ Man, Hussy, Philanderer

### **Alchemist (Pharmakon)**

Brew useful but noxious potions, analyze somebody else’s noxious potions, learn about obscure poisons, write recipes in a complex code, blow up lab on a regular basis

### **Arena Hunter**

Hunt exotic game for arena, organize expedition, survive in the wild, tramp stealthily, know nature lore, know territory, palaver with natives

**Variations:** Hard-bitten Trapper, Sadistic Animal Trainer, Greedy Arena Factor

**Artist**

Be sensitive, suck up to potential patrons, defend artistic vision, suffer for your art

**Variations:** Sculptor, Painter, Mosaic Tiler, Playwright, Actor

**Beggar**

Grovel convincingly, show crippling injury, flatter gullible passersby, spin tale of woe, collect juicy gossip, rummage through garbage heaps, eat stuff that would gag an orc, sleep in alleys and on doorsteps

**Variations:** Vagabond, Tramp, Mendicant, Panhandler, Freeloader

**Bounty Hunter**

Hunt outlaws, hunt barbarians, track through the wilderness, stalk through cities

**Backgrounds:** Barbarians looking for rewards; greedy or revenge-seeking Romans

**Variations:** Opportunistic, Vengeful, Greedy, Famous, Infamous, Bloodthirsty

**Boxer**

Fight without weapons or armor, float like butterfly/sting like bee, register fists as deadly weapons

**Background:** Plebeian, ex-slave

**Variations:** Professional, Amateur, Corrupt, Honorable

**Buffoon**

Wear funny clothes, make witty observations about people at the court who hopefully won't get mad and have you killed, embarrass that guy you don't like, make everybody realize just how witty you really are, take a pratfall, juggle as if your life depended on it, caper and prance

**Charioteer**

React quickly, lay on the lash, survive crashes, evaluate horses, maintain chariots, know odds

**Background:** often slaves or freedmen; successful drivers might rise in rank.

**Variations:** Despised, Greedy, Famous, Infamous, Corrupt

**Christian Priest**

Denounce heresy, minister to flock, proselytize, organize secret meetings, teach Scripture, endure persecution, perform marriage, baptize infant, convert unbeliever

**Variations:** Kindly, Arrogant, Condescending, Saintly

**Christian**

Hide beliefs, meet secretly, witness to others, proselytize, hide sacred paraphernalia, endure persecution, render unto Caesar

**Background:** any. Christians are often persecuted and must hide their religion from outsiders.

**Variations:** Rabble-Rousing Missionary, Covert Acolyte, Devout Pilgrim, Future Martyr

**Civil Servant**

Produce red tape, accumulate wealth and power, shuffle papers, produce voluminous reports, create organizational system only you can understand, say things in a way that people will be afraid to admit they don't understand, supervise subordinates, keep your eyes open and your mouth shut

**Backgrounds:** Slaves, Ex-Slaves, Former Roman officers

**Variations:** Capable Functionary, Greedy Procurator, Meddlesome Administrator, Devious Civil Servant, Cowardly Secretary, Honest Magistrate

**Courier (Auriga)**

Carry dispatches, convey orders, deliver reports, be resourceful, complete assignment at all costs

**Variations:** Scupulous, Careless, Traitorous

**Craftsperson**

Craft, make minor Equipment, Find Necessary Supplies, Haggle; Inspired, Patient

**Background:** slave, ex-slave, plebeian

**Variations:** Silversmith, jeweller, mason, potter, weaver, cook, baker, leatherworker, laundress, woodcrafter, brewer

**Diplomat**

Carry important messages, be an emissary, pal around with foreign courtiers, indulge in intrigue, keep your eyes and ears open, know what to kiss and when, know about what's in vogue

**Background:** Equestrian or patrician class

**Variations:** No-nonsense Envoy, Jaded Ambassador

## Diviner

Cast horoscope, examine livers, read palms, interpret omens, gaze into crystal ball, examine head-bumps, read cards, read tea leaves, dowse for water, use ouija board, look in magic scrying pool, read runes, find prophecies in sacred books, interpret dreams, cast lots, psychometry

**Variations:** Convincing Fraud, Self-Deluded Fortune-Teller, Wealthy Astrologer, Greedy Haruspex, Priestly Augur

## Entertainer

Juggle things, sing funny songs, tell lame jokes, do funny voices, imitate local celebrities

**Variations:** Wacky Juggler, Lame Comedian, Sonorous Soliloquist, Nimble Prestidigitator, Exotic Dancer

## Explorer

Get antsy when you're home too long, go somewhere nobody else has ever heard of, meet people you can't talk to, stumble on lost civilizations, collect exotic memorabilia, tell stories about how you got that scar, learn scandalous phrases in foreign languages

**Background:** often a merchant or sailor, sometimes a wealthy equestrian or patrician

## Fisherman

Fish, build boat, repair nets, make traps, know the local waters, brag about the one that got away

**Background:** slave, ex-slave, plebeian

## Gang Member

Defend turf or patron, know streets, evade capture, stand up for your gang, persuade violently

**Background:** ex-gladiators, young nobles looking for trouble or serving tough-willed clients, former soldiers, urban poor

**Variations:** Young Noble Bully, Street-Bred Tough, Struggling Ex-Soldier, Swaggering Ex-Gladiator, Ponderous Thug, Belligerent Mook

## Gladiator

Salute the emperor because you're about to die, fight with odd weapons and too little armor, please the crowd, flex muscles impressively, "it's just a scratch", kill opponents entertainingly, learn clever ways to "die" convincingly

**Background:** Barbarian, Slave

**Variations:** Enslaved Pit-Fighter, Famous Professional Gladiator, Crazed Crusher

## Gladiator

Salute the emperor because you're about to die, fight with odd weapons and too little armor, please the crowd, flex muscles impressively, "it's just a scratch", kill opponents entertainingly, learn clever ways to "die" convincingly

**Background:** Slave, often Barbarian

**Variation:** Reluctant, Bloodthirsty, Sadistic, Famous, Infamous, Wealthy, Greedy, Ex-

## Healer

Bind wounds, split broken bones, know herbal lore, treat illness

**Variations:** Discrete Physician, Crusty Old Sawbones, Rustic Herbalist, Embittered Combat Medic, Devout Faith Haler

## Hedge Wizard

Find lost possessions, craft protective amulets, scare away vermin and unwelcome visitors, create sleeping potion, cure minor ills, use natural properties of plants and animals

## Herder

Care for herd, train dog, butcher herd animals, run long distance, listen to endless stream of off-color jokes about herders and their herds

**Background:** slave, ex-slave, plebeian

## Innkeeper

Keep a tidy inn, throw out ruffians, provide food and drink, keep valuables safe

**Variations:** Nosy Landlord, Generous Taverner, King's Hosteler, Long-Suffering Bartender, Buxom Serving Wench, Burly Barmaid

## Lawyer

Plead case, investigate suspect, make speech, fake evidence, obfuscate, bribe official

**Variations:** Greedy, Corrupt, Crusading, Famous, Infamous, Struggling, Poor, Streetwise, Self-Promoting, Overconfident

**Legionnaire**

Perform duty, esprit de corps, take orders from your superiors, give orders to your subordinates, know the regulations, complain about the food, stand watch, complain about “the brass”, maintain discipline on the battlefield, gamble and drink and wench off duty

**Background:** Cannot be of Equestrian or Senatorial ranks. Must be a free Roman citizen.

**Variations:** Bumbling Veteran, Green Young Recruit, Dashing Young Officer, Grizzled Old Campaigner, Pious Mithraist

**Magician**

Make talismans and amulets, ward off evil eye, bring luck, ward off danger from building or property, defend walls or gates, create guardian statues, make sacred stones, bring luck and prosperity, repulse danger, avert ill-will, reverse sterility, prevent illness, oppose harmful testimony, protect from curses

**Mariner**

Live on a ship, never get seasick, say things like “arr, matey” and “landlubber”, wear little or no armor, batten down the hatches, swab the deck, climb the rigging, man the fo’c’sl, get tattoos, wear a ring in your ear, have a girl in every port, dance a hornpipe

**Medium**

Hold seance, enter trance, contact spirit guide, contact the dead, speak in spooky voices, interpret knocks on the walls by spirits of the dear departed, speak in spooky voices

**Merchant**

Buy cheap and sell dear, haggle haggle haggle!, know what things cost, keep an eye on your stuff, organize caravan, carry heavy stuff, pick up the local gossip

**Midwife**

Know signs of pregnancy, tend mother-to-be, spread old wive's tales, terminate pregnancy

**Military Tribune**

Plan battle, lead troops, lead sortie, spy on enemy, command auxiliaries, carry message

**Background:** Equestrian or Senatorial rank or family, impoverished Patrician

**Mystic**

Seek enlightenment, meditate upon obscure philosophical dilemmas, avoid unnecessary confrontations (but not the necessary ones), use obscure quotations from dead philosophers and strange folk wisdom, feign death, leave body, levitate self, don’t own more than you can carry

**Background:** Foreigner from the east (e.g., Asia, India or China)

**Necromancer**

Summon spirits of the deceased, harrow up the dead, look good in black, be spooky, hang around in graveyards and ancient battlefields, exorcise ghosts

**Outlaw**

Spit in the face of authority, scoff at the law, rob wayfarers and passersby, live in unpleasant places, disguise yourself as harmless local, travel lightly, watch your back, brag about the bounty on your head

**Variations:** Freedom-Loving Rebel, Fugitive from Justice, Reluctant Gangster

**Pacifist**

Resist passively, don’t fight (even to defend yourself or others), tell others not to fight, resolve conflicts peaceably, don’t wear armor, get beaten up a lot, get killed (usually only done once)

**Pagan Priest**

Perform ceremony, supervise charity, perform divination, teach theology, give advice

**Variations:** Patrician, Equestrian, Plebeian, Kind, Generous, Corrupt

**Patrician**

Hold office, debate endlessly, set good example, be educated, live lavishly, behave condescendingly, command respect, have a lot of influence, keep the peasants in their place, demand the best things in life, go hunting and riding, wear fancy clothing

**Variations:** Honest, Strong-Willed, Patriotic, Corrupt, Lecherous, Decadent, Thrill-Seeking, Young, Impoverished, Debauched

**Philosopher**

Indulge curiosity, know lots of obscure facts, carry around bundles of esoteric equipment, collect thousands of specimens, know astrology, take measurements and make calculations, lecture authoritatively, debunk critics, denounce rival, look scruffy

**Platonist:** Find ways to improve things, concentrate on the mind and soul

**Pythagorean:** "Number is all", manipulate through astrology and numerology, attempt to abolish irrational numbers, purify soul through successive lives through intellectual activities

**Megaran:** Give lectures, debate everything, make people do things they don't know they want to do

**Milesians:** Make calculations, draw up complicated plans, observe the heavens

**Cynics:** Don't believe what your senses tell you, deliver unpleasant truths without flinching, hopelessly and shamelessly offend

**Stoics:** Endure hardship, ignore suffering, pay no heed to pleasure

**Epicurians:** Experience everything, disregard unpleasant experiences, free self and others from fear (not the same as boldness)

## Pirate

Sail the seas, attack ships, ransom wealthy prisoners, climb the rigging, say things like "Sink me fer a lubber!" and "Shiver me timbers!", have an eyepatch or a peg leg or a hook

**Background:** Greek, Phoenician

**Variations:** Dashing Privateer, Grizzled Sea Dog, One-Eyed Buccaneer, Ouzo-Swilling Freebooter

## Police/Fireman (Vigile)

Patrol neighborhood, put out fires, spot crimes, enforce law, look for danger, use own judgement

**Background:** freedmen, others

## Roman Politician

Speak publicly, know laws, seek office, serve Rome (without pay), know Greek, enhance reputation, maintain wealthy lifestyle, know important people

**Background:** Equestrian or Senatorial rank or family, impoverished Patrician

**Variations:** Corrupt, Virtuous

## Foreign Ruler

Look imposing, bluster, debate, compromise, rally followers, keep followers happy, find weakness in argument, negotiate

**Variations:** Foreign Despot, Tribal Chieftain, Barbarian King, Crafty Usurper, Beloved Queen, Despised Tyrant, Reluctant Dictator, Puppet Monarch

## Scholar

Know lots of obscure lore, write down everything, be an expert on something, act as if you know something about everything else, criticize rivals, flatter patrons

## Scout

Live in the wild, hunt game, trap small animals, know the lay of the land, watch enemy troop movements, size up danger, be self-reliant, be uncomfortable out of your element

**Background:** barbarian, ex-legionnaire

**Variations:** Pathfinder, Frontiersman

## Secret Agent

Sneak around, decode secret messages, eavesdrop, stay out of the way, work undercover, know foreign languages, give report, kill people, wear cheesy disguises, use interesting poisons

Note: may be working for private citizens, political parties, a wealthy patron, or the government (or any combination thereof)

**Variations:** Informer, Spy, Infiltrator, Investigator

## Sharpshooter

Hit a fly's eye at 100 yards, be rock-steady, be extremely protective of your equipment

**Background:** Barbarian, Legionnaire

**Variations:** Eagle-eyed Archer, Trick Knife Thrower

## Shipwright

Build Ship, Patch Leaks, Make Sails, Boil Pitch, Career Ship

## Slave

Obey master, endure beatings, swallow pride, seize opportunities, explain self, keep ears open and mouth shut

**Variations:** Ambitious, lazy, rebellious, talented, beautiful, ex-

## Smith

Make things out of metal, ignore burns, impressive muscles, evaluate metalwork, snarl at lazy apprentice

**Background:** slave, ex-slave, plebeian

**Variations:** blacksmith, weaponsmith

### **Smuggler**

Fence illicit goods, feign innocence, have connections, appraise goods, obtain forged documents, conceal identity, have an escape plan

**Background:** any

### **Soldier of Fortune**

Getting paid for fighting, getting tricked out of being paid by evil patron who hired you, looking to be hired by a non-evil patron, gambling and drinking and wenching your pay away

**Background:** Usually a Barbarian or a former Legionnaire

**Variations:** Avaricious Mercenary, Idealistic Sellsword, Heartbroken Footslogger

### **Sorcerer**

Make trouble, afflict with boils, poison wells, afflict cattle, cause plague, pretend not to be a sorcerer

### **Tenant Farmer**

Grow food, raise livestock, kill varmints, gripe about taxes, talk about weather

**Background:** slave, ex-slave, plebeian

### **Thief**

Steal valuables, purloin treasure, filch a fortune, pilfer swag, cut purses, burgle shops, loot coffers, ransack vaults, slink warily, shadow victims, strike from behind, fence booty, bypass booby traps, scale obstacles

**Variations:** Deft Cutpurse, Dashing Highwayman, Gentleman Jewel-Thief

### **Village Crone**

Cackle menacingly, prepare corpse, tell how much better things used to be, hide valuables away, know secret

**Background:** Any except Equestrian, Senatorial, or Impoverished Patrician

### **Village Priest**

Bless crops and cattle, perform marriages, bless newborns, perform funerals, perform auguries, serve the gods

**Background:** Any except Equestrian, Senatorial, or Impoverished Patrician

### **Weapon Master**

Single-minded devotion to mastering one type of weapon, not being able to master other types of weapons, being able to do cool things with the type of weapon that you can master

**Background:** Most likely barbarian or gladiator.

**Variations:** World-weary Swordslinger, Eager Young Duellist, Lord of the Lash

## **BARBARIAN CLICHES**

Romans consider anyone who is not a Roman citizen to be a barbarian. However, in this context, we'll only consider the stereotypical barbarians like the Celts, the Picts, the Scytheans, and the Germans, and all those like them; all other non-Romans (such as the Egyptians, the Persians, etc.) are referred to as "Foreigners". Many other clichés above are well-suited to barbarians (e.g., gladiator, soldier of fortune, soldier, gang member, chariot driver, scout, arena hunter, etc.)

### **Amazon**

Stand up for yourself to any patronizing male, show women how to fend for themselves, show those bully-boys who's better

**Background:** usually a Barbarian (Scot/Pict, German, Scythean, perhaps a descendant of the legendary Amazons from a lost civilization)

### **Barbarian**

Glower menacingly at soft city dwellers, complain about the filthy streets, praise the virtues of living in a crude lean-to in your faraway homeland, forget to shower except when it rains, heft a mean battleaxe, perform amazing feats of martial prowess, have a wyrd or geas

**Variations:** Filthy German, Woad-stained Scot/Pict, Scythian Horseman, African Tribesman

### **Berserker**

Ignore wounds, look really scary, fight to the death, intimidate, ignore fire, drink kegs of ale, punch out rude oxen, leave a trail of destruction at a moment's notice

**Background:** Scot or Pict, German

### **Bloodthirsty Crone**

Appease the Earth, assure fertility, inflict curse on the wicked, lift curse from community, conduct human sacrifice (only when

necessary), stop plague

### **Druid**

Sacrifice prisoners (only when absolutely necessary), predict weather, answer questions with riddles, invoke the powers of nature, perform bizarre rituals

**Variations:** Rebel Druid, Village Druid, Wandering Druid

### **Savage**

Be primitive, hunt and forage, wear skins and paint, know about animals and plants and spirits, sleep lightly, be perplexed by foreign ways

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **Poor Jobs**

Beggar, Client, Dole Recipient, Litter Bearer, Low-Income Teacher, Miner, Street Guide, Street Thief, Street Vendor, Streetwalker, Tenant farmer, Work Gang farmer

### **Struggling Jobs**

Auxiliary Soldier, Barber, cart Driver, Cook, Sign Writer, Slave Cook, Small Store Owner, Street magician, Street Porter

### **Average Jobs**

Astrologer, bath masseur, Bodyguard, Cheap lawyer, Elementary Teacher, Gladiator, Legionary, Minor Civil Servant, Minor Priest, Personal Attendant, Sailor, Scribe, Shop Owner, Skilled Craftsman, Slave Administrator, Slave Entertainer, Small Farm Owner

### **Comfortable Jobs**

Artist, Augur, Bank Secretary, Building Administrator, Charioteer, Civil Servant, Corrupt Civil Servant, Doctor, Gladiator manager (Lanista), Lawyer, Legionary Officer, Merchant, Praetorian Guard, Provincial Tax Collector, Rhetoric Teacher

### **Wealthy Jobs**

Banker, Building Owner, Imperial Favorite, Large Land Owner, Provincial Governor

[Back to The RISUS Files](#)

# BUGHUNTERS



By Zamiel Al'Shaitan

*"We're Space Marines. Some call us "bughunters", others call us "exterminators", but it isn't derogatory, no, quite the opposite. We're the best of the best. When there's an exomorph breakout on a colony, planet, or god forbid, on a ship, we're the ones they call. You see, flesh is cheap, 'tech is expensive. As long as we have a high lethality and low collateral damage, we stay alive and employed."*

- Col. Mann, 314th Armored Marine Division (Deceased)

**BUGHUNTERS SOURCEBOOK FOR RISUS: THE ANYTHING RPG**

## **::GENRE INFORMATION::**

This is a serious-toned genre for Risus: The Anything RPG by S. John Ross. The players take on the roles of Space Marines, who have the job of exterminating highly advanced, highly dangerous insectoid life, both on a ravaged Earth, as well as space colonies. The inspiration for this setting comes from a number of places, including the Alien\* movies, Starship Troopers, my previous work on a BUGHUNTERS sourcebook for the Rifts/Palladium system (never released) and a healthy dose of my own hatred for all things bug-like. This game will most likely have a rather high lethality rate, making Risus the perfect system - if a character dies, another character is only 2 minutes away.

I would like to thank Stacy Allston (again) for the "Property damage" section, which I borrowed and adapted from his "Risus Supers" supplement.

So strap on your combat armor, grab your plasma thrower, and go cook some bugs, Soldier!

## **::THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT::**

The year is 2144, and the world is in ruin. Giant megacorporations have abused the planetary resources until life on Earth is near impossible. Large glass-domed cities populated by the wealthy and powerful trap air as well as keep out the toxic fumes of this now-barren wasteland.

Giant factories, hundreds of miles long, and sometimes miles high belch toxic gasses into the already doomed atmosphere, mutating the life that once flourished across the face of the planet. Strange, alien creatures have crawled from the slime pits and toxic runoff, heartier than anything seen before on the planet.

And so humanity reached out to the stars to find a new home. Beginning with the orbital colonies, man reached further and further into the blackness of space, encountering little trouble, other than their own fears.

Finally, what appeared to be a perfect home was found, great ships were built, and man colonized their first planet - but they were not alone. Giant insectoid life was soon encountered, and it was hostile. Standing 2 to 3 meters tall, they stormed into the colonies by foot and by wing, killing everything in their path. That's where you come in...

You are a Space Marine, trained and equipped by the New Earth Government to defend the colonies, destroy the bugs, and reclaim whatever remains.

## **::CHARACTER CREATION::**

Characters are created as stated in the Risus: the Anything RPG handbook. 10 cliche dice, no more than 4 dice in a starting cliche. A character may as usual, gain an extra cliche die for taking a hook, and another for a suitable tale. No funky dice are used.

It is recommended, though not required that all PC's take the "Space Marine" cliche. Space Marines are the most likely to be in the field, however exobiologists, mechanics, and other non-combat personnel can easily be integrated.

## ::COMMON CLICHÉ::

Cliche common to this genre will be mostly military skills, other cliche may be taken (as usual) this is intended only as a helpful guide.

### **APC / Tank Driver**

Driving APC's, using the weapons on said APC's, driving tanks, other large, relatively slow land-based craft.

### **Combat Engineer**

Jury-rigging / building / replacing equipment from items found (or carried to) the field. Demolishing things found in the field. Hoping things you've jury-rigged work twice (without blowing up).

### **Communications Expert**

Using scramblers, laser communications, figuring out and using alien / unfamiliar signaling technology, learning (very quickly) and speaking in strange languages.

### **Demolition Expert**

Blowing things up. A specialist in the use of plastic explosives, fusion blocks, cutting lasers, and other tools of the trade.

### **Exobiologist**

Poking around inside/around dead things, making hypothesis about the nature of said dead things. Attempting to find weak spots in living versions of said dead things.

### **Gunner**

Specializing in firing the weapons onboard a vehicle. A gunner is required to fire the auxiliary weapons on drop ships, APC's and other such mobile combat machines.

### **Heavy Weapons Specialist**

Includes using rocket launchers, plasma throwers, plasma cannons, railguns, and heavy machine guns.

### **Mechanic**

Fixing the APC's, dropships, and other equipment 'the team' wrecks on a mission. Your best work is done in a garage, or at least when there aren't people shooting at you or bugs trying to eat your face off - you're not as quick as the Combat Engineer, but your repairs LAST.

### **Medic**

Includes bandaging wounds, preventing blood loss, tourniqueting stumps from lost limbs, keeping Space Marines alive. The medic is everyone's best friend.

### **Pilot**

Flying anything with wings, rockets, or any other means of aeronautical or space flight . Not getting your ass shot off while doing so. Firing weapons attached to said flying vehicle.

### **Sniper**

Killing things at great distances with 1 shot.

### **Space Marine**

Includes shooting things, marching, running, taking orders, getting shot and not dying off too quick, disobeying orders. Space Marines are trained in all manner of small arms, from the standard laser sidearm pistol, to the fully automatic pulse laser rifle, as well as the use of grenades.

## **::COMMON HOOKS::**

Hooks common to this genre will be mostly mild psychological, or possibly physical limitations (due to war). All Space Marines are given mental evaluations regularly (to protect the mission) so the likelihood of a raving lunatic making it into, or staying in the Corps is unlikely.

### **Claustrophobia**

The fear of enclosed spaces. Though this is most likely only a mild case, that can be overcome by willpower - most of the time.

### **Combat Psychosis**

A character with combat psychosis may lose touch with reality in a combat situation. They can become incredibly unstable, possibly firing on friends and allies, or simply not acknowledging the combat at all. These characters rarely make it onto a second mission, either due to death, or post-mission evaluations.

### **Entomophobia**

Entomophobia is the fear of insects. This not an uncommon fear, and can even be quite healthy in a Space Marine, as long as the urge is to destroy the bugs, rather than freeze...

### **Lost Limb(s)**

This is a character that has lost one or more limbs due (most likely) to combat. They may or may not have bionic replacements, however feeling is not present in the limb.

### **Mania**

Those suffering from mania ("Manics") are in a constant state of euphoria. They are constantly moving, talking, and in general unable to sit or stand still. Even in dire or solemn situations, they often cannot keep themselves from fidgeting, snickering, and otherwise being a nuisance.

## ::COMMON EQUIPMENT::

Though the "tools of the trade" are assumed to be carried, it is recommended to record the equipment carried on the character record sheet. Weapons are listed either as a cliche dice value, or as a bonus die value to the appropriate cliche.

### **Combat Armor**

Combat armor is handled separate of the character, and must be breached before the character inside can be harmed. The first combat round the character loses, their armor is breached, but they are unhurt (assuming they are in a livable environment). Heavy combat armor is identical to combat armor, except it is bulkier, and as such imposes a -1 penalty to cliche rolls involving manual dexterity (including combat).

*Combat Armor(1)*

*Heavy Combat Armor(2)*

### **Communications Patch with Emergency Beacon**

This is a cloth patch that is affixed to the combat armor, and contains a radio transmitter as well as a distress signal beacon. 2-way radio communication is provided, as well as a locator whenever the beacon is active.

### **Cutting Laser**

This is a small, handheld laser wand, capable of cutting through the strongest of materials given enough time. It can be used as a weapon, but has a meager range of 1 foot, and is unwieldy as a weapon (-1 to cliche rolls to hit).

*Cutting Laser(5)*

### **Fusion Block**

A fusion block is a large, unwieldy explosive package, roughly the size of a brick. They are used by placing them (often in groups) against a structure, or a hole drilled into a structure and then remote detonating. A fusion block cannot be effectively thrown as a weapon, it must be shaped and planted.

*Fusion Block(6)*

## Grenades

Grenades used by the Space Marines come in 4 varieties, Smoke, High Explosive, Plasma, and Nuclear. Smoke grenades of various colors are used to obscure sight, mark landing zones, or signaling. High Explosive grenades are used for anti-personnel, plasma grenades are anti-vehicle weapons, and nuclear are anti-structure.

*High Explosive Grenade(3), blast radius 5m.*

*Plasma Grenade(4), blast radius 10m.*

*Nuclear Grenade(5), blast radius 15m.*

## Heavy Machine Gun

This is a standard .50BMG. Though it is not as technologically advanced as some of the other weapons, it is a reliable and tested weapon. The Heavy Machine Gun has an amazing effective range of 2000 meters, and 200 shots to the chain.

*Heavy Machine Gun(+0)*

## Jump Pack

This is a type of light jetpack that allows the character to jump approximately 20 meters in one bound, or a short-term flight. The nuclear power supply contained within it is sufficient for 100 leaps, or 2 minutes of continuous flight. All Space Marines are trained in the use of jump packs, as well as pilots.

## Laser Pistol

This is the standard sidearm issued to anyone assigned to a Space Marine unit. It is relatively short-ranged (50 meters) and has 20 shots to the clip. Standard issue is 3 clips per weapon.

*Laser Pistol (+0)*

## MedKit

A MedKit contains mundane items such as bandages, antiseptics and analgesics, as well as skin-knitters, dermal spray, and short-term advanced life support nanites. This is the minimum needed for a Medic to keep a critically injured team member alive, or to heal minor injuries.

### **Plasma Cannon**

The plasma cannon is a large, bazooka-sized weapon that fires a ball of coherent plasma. Relatively short ranged for such a large weapon (100 meters) it causes immense damage to whatever it impacts. The plasma cannon gets 10 shots to a drum, 2 drums standard.

*Plasma Cannon(+2)*

### **Plasma Thrower**

This heavy weapon is much like the 20th century flame-thrower, except it shoots a superheated jet of plasma. Two tanks of water are carried on the back, from which the hydrogen necessary is extracted via electrical current. A plasma thrower may be used to "sweep" a horde of incoming enemies, damaging them all, however it is NOT recommended for use in tight areas, as backflow can occur. The plasma thrower has a range of 15 meters and gets 20 shots to a tank, 2 tanks standard.

*Plasma Thrower(+1)*

### **Portable Tool Kit**

For in-field repairs of equipment, it contains a cutting laser (see above) various wrenches, hammers, screwdrivers, soldering laser, diagnostic equipment, etc. This is the minimum needed for a combat engineer or a mechanic to perform their job effectively.

### **Pulse Laser Rifle**

This is the most commonly encountered battlefield weapon. It is a rather large rifle, complete with computer targeting and tracking scope. It fires a rapid pulse laser, much like a standard machine gun fires bullets. Range is an impressive 500 meters, and payload is 30 shots per long clip. Standard issue is 2 long clips per weapon.

*Pulse Laser Rifle(+1)*

### **Railgun**

The electromagnetic railgun (also commonly called a "boom gun") uses a series of powerful electromagnets to propel a shell at great velocities towards a target. The gun itself is approximately 2 meters long. Range is 500 meters with 50 shots to a cyclic clip. 2 clips are standard issue.

*Railgun(+1)*

### Rocket Launcher

The rocket launcher is essentially a light rocket such as those carried on dropships, mounted inside a portable housing. It is a one-shot weapon, however it is highly accurate, has a long range, and a high damage potential. New Earth Government frowns upon the use of these except in dire situations, due to the amount of collateral damage they cause. Range 5 kilometers.

*Rocket Launcher(6), blast radius 10m.*

### Sniping Laser

This is a high-energy pinpoint laser generator with a computer-compensated aiming reticle, thermal imaging, probable movement overlay, and a whole suite of other optical enhancements and targeting aides. The sniping laser has a range of 3000 meters.

*Sniping Laser(+1)*

## ::VEHICLES::

The vehicles in use by the Space Marines are the most technologically advanced ever created by the New Earth Government. Cutting edge composite armor is capable of withstanding tremendous abuse without so much as a dent, and their weapons are of much greater magnitude than those carried by personnel.

For game statistics, treat vehicles as separate characters. They have their own cliche and abilities. When conflict rolls for driving or gunning skills arise, use the driver/gunner's cliche scores, but all damage is done to the vehicle. If a vehicle is reduced to 0 cliche dice, it has become inoperable. Depending on the amount of damage, it may be repaired by as little as a combat engineer and a portable tool kit, but if damage is severe it may require a mechanic and a base station (or worse, be a total loss). Vehicles, being of larger scale and tougher materials, do not operate under the 6 dice cliche limitation.

### **APC (Armored Personnel Carrier)**

The APC is the standard infantry-mover of the N.E.G. (New Earth Government). It has 6 large, solid wheels capable of crawling over the roughest of terrain, and is equipped with a heavy pulse cannon turret. The APC can carry a squad of 12 men in full combat armor and gear, or 24 in a very cramped fashion. A separate gunner is required to operate the turret.

*Armored Personnel Carrier(6)*

*Heavy Pulse Laser Turret(+3) - Range 4000m, payload unlimited.*

### **Attack Fighter**

This is a VTOL-capable transatmospheric one-man fighter used for scouting a possible "hot zone" as well as for close air support and bombing runs. They are fast, nimble and in the right pilot's hands, quite deadly.

*Attack Fighter(4)*

*Pulse Laser(+1)*

*Missile/Bomb Rack(+3) - Range [5km / NA], Payload [4 / 12].*

## Dropship

Dropships are used to land APC's and armored Space Marines. A single drop ship can carry 2 APC's/HAV's or 4 LAV's as well as 2 dozen additional Space Marines in full armor and gear. Dropships are equipped with 2 heavy pulse cannon batteries, as well as a tactical rocket launcher with 12 missiles. One gunner is required for each weapon system.

*Dropship (12)*

*2x Heavy Pulse Laser Battery(+3) - Range 4000m, payload unlimited.*

*Tactical Rocket Launcher(6) - Range 5km, payload 12.*

## HAV (Heavy Assault Vehicle)

Nearly as large as an APC, the HAV is a four-man tank (driver and 3 gunners) with room for an additional 2 Space Marines on external platforms. This is a tracked vehicle, made to power through obstacles, rather than over. It carries the same laser batteries as the dropship, as well as a heavy electromagnetic railgun turret. Be warned, the personnel on the 2 external platforms are NOT protected by the vehicle's hull.

*Heavy Assault Vehicle(8)*

*2x Heavy Pulse Laser Battery(+3) - Range 4000m, payload unlimited.*

*Heavy Electromagnetic Railgun(+2) - Range 1000m, payload 100.*

## LAV (Light Assault Vehicle)

This is a one-man tank, the driver operates the weapons system. It is a wheeled vehicle, but the tires are of the same synthetic material as the APC, making them highly resilient.

*Light Assault Vehicle(5)*

*Heavy Electromagnetic Railgun(+2) - Range 1000m, payload 100.*

## Shuttle

The shuttle is a lightly armed and armored transport vessel capable of vertical take-off and landing. They are used to transport people and goods to supposed "safe zones". It is not intended as a combat vehicle, but a cargo/personnel vessel.

*Shuttle(3)*

*Light Laser Battery(+0)*

## Space Freighter\*

These are large vessels used for inter-system travel. They are fully autonomous cities, they synthesize their own foods, maintain their own artificial gravities, and carry hundreds of thousands of people, both combat and noncombat personnel. A typical freighter holds 1000 Dropships, as many as 2000 APC's, LAV's and HAV's, 250 Shuttles, and 500 Attack Fighters.

*Space Freighter(100)*

*50x Heavy Pulse Laser Batteries(+3) - Range 4000m, payload unlimited.*

*25x Tactical Rocket Launcher(6) - Range 5km, payload 12.*

*"Planet Killer" Antiplanetary bomb(50) - Range 10,000km, Payload 2.*

\* These are not intended for PC usage ;-)

## ::PROPERTY DAMAGE::

Making a contest roll by a good margin implies the possibility of property damage. If the contest involved forces that can knock down a wall (such as fighting, exploding, using fusion blocks on jammed soda machines), use the leftover points to contest the materials of something nearby.

For instance, a Space Marine takes on a Soldier Bug. The Space Marine(4) fires his Pulse Laser Rifle(+1) and comes up a 20; the Soldier Bug only counters with a 7, leaving 13 leftover points. This 13 applies to an attack on nearby materials, such as bunkers, roads, walls, etc.

The GM creates such items on the spot. Some typical values might include:

- A laser-mining drill (15 points)
- A nearby APC. (40 points)
- A solar collector (10 points)
- A space colony wall (20 points)
- A tri-ethane refining station (25 points)

Also consider that the values given in Risus for throwing things (tanks, motorcycles, etcetera) can serve as useful figures for smashing those same objects up really well.

Remember - "Flesh is Cheap, 'Tech is Expensive." - destroy too much valuable property and you may find yourself without a job, or even worse - on a "bug planet" without a ride home.

## ::THE "BUGS"::

The “bugs” commonly referred to by Space Marines are more appropriately known as “exomorphs” by the exobiologists and those that have never seen one up close. The most common types of bugs are listed here, though many more are likely (especially when the PC’s grow too comfortable with them <g>). Bugs are capable of surviving in the vacuum of space, as they apparently do not need to breathe, however their only known means of reaching space is via transport bug or hitchhiking on a N.E.G. vessel..

### **Grenadier**

**Description:** Grenadier appear much like the artillery bugs above, and capable of spitting a massive ball of acid up to 500 meters distant. They bury themselves underground while waiting for an aggressor to come into range, effectively ambushing their opponents.

**Cliche:**

Grenadier Bug(5)

**Hook:**

Grenadier are unable to effectively attack an opponent that manages to land on their back.

### **Artillery Bug**

**Description:** Artillery bugs are large (APC-sized) beetles. These giant bugs can fire a ball of bio-energy into space, acting much like a planetary defense weapon.

**Cliche:**

Artillery Bug(5)

**Hook:**

Artillery bugs are so large and slow moving, they cannot effectively target anything smaller than a dropship. They are completely unable to attack ground targets.

### Queen

**Description:** There is only one queen found per “bug planet”, and they communicate via telepathy, controlling their massive societies. If the queen is killed, a new queen will emerge in a few months. Queens lay all the eggs, and maintain the order of a colony. When a queen dies, or is killed, their colony is thrown into turmoil they may lead to “rogue bugs” rampaging both on and off-world. Queen bugs are capable of spitting acid up to 50 meters distant. This is quite a reasonable range, as their brooding chambers are rarely larger than this.

**Cliche:**

Queen Bug[6]

**Hook:** The queen is so large she cannot effectively run from attackers, instead she must stand and fight (often to the death).

### Soldier

**Description:** Standing an average of 2 meters tall, some are wasp-like, with large translucent wings and a barbed stinger, while others have great ant-like mandibles capable of tearing through armor.

**Cliche:**

Soldier Bug(2)

**Hook:**

None.

### Transport

**Description:** The transport bug is an amazing evolutionary marvel. These are massive creatures, often growing in excess of 200 meters in length, who hold other bugs in their mouths, and hurl themselves into space. When they reach a new planet, or ship, they release their cargo to begin colonizing or assault.

**Cliche:**

Transport Bug[10]\*

**Hook:** Transport bugs are unable to defend themselves, relying on their tough exoskeleton and their “passengers” to defend them.

\* Due to their massive size they use vehicle rules, bypassing the 6-die cliche limit.

### Worker

**Description:** Workers are approximately 1 meter long and appear in a variety of shapes. Some appear almost ladybug-like that tend to crops, and others are more reminiscent of dung beetles as they build mud structures for the colony.

**Cliche:**

Worker Bug(1)

**Hook:**

Will more likely run from combat than fight, unless cornered.

**::CREDITS::**

Risus: The Anything RPG by S. John Ross, without which this sourcebook would not exist, is located at:

<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

Stacy Allston's "Risus Supers" which I borrowed the property damage rules from, is located at:

<http://www.angelfire.com/bx2/webgamer/supers.html>

This work, and the other works for Risus by Zamiel Al'Shaitan can be found at:  
<http://lordzamiel.is.dreaming.org>

The "BUGHUNTERS" logo on the cover page was created using the GIMP, from the cenobyte font. (Go Script-Fu!)

The fonts used in this document are Verdana, Spacedock Stencil, and Futurex Apocalypse. The latter two can be downloaded from Cumberland Fontworks at:  
<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/fonts.htm>

The graphic on the cover page is source unknown, unfortunately.

PDF Conversion by an amalgamation AFPL Ghostscript 7.04 and Redmon 1.7, this document was printed to RPT1: and lookit what happened!

Hi mom.

The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20050326193027/http://geocities.com:80/fedcomic/rah/rah.html>

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# RAH!

## A Risus American Hero!

The G.I. Joe / Action Force campaign for [Risus, the Anything RPG](#)

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**RAH! A Risus American Hero!** is a supplement to [Risus, the Anything RPG](#), provided here free of charge for your enjoyment. Risus is the original creation of [S. John Ross](#). To use this supplement, you will need a copy of the original Risus rules. Happily, these are also available free of charge, and can be found on S. John's [website](#). Thanks, S. John.

G.I. Joe, A Real American Hero, is owned exclusively by Hasbro, all rights reserved. This is the work of a fan, and is in no way intended to profit from Hasbro's property, or to challenge their copyright. To the contrary, I endorse G.I. Joe and encourage anyone who reads this to purchase G.I. Joe stuff, especially the old comics from Marvel and the new comics from Image and Devil's Due. They're great!

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And now that the legal stuff is out of the way, on to the game!

### RAH! A Risus American Hero!

**Genre:** Counter-Terror / Special Ops

**Tone:** Not too serious

**Advanced Options:** Hooks and Tales (sort of, see [Filecards](#)), Pumping Cliches

**Points/Dice:** 10 Dice

**Description:** "G. I. Joe is the code name for America's daring, highly trained special mission force. Its purpose: to defend human freedom against Cobra, a ruthless terrorist organization determined to rule the world."

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**RAH! A Risus American Hero!** is a role-playing game set in the world of [G.I. Joe](#) (and/or [Action Force](#)). The game uses [Risus](#) rules, with a few [modifications](#). Click around the site for [cliches](#) and [characters](#). Have fun!

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A Risus American Hero!

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# Faery: the Twilight Land

by  
Peter Kisner  
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Fairies are thought of as many things by mortals throughout history: nature spirits, dreams, monsters, fallen angels (or half-fallen angels), fallen gods, and the dead are just a few. All and none these things may be the case. The defining quality of fairies is their marginal status. Partly human, partly alive, or appearing at places at the edges of human society, fairies are liminal creatures confined to a middle region twixt existence and imagination.

But what if these twilit creatures could shrug off their obscurity and take on full being in the world of mortals...

What would drive them to enter the sunlit lands though?  
What plunders would be greater in value than the charmed gold of Faery?

The lands of faery are ephemeral, wonderous and ever changing, but in a sense life there is ever the same. To grow or become stronger Fairies must venture out of St. Martins land, into the realms of mortals and risk death or worse. By accomplishing some great deed in the world of men a fairy may win title or feif in the land under the hills, or gain something in power, or deepen their being.

Even in the mortal lands fairies are drawn to the inbetween states though. And thus is marked a difference in views between factions of fairy: seelie and unseelie. To most mortals the difference seems to be that seelie look kindly upon humans while unseelie seek to torment. But the true meat of the difference is somewhat more subtle.

Both factions are drawn to people or situations at cusps or perilous transitions: wars, familial problems, plagues, children lost, damsels menaced, and abominations walking. Seelie work as guides through this transition, seeking to shift the situation so that the participants may change and grow. This allows the fairies themselves to change and grow as well. By comparison Unseelie are a force of uneasy stasis, working to prolong the transition, to stall the participants in the state and heighten the drama of the situation. The unseelie way heightens the twilight

contrast of the soul and thus gives power.

But still it can be wrong to characterize the seelie as good and the unseelie as evil. Possibly individuals of each might attempt to perpetrate good or evil actions, but others have trouble understanding the concepts of good and evil at all. There are unseelie who seek to prolong some delusion or half-solution to a problem with the idea that a change would make things worse. Misguided surely, but truly evil? There are also seelie who would guide people and situations through crisis to crisis, ever growing and adapting, but with no mercy or compassion for those in the way.

This is a treatment of fairies for use with the game **Risus** by S. John Ross. It might also work as the poor man's substitute bastard red headed step child for those wanting to play ***Changeling: the Dreaming***. It may also be useful to read Jason Puckett's aptly named **Risus Magic** to help with ruling the specifics of Arts.

## **Cliches, Hooks, and Tales**

**Cliches** - Fairies must take a Fairy cliche. They may also take Medium cliches if they so desire, as well as cliches relating to occupation, class or caste, and special qualities relating to their existence in Faery. Any fairy or medium cliches may (and probably should) use funky dice if such are allowed in the game. Mortal cliches should not (unless the mortals also happen to be supers, monsters, or wizards).

**Fairy Cliche** - this is the type of being the fairy is. It could be a troll, brownie, nixie, elf, hob, or any other fairy creature that you desire. The first die of fairy cliche must be purchased with a hook. The hook being some traditional weakness of fairies. Some trolls turn to stone when exposed to sunlight and some shades fade away every dawn. Other fairies have a tithe to hell and are incapacitated by crosses or the sound of church bells. Still others have an uncommon hunger that must be sated or a desire that must be fulfilled. Some are simply subject to local

superstitions and go from one town to the next not being able to see people with their coats inside out in one place, being barred by iron bits and four leaf clovers in the next.

A fairy cliche may either be pumped to assist it's self, or double-cross-pumped to assist other cliches, especially Medium cliches.

The fairy cliche also includes one medium cliche associated with the type of fairy involved. For instance a character with Faun as their fairy cliche would probably have the Nature medium included as part of their cliche, where as a character with the fairy cliche of Gremlin would probably include Widget as part of their fairy cliche.

**Medium cliches** - these are the stuff of the worlds. The canvas upon which the fairies work their Arts. But not all fairies have come to understand these mediums from their perspectives on the sidelines of existence. Some never expand beyond the limits of their fairy cliche or even dabble with the stuff of the world.

Media include: Nature, Widget, Folk, Ephemera, and Season.

- Folk allows the fae insight into the strange worlds of men and mortals.
- Ephemera governs the fae themselves and other effects of magical, weird, or transient nature.
- Nature allows one to effect the world unchanged by human hands and creatures of little insight.
- Widget grants mastery over any crafted thing.
- Seasons are the media of change: moments and hours, days and decades. Understanding them and controlling them.

**Arts** - But Mediums can do little without an Art to work upon them. The Arts are methods of working the mediums. When using an Art roll the dice of the Medium it's being worked upon, you can double cross-pump dice from the fairy cliche to power it if you want. And while not as myriad as the fairy who weild them, there are none the less a great number of Arts. A few examples might include:

**Enchant** - taking mortals and others into Faery.

Charming others, manifesting faery might in the mortal realm (ie. enchanting a sword). This art can also be used to make the Fairy cliche obvious to things of the mundane world (otherwise a fairy is basically invisible and intangible with only the vaguest perceptions of what is going on in the mortal world nearby). This is easier for things like Ephemera and Nature which don't typically have wills to resist, but more difficult with Folk since humans are such a fickle and disbelieving lot. With Folk the character has to win a contest between the Folk medium cliche and the highest mortal cliche in the room to manifest the fairy cliche).

In some interpretations being enchanted may be the only way mortals can find the entrances to Faery at all.

**Quick study** - this Art grants the fairy things they may need to fit in somewhere. At lower levels it grants the ability to speak the local language or understand customs, at higher levels it gives the fairy a fitting appearance (human normally, could be animal or machine for that matter, or Seasons if displaced in time. Interpret liberally.) for that local, and a temporary local cliche.

To get the local cliche pick an occupation, social class or other mundane cliche likely to be found in the area. Roll appropriate Medium cliche. This Medium will usually "Folk" to become a human or other sentient mortal, Nature to become a dog or pool or magma (if there is lots of volcanic activity nearby), etc. While giving the character human appearance and/or knowledge of local customs this won't necessarily make them a forrest ranger unless they also have "Nature" at some level, or a mechanic unless they have a die or two in "Widget". For every 6 points scored get one d6 of temporary local cliche. This temporary cliche fades at the rate of one die per day, but can be maintained by cross-pumping from the fairy cliche. However if the fairy cliche is cross-pumped to maintain the temporary cliche there are two problems: first dice pumped to maintain the temporary cliche do not recover as long as

the temporary cliche remains in place. Second, if the fairy cross-pumps her last fairy cliche die to maintain the temporary cliche, then the temporary cliche becomes permanent and she loses the fairy cliche, possibly forever (although an appropriate tale might regain it).

Of course the temporary cliche may be dropped intentionally or allowed to elapse and retaken later after regaining fairy cliche dice. But without some pretty high rolling there is a good chance the fairy will not be able to duplicate the exact same temporary cliche. Many a nymph has been a buxom ecologist one day and a beefy forester the next.

**Metamorphosis** - the art of changing things into other things. Fairy must understand the medium of the thing they are changing and the medium of the thing they are changing it to.

**Elements** - fire, earth, air, water, lightning, cold, etc. The ability to create, control, or destroy these.

**Illusion** - the ability to make the clear obscured and the obscure unknowable.

**Divination** - the art of bringing the obscure to light and lit things into true understanding.

Arts are not cliches. They are something else which I am not going to tell you, but it doesn't matter. Arts can be gained in one of two ways: at the beginning of play the character can purchase them using tales (one for one). Or during play the character can gain them instead of advancing all other abilities, at the rate of one per adventure or great accomplishment. The art gained should have something definitive, though not necessarily sympathetic, to do with the accomplishment or tale.

### **Adventuring in Faery, Adventuring in the Mortal Realms**

The connections between Faery (Tir Na Nog, St. Martin's Land, or the land under the hills) are tenuous and some are prone to

random shifts, daily, or seasonal changes. But they exist nonetheless and both the fair folk and mortals may cross them if they choose, though fairies are more likely to find such shaded paths.

Fairies can adventure in Faery if they want. They can kill dragons, loot treasure, find lost secrets, rescue princesses, rescue princes, go to war, explore uncharted lands (or planets), enter al-Mithal or fight urges from the ancestral dream time. However in the end it's like an episode of some TV show, they always end up where they started with. No change of character can become evident. And what's worse: no gain of abilities or Arts to show for it! It's only by adventuring in mortal lands amidst the squalor, filth, and wretchedness of human concerns that they can gain great things.

Mortals can of course gain experience (which requires some esplainin') in the mortal world since they do anyway. There are two ways you can play their encounters in Faery:

- Mortals can do great things in Faery, journey to new worlds, etc. But they can't gain any new cliches while there, or if they do then the new cliches only work in Faery. They can get changes, however such changes are internal (like coming to an understanding about the death of a loved one, or gaining the courage to stand up to a bully).
- Mortals can gain new cliches in Faery or new treasures and bring them into the mortal world, doing all kinds of wonderous things. However, they may be under some obligation if they eat the food and if they stole the treasures or gained anything deceiptfully they better watch their bed for goblin traps from now on.
- Or, a little of both. Maybe there's a third option of how mortals and fairies work that hasn't been covered.

A character's pumped (and lost) cliche dice return at the rate of 1 per day in the mortal world (unless circumstances don't permit) or 1 per two hours if they are immersed in their element

(ie. tinkering with a machine if they are a gremlin, running a navy seal mission for an undine, etc.). In Faery the character's pumped fairy cliche dice recover at the rate of one per hour.

### **Some ideas for Fairy cliches:**

Troll (trowie?), Gnome, Gremlin, Kobold, Tommy Knocker, Djinn (various types), Goblin, Yallery Brown, Lutin, Satyr, Ogre, Fir-bolg (not exactly, but you get the idea), Hobgoblin, Elf, Shade (term I made up, but sometimes ghosts were considered fairies, ex: Bean-shithe or banshee), Faun, Pixie, Nixie, Nymph, Dryad, Undine, just to name a few.

### **Some ideas for Fairy classes and occupations:**

**Master craftsman** - maker of mead, cheese, and fine pretzels. Or maybe scrimshaw and other forms of carving... You sea livered dock sitting lout!

**Sage** - gathers obscure lore about Faery or mortal realms

**Knight** - fights, wears armor, honorable or black, if green can get his head chopped off and live, etc.

**Bard** - singing and playing an instrument, inspiring people with music (cross pump this cliche to others in your presence while you play).

**Lurker** - skulking, navigating tunnels, finding secrets and treasure, blinking in small patches of daylight.

**Noble** - lady, baron, thane, king, empress, king o' all the kings in the land. The higher the cliche dice the better the rank. But if they didn't appoint you king of everything, you can expect the real king of everything to show up and challenge you to a winner-take-all kinging contest.

And that's all about fairies. Thanks for reading.

This system is, as of yet, untested.

In addition to drawing upon *Changeling: the Dreaming* for part of it's magic and fairy/mortal treatment, I've also managed to

shill for another book in writing this: *At the Bottom of the Garden*. Throughout this work I've espoused a view on fairies heavily influenced by the one Diane Purkiss puts forward. If you wish to argue over my interpretations or others regarding this topic, I'll tell you now: I'm no expert in esoteric matters, but bring it on. I generally don't mind having my ignorance stamped out in such matters as long as you stomp carefully.

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# **Gen-Ex**

**A Heroic Campaign by Stan Ward  
Version 1.0**

## **A Risus Supplement**

**Setting** - Shortly after the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium A.D., a series of news reports captured the attention of the American nation: sporadic reports of teens demonstrating "exceptional" powers. These teens became known as those with "exceptional genetic abilities" or "gen-ex." for short.

Public opinion differed dramatically over what to do with these exceptional teens. Some wanted to "live and let live" while others wanted them to be monitored by the government.

Rumors began to circulate about an "Academy Ex" - a school for gen-ex students. Its location is unknown to the general public, and so is its benefactor. The school and its students are closely monitored by the U.S. Government ("We know *who* you are. We know *what* you are. And we know *how* to take you out . . . so behave.") Students "enroll" at age 16 and "graduate" at age 21. No one has graduated yet, and the government is still discussing what to do with the gen-ex population. Suggestions range from military to scientific applications.

**Character Development** - To create a gen-ex character requires four steps: (1) select your gen-ex ability, (2) select your study skill(s), (3) select your personal interest(s). Finally, select your "hook" (because nobody is perfect).

**Exceptional Genetic Abilities** - The following are suggestions. Feel free to create your own.

Elemental Control (choose one: earth, wind, fire, water)

Lycanthrope (Werewolf, werebear, etc.)

Energy Blast

Energy Drain

Contortion/Plasticity

Teleport

Control Animal

Control Weather

Telekinesis

Telepathy  
Flight  
Growth  
Shrinking  
Swimming  
Running  
Super Strength  
Super Senses  
6<sup>th</sup> Sense  
Intangible

*Study Skills -*

Computers  
Foreign Language (Specific)  
Linguistics (General)  
Detective Work  
Martial Arts (defensive; - 1d6 if used to attack)  
Invention Science (gadgeteering)  
Acrobatics  
Leadership  
Piloting  
Mechanical Engineering  
Diplomacy  
Public Speaking  
Speed Reading/Memorization  
Outdoor Survival Skills  
Physics  
Biology  
Math

*Interests -*

Guitar  
Athletics  
Poetry  
Literature  
Games  
Comic Books  
Gymnastics  
Pouting/Sulking

**Sample Characters**

*Robert Strongarm (Headmaster)*

Genius (4)  
Leadership (3)  
Detective Work (3)  
Mysterious Secret (2)  
Hook: Works directly for *mysterious benefactor*, yet never has direct contact with him/her/it.

*Coyote* - 16 year old native American werewolf  
Werewolf (4)  
Martial Arts (3)  
Linguistics (2)  
Guitar (2)  
Hook: Distrustful of Caucasians, and especially *Patriot*.

*Patriot* - super boy scout, wears red, white, and blue  
Flight (4)  
Martial Arts (2)  
Leadership (3)  
Gymnastics (2)  
Hook: WASP-y do-gooder

*Swoosh* - Conceited track star  
Hyper Speed [6]  
Ladies Man (2)  
Athletics (3)  
Hook: Conceited and easily distracted by ladies

*Academy Ex* - is located underground, below a ghost town outside of Roswell, NM. Besides the typical school features (library, gymnasium, cafeteria, dorms, etc.) the school owns a *Stealth Helicopter* (Silent Propeller - 5, Flying - 5) to assist it with locating and picking up gen-ex candidates.



What follows is a set of guidelines for creating a fantasy campaign based on J.R.R. Tolkien's world of Middle-earth using the *Risus* RPG system. *Risus* is an extremely simple yet elegant “rules light” RPG which allows players and game masters drama- (or humor-) and story-heavy game play. As such, *Risus* is well-suited to represent the heroic and mythic stature of Tolkien's Middle-earth. Best of all *Risus* has just a wee little rule book available as a free download on the [Risus Homepage](#).

I do not spell out a definitive set of *Risus* Middle-earth “rules” here nor are there specific stats for the likes of Gandalf, the Nazgûl or even a Balrog. There are, however, enough *suggestions* to allow one to construct a *Risus* Middle-earth campaign that does some justice to Tolkien's original creation.

## “Funky Dice”

I suggest using the “Funky Dice” option when running a Middle-earth based campaign. As in most fantasy campaigns, there will be creatures whose powers and strength far outstrip those of most adventurers or even heroes. Player characters can be built with the standard 60 points using d6's. In that way the d8-d20 dice can adequately represent more powerful creatures (i.e. Nazgûl, dragons, Balrogs, etc.). Game masters may allow players to advance beyond the standard d6 if they wish. However, note that even heroes such as Aragorn, Gimli and Legolas have skills which can sufficiently be represented by the standard d6 target chart.

## Racial Clichés

I don't generally like the use of racial clichés in a *Risus* campaign. Clichés seem to represent more of what a character *does* than *is*. Not every Elf (3)

will be the same. A handmaiden of Galadriel, for instance would have far different skills than a typical elven warrior in Lorien. Though there would certainly be many similarities between the two due to their race (immortality, keen senses, etc.), the warrior would likely be far better with blade and bow than the handmaiden (though her accomplishments with a comb and mirror could be legendary!). It would be more appropriate to use Elf Warrior (3) and Elf Handmaiden (3) to represent each character respectively. In that way inherent racial traits are preserved while specific skills (clichés) are indicated.

The same rule would apply for dwarves and hobbits alike. A Dwarven Miner (3) is actually quite different than a Dwarven Bard (3). While both are long-lived, one may be far better with an axe than a song. Similarly there is the Hobbit Merchant (3), the Hobbit Scout (3), the ever-present Hobbit Gardner (4)... you get the idea.

## Cultural Clichés

Cultural clichés can be handled in much the same way as racial clichés. A Rohirrim Warrior (4) would be different than a Rohirrim Healer (3). It is up to a game master to decide what cultural traits would be consistent between the two – certainly language, perhaps an affinity to horses, and some shared spirituality and history. In the same way there is no generic Gondorian (3) and likely no generic Beorning (3) either.

There are some interesting instances where a cultural descriptor paired with a profession cliché produces a unique cliché all its own. Take for instance the Dunedain Ranger (4). One could make the case that there is no Ranger cliché (at least as most gamers have come to know it from their *Dungeons & Dragons* days) since that cliché was originally derived from the Dunedain wanderers. In Middle-earth the Dunedain rangers are unique and legendary and differ from trackers, scouts or hunters of other races and cultures.

## Monsters

Here's where the real fun begins. The simple rule of thumb is to decide whether a monster alone is universal enough to represent a cliché, if they are to be used like racial descriptors, or if a combination of monster cliché and professional cliché are to be used.

For instance, since they have many unique powers and abilities attributed to their form, a dragon in Middle-earth can be an appropriate monster cliché. In a post on the [Risus mailing list](#), Risus creator S. John Ross suggested representing Smaug (the dragon from the *Hobbit*) as a Dragon (5d12). This would certainly makes sense since the Dragon cliché adequately encompasses a number of spectacular abilities such as knowledge, strength and extra senses as expressed on the “funky dice” target chart.

Orcs too work as simple monster clichés. While there is not much written about orcish culture, an innovative game master could dream up an Orc Shaman (3) or an Orc Assassin (3). A simpler way of treating these creatures, however is to “universalize” their racial traits and differentiate along breeding lines. All orcs can be considered apt fighters with equivalent abilities. The typical Orc (1) or Orc (2) would be most appropriate to represent the common goblin, while an Orc (3) or Orc (4) would be the garden variety Uruk, or common orc. Thus we can reserve the Orc (5) and Orc (6) as Uruk-Hai and simply roll their extra ability to travel in daylight into their monster (racial) cliché.

If you *must* bring unique and mythical creatures such as dragons, Ringwraiths and Balrogs into your Middle-earth campaign, the liberal use of “funky dice” is encouraged. First establish a “template” creature against which to rate all others (i.e. the 5d12 dragon from above). As with orcs and simpler creatures, monster clichés should adequately represent the powers and abilities of these unique creatures (again the 5d12 dragon). Feel free to embellish these beings with a variety of other clichés (such as a Nazgûl’s sorcery and spying ability for example).

## Magic

Magic in Middle-earth is much more of a “literary” device than a scientific or rules-based system. This is perhaps a good thing as it encourages game masters and players to view magic within the context of the storyline, character roles and personal motivations. Rather than embark on an exhaustive exploration on the nature of magic in Middle-earth, I will again merely suggest some basic guidelines. These should be adequate to represent any occurrence of magic that might arise in a Middle-earth

campaign. Anyone wishing for a more thorough treatment of the subject should read Berislav Lopac's excellent article on creating a [Middle-earth magic system for the GURPS RPG](#).

## Enchantment

The simplest way to handle magic is to determine the intention of the magic "user". When used appropriately, magic is considered blessed or "sanctioned". When used inappropriately, magic is considered fell, corrupt and "unsanctioned".

Sanctioned magic is used regularly by elves in the crafting of their works. Elven liquors are refreshing and renewing, elven blades are baneful to dark creatures, and elven cloaks seem to blend in with natural surroundings. However, elves consider neither themselves nor their works magical. They simply are who they are. It is the inherent "blessed" nature of the elves and the simple intention of their craft which makes their works endure.

Elves are certainly capable of using magic in "unsanctioned" ways as well. Though Feanor's crafting of the Silmarils was well intentioned in the beginning, under the corruption of Melkor, the enchantment of the Silmarils worked a deep greed and mistrust within him. Similar too are the works of dwarves who are themselves "blessed" creatures of a sort. Left to their own devices, dwarves fashion beautiful treasures, strongholds and weapons that long endure. But under the seduction of the seven Rings of Power, they too were corrupted by greed and lust for gold.

In terms of game effects, any elven crafting cliché may be considered to have simple "magical" effects as agreed between the player and game master (refer to the elven rope, liquor and cloaks above as examples). Elves never casually craft *anything*, so this would only apply to items wrought without haste. Attempts to create *intentionally* enchanted or powerful items (think of the Silmarils, the three elven rings, or Isildur's sword Narsil) are treated differently. In most cases the crafter in question should begin with mastery (six dice) in their appropriate crafting cliché. The creation of such an item could result in the permanent sacrifice of one or more dice in the crafting cliché depending on the power of the item in question (note that these dice may be re-earned later as normal). If this penalty seems too harsh or unrealistic, an alternative would be to count each exceptional item against the total a character could ever create. This is based on the idea that even a master craftsman would only make a certain number of truly spectacular artifacts in his or her lifetime.

Dwarves and even orcs may also consider many of their craft works similarly “magical”. Whereas elven enchantments lie along the more natural crafts (clothing, woodwork, food, etc.) those of dwarves and orcs are almost always martial in nature (weapons and armor). The effect of an elven blade may be more baneful to evil creatures than a dwarven blade due to the “purer” nature of the elven spirit. However, dwarven works of metal and stone (including gemstones) are renowned for their strength and have their own ability to inspire and endure.

As orcs are corrupted elves in their origin, their enchantments are as negative images of elven works. For instance, orcs may be able to make cloaks which serve the wearer best when in barren or bleak surroundings. So too do the orcs make a liquor similar to the elves which restores strength and vitality to the body. Its effect, however, is much sharper and firey and has none of the wholesome and restful quality of the elven cordial.

## Wizardry

Another manifestation of magic in Middle-earth may be referred to as wizardry or sorcery and is rarer and more elusive than the inherent enchanted nature of elves, dwarves and orcs.

Closer to the original source of creation are the gods of Middle-earth also known as the Valar and their kin and servants, the Maiar. The power of these beings is great, but with each passing age, they have withdrawn further and further from the affairs of the world. The most notable of the Maia remaining in Middle-earth are the dark lord Sauron, the wizards Gandalf, Saruman, and Radagast and the demons of shadow and flame known as Balrogs. The number of Maia in Middle-earth is intentionally small as the potential power each can wield could easily disrupt and destroy much which the Valar first built. Such is the case of Sauron, greatest of the Maiar on Middle-earth who was driven back again and again over the ages and who ever seeks to increase his power and influence over the world. The Balrogs too were driven beneath the earth and almost all destroyed save one or two.

The Maiar known as Gandalf, Saruman and Radagast are known by many as wizards for they appear as men with strange powers. In truth, they are Maiar sent by the Valar to Middle-earth with careful instructions to use their power appropriately and sparingly. Again we have here the appropriate and inappropriate use of power (magic). Gandalf remains one of the few Maiar who continues to use his power wisely and well. Saruman falls to the

seduction of power embodied in the One Ring and Sauron, while Radagast retreats to the isolation of nature forgetting his divine charge.

While no character can begin as a being such as a Maia, it is *possible* though difficult to learn magic. Even the elves were able to teach their skills of craft to the men who came to rule Númenor, a kingdom later noted for its works of wonder and enchantment. Sauron tempted nine kings of men to his service by teaching them sorcery (further enhanced by their possession of nine Rings of Power). The chief among them became the dreaded witch-king of Angmar and the remaining eight Nazgûl possessed powers of their own. And it is even conceivable that Saruman taught some of his art to orcs and other servants during the War of the Ring.

The teaching of magic is problematic however. There are few who possess the skill willing to pass it along, and for good reason. The men of Númenor came in time to abuse their power and so fell into darkness and destruction themselves. Thus the elves are unwilling to teach men their art. Gandalf showed no willingness nor inclination to pass on his talents seeing the value in keeping such power in the world to a minimum. There is no indication that Balrogs or Nazgûl are able to teach their powers (though the latter might), and Sauron is either busy building up his own power during the Third Age or has been utterly destroyed by the end of it.

In short, if a game master is generous enough to allow players access to magical talents, he should be very diligent in keeping track of how characters are using such power. Liberal use of magic is *always* risky tempting the wielder with the desire for more power and control. In some cases this kind of use may bring characters under the influence and domination of other unwholesome powers in the world. Used sparingly and subtly, however, magic may be used wisely and well keeping within the balance of the world.

## Magic Items

Another way to bring magic into a *Risus* Middle-earth campaign is through the use of enchanted items. These will most likely range from weapons and armor to clothing and jewelry – anything that falls under the normal gear needed to use clichés at full effectiveness. In some cases these items will add interesting story elements to the game such as the sword that glows when orcs are near or the boots that make the burden of a long journey light. In other cases these items can act as bonus die gear adding extra dice or pips to appropriate clichés. Since the adding of a whole extra die is a

powerful enhancement in *Risus*, game masters can handle magic items in a variety of ways. A sword can have a baneful effect against orcs and goblins causing them to think twice before attacking anyone who wields it, but add no actual bonuses to physical combat rolls. Similarly an enchanted sword, shield and breast plate may add an extra die only when all of them are worn together, the reasoning being that the critical mass of all enchantments is needed in order to change a combatant's effectiveness in combat.

Extremely powerful enchantments should simply not be used at all. No Rings of Power, Silmarils or palantír. If for any reason you find it necessary to include these items in an adventure, they should have a very disruptive effect on a character's personality, motivations, and power. While this could add an interesting twist to a campaign, be careful to not cheapen the presence or effects of such powerful magic. Even Galadriel's power within Lothlórien was greatly enhanced by the elven Ring of Power, Nenya, and earned her a reputation as a terrible sorceress among dwarves and men alike (though general prejudice against elves helped feed such an image).

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Hopefully this article has provided enough material and guidance with which to construct a good story-driven Middle-earth campaign using the *Risus* rules. Please feel free to send [me](#) any questions or comments. With any luck this article may spawn discussion on the [Risus Mailing List](#) or a few Middle-earth RPG sites.

A good place to find material for a Middle-earth campaign is the [Encyclopedia of Arda](#) website, an astonishing reference to nearly every person, place and thing appearing in Tolkien's Middle-earth books. If you are interested in a more structured set of rules you may want to try [Decipher's Lord of the Rings RPG](#) which is one of the few games able to capture the mood and feel of living and adventuring in Middle-earth.

# RisusPUNK

A Future Punk Genre Sourcebook for Risus: the Anything RPG by S. John Ross

By Zamiel Al'Shaitan

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>SOURCEBOOK INFORMATION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHARACTER CREATION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>COMMON CLICHE'</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>COMMON HOOKS</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>TYPES OF CONFLICT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SAMPLE GEAR</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>SAMPLE NPC'S</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>SOURCES AND LINKS</b>	<b>12</b>

## **SOURCEBOOK INFORMATION**

**THIS SOURCEBOOK IS AN UNOFFICIAL CAMPAIGN GENRE BOOK FOR RISUS- THE ANYTHING RPG BY S. JOHN ROSS. RISUS IS AVAILABLE FREE FOR DOWNLOAD - SOURCES ARE LISTED AT THE END OF THIS BOOK.**

**IN THIS SOURCEBOOK, WE PRESENT CLICHE'S FOR RUNNING AND PLAYING A FUTURE EARTH CAMPAIGN WHERE THE STREETS ARE RUN BY GANGS OF CYBER-BANDITS, THE GOVERNMENTS ARE CONTROLLED BY THE ALMIGHTY MEGACORPORATION AND THEIR VAST FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL WEALTH, AND LIVES ARE EXTINGUISHED AT THE DROP OF A HAT. THE ONLY "OFFICIAL" LAW IS THE CORPORATE LAW.**

**PLAYERS MAY TAKE THE ROLES OF VIGILANTES ATTEMPTING TO TAKE BACK THEIR STREETS, CORPORATE OPERATIVES TRYING TO CRUSH THE OPPOSITION, OR SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT - IT'S ALL UP TO THE INDIVIDUAL PLAYER'S AND GAME MASTER'S TASTES.**

## **CHARACTER CREATION**

**CHARACTERS ARE CREATED AS PRESENTED IN THE RISUS- THE ANYTHING RPG RULEBOOK - 10 DICE, +1 FOR HOOK, +1 FOR TALE, PUMPS AND DOUBLE-PUMPS ALLOWED, NO FUNKY DICE, AND A MAXIMUM OF 4 DICE IN ANY STARTING CLICHE.**

**FOR THOSE NEW TO THE PUNK GENRE, A QUICK READ-THROUGH OF THE COMMON CLICHE'S PRESENTED BELOW WILL (HOPEFULLY) BRING YOU UP TO SPEED QUICKLY. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, CONSULT YOUR GAME MASTER.**

## **COMMON CLICHE'**

THE FOLLOWING IS A LIST OF CLICHE' COMMON TO A FUTURE 'PUNK CAMPAIGN WORLD. FROM THE LOWLY STREET THUG TO THE MEGACORPORATE EXECUTIVE, YOU'LL FIND THEM ALL HERE.

CLICHE'	WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR
COP	WHETHER WALKING A BEAT, DRIVING IN AN ARMORED CRUISER WITH GATLING CANNONS, OR FLYING AROUND IN A PERSONAL AERO VEHICLE, YOUR VERY PRESENCE INSPIRES FEAR (OR AT LEAST LOATHING) BY THE CRIMINAL POPULACE. YOUR BEST FRIENDS ARE YOUR ARMORED JACKET AND YOUR ANTI-CYBORG RIFLE FULL OF ARMOR PIERCING EXPLODING AMMO - DOES YOUR BOSS KNOW YOU CARRY THAT?
CYBORG	WHETHER YOU'RE 99% METAL, OR ONLY A LOWLY 65%, YOU'VE GOT A WHOLE LOT OF POWER PACKED ONTO YOUR AVERAGE-JOE FRAME, OR DID YOU GO FOR THE 9' TALL COMBAT 'BORG MODEL WITH THE CHEST-MOUNTED CHAINGUN? EITHER WAY, YOU'RE PROBABLY STRONGER, FASTER, AND ALL AROUND NASTIER THAN A NON-'BORG, AND MIGHT BE BRISTLING WITH WEAPONRY (THAT <u>REALLY</u> ANNOYS THE COPS..)
DOCTOR	YOU'RE A MEDICAL DOCTOR, WHETHER YOU HAVE THE SHINY GLASS-AND-GOLD FRAMED DIPLOMA THAT SAYS SO OR NOT. MAYBE YOU WENT TO MED SCHOOL, MAYBE YOU DID A STINT IN THE MILITARY, MAYBE YOU JUST PRACTICED UNTIL YOU STARTED GETTING THINGS RIGHT (POOR KITTIES...) - BUT THE POINT IS, NOW YOU'RE NOT TOO BAD. YOU'RE CAPABLE OF ALL MANNER OF DOCTORLY-TASKS SUCH AS DIAGNOSING AND TREATING ILLNESSES (EASY TASK), AND STOPPING THE BLEEDING FROM A SUCKING CHEST WOUND (MODERATE) TO INSTALLING CYBERNETICS (DARN DIFFICULT). YOU MIGHT BE A RESPECTED DOCTOR WITH A STOREFRONT PRACTICE, YOU MAY WORK FOR A CORPORATE MILITARY GROUP, OR YOU MAY BE A "STREET DOCTOR", HELPING THOSE IN NEED FOR LITTLE OR NOTHING IN RETURN.
DRIFTER	YOU'RE A DRIFTER - A ROVER, WANDERER, NOMAD, VAGABOND - CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL. YOU PROBABLY DON'T HAVE MUCH CASH, AND MIGHT NOT SMELL TOO NICE, BUT YOU PROBABLY HAVE A PACK OF OTHERS LIKE YOU TO WATCH YOUR BACK, YOUR BIKE, AND LOAN YOU AMMO WHEN YOU RUN LOW. YOU CAN LIVE OFF THE LAND, WHETHER IT'S A MILE-HIGH MEGOPOLIS OR THE LONG, DUSTY ROADS INBETWEEN.

CLICHE'	WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR
ENGINEER	THE LIFE OF AN ENGINEER REVOLVES AROUND MAKING THINGS, AND MAKING THINGS BETTER. SO WHAT IF YOU JUST BUILT A WATER-POWERED HYDROGEN TURBINE GAMMA RAY PISTOL THAT CAN FRAG A GUY AT 2 MILES? YOU KNOW YOU CAN MAKE IT BETTER. AUGH! AUGH! MORE POWER! AHEM.. SORRY. YOU CAN ALSO PERFORM MORE MUNDANE TASKS LIKE REPAIR DAMAGED VEHICLES, CYBORG BITS, AND WEAPONS, AS WELL AS IMPROVISE WORKING REPLACEMENT PARTS FROM MEAGER MATERIALS.
EXECUTIVE	YOU'RE A JUNIOR-EXECUTIVE, AKA A "SUIT". PROBABLY ABOUT AS LOW ON THE CORPORATE LADDER AS YOU CAN GET WITHOUT BEING A STREET OPERATIVE - OR MAYBE YOU ARE ON THE STREET, KEEPING AN EYE ON THE CORPORATION'S SECRETS, ASSETS, OR DOING FIELD STUDY ON THE LOWLIFES, ERM, "CLIENTS" THAT YOUR COMPANY CATTERS TO. EITHER WAY, YOU GET PAID WELL, YOU PROBABLY HAVE NICE CLOTHES AND WEAPONRY, AND A NICE CAR. YOU PROBABLY ALSO HAVE ENEMIES. LOTS OF THEM.
HACKER	WHETHER YOU USE A SOUPED-UP PORTABLE PC, OR PLUG THE CABLE DIRECTLY INTO YOUR BRAIN, YOU'RE A HACKER. YOU CAN WRITE CODE IN YOUR SLEEP, AND BREAK A LEVEL 6 ENCRYPTION USING A POST-IT NOTE AND A RED CRAYON. BUT BE CAREFUL - IN CYBERSPACE A VIRUS CAN MELT YOUR BRAIN, YOUR RIG, OR BOTH IN AN INSTANT.
KID	WHY IS THERE ALWAYS AN ANNOYING KID HANGING AROUND? OK, YOU MIGHT BE GOOD AS BAIT, YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO GO UNNOTICED WHERE THE AFOREMENTIONED 9' TALL COMBAT 'BORG CAN'T, BUT TO BE REALLY HONEST, YOU'RE RATHER USELESS :-)
MEDIA	YOU'RE A JOURNALIST - MIGHT BE FOR THE NIGHTLY VID, MIGHT BE A WRITER FOR THE LOCAL E-PAPER, EITHER WAY, YOU'VE GOT A KNACK FOR GETTING THE "DIRT". YOU PROBABLY HAVE A LOG OF EVERY SECOND OF YOUR LIFE FOR THE LAST 10 YEARS ON MICRODISC - AND PROBABLY CARRY IT ON YOU - JUST IN CASE YOU NEED TO LOOK UP A LONG-GONE FACT FOR YOUR LATEST STORY.
MERCENARY / MILITARY	YOU'RE A SOLDIER - MIGHT BE FOR THE HIGHEST BIDDER, OR MAYBE YOU LANDED ONE OF THOSE CUSHY CORPORATE MILITARY GIGS - THEY PAY YOUR RENT, YOUR AMMO TAB, YOUR MEDICAL, AND YOUR SALARY - DAMN THAT'S SWEET. OH, BY THE WAY, THEY IMPLANTED A CRANIAL BOMB DURING YOUR DENTAL VISIT - BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT. EITHER WAY, YOU KNOW HOW TO USE DARN NEAR ANYTHING THAT GOES "BANG!" BE IT A GUN, GRENADE, BOMB, OR TANK. YOU'RE ALSO PROBABLY PRETTY TOUGH - OTHERWISE YOU'D BE DEAD ALREADY.

CLICHE'	WHAT IT'S GOOD FOR
MUSICIAN	MAYBE YOU'RE A CYBER-HIPPIE, OR MAYBE YOU'RE A HEAVY METAL (2030-STYLE) ROCKER WITH A CHROME-PLATED SKULL AND A GUITAR THAT DOUBLES AS A LASER RIFLE.. WHICHEVER.. YOUR GREATEST POWER IS IN YOUR FLOCKS OF FOLLOWERS - YOU CAN PLAY THEM JUST AS EASY AS THAT POWERCHORD...
SNEAK	SNEAKS, THIEVES, SPIES, ASSASSINS - THEY'RE ALL GENERALLY THE SAME - THEY USE STEALTH (AND POSSIBLY STEALTH TECHNOLOGY) TO FILL THEIR ROLES. MAYBE YOU WALK THE STREETS LOOKING FOR AN EASY MARK, MAYBE YOU BREAK INTO CORPORATE FACILITIES FOR DATA OR PRODUCT, OR MAYBE YOU WORK FOR THE CORPORATION, AS AN ESPIONAGE AGENT, RAIDING (AND POSSIBLY DESTROYING) THEIR COMPETITION...
STREET VENDOR	MAYBE YOU SELL "POLEX" WATCHES ON THE STREET CORNER, OR PIRATE VID COPIES AT A SWAP MEET, MAYBE YOU ACT AS A "FENCE", OR EVEN SELL THE LATEST TWEAK TO COME OUT OF SOME COLLEGE STUDENT'S LAB KIT - WHATEVER IT IS, YOU KNOW HOW TO WORK THE STREETS, MAKE A PROFIT, AND AVOID THE EYES OF THE LAW. YOU ALSO KNOW HOW TO FIND INFORMATION - RUMORS AND THE LIKE - WHICH CAN OFTEN BE THE MOST VALUABLE "PRODUCT".
THUG	YOU'RE A COMMON STREET THUG. YOU PROBABLY OWN A KNIFE OR 2, A GUN OR SIX, AND PROBABLY HAVE SOME BODY ARMOR YOU SWIPED OFF THAT HEAD-SHOT A FEW WEEKS AGO.

## COMMON HOOKS

THE FOLLOWING HOOKS ARE SOME OF THE MOST COMMON, PRESENTED HERE TO HELP YOU CHOOSE OR CREATE SOME BEFITTING YOUR CHARACTER. FEEL FREE TO COME UP WITH YOUR OWN (WITH GM APPROVAL, OF COURSE).

HOOK	DESCRIPTION
FREEZES	MAYBE YOU FREEZE UNDER STRESS, MAYBE YOU HAVE FLASHBACKS OF THE LAST 'BIG WAR' DURING FIREFIGHTS, OR MAYBE YOU'RE JUST A CHICKEN AND THINK PEOPLE WON'T SHOOT A UNMOVING TARGET THAT'S NOT RESISTING THEM (PFAH!) HECK, MAYBE YOU HAVE FULL-BLOWN NARCOLEPSY AND TAKE A NAP AT THE MOST INOPPORTUNE MOMENTS...
MEMORABLE	YOU HAVE A MEMORABLE FACE, CYBORG EXTERIOR, GUN, SOMETHING THAT WILL GET YOU NOTICED AND REMEMBERED.
PARANOID	SOMEONE IS OUT TO GET YOU. WELL, PROBABLY, AT LEAST. BUT YOU ALSO <u>THINK</u> PEOPLE ARE OUT TO GET YOU - YOUR PARENTS, FRIENDS, THE GUY AT THW KWICKY-MART, THAY GUY POINTING A GUN AT YOU... EVERYONE!
PHOBIA	YOU'RE SCARED OF SOMETHING.. NOT JUST A LITTLE SCARED EITHER, BUT JUMP OUT OF YOUR SEAT, SCREAM LIKE A LITTLE GIRL, AND POSSIBLY WET YOURSELF TERRIFIED.
WANTED	YOU'RE WANTED BY CORPORATE POLICE, OR ANOTHER, SIMILARLY LARGE AND ICKY ORGANIZATION. MAYBE IT'S SOMETHING MINOR, LIKE MURDER (PAY THE FINE AND OFF YA GO) OR MAYBE IT'S SOMETHING WORSE (CORPORATE ESPIONAGE, PERCHANCE?) THAT WILL GET YOU SHOT ON SIGHT. WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S EITHER A DEATH SENTENCE, OR RECURRANT - OTHERWISE, WHY WOULD IT BE A HOOK?

## **TYPES OF CONFLICT**

**THESE ARE THE COMMON TYPES OF CONFLICT ENCOUNTERED IN AN AVERAGE GAME.  
DEPENDING ON THE PARTICULAR GAME THEME, SOME OF THESE MAY NOT APPLY.**

<b>CONFLICT</b>	<b>WHEN IT'S USED-</b>
<b>CYBERSPACE CONFLICT</b>	<b>THIS IS COMBAT IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD, USING ATTACK AND DEFENSE PROGRAMS. YOUR GUNS AND KNIVES WILL DO YOU NO GOOD HERE, UNLESS THEY'RE 3D MODELED AND PACK A HOSTILE CODE FRAGMENT..</b> <b>ONLY HACKERS CAN (NORMALLY) PARTICIPATE IN THIS CONFLICT TYPE, THOUGH IF PROVIDED WITH AUTOMATED TOOLS (CREATED BY A HACKER) OTHERS MAY JOIN (OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "SKRIPT KIDDEES").</b>
<b>PERSONAL COMBAT</b>	<b>WHEN TWO (OR MORE) PEOPLE ARE FIGHTING EACH OTHER USING FISTS, KNIVES, GUNS, GRENADES, ANTI-CYBORG RIFLES, ROCKET LAUNCHERS, OR OTHER METHODS. THIS WILL MOST LIKELY BE THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF COMBAT.</b>
<b>VEHICLE COMBAT</b>	<b>VEHICLE COMBAT IS ON A LARGER SCALE THAN PERSONAL COMBAT. THIS IS COMBAT BETWEEN ARMORED CARS, TANKS, ATTACK AEROS, POWERED ARMOR, AND THE LIKE. INDIVIDUALS MAY ALSO PARTICIPATE IN THIS CONFLICT TYPE IF USING A VEHICLE-SCALE WEAPON, SUCH AS A ROCKET LAUNCHER.</b>

## **WHEN SOMEBODY CAN'T PARTICIPATE**

**AS PER THE STANDARD RISUS RULES, IF SOMEONE CAN'T PARTICIPATE IN A CONFLICT, ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE GRANTED AN ADDITIONAL 2 DICE TO USE. FOR CYBERSPACE CONFLICTS, THEY MUST BE PROVIDED WITH A TERMINAL AND TOOLS BY A HACKER, BUT FOR OTHER CONFLICTS NO SPECIAL CONCESSIONS ARE REQUIRED.**

## **SAMPLE GEAR**

**EVERY HACKER HAS HIS 'DECK, AND EVERY COP HAS HIS SIDEARM, BUT HERE WE WILL EXPLORE THOSE PIECES OF EQUIPMENT THAT HAVE DIRECT GAME CONSEQUENCE - BONUS DIE GEAR, AND STANDALONE CLICHE' GEAR.**

**FOR A CHARACTER TO PURCHASE A PIECE OF BONUS DIE OR STANDALONE CLICHE' GEAR, THEY MUST SPEND DICE EQUAL TO 1/2 THE VALUE OF THE ITEM. FOR EXAMPLE, TO PURCHASE A HOWITZER WHICH ADDS +2D TO THEIR MILITARY CLICHE, IT WOULD COST THEM 1 CLICHE' DIE AT CREATION. THE DRAWBACK BEING, IF THIS PIECE OF EQUIPMENT IS STOLEN OR DESTROYED THE DICE SPENT ARE PERMANENTLY LOST.**

**THE MOST COMMON TYPE OF STANDALONE CLICHE GEAR ALLOWS THE CHARACTER USING IT TO HAVE ACCESS TO A CLICHE' THEY HAD NOT PURCHASED, SUCH AS HACKER(3) GRANTED BY AN AI CYBER-LINKED PORTA-TERMINAL, OR SNEAK(2) PROVIDED BY A OPTICAL CAMOUFLAGE CLOAK. ANOTHER TYPE OF STANDALONE CLICHE' DICE ITEM IS A VEHICLE. THESE HAVE THEIR OWN CLICHE' REPRESENTING THEIR SPEED, DURABILITY, COMBAT WEAPONRY, WHATEVER. WHEN IN A VEHICLE COMBAT, THE VEHICLE WILL NORMALLY TAKE THE "DAMAGE" DURING A ROUND BEFORE THE PILOTING CHARACTER. THE LAST TYPE OF STANDALONE DICE GEAR IS ARMOR. SEE THE SECTION ON ARMOR BELOW FOR DETAILS.**

**THOUGH CALLED "BONUS DICE GEAR" SOME ITEMS MAY ACTUALLY REDUCE THE DICE OF A CLICHE, REPRESENTING SOMETHING INFERIOR IN QUALITY. THESE ITEMS ALLOW A CLICHE TO BE USED AT A PENALTY, RATHER THAN BE DISALLOWED DUE TO LACK OF EQUIPMENT.**

## **WEAPONS**

MOST WEAPONS ARE CONSIDERED TOOLS OF THE TRADE, REQUIRED TO USE A CLICHE' AT FULL DICE. THE EXCEPTIONS TO THAT RULE ARE THOSE PIECES OF GEAR PURCHASED WITH CLICHE' DICE, OR THOSE AWARDED BY THE GAME MASTER.

### **VIBRO AND MONO-MOLECULAR WEAPONRY(+1)**

VIBRO SWORDS, KNIVES, AND OTHER SUCH WEAPONS GENERATE A HIGH-FREQUENCY FIELD AROUND THEM, ALLOWING THEM TO SLICE THROUGH ARMOR (AND PEOPLE) LIKE BUTTER, RESULTING IN A BONUS DIE. SIMILARLY, MONO-MOLECULAR WEAPONS (BEING ONLY 1 MOLECULE WIDE) CAN PASS THROUGH MOST ARMORS EFORTLESSLY.

### **SPECIALTY AMMUNITION (+1)**

AMMUNITION SUCH AS HYPERSONIC, ARMOR PIERCING, EXPLODING, ACID-TIPPED OR THE LIKE ADDS 1 DIE. THESE ARE NORMALLY HANDED OUT BY GM'S IN PREFERENCE TO BONUS-DICE GUNS, AS AMMO RUNS OUT AT THE GM'S WHIM ;-)

### **ANTI-CYBORG RIFLES (+1 - +3)**

DEPENDING ON THE RIFLE, (AND HOW BAD A GM WANTS A CYBORG DEAD) AN ANTI-CYBORG RIFLE MAY BE FROM +1 TO +3 DICE. THESE ARE LARGE, SHOULDER-FIRED RIFLES WITH INTERNAL RECOIL SUPPRESSORS, SOUND BAFFLES, AND GYROSCOPES THAT FIRE ROCKET-PROPELLED (AND OFTEN ARMOR PIERCING AND EXPLODING) AMMUNITION.

### **VEHICLE-SCALE SHOULDER-FIRED WEAPONRY (+2)**

ROCKET LAUNCHERS, HEAVY RAILGUNS, AND THE LIKE THAT ARE INTENDED TO BE FIRED AT, OR FROM VEHICLES ARE OFTEN TREATED AS BONUS DIE GEAR, DUE TO THEIR INCREASED LETHALITY.

### **POCKET PISTOL (-2 TO -1)**

POCKET PISTOLS, AND OTHER SIMILARLY CHEAP TO PRODUCE, LOW-QUALITY GUNS ARE AVAILABLE ALL OVER THE STREETS IN 2030. THE UPSIDE, YOU CAN STEAL ONE FROM A 12 YEAR OLD, THE DOWN SIDE, THEY'RE GARBAGE. HORRIBLY INACCURATE AND SMALL CALIBER - BUT IT'S (SOMETIMES) BETTER THAN WALKING INTO A FIREFIGHT WITH ONLY YOUR KNUCKLES..

## **VEHICLES**

**EVERYONE IN 2030 HAS SOME KIND OF RIDE, WHETHER IT'S AN "EXEC-LITE" ELECTRIC SCOOTER, OR AN ANCIENT HARLEY HOG, TO THE LATEST IN CUTTING EDGE HYDROGEN CARS, TRUCKS, MOTORCYCLES OR AEROS.**

**CHARACTERS THAT HAVE NOT ALLOCATED DICE TO BUYING A VEHICLE ARE ASSUMED TO HAVE SOME FORM OF "OLD BEATER", BE IT A CYCLE, CAR OR TRUCK. NOTHING FANCY, JUST A SET OF WHEELS TO GET AROUND.**

### **OLD BEATER(2)**

**THIS CAR, TRUCK, OR CYCLE CAN BE BEST DESCRIBED AS "RUST HOLDING HANDS" - IT'S NOT GONNA STOP A BULLET FOR YOU, AND YOU'RE NOT GONNA OUTRUN ANYTHING FASTER THAN A 10-SPEED BIKE (AND EVEN THAT'S SOMETIMES A RACE..) BUT IT'S BETTER THAN WALKING.**

### **AVERAGE CYCLE(4)**

**THIS IS ANY TYPICAL BIKE, WHETHER IT'S A PLASTIC SPORTS BIKE, OR A STEEL AND CHROME CHOPPER. THEY'RE FAST, AND MANEUVERABLE, BUT THEY DON'T PROTECT YOU FROM TAKING A GRENADE LAUNCHER TO THE FACE.**

### **AVERAGE CAR, TRUCK, OR VAN(4)**

**NOT AS FAST AS A CYCLE, BUT THEY ALSO HAVE SOME LEVEL OF PROTECTION. AFTER 2010 ALL VEHICLES WERE REQUIRED TO USE BULLET-RESISTANT GLASS AND BODY PANELS, MAKING THESE RELATIVELY SAFE TO RIDE AROUND IN.**

### **AVERAGE ARMORED VEHICLE(6)**

**THESE ARE SLOW, BUT THEY'RE TOUGH - AND LIKELY PACKING GUNS. 20MM RAPID-FIRE VULCANS ARE THE NORM, THO SOMETIMES YOU DO FIND 60MM CANNONS FOR THOSE VEHICLES USED TO PATROL KNOWN "HOT SPOTS".**

### **ASSAULT AERO(5)**

**FAST, SMALL AND MANEUVERABLE, THESE ARE THE MOST COMMONLY ENCOUNTERED AIRBORNE VEHICLES, IN USE BY CORPORATE POLICE FORCES AS WELL AS THEIR MILITARY UNITS. APPEARING MUCH LIKE THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ULTRALIGHT HELICOPTER, THESE USE VECTORED THRUST ENGINES FOR PROPULSION. COMMON ARMAMENTS ARE 20MM CANNONS AND LIGHT ROCKETS.**

## **ARMOR**

**ARMOR IS A SPECIAL TYPE OF BONUS DIE GEAR. WHEN IN COMBAT, ALL DICE GAINED FROM ARMOR SHOULD BE OF A DIFFERENT COLOR THAN THE REST.**

- x IF A COMBAT ROUND IS LOST, THE DICE FIRST COME FROM THE ARMOR, ONLY AFTER THAT IS DEPLETED IS THE CHARACTER'S CLICHE' REDUCED.**
- x IF THE ROUND IS WON WITHOUT ADDING THE ARMOR VALUE, THE ROUND ENDS NORMALLY WITH THE OPPONENT LOSING DICE.**
- x IF THE ROUND IS WON, BUT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE ADDITION OF ARMOR DICE, NO DAMAGE IS SCORED ON EITHER SIDE (IT [GLANCED OFF/WAS ABSORBED BY/GOT STUCK IN] THE ARMOR), AND THE NEXT ROUND BEGINS.**

### **COMMON POLICE ARMOR(1)**

**THIS IS THE TYPICAL ARMORED VEST, USED FOR DAILY PATROL BY POLICE. IT IS VIRTUALLY UNDETECTABLE UNDER CLOTHING AND LIGHTWEIGHT, ALSO MAKING IT POPULAR WITH EVERYDAY PEOPLE.**

### **SWAT ARMOR(2)**

**THIS IS HARD ARMOR, ISSUED TO COPS IN HOT SPOTS, AS WELL AS TACTICAL RESPONSE TEAMS AND MEDICS. NORMALLY THESE ARE STOP-GAP TROOPS TO TRY AND CONTAIN A SITUATION UNTIL THE MILITARY CAN ARRIVE TO NEUTRALIZE THE SITUATION.**

### **MILITARY HARD ARMOR(3)**

**LARGE, HEAVY, AND TOUGH, THIS IS THE MOST PROTECTIVE ARMOR TO DATE. THESE SUITS ARE OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "PLATEMAIL" DUE TO THEIR RESEMBLANCE TO THE HISTORIC ARMOR. MOBILITY IS SEVERELY LIMITED IN THESE SUITS BUT THE PROTECTION IS UNPARALLELED.**

## **SAMPLE NPC'S**

### **JOHNNY CHROMECKO**

**MUSICIAN(2)**

**MERCENARY(4)**

**MEDIA[2]**

**JOHNNY IS A POPULAR ROCKER, HIS TRADEMARK BEING HIS CHROMED, UM, YEAH. OF MEDIOCRE MUSICAL TALENT, HE'S MOST POPULAR AMONGST REBELLING PRETEENS. TO TRY AND KEEP HIMSELF ON TOP, HE ALSO WRITES REVIEWS OF HIS BAND UNDER THE PEN NAME "YNNHOJ" FOR THE LOCAL EPAPER.**

### **BILLY JOE BOB**

**MERCENARY[3]**

**SNEAK(3)**

**ENGINEER(2)**

**HOOK- WANTED BY SUPERMEGALOCORP, INC. FOR TRADEMARK INFRINGEMENT (ON THE PHRASE "BANG, YOU'RE DEAD") WHILST KILLING A BUSLOAD OF JPOP MUSICIANS (FINE WAIVED FOR MURDER - JUSTIFIABLE MASS-HOMICIDE.)**

**BILLY JOE BOB IS THE NEW IDENTITY GIVEN TO A EX-CORPORATION JAPANESE ASSASSIN AFTER MANY YEARS OF COVERT OPERATIONS. INSTEAD OF RETIRING, HE BECAME A FREELANCER, AND NOW HE WORKS FOR THE HIGHEST BIDDER.**

## **SOURCES AND REFERENCES**

**RISUS- THE ANYTHING RPG BY S. JOHN ROSS**

**WWW.CUMBERLANDGAMES.COM**

**RISUS IS THE FINEST AND FREE'EST RPG I'VE FOUND. WHERE ELSE CAN YOU DOWNLOAD A HIGH QUALITY PDF FORMAT ROLE PLAYING SYSTEM IN ONLY 6 PAGES? ADD ANOTHER FEW PAGES FOR THE BIG LIST OF RPG PLOTS AND YOU'RE SET FOR YEARS TO COME, OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT. OH YEAH, AND YOU NEED MY BOOKS, HONEST.**

**LORDZAMIEL.IS.DREAMING**

**LORDZAMIEL.IS.DREAMING.ORG**

**HERE'S WHERE YOU CAN FIND ALL MY BOOKS IN PDF AND PALMDOC FORMAT.**

# RISUS ROGUES GALLERY

***Edited by Hank Harwell***

The Gallery follows this format:

Genre  
Name  
One-Sentence Description/Profession  
Submitted by  
Clichés  
Description  
Story  
Hook  
Adventure Ideas  
Miscellaneous Notes

Genres:

(C) Cthulhu  
(V) Victorian/Edwardian Era  
(F) Fantasy  
(P) Pulp  
(S) SciFi  
(SW) Star Wars  
(CP) Cyberpunk  
(M) Modern  
(E) Espionage  
(HA) Comedy, Toon  
(SH) Superhero

## **1. (V)            *Roger Rickson, Librarian in the British Museum Library***

(Submitted by Florian Edlbauer [florian\\_edlbauer@yahoo.com](mailto:florian_edlbauer@yahoo.com))

Clichés:

Bookworm (4)  
Athlete (3)  
Kleptomaniac (2)  
Scotch Whisky connoisseur (1)

Description: A man in his 30's, moustache, slightly above medium height. Very agile for a librarian.  
Dresses in dark colors.

Story: Though quite capable in his job and well-read, Roger has been an athlete in his youth, which comes in handy as he has recently taken to breaking into other people's houses by night! Since his wife died a year ago, he has felt such a desire to rob others of what is dear to them... The one other vice he indulges in is an occasional Scotch after one of his nightly sorties.

Hook: Proud of his twisty moustache.

Adventure ideas:

1. Possible ally. As the adventurers frequent the library, he might overhear they are interested in the owner of a certain house he has recently broken into.
2. As an old friend, PCs might have to help/rescue him.
3. However, if the PCs talk loudly about their treasures in the library reading room, he might visit them instead.

## **2. (V), (C)      *Armington Lewis, Globetrotter Psychiatrist.***

(Submitted by Jokin González [armingtonlewis@yahoo.es](mailto:armingtonlewis@yahoo.es))

Clichés:

Proud of it NorthAmerican Psychiatrist (4);  
Life caring gunman (3);  
Lucky dandy (2);  
Babelfish\* (1)

Description: Young doctor, brown haired and green eyed, not so tall, not so small... Always elegantly dressed (too much elegantly for an American), and always with a smile in his face.

Story: Mr. Lewis wrote his last exam of Medicine in the Boston University a few years ago. He came to Europe looking for a deeper knowledge, by the hand of great psychiatrists, as Mr. Freud and Mr. Jung. But it's hard for a young doctor to be known amongst the people, and get enough clients. In fact he has a job as teacher of Biology in a College, by which he hardly earns the enough money to live with the dignity deserved to a doctor.

Hook: In spite of being a fairly acute shooter, he never uses his revolver for killing another person. He learned that a doctor must always protect human life. Even the mean and evil doer's life.

Adventure ideas:

1. Armington may be the PCs consultant in health and psychiatric affairs (including hypnosis, an emerging and valuated technique at that time).
2. Or he can be the family doctor of one (or more) of the PCs.
3. On the other hand, PCs can meet Mr. Lewis at his role of High School teacher: At any literary meeting with other intellectuals, or if the behavior of a student makes necessary a report to his father.

\*Miscellaneous Notes: *Babelfish: This cliché is used when a PC needs to test his foreign language skills. If any language is supposed to be known no roll is necessary. But if character faces a new language, he may check this cliché.*

*If successful it represents that he is able to communicate with others, due to the resemblances of the new language with another one the character knows, or to the logical application of some basic linguistic rules. This cliché doesn't allow to speak so fluently, nor to read (and fully understand) any text more complex than a Pub sign or soap label... (but is really useful for traveling campaigns or arcane book seekings)*

## **3. (C) *Larry Lombardi, Escape Artist Extraordinaire***

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Clichés:

Famous Escape Artist/Daredevil (5)  
Dyed-In-The-Wool Skeptic (3)  
Secret Spiritualist (2)

Story: Making his fortune and his fame escaping from submerged cabinets, walking tightropes across deep canyons, and escaping from the lightless catacombs beneath the tombs of the Pharaohs, Larry Lombardi secretly wishes to contact the spirit of his beloved dog Rover. Seeking proof of the afterlife, he exposes phony table-levitating mediums, knuckle-rapping con-men, and others who would use trickery to play upon the grief of others.

Hook: Fame is an awesome burden.

Adventure ideas:

1. While investigating a phony fortuneteller, Larry stumbles upon a much greater crime (kidnapped heiress, anarchist plot to blow up something, white slave ring, coven of witches bent on summoning the Thing With No Nose, etc.)
2. During a performance, something unusual happens (someone kidnapped, dead body in the trunk Larry was supposed to escape in, ghost appears on stage, dead body falls onto the stage, someone tries to shoot Larry, etc.)

**4. (M), (P)    *Shamus Killduggon, Antiquity Dealer and Cultural Ambassador for the Limerick Republican Army.***

(Submitted by jcwmbs [isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk](mailto:isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk))

Clichés:

Loan shark (5)  
 Antique hunter (2)  
 Darts athlete (2)  
 Irish dancer (1)

Story: Mostly just looking for that pot of gold over the rainbow.

Killduggon trotted over to old Blighty to avoid potato blight and cultural persecution from his next-door neighbors in Limerick. Fleet of foot, with a supernatural nose for the trail of gold, and plenty of resourcefulness when it comes to the lending/recovery business, our Shamus can kick arse with grace to be sure.

Hook. Devoutly religious with many strange romano-celtic rituals to keep the guilt at bay.

Adventure ideas: Too many to mention.

**5. (M), (P)    *Hans Oberydole, Financial Security Consultant (Safe Breaker)***

(Submitted by jcwmbs [isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk](mailto:isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk))

Clichés:

Rock climber (4)  
 Clockwork mechanic (3)  
 Alpine soldier (2)  
 Linguist (1)

Description/Story: Blond, lederhosen wearing tanned and rugged professional thief. A total fascination in overcoming any security system, rustic or high tech, before and up to the present day (1900's). Belly laughs in the face of avalanches, a master of verbal disguise, and able digest the gristliest of sausages.

Hook: Trouble deciding whose side he's on (very indecisive).

Adventure ideas: Can be seen on the side of good or evil. Can be swayed in any direction eventually. Will definitely be drawn to any scheme that involves breaking into places and grabbing the loot. Definitely open to money laundering and cross border smuggling schemes.

**6. (M), (P), (C) *Laurie "Grease" King, Airplane Mechanic***

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cleireac@netzero.net](mailto:cleireac@netzero.net))

Clichés:

Crackerjack Mechanic (5)\*  
 Trivia-Spouting Baseball Fan (3)  
 Pilot (2)  
 Ballroom Dancer (1)

Description: Age 24, slight build, medium-length dishwater-blonde hair (usually pulled back or hidden under a baseball cap), brown eyes.

Story: "Grease" (short for "Grease monkey") is the only female airplane mechanic in the San Francisco Bay area. Her gender however does not negate her ability to keep in the air nearly any airplane ever made. She is the daughter of one of the best mechanics around, and learned her way around an engine practically before she could read.

Laurie is in reality a very attractive young woman, but her usual dress (coveralls and a baseball cap) and the large amount of engine grease covering her face often discourage all but the most persistent suitors.

While she loves what she does, she harbors a secret fantasy to be Fred Astaire's dancing partner...

Hook: A Female in a Male world...

Adventure Ideas: The PC's may have need of her skills in order to keep their plane flying. She may also be a source of information for the PC's of any activity going on in the hangars/at the airport.

*\*Miscellaneous Notes: The Crackerjack Mechanic cliché requires the use of at least a standard mechanic's tool kit. However, if she can scrounge up some bailing wire and chewing gum, she might be able to make do (GM's discretion).*

## **7. (M), (P), (C) *Butch Hiacinth, Circus Strongman and Exotic Florist***

(Submitted by jcwmbs [isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk](mailto:isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk))

Clichés:

Circus Strongman (4)

Engineer (2)

Tracker (2)

Ethnobotanist (2)

Butch is a budding and slightly davincian dark horse. Born in the depths of Borneo after his father's circus took a wrong turn, Butch has developed a "wild" range of skills. The archetypal strongman, large, muscular, shaven head, wide black mustache, leopard skin leotard, hairy shoulders, he has also developed a taste for the culinary delights of exotic plant gathering. Rare panaceas, cold cures, and recreational supplements are expertly collected and administered by this overbearing billiard ball crusher.

Hook:

Unfortunately, Butch has a squealing terror of the sight of creepy crawlies (insects, arachnids, and small rodents).

Adventure idea:

As a goody: Hey you! That plant belongs in a conservatory!

As a baddy; Poisoner, drug baron, over-sensitive thug.

## **8. (M), (P), (C) *Rick "Bubbles" Bauer, Salvage Diver***

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cleireac@netzero.net](mailto:cleireac@netzero.net) )

Clichés:

Diver (4)\*

Carousing Seaman (3)

Poker-Faced Card Sharp (2)\*\*

Ship's Cook (2)\*\*\*

Description: Slightly rotund, short man with fair skin, bright red hair and green eyes

Story: "Bubbles" is probably one of the most competent salvage divers on the coast. The company he works for is the one that is usually sought after for most complicated operations, partly because of Bauer's reputation. He is an ex-navy diver, with a few war stories he is quite willing to share.

He was married, but his wife contracted a debilitating illness, and Bubbles took up cooking in order to help around the house. When his wife died, he returned to what he knew best – diving – although he does help around the galley. If anyone were to criticize his cooking, he breaks down, remembering how much his late wife (Emma) loved his cooking....

Hook: Defensive about his cooking skills

Adventure Ideas: PC's may recruit Bubbles for a salvage operation, or they may get into a fight with him in a seedy dockside bar...

*Miscellaneous Notes:*

- \*Diver requires standard diving equipment
- \*\*Poker-Faced Card Sharp requires playing cards
- \*\*\*Ship's cook requires equipment dependant on type of meal desired:
  - Simple = Basic ingredients and common utensils
  - Medium = Fresh foodstuffs and standard kitchen
  - Complex = Fully stocked kitchen, restaurant quality

## **9. (M), (P), (C), (E) Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena, Italian Secret Agent**

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cleireac@netzero.net](mailto:cleireac@netzero.net) )

Clichés:

Italian Noble (4)

Secret Agent (4)

Diplomat (2)

Femme Fatale (1)

Description: The Princess has long, dark brown hair with large hazel colored eyes. Her appearance makes her look much younger than her 32 years.

Story: Princess Elida is the premiere agent in the service of the Italian Government. Her youthful appearance as well as her notoriety as a member of the Italian aristocracy provide the perfect cover for an intelligence agent: she's too obvious to be dangerous. The Princess uses her wealth, age, and reputation as a bored, well-traveled socialite to her advantage. She sails aboard her private yacht, the *Espérance*, to places of interest and reports on them to her superiors in Rome.

She is, as befits her station, very well cultured, accustomed to the finer things and passionate about her country. She hopes one day to see Italy return to her position as a major world power, and will do what she can to accomplish this goal. Although a devoted monarchist, she is above all a pragmatist and will ally herself to the party that will increase Italy's influence and world standing.

When entertaining, the Princess favors wearing slippers adorned with priceless Medici buckles. She is very possessive of these buckles and would willingly sacrifice the shoes in order to save the buckles.

Hook: Extreme (but not fanatical) dedication to her cause

Adventure Ideas: Princess Elida could be a recurring character in any espionage or pulp adventure game possibly as a friendly competitor to the causes of the PC's.

*Miscellaneous Notes:* Based on a character from the book The Spy Paramount, by E. Phillips Oppenheim (1934)

**10. (F) Tambor the Lame, Proprietor, “The Broken Leg” Playhouse and Inn**

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cldreac@netzero.net](mailto:cldreac@netzero.net) )

Clichés:

Actor (5)

Entertainer (4)

Innkeeper (3)

Description: Tambor is a slight man in his mid-fifties, with graying black hair and deep blue eyes. It has been said that he has “a presence” about him...

Story: Tambor was once a great actor, until an accidental fall off of the stage during a performance of “The Shepherd of Wakefield” (often referred to as “The Wooly Play” by superstitious thespians; it was perhaps his greatest role!) left him with a severely broken left leg. Unfortunately, it was not set properly, leaving Tambor with a painfully crippled leg. Forced to retire from the stage, Tambor traveled to the frontier city of Stonegate to escape the sorrow of his past. But there, he became determined that he should bring civilization to the “uncultured” citizens of Stonegate and introduce them to the pleasures of the theater. As a result, he opened the Broken Leg Playhouse. Sadly, he overestimated the interest of the Stonegate residents in the theater. This reality forced Tambor to convert some of his boxes for the more well-to-do patrons into rooms. The resulting “inn” helps to pay the bills.

Often, Tambor will hire traveling players to perform productions on his stage. He also contracts entertainers for variety acts.

Hook: Crippled left leg

- Adventure Ideas:
1. An actor is found murdered after a performance. Was he a royal spy, a philanderer, or was he simply just a really \*bad\* actor?
  2. The PC's take rooms in the inn, but their money is stolen in the night by burglars. They will not be able to pay, and Tambor employs them on his stage (as either actors or stagehands) to pay off the debt.

**11. (M), (P), (HA) UNCLE BOOZY, The Clown That Stalks The Night**

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Clichés:

Circus Clown (4)

Two-Fisted Crimebuster (4)

Struggling Writer of Clown Mysteries (3)

Description: Uncle Boozy is a grinning, staggering circus clown. Crime makes Uncle Boozy sad. When Uncle Boozy's friends have crime happen to them, Uncle Boozy takes to the night, a grinning, staggering clown of vengeance. Uncle Boozy would like to be a writer, but he can't seem to make a living at it. When Uncle Boozy's mystery-clown novels get rejected, Uncle Boozy gets drunk and takes to the night, a grinning, staggering clown who vandalizes the publisher's office.

Hook: Drinks because he can't sell any clown-mystery books to publishers.

**12. (M), (CP), (SH), (HA) Steve "Blackboard" Belkin, Skateboarding Pizza Deliveryman and Crimefighter**

(Submitted by JRice)

Extreme Pizza Delivery (4), Skateboarding Anti-commercialist (4),  
Shoegazer (2)\*

Steve is serious about Pizza delivery. During the day, he prides himself on the fact that he has only ever been late for a delivery ONCE (and memory of that once will flare his temper). By night, Steve becomes "Blackboard", a chain-swining, ramp-riding dark-do-gooder with a sworn oath to fight white-collar crime! Steve writes decent (in his mind) music which he'd love to do full-time, but will never sign with those self-interested back-stabbing big-label scum that serve only to repress TRUE artists!

Adventure Ideas: 1. Blackboard delivers Pizza to an executive meeting, where he overhears a plot by corporate execs to tear down the local skate-park and put up a strip-mall.

2. A gang that Blackboard is familiar with signs with a small label to write indie rock. Blackboard refuses to listen to it. ...And, good thing... the corporate execs put subliminal messages into the recordings; Blackboard's friends all start shopping at the local mall, and Blackboard smells trouble!

3. Blackboard happens to deliver pizza to a birthday party where Boozy is performing. And--what a coincidence--just then, the party is crashed by a gang that steals the birthday girl. She turns out to be the daughter of a big publishing conglomerate executive... Moral quandary!

\* *Miscellaneous Notes:* *Shoegazer* is a style of slow indie rock music, heavy on guitar and super-heavy on reverb. Imagine a long-haired punk singing about being depressed while staring at his shoes.

### **13. (M), (HA) Big Dave, Geologist**

(Submitted by Mike Munsil [mikemunsil@earthlink.net](mailto:mikemunsil@earthlink.net))

Loud, burly plaid-and-tan wearing Woodsman (3)(never gets lost in the woods, knows bears by name, can light a fire in the rain)

Droning Geologist (4)(can put people to sleep with the sound of his voice, lethal with a rock pick, digs fast, can climb up sheer cliffs but not down)

Bubba (3)(has a never-ending supply of beer, belches loudly, chases women but never catches them)

Description: Burly, loud and addicted to plaid shirts and tan pants with built-in beer pockets. Will speak for hours about the contributions rocks make to "Life as We Know It" and beer. Pokes around in the dirt while drinking beer. Did I mention the beer?

### **14. (M), (HA) Nicholas Weatherby**

(Submitted by Jens Reineking [j\\_reineking@gmx.de](mailto:j_reineking@gmx.de))

Genius Inventor [4]

Stuntman (2)

Eco Activist (2)

Hook: Overconfident. And then has to struggle to stretch himself to reach the set goal - or at least to iron his misjudgment out.

Tale: Heir of the family fortune, Nicholas never had to work for or worry about money. Instead he dived into study and research of all things strange and out-of-mainstream. After several forced

rebuilds of his study, he took some training as a stuntman to avoid further breaking of bones, but some scars remain.

From his early teens on, he appeased his conscience by giving money to some obscure charities, finally landing in the Eco movement where he finally began to do something himself.

Sometimes he has flights of brilliance (double pumps), thus being able to turn nothing into something (like MacGyver).

He's a Brit.

Adventure Ideas: An obvious starter for a story would be some tour with his fellow eco activists or some grand invention that gets him into trouble.

*Notes: Can be played serious or silly. In serious mode, his inventions are in the lines of Tony Stark or Reed Richards. In silly mode, he's more like Gyro Gearless or Uncle Wisebottom and his nephew Nick (from www.gpf-comics.com). Nick for example once turned a remote control accidental into a laser while trying to fix it.*

## Cliche Index

actor.....	Tambor the Lame
soldier, alpine.....	Hans Oberydole
antique hunter.....	Shamus Killduggon
athlete.....	Roger Rickson
babelfish.....	Armington Lewis
dancer, ballroom.....	Laurie "Grease" King
bookworm .....	Roger Rickson
bubba.....	Big Dave
seaman, carousing.....	Rick "Bubbles" Bauer
circus clown.....	UNCLE BOOZY
circus strongman.....	Butch Hiacinth
mechanic, clockwork.....	Hans Oberydole
geologist, crackerjack.....	Laurie "Grease" King
athlete, darts.....	Shamus Killduggon
diplomat.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena
diver.....	Rick "Bubbles" Bauer
geologist, droning.....	Big Dave
dyed-in-the-wool skeptic.....	Larry Lombardi
eco activist.....	Nicholas Weatherby
engineer.....	Butch Hiacinth
entertainer.....	Tambor the Lame
ethnobotanist.....	Butch Hiacinth
famous escape artist/daredevil.....	Larry Lombardi
femme fatale.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena
inventor, genius.....	Nicholas Weatherby
gunman, life caring.....	Armington Lewis
innkeeper.....	Tambor the Lame
dancer, irish.....	Shamus Killduggon
noble, italian.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena

kleptomaniac.....	Roger Rickson
linguist.....	Hans Oberyodle
loan shark.....	Shamus Killduggon
lucky dandy .....	Armington Lewis
pilot.....	Laurie "Grease" King
poker-faced card sharp.....	Rick "Bubbles" Bauer
psychiatrist, proud of it northamerican..	Armington Lewis
rock climber.....	Hans Oberyodle
scotch whisky connoisseur.....	Roger Rickson
secret agent.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena
secret spiritualist.....	Larry Lombardi
cook, ship's.....	Rick "Bubbles" Bauer
skateboarding anti-commercialist.....	Steve "Blackboard" Belkin
shoegazer.....	Steve "Blackboard" Belkin
woodsman, loud, burly plaid-and-tan wearing.....	Big Dave
struggling writer of clown mysteries.....	UNCLE BOOZY
extreme pizza delivery.....	Steve "Blackboard" Belkin
stuntman.....	Nicholas Weatherby
tracker.....	Butch Hiacinth
trivia-spouting baseball fan.....	Laurie "Grease" King
two-fisted crimebuster.....	UNCLE BOOZY

## RISUS ROGUES GALLERY

*Edited by Hank Harwell & Joe Mucchiello*

The Gallery follows this format:

Genre  
Name  
One-Sentence Description/Profession  
Submitted by  
Clichés  
Description  
Story  
Hook  
Adventure Ideas  
Notes

Genres:

(C) Cthulhu  
(V) Victorian/Edwardian Era  
(F) Fantasy  
(P) Pulp  
(S) SciFi  
(SW) Star Wars  
(CP) Cyberpunk  
(M) Modern  
(E) Espionage  
(HA) Comedy, Toon  
(SH) Superhero

### **1. (V)           *Roger Rickson, Librarian in the British Museum Library***

(Submitted by Florian Edlbauer [florian\\_edlbauer@yahoo.com](mailto:florian_edlbauer@yahoo.com))

Clichés:

Bookworm (4)  
Athlete (3)  
Kleptomaniac (2)  
Scotch Whisky connoisseur (1)

Description: A man in his 30's, moustache, slightly above medium height. Very agile for a librarian.  
Dresses in dark colors.

Story: Though quite capable in his job and well-read, Roger has been an athlete in his youth, which comes in handy as he has recently taken to breaking into other people's houses by night! Since his wife died a year ago, he has felt such a desire to rob others of what is dear to them... The one other vice he indulges in is an occasional Scotch after one of his nightly sorties.

Hook: Proud of his twisty moustache.

Adventure ideas:

1. Possible ally. As the adventurers frequent the library, he might overhear they are interested in the owner of a certain house he has recently broken into.
2. As an old friend, PCs might have to help/rescue him.
3. However, if the PCs talk loudly about their treasures in the library reading room, he might visit them instead.

## **2. (V), (C)      *Armington Lewis, Globetrotter Psychiatrist.***

(Submitted by Jokin González [armingtonlewis@yahoo.es](mailto:armingtonlewis@yahoo.es))

Clichés:

Proud of it NorthAmerican Psychiatrist (4);  
Life caring gunman (3);  
Lucky dandy (2);  
Babelfish\* (1)

Description: Young doctor, brown haired and green eyed, not so tall, not so small... Always elegantly dressed (too much elegantly for an American), and always with a smile in his face.

Story: Mr. Lewis wrote his last exam of Medicine in the Boston University a few years ago. He came to Europe looking for a deeper knowledge, by the hand of great psychiatrists, as Mr. Freud and Mr. Jung. But it's hard for a young doctor to be known amongst the people, and get enough clients. In fact he has a job as teacher of Biology in a College, by which he hardly earns the enough money to live with the dignity deserved to a doctor.

Hook: In spite of being a fairly acute shooter, he never uses his revolver for killing another person. He learned that a doctor must always protect human life. Even the mean and evil doer's life.

Adventure ideas:

- 4 . Armington may be the PCs consultant in health and psychiatric affairs (including hypnosis, an emerging and valuated technique at that time).
- 5 . Or he can be the family doctor of one (or more) of the PCs.
- 6 . On the other hand, PCs can meet Mr. Lewis at his role of High School teacher: At any literary meeting with other intellectuals, or if the behavior of a student makes necessary a report to his father.

\* Notes: *Babelfish: This cliché is used when a PC needs to test his foreign language skills. If any language is supposed to be known no roll is necessary. But if character faces a new language, he may check this cliché.*

*If successful it represents that he is able to communicate with others, due to the resemblances of the new language with another one the character knows, or to the logical application of some basic linguistic rules. This cliché doesn't allow to speak so fluently, nor to read (and fully understand) any text more complex than a Pub sign or soap label... (but is really useful for traveling campaigns or arcane book seekings)*

## **3. (C) *Larry Lombardi, Escape Artist Extraordinaire***

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Clichés:

Famous Escape Artist/Daredevil (5)  
Dyed-In-The-Wool Skeptic (3)  
Secret Spiritualist (2)

Story: Making his fortune and his fame escaping from submerged cabinets, walking tightropes across deep canyons, and escaping from the lightless catacombs beneath the tombs of the Pharaohs, Larry Lombardi secretly wishes to contact the spirit of his beloved dog Rover. Seeking proof of the afterlife, he exposes phony table-levitating mediums, knuckle-rapping con-men, and others who would use trickery to play upon the grief of others.

Hook: Fame is an awesome burden.

Adventure ideas:

1. While investigating a phony fortuneteller, Larry stumbles upon a much greater crime (kidnapped heiress, anarchist plot to blow up something, white slave ring, coven of witches bent on summoning the Thing With No Nose, etc.)
2. During a performance, something unusual happens (someone kidnapped, dead body in the trunk Larry was supposed to escape in, ghost appears on stage, dead body falls onto the stage, someone tries to shoot Larry, etc.)

**4. (M), (P)    *Shamus Killduggon, Antiquity Dealer and Cultural Ambassador for the Limerick Republican Army.***

(Submitted by jcwmbs [isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk](mailto:isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk))

Clichés:

Loan shark (5)  
 Antique hunter (2)  
 Darts athlete (2)  
 Irish dancer (1)

Story: Mostly just looking for that pot of gold over the rainbow.

Killduggon trotted over to old Blighty to avoid potato blight and cultural persecution from his next-door neighbors in Limerick. Fleet of foot, with a supernatural nose for the trail of gold, and plenty of resourcefulness when it comes to the lending/recovery business, our Shamus can kick arse with grace to be sure.

Hook. Devoutly religious with many strange romano-celtic rituals to keep the guilt at bay.

Adventure ideas: Too many to mention.

**5. (M), (P)    *Hans Oberydole, Financial Security Consultant (Safe Breaker)***

(Submitted by jcwmbs [isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk](mailto:isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk))

Clichés:

Rock climber (4)  
 Clockwork mechanic (3)  
 Alpine soldier (2)  
 Linguist (1)

Description/Story: Blond, lederhosen wearing tanned and rugged professional thief. A total fascination in overcoming any security system, rustic or high tech, before and up to the present day (1900's). Belly laughs in the face of avalanches, a master of verbal disguise, and able digest the gristliest of sausages.

Hook: Trouble deciding whose side he's on (very indecisive).

Adventure ideas: Can be seen on the side of good or evil. Can be swayed in any direction eventually. Will definitely be drawn to any scheme that involves breaking into places and grabbing the loot. Definitely open to money laundering and cross border smuggling schemes.

**6. (M), (P), (C) *Laurie "Grease" King, Airplane Mechanic***

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cleireac@netzero.net](mailto:cleireac@netzero.net))

Clichés:

Crackerjack Mechanic (5)\*  
 Trivia-Spouting Baseball Fan (3)  
 Pilot (2)  
 Ballroom Dancer (1)

Description: Age 24, slight build, medium-length dishwater-blonde hair (usually pulled back or hidden under a baseball cap), brown eyes.

Story: "Grease" (short for "Grease monkey") is the only female airplane mechanic in the San Francisco Bay area. Her gender however does not negate her ability to keep in the air nearly any airplane ever made. She is the daughter of one of the best mechanics around, and learned her way around an engine practically before she could read.

Laurie is in reality a very attractive young woman, but her usual dress (coveralls and a baseball cap) and the large amount of engine grease covering her face often discourage all but the most persistent suitors.

While she loves what she does, she harbors a secret fantasy to be Fred Astaire's dancing partner...

Hook: A Female in a Male world...

Adventure Ideas: The PC's may have need of her skills in order to keep their plane flying. She may also be a source of information for the PC's of any activity going on in the hangars/at the airport.

\* Notes: *The Crackerjack Mechanic cliché requires the use of at least a standard mechanic's tool kit. However, if she can scrounge up some bailing wire and chewing gum, she might be able to make do (GM's discretion).*

## **7. (M), (P), (C) *Butch Hiacinth, Circus Strongman and Exotic Florist***

(Submitted by jcwmbs [isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk](mailto:isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk))

Clichés:

Circus Strongman (4)

Engineer (2)

Tracker (2)

Ethnobotanist (2)

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Hook:

Unfortunately, Butch has a squealing terror of the sight of creepy crawlies (insects, arachnids, and small rodents).

Adventure idea:

As a goody: Hey you! That plant belongs in a conservatory!

As a baddy; Poisoner, drug baron, over-sensitive thug.

## **8. (M), (P), (C) *Rick "Bubbles" Bauer, Salvage Diver***

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cleireac@netzero.net](mailto:cleireac@netzero.net) )

Clichés:

Diver (4)\*

Carousing Seaman (3)

Poker-Faced Card Sharp (2)\*\*

Ship's Cook (2)\*\*\*

Description: Slightly rotund, short man with fair skin, bright red hair and green eyes

Story: "Bubbles" is probably one of the most competent salvage divers on the coast. The company he works for is the one that is usually sought after for most complicated operations, partly because of Bauer's reputation. He is an ex-navy diver, with a few war stories he is quite willing to share.

He was married, but his wife contracted a debilitating illness, and Bubbles took up cooking in order to help around the house. When his wife died, he returned to what he knew best – diving – although he does help around the galley. If anyone were to criticize his cooking, he breaks down, remembering how much his late wife (Emma) loved his cooking....

Hook: Defensive about his cooking skills

Adventure Ideas: PC's may recruit Bubbles for a salvage operation, or they may get into a fight with him in a seedy dockside bar...

Notes: \*Diver requires standard diving equipment

\*\* Poker-Faced Card Sharp requires playing cards

\*\*\* Ship's cook requires equipment dependant on type of meal desired:

Simple = Basic ingredients and common utensils

Medium = Fresh foodstuffs and standard kitchen

Complex = Fully stocked kitchen, restaurant quality

## **9. (M), (P), (C), (E) Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena, Italian Secret Agent**

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cleireac@netzero.net](mailto:cleireac@netzero.net) )

Clichés:

Italian Noble (4)

Secret Agent (4)

Diplomat (2)

Femme Fatale (1)

Description: The Princess has long, dark brown hair with large hazel colored eyes. Her appearance makes her look much younger than her 32 years.

Story: Princess Elida is the premiere agent in the service of the Italian Government. Her youthful appearance as well as her notoriety as a member of the Italian aristocracy provide the perfect cover for an intelligence agent: she's too obvious to be dangerous. The Princess uses her wealth, age, and reputation as a bored, well-traveled socialite to her advantage. She sails aboard her private yacht, the *Espérance*, to places of interest and reports on them to her superiors in Rome.

She is, as befits her station, very well cultured, accustomed to the finer things and passionate about her country. She hopes one day to see Italy return to her position as a major world power, and will do what she can to accomplish this goal. Although a devoted monarchist, she is above all a pragmatist and will ally herself to the party that will increase Italy's influence and world standing.

When entertaining, the Princess favors wearing slippers adorned with priceless Medici buckles. She is very possessive of these buckles and would willingly sacrifice the shoes in order to save the buckles.

Hook: Extreme (but not fanatical) dedication to her cause

Adventure Ideas: Princess Elida could be a recurring character in any espionage or pulp adventure game possibly as a friendly competitor to the causes of the PC's.

Notes: Based on a character from the book The Spy Paramount, by E. Phillips Oppenheim (1934)

**10. (F) Tambor the Lame, Proprietor, “The Broken Leg” Playhouse and Inn**

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cleireac@netzero.net](mailto:cleireac@netzero.net) )

Clichés:

Actor (5)

Entertainer (4)

Innkeeper (3)

Description: Tambor is a slight man in his mid-fifties, with graying black hair and deep blue eyes. It has been said that he has “a presence” about him...

Story: Tambor was once a great actor, until an accidental fall off of the stage during a performance of “The Shepherd of Wakefield” (often referred to as “The Wooly Play” by superstitious thespians; it was perhaps his greatest role!) left him with a severely broken left leg. Unfortunately, it was not set properly, leaving Tambor with a painfully crippled leg. Forced to retire from the stage, Tambor traveled to the frontier city of Stonegate to escape the sorrow of his past. But there, he became determined that he should bring civilization to the “uncultured” citizens of Stonegate and introduce them to the pleasures of the theater. As a result, he opened the Broken Leg Playhouse. Sadly, he overestimated the interest of the Stonegate residents in the theater. This reality forced Tambor to convert some of his boxes for the more well-to-do patrons into rooms. The resulting “inn” helps to pay the bills.

Often, Tambor will hire traveling players to perform productions on his stage. He also contracts entertainers for variety acts.

Hook: Crippled left leg

Adventure Ideas: 1. An actor is found murdered after a performance. Was he a royal spy, a philanderer, or was he simply just a really \*bad\* actor?  
3. The PC's take rooms in the inn, but their money is stolen in the night by burglars. They will not be able to pay, and Tambor employs them on his stage (as either actors or stagehands) to pay off the debt.

**11. (M), (P), (HA) UNCLE BOOZY, The Clown That Stalks The Night**

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Clichés:

Circus Clown (4)

Two-Fisted Crimebuster (4)

Struggling Writer of Clown Mysteries (3)

Description: Uncle Boozy is a grinning, staggering circus clown. Crime makes Uncle Boozy sad. When Uncle Boozy's friends have crime happen to them, Uncle Boozy takes to the night, a grinning, staggering clown of vengeance. Uncle Boozy would like to be a writer, but he can't seem to make a living at it. When Uncle Boozy's mystery-clown novels get rejected, Uncle Boozy gets drunk and takes to the night, a grinning, staggering clown who vandalizes the publisher's office.

Hook: Drinks because he can't sell any clown-mystery books to publishers.

**12. (M), (CP), (SH), (HA) Steve "Blackboard" Belkin, Skateboarding Pizza Deliveryman and Crimefighter**

(Submitted by JRice)

Extreme Pizza Delivery (4), Skateboarding Anti-commercialist (4),  
Shoegazer (2)\*

Steve is serious about Pizza delivery. During the day, he prides himself on the fact that he has only ever been late for a delivery ONCE (and memory of that once will flare his temper). By night, Steve becomes "Blackboard", a chain-swining, ramp-riding dark-do-gooder with a sworn oath to fight white-collar crime! Steve writes decent (in his mind) music which he'd love to do full-time, but will never sign with those self-interested back-stabbing big-label scum that serve only to repress TRUE artists!

Adventure Ideas:      1. Blackboard delivers Pizza to an executive meeting, where he overhears a plot by corporate execs to tear down the local skate-park and put up a strip-mall.

                        2. A gang that Blackboard is familiar with signs with a small label to write indie rock. Blackboard refuses to listen to it. ...And, good thing... the corporate execs put subliminal messages into the recordings; Blackboard's friends all start shopping at the local mall, and Blackboard smells trouble!

                        3. Blackboard happens to deliver pizza to a birthday party where Boozy is performing. And--what a coincidence--just then, the party is crashed by a gang that steals the birthday girl. She turns out to be the daughter of a big publishing conglomerate executive... Moral quandary!

\* Notes:      *Shoegazer* is a style of slow indie rock music, heavy on guitar and super-heavy on reverb. Imagine a long-haired punk singing about being depressed while staring at his shoes.

### **13. (M), (HA) Big Dave, Geologist**

(Submitted by Mike Munsil [mikemunsil@earthlink.net](mailto:mikemunsil@earthlink.net))

Loud, burly plaid-and-tan wearing Woodsman (3)(never gets lost in the woods, knows bears by name, can light a fire in the rain)

Droning Geologist (4)(can put people to sleep with the sound of his voice, lethal with a rock pick, digs fast, can climb up sheer cliffs but not down)

Bubba (3)(has a never-ending supply of beer, belches loudly, chases women but never catches them)

Description: Burly, loud and addicted to plaid shirts and tan pants with built-in beer pockets. Will speak for hours about the contributions rocks make to "Life as We Know It" and beer. Pokes around in the dirt while drinking beer. Did I mention the beer?

### **14. (M), (HA) Nicholas Weatherby**

(Submitted by Jens Reineking [j\\_reineking@gmx.de](mailto:j_reineking@gmx.de))

Genius Inventor [4]

Stuntman (2)

Eco Activist (2)

Hook: Overconfident. And then has to struggle to stretch himself to reach the set goal - or at least to iron his misjudgment out.

Tale: Heir of the family fortune, Nicholas never had to work for or worry about money. Instead he dived into study and research of all things strange and out-of-mainstream. After several forced rebuilds of his study, he took some training as a stuntman to avoid further breaking of bones, but some scars remain.

From his early teens on, he appeased his conscience by giving money to some obscure charities, finally landing in the Eco movement where he finally began to do something himself.

Sometimes he has flights of brilliance (double pumps), thus being able to turn nothing into something (like MacGyver).

He's a Brit.

Adventure Ideas: An obvious starter for a story would be some tour with his fellow eco activists or some grand invention that gets him into trouble.

*Notes: Can be played serious or silly. In serious mode, his inventions are in the lines of Tony Stark or Reed Richards. In silly mode, he's more like Gyro Gearless or Uncle Wisebottom and his nephew Nick (from www.gpf-comics.com). Nick for example once turned a remote control accidental into a laser while trying to fix it.*

### **15. (SF), (F) Jameih I'Kta**

(Submitted by Jens Reineking [j\\_reineking@gmx.de](mailto:j_reineking@gmx.de))

Clichés: Uplifted Gorilla (4); Gentleman Mobster (3); Amateur Actor (3); Voice Manipulist [1]

Hook: Extremely passionate about his appearance - as well in daily life as on stage. This can get extreme reactions from him if he perceives an insult. And, as with most fresh uplifted species, this kind of stress enforces the animal side.

Tale: His tribe is the first experiment in magical uplifting. Because he didn't like the magical research facility, he struck a deal with the organized crime and they got him out. His physique and his voice made him soon a valued member of the 'family'. Trying to blend in, he invested heavily in clothing and social activities, especially acting.

He's arrived in Atamar with the mission to check out the possibilty of bringing organized crime to Atamar. So far, he's enjoying himself immensely – Atamarians simply don't care that he's a four hundred pound gorilla.

*Notes: Uplifting (see David Brin) means giving a species a boost and making it intelligent. So he can speak, think, and go the forward leaning walk of a great ape.*

*Voice Manipulist would be something like the ability of the Bene Gesserit (Frank Herbert/Dune) - can manipulate, influence and command other beings.*

### **16. (F), (HA) Barnacle Bob**

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Cliches: Singing Pirate (4); Wildly Improvisational Tavern Brawler (3); Ex-Member of Thorny Cove Repertory Theatre (3); Impersonator of Long-Lost Royalty (2)

Hook: Occasionally recognized as fraud by family of long-lost aristocrats he impersonated; still has nightmares about his days as a cabin boy.

Tale: Barnacle Bob's early childhood prepared him for two things he would excel in later on in life: pretending to be someone else, and fleeing for his life. He was often mistaken for someone else, particularly various missing members of various ruling families. He was very happy to encourage the mistake, which did not endear him to his newfound "family" when they inevitably realized the mistake. So Bob learned early on that making a hasty retreat was often the better part of valor.

Bob's misadventures soon led him to a life in the theater, where he began to broaden his performing skills. He particularly loved musical theater, and soon found himself a member of the Thorny Cove Repertory Theater, where almost all the plays were about pirates (Thorny Cove being a community founded and populated by ex-pirates). There were pirate musicals, pirate tragedies, pirate comedies, pirate operas, and pirate ballets (co-produced by the Thorny Cove Pegleg Ballet Company).

Bob's past caught up with him again when a patron of the arts recognized him as the pretender to the

throne of a Kovali arch-dukedom, which caused Bob to flee for his life in the first available ship. Unfortunately, the ship was a pirate ship, and Bob had two choices: walk the plank, or serve as cabin boy. To this day, Bob has nightmares about his stint as the cabin boy of the "Scuttlefish". However, he soon won the crew over with his wide knowledge of pirate songs, and his one-man version of such Thorny Cove faves as "Seven Whores for Seven Pirates", "Kiss Me, Mate", and "Damn Pirates!". Within a year, Barnacle Bob (as he was christened after an unfortunate keelhauling incident) had won his place in the "Scuttlefish" crew and was accepted as a full-fledged pirate (and leader of their Saturday-night choral ensemble).

*Notes: This was the character I played in S. John's Risus game at A-Kon, set in his world of Uresia, using his Risus rules. The only change I've made is adding a D6 because of the hook.*

## Cliche Index

actor.....	Tambor the Lame
Amateur Actor.....	Jameih I'Kta
soldier, alpine.....	Hans Oberyodle
antique hunter.....	Shamus Killduggon
athlete.....	Roger Rickson
babelfish.....	Armington Lewis
dancer, ballroom.....	Laurie "Grease" King
bookworm .....	Roger Rickson
bubba.....	Big Dave
seaman, carousing.....	Rick "Bubbles" Bauer
circus clown.....	UNCLE BOOZY
circus strongman.....	Butch Hiacinth
mechanic, clockwork.....	Hans Oberyodle
geologist, crackerjack.....	Laurie "Grease" King
athlete, darts.....	Shamus Killduggon
diplomat.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena
diver.....	Rick "Bubbles" Bauer
geologist, droning.....	Big Dave
dyed-in-the-wool skeptic.....	Larry Lombardi
eco activist.....	Nicholas Weatherby
engineer.....	Butch Hiacinth
entertainer.....	Tambor the Lame
ethnobotanist.....	Butch Hiacinth
famous escape artist/daredevil.....	Larry Lombardi
femme fatale.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena
inventor, genius.....	Nicholas Weatherby
Gentleman Mobster.....	Jameih I'Kta
gunman, life caring.....	Armington Lewis
innkeeper.....	Tambor the Lame
dancer, irish.....	Shamus Killduggon
noble, italian.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena
kleptomaniac.....	Roger Rickson
linguist.....	Hans Oberyodle
loan shark.....	Shamus Killduggon
lucky dandy .....	Armington Lewis
pilot.....	Laurie "Grease" King
poker-faced card sharp.....	Rick "Bubbles" Bauer
psychiatrist, proud of it northamerican..	Armington Lewis
rock climber.....	Hans Oberyodle
scotch whisky connoisseur.....	Roger Rickson
secret agent.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena
secret spiritualist.....	Larry Lombardi

cook, ship's.....Rick "Bubbles" Bauer  
skateboarding anti-commercialist.....Steve "Blackboard" Belkin  
shoegazer.....Steve "Blackboard" Belkin  
woodsman, loud, burly plaid-and-tan wearing.....Big Dave  
struggling writer of clown mysteries.....UNCLE BOOZY  
extreme pizza delivery.....Steve "Blackboard" Belkin  
stuntman.....Nicholas Weatherby  
tracker.....Butch Hiacinth  
trivia-spouting baseball fan.....Laurie "Grease" King  
two-fisted crimebuster.....UNCLE BOOZY  
Uplifted Gorilla.....Jameih I'Kta  
Voice Manipulist.....Jameih I'Kta

## RISUS ROGUES GALLERY

*Edited by Hank Harwell & Joe Mucchiello*

The Gallery follows this format:

Genre  
Name  
One-Sentence Description/Profession  
Submitted by  
Clichés  
Description  
Story  
Hook  
Adventure Ideas  
Notes

Genres:

(C)	Cthulhu
(V)	Victorian/Edwardian Era
(F)	Fantasy
(P)	Pulp
(S)	SciFi
(SW)	Star Wars
(CP)	Cyberpunk
(M)	Modern
(E)	Espionage
(HA)	Comedy, Toon
(SH)	Superhero

### **1. (V)        *Roger Rickson, Librarian in the British Museum Library***

(Submitted by Florian Edlbauer [florian\\_edlbauer@yahoo.com](mailto:florian_edlbauer@yahoo.com))

Clichés:

Bookworm (4)  
Athlete (3)  
Kleptomaniac (2)  
Scotch Whisky connoisseur (1)

Description: A man in his 30's, moustache, slightly above medium height. Very agile for a librarian.  
Dresses in dark colors.

Story: Though quite capable in his job and well-read, Roger has been an athlete in his youth, which comes in handy as he has recently taken to breaking into other people's houses by night! Since his wife died a year ago, he has felt such a desire to rob others of what is dear to them... The one other vice he indulges in is an occasional Scotch after one of his nightly sorties.

Hook: Proud of his twisty moustache.

Adventure ideas:

1. Possible ally. As the adventurers frequent the library, he might overhear they are interested in the owner of a certain house he has recently broken into.
2. As an old friend, PCs might have to help/rescue him.
3. However, if the PCs talk loudly about their treasures in the library reading room, he might visit them instead.

### **2. (V), (C)        *Armington Lewis, Globetrotter Psychiatrist.***

(Submitted by Jokin González [armingtonlewis@yahoo.es](mailto:armingtonlewis@yahoo.es))

Clichés:

Proud of it NorthAmerican Psychiatrist (4);  
Life caring gunman (3);  
Lucky dandy (2);  
Babelfish\* (1)

Description: Young doctor, brown haired and green eyed, not so tall, not so small... Always elegantly dressed (too much elegantly for an American), and always with a smile in his face.

Story: Mr. Lewis wrote his last exam of Medicine in the Boston University a few years ago. He came to Europe looking for a deeper knowledge, by the hand of great psychiatrists, as Mr. Freud and Mr. Jung. But it's hard for a young doctor to be known amongst the people, and get enough clients. In fact he has a job as teacher of Biology in a College, by which he hardly earns the enough money to live with the dignity deserved to a doctor.

Hook: In spite of being a fairly acute shooter, he never uses his revolver for killing another person. He learned that a doctor must always protect human life. Even the mean and evil doer's life.

Adventure ideas:

- 7 . Armington may be the PCs consultant in health and psychiatric affairs (including hypnosis, an emerging and valued technique at that time).
- 8 . Or he can be the family doctor of one (or more) of the PCs.
- 9 . On the other hand, PCs can meet Mr. Lewis at his role of High School teacher: At any literary meeting with other intellectuals, or if the behavior of a student makes necessary a report to his father.

\* Notes: *Babelfish: This cliché is used when a PC needs to test his foreign language skills. If any language is supposed to be known no roll is necessary. But if character faces a new language, he may check this cliché.*

*If successful it represents that he is able to communicate with others, due to the resemblances of the new language with another one the character knows, or to the logical application of some basic linguistic rules. This cliché doesn't allow to speak so fluently, nor to read (and fully understand) any text more complex than a Pub sign or soap label... (but is really useful for traveling campaigns or arcane book seekings)*

### **3. (C) Larry Lombardi, Escape Artist Extraordinaire**

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Clichés:

Famous Escape Artist/Daredevil (5)

Dyed-In-The-Wool Skeptic (3)

Secret Spiritualist (2)

Story: Making his fortune and his fame escaping from submerged cabinets, walking tightropes across deep canyons, and escaping from the lightless catacombs beneath the tombs of the Pharaohs, Larry Lombardi secretly wishes to contact the spirit of his beloved dog Rover. Seeking proof of the afterlife, he exposes phony table-levitating mediums, knuckle-rapping con-men, and others who would use trickery to play upon the grief of others.

Hook: Fame is an awesome burden.

Adventure ideas:

1. While investigating a phony fortuneteller, Larry stumbles upon a much greater crime (kidnapped heiress, anarchist plot to blow up something, white slave ring, coven of witches bent on summoning the Thing With No Nose, etc.)
2. During a performance, something unusual happens (someone kidnapped, dead body in the trunk Larry was supposed to escape in, ghost appears on stage, dead body falls onto the stage, someone tries to shoot Larry, etc.)

### **4. (M), (P) Shamus Killduggon, Antiquity Dealer and Cultural Ambassador for the Limerick Republican Army.**

(Submitted by jcwmbs [isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk](mailto:isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk))

Clichés:

Loan shark (5)

Antique hunter (2)

Darts athlete (2)  
Irish dancer (1)

Story: Mostly just looking for that pot of gold over the rainbow.  
Killduggon trotted over to old Blighty to avoid potato blight and cultural persecution from his next-door neighbors in Limerick. Fleet of foot, with a supernatural nose for the trail of gold, and plenty of resourcefulness when it comes to the lending/recovery business, our Shamus can kick arse with grace to be sure.

Hook. Devoutly religious with many strange romano-celtic rituals to keep the guilt at bay.

Adventure ideas: Too many to mention.

**5. (M), (P)    *Hans Oberydle, Financial Security Consultant (Safe Breaker)***

(Submitted by jcwmbs [isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk](mailto:isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk))

Clichés:

Rock climber (4)  
Clockwork mechanic (3)  
Alpine soldier (2)  
Linguist (1)

Description/Story: Blond, lederhosen wearing tanned and rugged professional thief. A total fascination in overcoming any security system, rustic or high tech, before and up to the present day (1900's). Belly laughs in the face of avalanches, a master of verbal disguise, and able digest the gristliest of sausages.

Hook: Trouble deciding whose side he's on (very indecisive).

Adventure ideas: Can be seen on the side of good or evil. Can be swayed in any direction eventually. Will definitely be drawn to any scheme that involves breaking into places and grabbing the loot. Definitely open to money laundering and cross border smuggling schemes.

**6. (M), (P), (C) *Laurie "Grease" King, Airplane Mechanic***

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cleireac@netzero.net](mailto:cleireac@netzero.net) )

Clichés:

Crackerjack Mechanic (5)\*  
Trivia-Spouting Baseball Fan (3)  
Pilot (2)  
Ballroom Dancer (1)

Description: Age 24, slight build, medium-length dishwater-blonde hair (usually pulled back or hidden under a baseball cap), brown eyes.

Story: "Grease" (short for "Grease monkey") is the only female airplane mechanic in the San Francisco Bay area. Her gender however does not negate her ability to keep in the air nearly any airplane ever made. She is the daughter of one of the best mechanics around, and learned her way around an engine practically before she could read.

Laurie is in reality a very attractive young woman, but her usual dress (coveralls and a baseball cap) and the large amount of engine grease covering her face often discourage all but the most persistent suitors.

While she loves what she does, she harbors a secret fantasy to be Fred Astaire's dancing partner...

Hook: A Female in a Male world...

Adventure Ideas: The PC's may have need of her skills in order to keep their plane flying. She may also be a source of information for the PC's of any activity going on in the hangars/at the airport.

\* Notes: *The Crackerjack Mechanic cliché requires the use of at least a standard mechanic's tool kit. However, if she can scrounge up some bailing wire and chewing gum, she might be able to make do (GM's discretion).*

## **7. (M), (P), (C) *Butch Hiacinth, Circus Strongman and Exotic Florist***

(Submitted by jcwmbs [isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk](mailto:isjohnm@is.cityu.edu.hk))

Clichés:

Circus Strongman (4)

Engineer (2)

Tracker (2)

Ethnobotanist (2)

Butch is a budding and slightly davincian dark horse. Born in the depths of Borneo after his father's circus took a wrong turn, Butch has developed a "wild" range of skills. The archetypal strongman, large, muscular, shaven head, wide black mustache, leopard skin leotard, hairy shoulders, he has also developed a taste for the culinary delights of exotic plant gathering. Rare panaceas, cold cures, and recreational supplements are expertly collected and administered by this overbearing billiard ball crusher.

Hook:

Unfortunately, Butch has a squealing terror of the sight of creepy crawlies (insects, arachnids, and small rodents).

Adventure idea:

As a goody: Hey you! That plant belongs in a conservatory!

As a baddy; Poisoner, drug baron, over-sensitive thug.

## **8. (M), (P), (C) *Rick "Bubbles" Bauer, Salvage Diver***

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cleireac@netzero.net](mailto:cleireac@netzero.net) )

Clichés:

Diver (4)\*

Carousing Seaman (3)

Poker-Faced Card Sharp (2)\*\*

Ship's Cook (2)\*\*\*

Description: Slightly rotund, short man with fair skin, bright red hair and green eyes

Story: "Bubbles" is probably one of the most competent salvage divers on the coast. The company he works for is the one that is usually sought after for most complicated operations, partly because of Bauer's reputation. He is an ex-navy diver, with a few war stories he is quite willing to share.

He was married, but his wife contracted a debilitating illness, and Bubbles took up cooking in order to help around the house. When his wife died, he returned to what he knew best – diving – although he does help around the galley. If anyone were to criticize his cooking, he breaks down, remembering how much his late wife (Emma) loved his cooking....

Hook: Defensive about his cooking skills

Adventure Ideas: PC's may recruit Bubbles for a salvage operation, or they may get into a fight with him in a seedy dockside bar...

Notes:    \*Diver requires standard diving equipment  
      \*\* Poker-Faced Card Sharp requires playing cards  
      \*\*\* Ship's cook requires equipment dependant on type of meal desired:  
            Simple = Basic ingredients and common utensils  
            Medium = Fresh foodstuffs and standard kitchen  
            Complex = Fully stocked kitchen, restaurant quality

## **9. (M), (P), (C), (E) Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena, Italian Secret Agent**

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cleireac@netzero.net](mailto:cleireac@netzero.net) )

Clichés:

Italian Noble (4)  
Secret Agent (4)  
Diplomat (2)  
Femme Fatale (1)

Description: The Princess has long, dark brown hair with large hazel colored eyes. Her appearance makes her look much younger than her 32 years.

Story: Princess Elida is the premiere agent in the service of the Italian Government. Her youthful appearance as well as her notoriety as a member of the Italian aristocracy provide the perfect cover for an intelligence agent: she's too obvious to be dangerous. The Princess uses her wealth, age, and reputation as a bored, well-traveled socialite to her advantage. She sails aboard her private yacht, the *Espérance*, to places of interest and reports on them to her superiors in Rome.

She is, as befits her station, very well cultured, accustomed to the finer things and passionate about her country. She hopes one day to see Italy return to her position as a major world power, and will do what she can to accomplish this goal. Although a devoted monarchist, she is above all a pragmatist and will ally herself to the party that will increase Italy's influence and world standing.

When entertaining, the Princess favors wearing slippers adorned with priceless Medici buckles. She is very possessive of these buckles and would willingly sacrifice the shoes in order to save the buckles.

Hook: Extreme (but not fanatical) dedication to her cause

Adventure Ideas: Princess Elida could be a recurring character in any espionage or pulp adventure game possibly as a friendly competitor to the causes of the PC's.

Notes: *Based on a character from the book The Spy Paramount, by E. Phillips Oppenheim (1934)*

## **10. (F) Tambor the Lame, Proprietor, "The Broken Leg" Playhouse and Inn**

(Submitted by Hank Harwell [cleireac@netzero.net](mailto:cleireac@netzero.net) )

Clichés:

Actor (5)  
Entertainer (4)  
Innkeeper (3)

Description: Tambor is a slight man in his mid-fifties, with graying black hair and deep blue eyes. It has been said that he has "a presence" about him...

Story: Tambor was once a great actor, until an accidental fall off of the stage during a performance of "The Shepherd of Wakefield" (often referred to as "The Wooly Play" by superstitious thespians; it was perhaps his greatest role!) left him with a severely broken left leg. Unfortunately, it was not set properly, leaving Tambor with a painfully crippled leg. Forced to retire from the stage, Tambor traveled to the

frontier city of Stonegate to escape the sorrow of his past. But there, he became determined that he should bring civilization to the “uncultured” citizens of Stonegate and introduce them to the pleasures of the theater. As a result, he opened the Broken Leg Playhouse. Sadly, he overestimated the interest of the Stonegate residents in the theater. This reality forced Tambor to convert some of his boxes for the more well-to-do patrons into rooms. The resulting “inn” helps to pay the bills.

Often, Tambor will hire traveling players to perform productions on his stage. He also contracts entertainers for variety acts.

Hook: Crippled left leg

- Adventure Ideas:
1. An actor is found murdered after a performance. Was he a royal spy, a philanderer, or was he simply just a really \*bad\* actor?
  4. The PC's take rooms in the inn, but their money is stolen in the night by burglars. They will not be able to pay, and Tambor employs them on his stage (as either actors or stagehands) to pay off the debt.

**11. (M), (P), (HA) UNCLE BOOZY, *The Clown That Stalks The Night***

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Clichés:

Circus Clown (4)

Two-Fisted Crimebuster (4)

Struggling Writer of Clown Mysteries (3)

Description: Uncle Boozy is a grinning, staggering circus clown. Crime makes Uncle Boozy sad. When Uncle Boozy's friends have crime happen to them, Uncle Boozy takes to the night, a grinning, staggering clown of vengeance. Uncle Boozy would like to be a writer, but he can't seem to make a living at it. When Uncle Boozy's mystery-clown novels get rejected, Uncle Boozy gets drunk and takes to the night, a grinning, staggering clown who vandalizes the publisher's office.

Hook: Drinks because he can't sell any clown-mystery books to publishers.

**12. (M), (CP), (SH), (HA) Steve "Blackboard" Belkin, Skateboarding Pizza Deliveryman and Crimefighter**

(Submitted by JRice)

Extreme Pizza Delivery (4), Skateboarding Anti-commercialist (4),  
Shoegazer (2)\*

Steve is serious about Pizza delivery. During the day, he prides himself on the fact that he has only ever been late for a delivery ONCE (and memory of that once will flare his temper). By night, Steve becomes "Blackboard", a chain-swinging, ramp-riding dark-do-gooder with a sworn oath to fight white-collar crime! Steve writes decent (in his mind) music which he'd love to do full-time, but will never sign with those self-interested back-stabbing big-label scum that serve only to repress TRUE artists!

Adventure Ideas:

1. Blackboard delivers Pizza to an executive meeting, where he overhears a plot by corporate execs to tear down the local skate-park and put up a strip-mall.

2. A gang that Blackboard is familiar with signs with a small label to write indie rock. Blackboard refuses to listen to it. ...And, good thing... the corporate execs put subliminal messages into the recordings; Blackboard's friends all start shopping at the local mall, and Blackboard smells trouble!

3. Blackboard happens to deliver pizza to a birthday party where Boozy is performing. And--what a coincidence--just then, the party is crashed by a gang that steals the birthday girl. She turns out to be the daughter of a big publishing conglomerate executive... Moral quandary!

\* Notes: *Shoegazer* is a style of slow indie rock music, heavy on guitar and super-heavy on reverb. Imagine a long-haired punk singing about being depressed while staring at his shoes.

### **13. (M), (HA) Big Dave, Geologist**

(Submitted by Mike Munsil [mikemunsil@earthlink.net](mailto:mikemunsil@earthlink.net))

Loud, burly plaid-and-tan wearing Woodsman (3)(never gets lost in the woods, knows bears by name, can light a fire in the rain)

Droning Geologist (4)(can put people to sleep with the sound of his voice, lethal with a rock pick, digs fast, can climb up sheer cliffs but not down)

Bubba (3)(has a never-ending supply of beer, belches loudly, chases women but never catches them)

Description: Burly, loud and addicted to plaid shirts and tan pants with built-in beer pockets. Will speak for hours about the contributions rocks make to "Life as We Know It" and beer. Pokes around in the dirt while drinking beer. Did I mention the beer?

### **14. (M), (HA) Nicholas Weatherby**

(Submitted by Jens Reineking [j\\_reineking@gmx.de](mailto:j_reineking@gmx.de))

Genius Inventor [4]

Stuntman (2)

Eco Activist (2)

Hook: Overconfident. And then has to struggle to stretch himself to reach the set goal - or at least to iron his misjudgment out.

Tale: Heir of the family fortune, Nicholas never had to work for or worry about money. Instead he dived into study and research of all things strange and out-of-mainstream. After several forced rebuilds of his study, he took some training as a stuntman to avoid further breaking of bones, but some scars remain.

From his early teens on, he appeased his conscience by giving money to some obscure charities, finally landing in the Eco movement where he finally began to do something himself.

Sometimes he has flights of brilliance (double pumps), thus being able to turn nothing into something (like MacGyver).

He's a Brit.

Adventure Ideas: An obvious starter for a story would be some tour with his fellow eco activists or some grand invention that gets him into trouble.

Notes: *Can be played serious or silly. In serious mode, his inventions are in the lines of Tony Stark or Reed Richards. In silly mode, he's more like Gyro Gearless or Uncle Wisebottom and his nephew Nick (from www.gpf-comics.com). Nick for example once turned a remote control accidental into a laser while trying to fix it.*

### **15. (SF), (F) Jameih I'Kta**

(Submitted by Jens Reineking [j\\_reineking@gmx.de](mailto:j_reineking@gmx.de))

Clichés: Uplifted Gorilla (4); Gentleman Mobster (3); Amateur Actor (3); Voice Manipulist [1]

Hook: Extremely passionate about his appearance - as well in daily life as on stage. This can get extreme reactions from him if he perceives an insult. And,

as with most fresh uplifted species, this kind of stress enforces the animal side.

Tale: His tribe is the first experiment in magical uplifting. Because he didn't like the magical research facility, he struck a deal with the organized crime and they got him out. His physique and his voice made him soon a valued member of the 'family'. Trying to blend in, he invested heavily in clothing and social activities, especially acting.

He's arrived in Atamar with the mission to check out the possibility of bringing organized crime to Atamar. So far, he's enjoying himself immensely – Atamarians simply don't care that he's a four hundred pound gorilla.

*Notes: Uplifting (see David Brin) means giving a species a boost and making it intelligent. So he can speak, think, and go the forward leaning walk of a great ape.*

*Voice Manipulist would be something like the ability of the Bene Gesserit (Frank Herbert/Dune) - can manipulate, influence and command other beings.*

## **16. (F), (HA) Barnacle Bob**

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Cliches: Singing Pirate (4); Wildly Improvisational Tavern Brawler (3); Ex-Member of Thorny Cove Repertory Theatre (3); Impersonator of Long-Lost Royalty (2)

Hook: Occasionally recognized as fraud by family of long-lost aristocrats he impersonated; still has nightmares about his days as a cabin boy.

Tale: Barnacle Bob's early childhood prepared him for two things he would excel in later on in life: pretending to be someone else, and fleeing for his life. He was often mistaken for someone else, particularly various missing members of various ruling families. He was very happy to encourage the mistake, which did not endear him to his newfound "family" when they inevitably realized the mistake. So Bob learned early on that making a hasty retreat was often the better part of valor.

Bob's misadventures soon led him to a life in the theater, where he began to broaden his performing skills. He particularly loved musical theater, and soon found himself a member of the Thorny Cove Repertory Theater, where almost all the plays were about pirates (Thorny Cove being a community founded and populated by ex-pirates). There were pirate musicals, pirate tragedies, pirate comedies, pirate operas, and pirate ballets (co-produced by the Thorny Cove Pegleg Ballet Company).

Bob's past caught up with him again when a patron of the arts recognized him as the pretender to the throne of a Kovali arch-dukedom, which caused Bob to flee for his life in the first available ship. Unfortunately, the ship was a pirate ship, and Bob had two choices: walk the plank, or serve as cabin boy. To this day, Bob has nightmares about his stint as the cabin boy of the "Scuttlefish". However, he soon won the crew over with his wide knowledge of pirate songs, and his one-man version of such Thorny Cove faves as "Seven Whores for Seven Pirates", "Kiss Me, Mate", and "Damn Pirates!". Within a year, Barnacle Bob (as he was christened after an unfortunate keelhauling incident) had won his place in the "Scuttlefish" crew and was accepted as a full-fledged pirate (and leader of their Saturday-night choral ensemble).

*Notes: This was the character I played in S. John's Risus game at A-Kon, set in his world of Uresia, using his Risus rules. The only change I've made is adding a D6 because of the hook.*

**17. (F), (HA) *Ginsu the Keen, a Dreed gourmand who roams the world in search of the ultimate dining experience, defending himself with a bewildering variety of cutlery.***

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Cliches: Roving Buffet Demon (4), Avid but Haunted Connoisseur of the Culinary Arts (4), Well-Armed Cutlery-Wielding Blade-Flinging Martial Artist (4)

Hook: Once tasted the best food in the world in a dream, now tormented to roam the world in search of it.

Tale: Ginsu the Keen grew up in the fragrant bread-baking district in Jubilation, one of Dreed's city-states. He was an enthusiastic participant in many of the cooking contests of Dreed, a taste-tester in some of the finest kitchens in the land. Once, however, he succumbed to temptation, and accepted a bribe during a crucial bake-off, and his vote delivered the verdict into the hands of an unworthy chef. Guilt-ridden, the gourmand dreamed one night that he was visited by the Arbiters, who served him up a banquet fit for the gods. In the dream, he tasted the very best food in all of Uresia. He could not eat enough of it. Ginsu woke up with the memory of the food on his tatsebuds, and feathers from his half-devoured pillow in his mouth. Suddenly and permanently ravenous, he knew that he would never be sated by the taste of ordinary food. He must search all of Uresia if need be in search of the elusive dish that he tasted in dreams that night. Ginsu is always armed with cutlery which he pilfers, borrows, or buys from whatever land he is in, and he has learned to use it both defensively and offensively in the mean streets of whatever town he finds himself in.

**18. (F), (HA) *Ombre***

(Submitted by "Yragael" <email not available>)

Cliches: Streetwise freelance thief (4), Acrobatic darts-throwing-and-dagger wielding martial artist (3), Disturbing shadow wizard [2]

Side Kick: Shadow elemental (3)

Hook: Ombre is amnesiac and he cannot stand bright light as it hurts his eyes, and more specifically the sun, which can also harm his skin.

Tale: Ombre is a slim middle sized human, he is very pale and even though he gives the impression to be very ill he still proves to be very agile and athletic, and one of the best thieves in the city. Ombre chose his name shortly after he woke up in a dark alley, not remembering anything of his past and of the world, and bearing a dark scar of a mysterious shape on his chest. Being without food or shelter and not knowing anybody, he had to rely to theft to survive. Very soon he realised that he was very good at it, stealing, and he discovered that he had a most incredible asset in his endeavour: a shadow elemental appears from his scar whenever he summons it and serves him in his best interest. The Scar also gave Ombre the power to manipulate the shadows at a low level.

However Ombre developed an aversion to bright light, which hurts his eyes, and to the sun in particular, which as well as hurting his eyes can harm his skin easily. Whenever seen during the day Ombre always wears a thick cloak under which he protects himself from the sun.

His talent as a thief and his 'oddity' made him well known in the underground world. This allowed him to do a few well-paid jobs and to become very streetwise.

Though he is building a good reputation in his field, Ombre is tormented by his amnesia. He feels that his life is going nowhere. He has got questions that need an answer. Who is he? Where does he come from? And what is that scar on his chest?

## **19. (F), (HA) Balabar Gree**

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Cliches: Remarkably Unremarkable-appearing Rogue (4), Sometime Beggar (3), Tight-fisted Street Survivalist (3), Persistent Ladies' Man (1)

Questing Dice (Lookin' for love in all the wrong places): [][]][[]]

Hook: Notoriously tight-fisted with his loot until the "right girl" comes along (the "right girl" being someone completely unsuited to life on the streets).

Tale: Balabar Gree grew up hungry on the streets of Pork Hill. He followed gang after gang as a sort of mascot, never actually a member of any particular group, yet learning the tricks of the trade from a number of sources. Balabar learned to sham muteness, deafness, lameness, and a variety of other complaints by observing beggars after he saw how much they could make in an afternoon by preying on the mercy of others. He learned to hoard his wealth by example, after he watched seemingly callous and cunning thieves and beggars lose their hard-earned cash in bars, games of chance, and in confidence rackets. His features are generally unmemorable, which has helped him escape the law on more than one occasion ("He was sort of average; no, no distinguishing features; no, he was just wearing sort of ordinary clothes...")

Balabar has a soft spot (in his heart, maybe, or his head), for beauteous maids of other social classes. He has fallen hard for a princess, a sorceress, a rich merchant's daughter, a Magic Girl from Madame Ona's school, and others who are not suited to the grim life of a beggar and thief. Though he has squandered huge sums of money on all of them, Balabar's heart and wallet have been broken every time.

Nevertheless, he keeps trying, hoping that one day he'll meet the lady of his dreams. Whether he'll leave the streets to join her, or he'll convince her to share his life of roguery, remains to be seen.

## **20. (P) Carson Hill (Famed adventurer and world-traveling archaeologist who believes he's the reincarnation of an Egyptian prince)**

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Famous archaeologist and explorer (4)

Brooding reincarnation of pharaoh Horus-Re (4)

Variety of well-trained birds [2]

Hook: Past life keeps interfering with his present life.

Story: Carson Hill's interest in ancient Egypt began when he was a small boy, but it actually began thousands of years before that. Hill is the reincarnation of an Egyptian pharaoh, Horus-Re, who was murdered by the priest Ankhetaumun, his rival for the hand of Princess Selena. One of Carson Hill's earliest dreams was of being mummified while still alive. The vividness of his dreams led to his study of archaeology, Egyptology in particular.

Hill's life was surrounded by omens involving birds of prey, the sun, Egypt, and the Nile. He developed a keen interest in falconry, including an almost empathic bond with these birds of prey.

Fortune-tellers and mediums uniformly told him of his existence as a mighty but forgotten Egyptian ruler named Horus-Re. As a man of science, he scoffed at all this, knowing that there was no such ruler as Horus-Re. However, on a dig in Egypt, Hill discovered the forgotten tomb of Horus-Re. The many artifacts and inscriptions within the tomb awakened his knowledge of his true nature, as a reincarnation of the mysterious warrior-pharaoh. He recognized that many of the events of his life as Carson Hall reflected events in the life of Horus-Re.

Watched over by his faithful birds, Carson Hill broods on both the past and the future, waiting for destiny to fulfill itself. Watched over by his beloved falcons (symbols of the Egyptian god Horus, King of the Gods), he has accepted a job as museum curator to prepare for his beloved, and his murderer.

(Egyptian Pharaohs were regarded as incarnations of falcon-headed Horus, God of the Sun and King of the Gods. The “Forgotten Pharaoh”, Horus-Re, was noted in his time for his rapport with birds of all kinds, especially the falcons of Horus. He fell in love with the betrothed of Ankhetaun, his chief priest. The cuckolded priest gave each of the lovers a potion that induced a death-like trance and had them mummified while still alive, pronouncing a curse upon them, and himself.)

The falcons, while seemingly intelligent, aren't really supernatural in and of themselves. They respond very well to Hill, can figure out in general most of what he wants, and at least a few of them tend to follow him around wherever he goes, even in the city.

**21. (P), (C) Jack Cardigan (Formerly dead psychic detective obsessed with avenging unsolved murders)**

(Submitted by Guy Hoyle [ghoyle1@airmail.net](mailto:ghoyle1@airmail.net))

Murdered detective returned from the dead (4)

Medium obsessed with avenging murder victims [2]

Glib Ex-cop (3)

Questing Dice: Avenging the dead [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Hook: The mob keeps trying to kill him

When you're plummeting to the bottom of a river, your hands securely tied behind your back and your feet in a bucket of concrete, you can imagine some pretty strange things. Jack Cardigan, late of the city police's anti-racket squad, tried to imagine waking up in his own bed, next to his girlfriend Charlene. Of course, Charlene was probably the one who betrayed Cardigan to the mob, but at this moment Cardigan would have hugged an armload of mackerel. Unfortunately, Boss Zuccone's men were meticulous cement mixers – after all, they had had a lot of practice – and Cardigan's feet were firmly embedded in bricklayer's mortar when the bucket hit bottom.

But Cardigan's imagination must have been better than he thought. As his lungs began to give out, he heard the sound of--- singing? Music playing? No, a voice like the roaring thunder of blood in his ears. A voice that could have belonged to God Himself. It was calling his name.

“John Cardigan---“

“Call me Jack!” It must have been a dream; how could he talk with the foulness of the river rushing into his lungs?

God ignored his witticism. “John Cardigan, I offer you a choice. You may remain here for all eternity, your fate unknown, your resting place unhallowed, your soul unshriven...”

“I hear an ‘or’ coming up!” It must be a dream, Cardigan told himself, because there ain’t no bubbles when I talk!

“Or, you may walk once more amongst mortals, an avenger of those like yourself, whose lives were taken from them unjustly, their spirits unquiet, a plague upon the living.”

Cardigan figured he had nothing to lose, so he took God up on his offer.

Jack Cardigan doesn't work on the anti-racket squad anymore; he's a private gumshoe now, with a crummy office in a bad part of town. Like any other detective, he takes pictures of cheating husbands and tracks down missing property. But sometimes, he remembers what the river-bottom tastes like, and what it's like not to breathe, and he wonders if that was really God who gave him a choice.

Then he realizes that he hasn't breathed in hours, and his heart only beats when he wants it to, and that there's still a contract out on his life. He takes a deep, satisfying pull on his cigarette and glances up at his next client, the dancer with legs that won't quit. Her name is Deedee, and he didn't hear her come in; that's because her kind doesn't open the door. Deedee wants him to find out who put the slug in the back of her head and ruined her hair-do.

It's a living, as they say.

## Cliché Index

actor.....	Tambor the Lame
Amateur Actor.....	Jameih I'Kta
soldier, alpine.....	Hans Oberyodle
antique hunter.....	Shamus Killduggon
archeologist.....	Carson Hill
athlete.....	Roger Rickson
babelfish.....	Armington Lewis
dancer, ballroom.....	Laurie "Grease" King
birds.....	Carson Hill
bookworm .....	Roger Rickson
Brooding reincarnation of pharaoh Horus-Re .....	Carson Hill
bubba.....	Big Dave
seaman, carousing.....	Rick "Bubbles" Bauer
circus clown.....	Uncle Boozy
circus strongman.....	Butch Hiacinth
mechanic, clockwork.....	Hans Oberyodle
geologist, crackerjack.....	Laurie "Grease" King
athlete, darts.....	Shamus Killduggon
detective.....	Jack Cardigan
diplomat.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena
diver.....	Rick "Bubbles" Bauer
geologist, droning.....	Big Dave
dyed-in-the-wool skeptic.....	Larry Lombardi
eco activist.....	Nicholas Weatherby
engineer.....	Butch Hiacinth
entertainer.....	Tambor the Lame
ethnobotanist.....	Butch Hiacinth
ex-cop.....	Jack Cardigan
explorer.....	Carson Hill
famous escape artist/daredevil.....	Larry Lombardi
femme fatale.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena
inventor, genius.....	Nicholas Weatherby
Gentleman Mobster.....	Jameih I'Kta
gunman, life caring.....	Armington Lewis
innkeeper.....	Tambor the Lame
dancer, irish.....	Shamus Killduggon
noble, italian.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena
kleptomaniac.....	Roger Rickson
linguist.....	Hans Oberyodle
loan shark.....	Shamus Killduggon
lucky dandy .....	Armington Lewis
medium.....	Jack Cardigan
pilot.....	Laurie "Grease" King
poker-faced card sharp.....	Rick "Bubbles" Bauer
psychiatrist, proud of it northamerican..	Armington Lewis
rock climber.....	Hans Oberyodle
scotch whisky connoisseur.....	Roger Rickson
secret agent.....	Prinzessin (Princess) Elida di Rezco di Vasena
secret spiritualist.....	Larry Lombardi
cook, ship's.....	Rick "Bubbles" Bauer
skateboarding anti-commercialist.....	Steve "Blackboard" Belkin
shoegazer.....	Steve "Blackboard" Belkin

woodsman, loud, burly plaid-and-tan wearing.....Big Dave  
struggling writer of clown mysteries.....Uncle Boozy  
extreme pizza delivery.....Steve "Blackboard" Belkin  
stuntman.....Nicholas Weatherby  
tracker.....Butch Hiacinth  
trivia-spouting baseball fan.....Laurie "Grease" King  
two-fisted crimebuster.....Uncle Boozy  
Uplifted Gorilla.....Jameih I'Kta  
Voice Manipulist.....Jameih I'Kta

# RISUS

# WILD WEST!

A Western genre sourcebook for Risus; The Anything RPG  
By David E. North

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## WHAT IS RISUS?

Risus is a free, universal role playing game by S. John Ross. It is available online at <http://www.io.com/~sjohn/risus.htm> You will need a copy of the core rules to use this sourcebook.

## INTRODUCTION

The western genre has been a popular setting for stories, movies and role playing games for many years. Risus Wild West is an attempt to bring this genre to the Risus game system.

My definition of the Western genre is that period of American history ranging from 1860 to 1890, set in the states and territories west of the Mississippi river and including Mexico. This sourcebook could be used to cover the whole of the 18th century, but the period between the Civil War and the end of the Indian Wars is its primary focus.

## CHARACTER CREATION

Risus Wild West uses the standard character creation system outlined in the core rules. Players have 10d6 to allocate to cliches, with the usual limit of 4d6 per cliche. Hooks, Tales and Pumped Cliches are allowed. Double Pumped Cliches and Funky Dice are not used.

The following is a list of standard cliches available in Wild West. It is, of course, not a complete list. Players should feel free to come up with their own to add to the list, subject to GM approval.

**Army Officer** (Leading soldiers, following orders, shooting, knowing tactics, charming ladies)

**Army Soldier** (Shooting, brawling, carousing, being crude)

**Blacksmith** (Making things from iron, repairing things, shoeing horses)

**Buffalo Hunter** (Hunting, tracking, shooting, skinning animals)

**Cavalry Officer** (Leading troopers, following orders, riding, shooting, knowing tactics, charming ladies)

**Cavalry Trooper** (Riding, shooting, brawling, carousing, being crude)

**Con-Man** (Pitching phoney goods {snake oil}, persuading, charming, evading the law)

**Cook** (cooking, operating a chuck wagon)

**Cowhand** (Riding, roping, shooting, carousing)

**Dance Hall Girl** (Dancing, singing, providing wholesome entertainment for hard working men)

**Dentist** (fixing teeth)

**Doctor** (Diagnosing ills, prescribing medicine, healing, performing surgery)

**Gambler** (Gambling, reading body language, sleight-of-hand, shooting)

**Gunslinger** (Shooting, shooting and, oh yeah, more shooting)

**Indian Chief** (Leading braves, negotiating treaties, riding, shooting, fighting hand-to-hand)

**Indian Brave** (Riding, shooting, fighting hand-to-hand, tracking, being stealthy)

**Indian Medicine Man** (Healing, interpreting dreams, having visions, influencing other Indians)

**Lawman** (Riding, shooting, upholding the law)

**Merchant** (buying, selling)

**Outlaw** (Riding, shooting, hiding out, being stealthy)

**Prospector** (Prospecting, surviving in the wild, carousing)

**Railroad Engineer** (Operating and maintaining trains)

**Sailor** (Operating riverborne or seagoing vessels, carousing)

**Scout** (Tracking, riding, surviving in the wild, being stealthy)

**Teamster** (Operating freight wagons or stagecoaches)

**Trapper** (Hunting, tracking, surviving in the wild)

## GUNFIGHTS AND SHOOT-OUTS

This being the Wild West, lead will no doubt be flying frequently. Normally, gunfights and shoot-outs should be treated as single-action conflicts, as described in the "conflicts that aren't combat" section of the core rules, with the addition of the weapon chart below. This chart lists the weapons effective range, cliche, ammo supply and it's cost.

In game terms, a shoot-out is treated as a standard opposed action. The character and his weapon are treated as a team, with the character as the team leader, of course.

**EFF** is effective range of the weapon, in yards. If the character tries to shoot at something beyond this range, his cliche dice are HALVED.

**AMMO** is the ammo supply and reload speed of the weapon. The first number is the number of shots the weapon can fire before reloading. The second number is the number of combat rounds it takes to reload the weapon.

**COST** is how many greenbacks your character will have to shell out to get the weapon.

## WILD WEST WEAPON CHART

<b>WEAPON</b>	<b>EFF</b>	<b>AMMO</b>	<b>COST</b>	
<b>LONG ARMS</b>				
100	1/3	Smoothbore Musket(2)	\$5.00	
350	1/4	Rifled Musket(2)	\$10.00	
350	1/1	Breech Loading Rifle(4)	\$12.00	
1/1		Breech Loading Carbine(4)		200
1/1		\$11.00		
1/1		Breech Loading "Buffalo Gun"(5)		300
1/1		\$17.00		
15/3		Henry Repeating Rifle(3)		150
15/3		\$17.00		
150	7/3	Spencer Carbine(4)	\$18.00	
150	17/3	Winchester '73(4)	\$20.00	
250	13/3	Winchester '76(4)	\$22.00	
<b>SHOTGUNS</b>				
1 or 2/4		Muzzle Loading Shotgun(5)	\$7.00	10
1 or 2/2		Break-Open Shotgun(5)	\$15.00	10
<b>HANDGUNS</b>				
75	6/5	Colt Dragoon (3)	\$6.00	
20	7/3	S&W Model 1(1)	\$6.00	
65	6/5	Colt Army .44(2)	\$14.00	
60	6/3	S&W Model 2(2)	\$10.00	
6/3		Colt "Peacemaker" .45(3)	\$10.00	75
80	6/3	Remington .44(3)	\$15.00	

	S&W Schofield .45(3)	
75	6/3	\$13.00
	Colt Lightning(3)	
60	6/3	\$13.00

### POCKET PISTOLS

	Deringer .44(2)	
5	1/5	\$2.00
	Colt One-Shot(1)	
7	1/2	\$3.00
	Remington Two-Shot(1)	
7	2/2	\$5.00
	Knuckleduster(1)	
7	5/3	\$7.00
	Colt Cloverleaf(1)	
7	4/3	\$9.00

### MACHINE GUNS

	Gatling Gun(6)	
350	100/2	\$120.00
	Hotchkiss Gun(10)	
350	100/2	\$250.00

### OTHER RANGED WEAPONS

	Tomahawk, Thrown(2)	
5	1/0	\$1.00
	6" Throwing Knife(2)	
4	1/0	\$2.00
	Short Bow(1)	
50	1/1	\$1.00
	Medium Bow(2)	
75	1/1	\$1.00
	Spear/Lance, Thrown(2)	
7	1/0	\$2.00

It is important to remember that characters who have their cliche reduced to zero have lost the fight, but are not necessarily dead. As stated in the core rules, the character is usually considered to be at the mercy of the victor.

### ANIMALS

The following is a small bestiary of common animals found in the old west. The Cliche ratings are suggestions. Feel free to alter them as needed.

## Domesticated Animals

**Cattle(2);** commonly used as draft animals and for meat. Quite strong, but not very smart. Prices vary widely from one locale to the other, anywhere from \$5.00 a head to \$30.00 a head.

**Dog(2);** They come in all shapes and sizes, and are used for hunting, herding and as pets. They are very intelligent and trainable. Prices vary widely, from nearly free to \$100.00 or more.

**Donkey(2);** Strong for their small size, donkeys are popular pack animals. Known for their agility, they are frequently used by prospectors in mountainous terrain. \$30.00

**Horse, Cavalry(4);** Fast and strong, the cavalry horse is trained not to spook in battle. \$100.00

**Horse, Draft(3);** Slow but powerful, true draft horses are uncommon out west. Some wagon drivers have them. They're not very good for riding, but make excellent workhorses. \$60.00

**Horse, Saddle(3);** The most common type of horse out west, the saddle horse is quick and relatively strong. \$60.00

**Mule(3);** excellent pack animals, mules are far easier to maintain than draft horses. They are notorious for refusing to overwork themselves. \$90.00

**Pony(3);** Also known as mustangs, ponys are descendants of wild horses. commonly used by indians, they are popular with cowboys as well, for their ability to live off the land. Although not exceptionally strong, they are very quick and agile. \$50.00

**Sheep(1);** Shy and stupid, sheep are used for meat and for wool. \$5.00

## Wild Animals

(The monetary value listed for wild animals is it's pelt and/or meat value)

**Armadillo(1);** Native to southern Texas. Not good for much of anything. .30¢

**Bear, Black(4);** Common in the mountain states, the black bear is usually not dangerous if left alone. \$5.00

**Bear, Grizzly(6);** Mean, deadly and best avoided. \$10.00

**Beaver(2);** Valued for their pelts. \$2.00

**Buffalo(3);** Buffalo are the lifeblood of the plains indians. They are hunted nearly to extinction by the whites, for their hides. Buffalo travel in huge herds, and are easily spooked, causing stampedes. \$5.00

**Coyote(2);** Smaller but more intelligent than wolves, coyotes are viewed as a nuisance by farmers. They are difficult to trap. .75¢

**Eagle(2);** Large birds of prey, eagles are considered sacred by Indians. Captured live, they are worth \$12.00.

**Gila Monster(2);** Native to the arid southwest, the gila monster is a 2-foot long lizard with a poisonous bite.

**Jackrabbit(1);** Large, wild rabbits that are a nuisance to farmers. Known to carry disease. .05¢

**Porcupine(2);** Generally harmless, the porcupine is covered with sharp quills that can cause nasty wounds to the unwary.

**Puma(3);** Also known as cougars or mountain lions, pumas are large hunting cats. They are fast and agile, and can be quite dangerous if cornered. \$2.00

**Raccoon(2);** Native to forest lands, raccoons are intelligent scavengers. .50¢

**Rattlesnake(2);** A deadly poisonous snake, the rattlesnake rapidly shakes its tail when threatened, making a rattling sound as a warning to stay away. \$1.00

**Scorpion(1);** Despite their reputation, most scorpions are relatively harmless. Some species do have a deadly sting, however.

**Skunk(1);** When threatened, skunks spray a noxious, foul smelling liquid. \$1.00

**Vulture(1);** Carrion eating scavengers. They are often seen circling above wounded animals (and men), waiting for death so they can feed.

**Wolverine(3);** Mean little creatures, wolverines are known to drive off bears and pumas. They are a nuisance to trappers. \$1.00

**Wolf(2);** A pack hunting animal, wolves are a nuisance to both sheep and cattle farmers. \$1.00

## STAMPEDES

Whether it be buffalo hunters or Indians hunting buffalo, or cowboys driving herds of cattle, the stampede is a very real danger in the old west. In game terms, a stampede is treated like an NPC grunt squad. It's up to the GM to determine the cliche strength of a stampede, but anywhere from 6 to 10 would not be unreasonable for a large herd.

## ECONOMICS

Below is a listing of average pay scales for various jobs common in the old west. The values are a rough average, and can vary from place to place at the GM's discretion. Pay is per month.

If you decide to use economics in your campaign, I would suggest letting each character roll his highest cliche, and multiply that by \$10.00 to determine his/her starting cash. This should be enough to modestly outfit a new character.

Army/Cavalry Officer	\$25.00
Army/Cavalry Trooper	\$13.00
Bartender	\$25.00
Blacksmith	\$30.00

<b>Cowhand</b>	<b>\$25.00</b>
<b>Deputy Marshall</b>	<b>\$35.00</b>
<b>Deputy Sheriff</b>	<b>\$25.00</b>
<b>Federal Marshall</b>	<b>\$45.00</b>
<b>Railroad Engineer</b>	<b>\$35.00</b>
<b>Scout</b>	<b>\$25.00</b>
<b>Territorial Marshall</b>	<b>\$40.00</b>
<b>Texas Ranger</b>	<b>\$25.00</b>
<b>Town Sheriff</b>	<b>\$35.00</b>

## SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

Prices listed are averages, and can vary from place to place at the GM's discretion.

### AMMUNITION

100 rounds, .38 caliber or smaller	
\$2.00	
100 rounds, .41-.45 caliber	
\$3.25	
100 rounds, .50 caliber or larger	
\$4.75	
5 pounds, loose lead balls	
\$0.35	
5 pounds, black powder	
\$0.50	

### WEAPONS

(Hand-to-hand. Ranged weapons are listed above)

4" Pocket knife	
\$0.50	
8" Kitchen knife(1)	
\$0.50	
12" Hunting knife(1)	
\$1.00	
16" Bowie Knife(2)	
\$5.00	
24" Machete(3)	
\$2.50	
6" Meat cleaver(2)	
\$1.50	
Cavalry sabre(3)	
\$7.00	
Axe(3)	
\$2.00	
Hatchet(2)	
\$1.50	

(Note: The white man's hatchet was not as well balanced for throwing as the Indian tomahawk, but COULD be thrown. Treat as Hatchet(1), range 5 if used this way.)

9 lb. Sledgehammer(3)	
\$2.00	
Indian war club(2)	
\$0.50	
Carpenters hammer(1)	
\$0.50	

Whip(1)  
\$15.00

### **MISCELLANEOUS GEAR**

Bed roll	
\$4.00	
Boots & spurs	
\$15.00	
Canteen	
\$1.00	
Chaps	
\$4.00	
Gloves	
\$1.00	
Gun belt	
\$2.00	
Hat	
\$3.00	
Holster	
\$3.00	
Horse blanket	
\$3.00	
Jacket, leather	
\$5.00	
Jacket, sheepskin lined (for cold weather)	
\$10.00	
Lamp oil	
\$0.25 per 5 gallons	
Lantern	
\$2.00	
Lasso	
\$8.00	
Mess kit	
\$2.00	
Pipe, corncob	
\$0.05	
Pipe, briarwood	
\$1.00	
Playing cards	
\$0.25	
Poncho	
\$2.00	
Saddle bags	
\$6.00	
Saddle (ornate, with bridle and blanket)	
\$40.00	
Saddle (standard, with bridle and blanket)	
\$35.00	
Sheath, knife	
\$0.50	
Sheath, rifle	
\$3.00	
Sulphur matches	
\$0.25 per box of 50	

## **LIVING EXPENSES**

Bath	
\$1.00	
Beer	
\$0.05 per mug	
Cigar, cheroot	
\$0.05	
Cigar, fancy	
2 for \$0.25	
Provisions (rations)	
\$4.00 per week	
Room, boarding house (meals included)	
day	\$1.00 per
Room, bordello	
\$5.00 per night	
Room, hotel (no meals)	
\$1.00 per day	
Restaurant meal	
\$0.50	
Shave & haircut	
\$0.25	
Tobacco, plug (chewing)	
\$0.10	
Tobacco, pouch (smoking)	
\$0.20	
Whiskey, Kentucky mash	
\$4.00 per bottle	
Whiskey, "red eye"	
\$1.00 per bottle	

## **TOOLS OF THE TRADE**

Anesthetic, chloroform	
\$4.00 per bottle	
Anesthetic, ether	
\$6.00 per bottle	
Blacksmith's anvil	
\$25.00	
Blacksmith's forge	
\$60.00	
Blacksmith's hammer	
\$3.00	
Blacksmith's tools (tongs, punches, etc.)	
\$30.00	
Bear grease (metal preservative)	
pound	\$0.05 per
Carbolic acid	
\$3.00 per gallon	
Carpenter's tools	
\$40.00	
Dentist's instruments	
\$50.00	
Doctor's kit (physician or veterinarian)	
\$50.00	

Iodine solution	
\$0.50 per quart	
Medicinal alcohol	
\$2.00 per gallon	
Miner's tools (picks, drills, shovels, etc.)	
\$15.00	

### **EXPLOSIVES**

Blasting powder	
\$0.50 per pound	
Gun cotton	
\$1.00 per pound	
Nitro-glycerine	
\$2.00 per 10 ounces	
Dynamite	
\$3.00 per stick	
Blasting caps	
\$0.50 per cap	
Fuse cord	
\$0.10 per foot	

### **TRANSPORTATION**

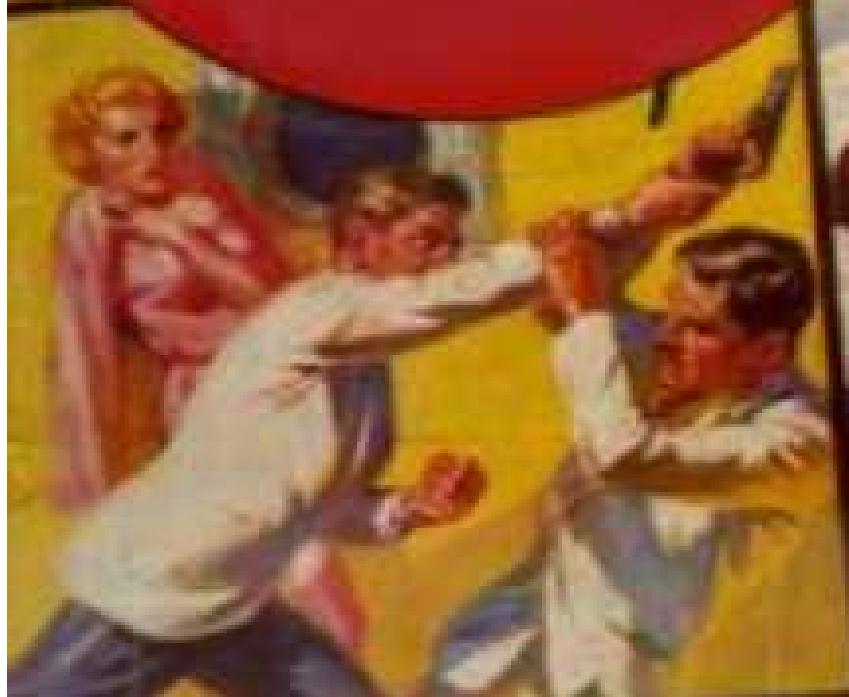
(For live animals, see the Animals section below)

Stagecoach fare, local	
\$0.15 per mile	
Stagecoach fare, express	\$3.00
per 50 miles	
Train fare, 1st class	\$10.00
per 100 miles	
Train fare, 2nd class	
\$7.50 per 100 miles	
Connestoga wagon (requires 4-horse team)	
\$150.00	
Light freight wagon (requires 2-horse team)	
\$100.00	
Heavy freight wagon (requires 6-horse or mule team)	\$300.00
Stagecoach (requires 4 to 6-horse team)	
\$600.00	
Two-seat buggy (requires 1 horse to pull)	
\$80.00	

# *Adventure Street Omnibus*

*A Pulp Magazine Setting*  
*by Hank Harwell*

*for*  
*Risus: The Anything RPG*  
*by S. John Ross*



# *Adventure Street Omnibus*

## **Introduction**

Pulp is the literary equivalent of “junk food.” It is not high art, but it is a lot of fun nonetheless.

### **❖ What Are Pulp Adventures?**

Pulp adventures take their name from the publishing method of choice for the popular press from, say the turn of the century to the 1950's. Cheap paper made of pressed wood pulp was used to print magazines affordable to the working class. These magazines covered a wide range of genres: science fiction and fantasy, horror, detective mystery, globe-trotting adventure, sports, wild west, and even romance.

No matter what genre was featured, there were some near-universal conventions: clear-cut heroes and villains, an insidious plot, a mystery, “deathtraps” and the triumph of the Right over the Wrong.

Pulp magazines were published regularly from the 1920's through the 1950's, peaking during the 30's and 40's. Eventually, paper quality improved, but because the stories were all written along a certain style, the name “pulp” became associated with the adventures themselves rather than the medium.

Pulp authors wrote stories featuring simple, almost visceral themes such as good vs. evil, order vs. anarchy and the like. As gritty as the stories could become, they almost always offered an escape from the grim realities of the day. Although they were simple stories in terms of theme, often they featured rather complicated characters. The “heroes” of hard-boiled detective pulps were hard-drinking, chain-smoking, skirt-chasing, acid-tongued insomniacs. The protagonists of gangster pulps were, well, *gangsters*. But no matter how rough such anti-heroes were, there was always something redeemable about them, which again fits in with the underlying black-and-white themes.

### **Pulp Heroes**

Pulp heroes in general are “All-American-Boy (or Girl)-Next-Door types. They are not motivated by a desire for personal glory, but by an almost overdeveloped sense of right and wrong, justice, and fair play.

As an example, take a look at the personal code of Doc Savage, one of the greatest pulp heroes:

*Let me strive every moment of my life, to make myself better and better, to the best of my ability, that all may profit by it.*

*Let me think of the right and lend all my assistance to those who need it, with no regard for anything but justice.*

*Let me take what comes with a smile, without loss of courage.*

*Let me be considerate of my country, of my fellow citizens and my associates in everything I say and do.*

*Let me do right to all, and wrong no man.*

Pulp heroes stand as paragons of clean living, education, and morality. Although they appear on the surface to be the “hometown boy or girl done good,” there is a presence about them, a charisma that causes them to stand out from the crowd.

They are not superheroes. That is, they are not “endowed with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal man.” Rather, they are highly trained, educated and motivated. They succeed not because they have super-powers, but because they are determined, clever, and possess a strong moral character.

To roleplay these heroes, the player must “buy in” to the concept that the PC is deeply committed to preserving the ideals of Western (specifically American) civilization. These ideals of justice, fair play, humility, “stick-to-it-iveness,” ingenuity, humor, and, when necessary, self-sacrifice.

Players should not expect to be showered with wealth at the end of a successful adventure or campaign. Rather, their reward is the satisfaction that they have helped humanity.

#### ❖ What is Risus?

Risus is a FREE rules-lite role-playing game (rpg) that focuses on clichés to describe characters, rather than stats, skills, and attributes. Its features are extreme fast play, flexibility, and humor. In fact, it is billed as a “comedy rpg”, but the author, S. John. Ross allows that it can be used to play serious games “if you insist.” For more information, and to download your own FREE copy, go to the Risus site at <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>.

#### • Master Pulp Cliché List

*While exhausting, this list is by no means exhaustive. If you think up a cliché you would like to play, write out a clear, clever description (“what it’s good for”) and ask your GM to consider it. If it’s well-done and does not unfairly tip the balance of the game, he just might go for it!*

This list was cobbled together from a number of sources, including members of the Risus Talk List <http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/risustalk/> (especially Guy Hoyle <http://www.guyhoyle.net/risus/>) and members of the Pulp Games List [http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/Pulp\\_Games/](http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/Pulp_Games/), (especially Joe Coleman’s list of Pulp-Style Archetypes <http://fearlessrpg.tripod.com/PulpArch.pdf>). Any similarity between this list and the others is purely intentional (after all, why should I reinvent the wheel, right?)

## Academics

Cliché	What It's Good For
<i>Absent-minded professor</i>	Forget head if it wasn't attached, invent miraculous but troublesome device or substance, leave isolation chamber doors ajar, accidentally shrink the kids
<i>Anthropologist</i>	Know aboriginal folktales, know tribal customs, eat disgusting things, speak obscure languages
<i>Antiquarian</i>	Quote from obscure authors, know obscure facts, cite reference
<i>Archeologist</i>	Discover/explore ancient ruins/burial chambers/temples, read hieroglyphics
<i>College student</i>	Party, chase girls, cram for test, go to class, write home for money
<i>Ghost Chaser</i>	Know all about ghosts, set up cameras to catch ghosts on film, disprove fake ghosts, get rid of real ghosts

<i>Librarian</i>	Sort books, find newspaper articles, “shh!”, find obscure information, repair books
<i>Linguist</i>	Know obscure languages, translate ancient inscriptions, pronounce the unpronounceable
<i>Occult Scholar</i>	Know weird phenomena, remember strange names, find ancient incantation
<i>Professor's Aide</i>	Pull books for Professor, do research for Professor, teach classes for Professor, give credit to Professor
<i>Psychic Investigator</i>	Study psychic phenomena, test subjects for ESP and Telekinesis
<b>Adventure</b>	
<i>Cliché</i>	<i>What It's Good For</i>
<i>Aviator/Aviatrix</i>	Fly plane, tinker with engine, storm barns, make an emergency landing
<i>Big Game Hunter</i>	Shoot wild animals, interpret native drums, speak native languages, survive in the wild
<i>Explorer</i>	Drive dogsled teams, climb mountains, push back the frontiers of the known world, map uncharted areas, get antsy when you're home too long, go somewhere nobody else has ever heard of, meet people you can't talk to, stumble on lost civilizations, collect exotic memorabilia, tell stories about how you got that scar, learn scandalous phrases in foreign languages
<i>Human Fly</i>	Climb skyscraper without gear, walk across tightrope, tip off photographers
<i>Jungle King/Queen</i>	Raised by animals, keen sight and smell, great strength and agility, communicate with animals, survive in the wild, swing from vine, wrestle alligator
<i>Mountain Climber</i>	Rappel down sheer cliff faces, wear spikes on your shoes, have lots of rope
<i>Noble Savage</i>	Be confused by technology, spout ancestral wisdom, not be corrupted by modern values
<i>Treasure Hunter</i>	Follow treasure maps, explore sunken wrecks,
<b>Athletics</b>	
<i>Cliché</i>	<i>What It's Good For</i>
<i>All-American Athlete</i>	Run, swim, jump, throw, wrestle, be a good sport
<i>Baseball Hero</i>	Pitch, field, throw, bat, slide, chew
<i>Boxer</i>	Punch, jab, jump rope, work on footwork
<i>Football Hero</i>	Tackle, kick, throw, catch, block
<i>Golf Pro</i>	Drive, chip, putt, wear gaudy pants
<i>Swimmer</i>	Dive, hold breath, cross English Channel
<i>Tennis Pro</i>	Serve, volley, wear white
<i>Track and Field</i>	Run, jump, put shot, throw javelin/discus
<i>Wrestler</i>	Grapple, pin, throw opponent
<b>Business</b>	
<i>Cliché</i>	<i>What It's Good For</i>
<i>Accountant</i>	Cook the books, add columns, calculate interest rates

<b>Antique Dealer</b>	Know value of antiques, discuss characteristics of old craftsmanship, haggle with sellers, outbid competitors at auctions
<b>Bookshop owner</b>	Obtain obscure titles, dust shelves, know where any book in the shop is, know what's in all the books
<b>Financier/Banker</b>	Wear suits, calculate interest/mortgage rates, invest in companies, make loans
<b>Industrialist</b>	Build factories, mass produce goods, buy smaller companies
<b>Salesman</b>	Convince people to buy, travel, smile reassuringly, apply pressure
<b>Stockbroker</b>	Wear suits, read ticker-tape information
<b>Crime</b>	
<b>Cliché</b>	<b>What It's Good For</b>
<b>Bankrobber</b>	Wear masks, "Stick 'em up!",
<b>Bootlegger</b>	Make 'shine, drive fast on rural, mountain roads
<b>Burglar</b>	Break into houses, find hidden safes, walk quietly
<b>Con Artist</b>	Convincing other people to give you money, evading cops.
<b>Counterfeiter</b>	Make phony money that looks real
<b>Criminal Mastermind</b>	Conquer the world, devise fiendish tortures, utilize exotic devices, create elaborate plots, explain plan to enemy before you kill him, hire henchman without explaining what happened to the dozens of other henchmen you hired, secret escape route, destroy secret base
<b>Femme Fatale</b>	Trade money for love, seduce the rich and elderly, disguise true nature, fall in love for real with hero.
<b>Fugitive From Justice</b>	Disguise oneself, hide in shadows, protest innocence,
<b>Gangster</b>	Dark suit with black shirt & white tie, execute squealers, carry out the orders of Mr. Big
<b>Gun Moll</b>	Heavy makeup, sexy in a cheap and tawdry way, cynical
<b>Henchman</b>	Follow orders without wondering what happened to other henchmen
<b>Hit Man</b>	Not talking much, wearing a cheap suit, looking intimidating, stalking targets, telling people to go out in the alley but still not talking much.
<b>Oriental Mystic</b>	Hypnotize do-gooders, be inscrutable, create illusion, quote Confucius and Lao Tsu
<b>Reformed Gangster</b>	Old contacts, streetwise, keep nose clean, frequently suspected by police, not trusted by other crooks
<b>Thug</b>	Pistol-whip victims, brutalize victims, take it on the lam, never squeal, plan heist, steal things, have no personality
<b>Engineering</b>	
<b>Cliché</b>	<b>What It's Good For</b>
<b>Crackpot Inventor/Mad Scientist</b>	Come up with amazing device/plan to revolutionize the world, have weird/crazy/menacing laugh

<b>Inventor/Gadgeteer</b>	Fix almost anything but it looks weird, invent half-baked contraptions, put together intricate gadgets out of common objects, stammer and sweat around women
<b>Espionage</b>	
<b>Cliché</b>	<b>What It's Good For</b>
<b>Gentleman Spy</b>	Master of disguise, ladies' man, marksman, sophisticate
<b>Spy</b>	Cross enemy lines, infiltrate enemy territory, collect vital information, attend swanky parties, sit in smoky taverns, collect latest rumors and gossip, use cover identities, plan escape route, sneak around, decode secret messages, eavesdrop, stay out of the way, disguise, know foreign languages, get back with information
<b>Fine Arts</b>	
<b>Cliché</b>	<b>What It's Good For</b>
<b>Painter</b>	Wear beret & smocks, stretch canvases, mix paints, live in a loft
<b>Sculptor</b>	Work with clay, use chisels, make busts/statutes
<b>Government</b>	
<b>Cliché</b>	<b>What It's Good For</b>
<b>Ambassador</b>	Negotiate treaties, enjoy immunity from petty crimes, throw formal balls,
<b>Bored Civil Servant</b>	Insist on filling out paperwork <i>in triplicate</i> , refuse to rush
<b>Diplomat</b>	Carry important messages, be an emissary, pal around with foreign courtiers, indulge in intrigue, keep your eyes and ears open, know what to kiss and when, know about what's in vogue
<b>Politician</b>	Kiss babies, shake hands, make promises, negotiate compromises,
<b>Journalism</b>	
<b>Cliché</b>	<b>What It's Good For</b>
<b>Ace Reporter</b>	Sniff out a scoop, drink like fish, smoke like chimney, bang out a story, protect sources, transcribe conversation
<b>Crusading Journalist</b>	Have a cause, write about cause, make up facts in support of cause, get other people to join cause
<b>Foreign Correspondent</b>	Live in exotic locales, know best restaurants and bars, send reports to home office, have contacts in local government
<b>News Photographer</b>	Have a big camera, flash bulbs in people's faces, make dark jokes at murder scenes
<b>Tabloid Hack</b>	Be nosy, be pushy, crank out sensationalized stories to sell more copy, be insensitive

## Law Enforcement

Cliché	What It's Good For
<i>Agency Detective</i>	Tail suspects, gather information/evidence, intimidate, pick locks
<i>Amateur Detective</i>	Trouble magnet, find clues professionals overlook
<i>Beat Cop</i>	Walk beat, direct traffic, find donuts, drink stale coffee, chase fugitive
<i>Costumed Vigilante</i>	Wear strange costume, foil dastardly crime, track criminal to lair, duke it out, escape from certain death, protect secret identity, drive flashy vehicle, send clueless assistants on senseless tasks, rescue clueless assistants
<i>G-Man</i>	Agent of FBI/Treasury Dept/Federal Bureau of Narcotics, smoke like a chimney, snappy black suit, trenchcoat,
<i>Hard-Boiled Private Detective</i>	Broke all the time, never give up on a case, drink gallons of bad coffee, incorruptible, doggedly pursue clues
<i>Police Detective</i>	Interrogate suspect, deduce, flash badge, drink gallons of stale coffee
<i>Policeman</i>	Arrest criminals, interrogate criminals, drink gallons of bad coffee, smoke like a chimney, find donut shop
<i>Private Investigator</i>	Weakness for attractive women, dark sense of humor, cynical worldview
<i>Scientific Detective</i>	Observant of smallest detail, condescending
<i>Vigilante</i>	Seek to bring justice and law and order by whatever means necessary
<i>Western Lawman</i>	Wear cowboy hat, ride horses in city, promote the Code of the West

## Legal

Cliché	What It's Good For
<i>Judge</i>	Wear robes, pound gavel, know the law, sentence crooks, be distinguished member of community
<i>Lawyer</i>	Make deal, interrogate, know the law, twist the law, find loophole, "Objection!"

## Medicine

Cliché	What It's Good For
<i>Dedicated Physician</i>	Work long hours in hospital, work miracles at the 11 <sup>th</sup> hour, treasure Hippocratic oath
<i>Dentist</i>	Brushing, cleaning, drilling, causing pain
<i>Family Doctor</i>	Diagnose illness, make house call, treat disease, stitch up wound, prescribe remedy
<i>Forensic Specialist</i>	Know poisons, know telltale signs of causes of death, concoct medicines out of exotic plants, champion cause of native peoples
<i>Jungle Doctor</i>	Concoct medicines out of exotic plants, champion cause of native peoples
<i>Nurse</i>	Assist doctors, care for patients, wear white uniforms, take temperature, dispense medications, push people around in wheelchairs

<b>Military</b>	<b>Orderly</b>	Push people around in wheelchairs, look tough for agitated patients
	<b>Plastic Surgeon</b>	Look at people for ways to “improve” them, have a project girlfriend/wife, maybe have underworld contacts
	<b>Psychiatrist</b>	Ask pointless or infuriating questions, analyze neurosis, prescribe mind-altering drugs, make everything relate to sex
	<b>Psychologist</b>	Same as Psychiatrist, but can't prescribe drugs
	<b>Surgeon</b>	Cutting, stitching, sweating in operating room
<b>Nautical</b>	<b>Cliché</b>	<b>What It's Good For</b>
	<b>Flying Ace</b>	Fly planes, dogfight, diving out of the sun to surprise opponents
	<b>Foreign Legionnaire</b>	Have past to forget, march out into desert, fight Arabs,
	<b>Marine</b>	Red-blooded patriot, drive tanks, one-man army
	<b>Military Veteran</b>	Use rifles and bayonets, reminisce about the Great War, nightmares
	<b>Sailor</b>	Swab decks, tie knots, “Aye, aye, Captain!”
	<b>Soldier</b>	Clean rifle, fire rifle, know about tactics and strategy, sleep whenever you can, stay awake during guard duty
	<b>Soldier of Fortune/M Mercenary</b>	Overconfident, have contacts with gunrunners, use military training to make a living
	<b>Stalwart Lieutenant</b>	Loyal, carries out orders from commander
<b>Other</b>	<b>Cliché</b>	<b>What It's Good For</b>
	<b>Deep-Sea Diver</b>	Wear lead shoes, hold breath, explore sunken wrecks, salvage sunken ships, fight off sharks
	<b>Sailor</b>	Swab decks, tie knots, raise sails, stow cargo
	<b>Ship's Captain</b>	Wear captain's hat, have three-day stubble for beard
<b>Performing Arts</b>	<b>Cliché</b>	<b>What It's Good For</b>
	<b>Cowboy</b>	Ridin', ropin', brandin', spittin', and shootin'.
	<b>Gambler</b>	Betting, cheating, winning, running very fast.
	<b>Hobo</b>	Hop freight train, sing mournful songs, panhandle, do odd jobs, hobo code, drink anything alcoholic
	<b>Race Driver</b>	Drive fast, tinker with car engines,
	<b>Trusty Grease-Monkey</b>	Work on engines, fix engines with chewing gum and bailing wire, face and hands always smudged with grease
	<b>Acrobat</b>	Jumping around, doing lots of flippy things, having a gift for finding naturally-occurring uneven bars in urban sprawls
	<b>Circus Performer</b>	Walk tightrope, get shot out of cannon, swing from trapeze
	<b>Concert Pianist</b>	Virtuoso performance, nimble fingers, impeccable

	evening wear
<i>Escape Artist</i>	Dislocate shoulder to escape straitjacket, hide key/lockpick in mouth, mystify audiences
<i>Film Crew</i>	Operate camera, rig lights,
<i>Jazz Musician</i>	Play in smoky clubs, improvise music, play in band, be late for a gig
<i>Movie Star</i>	Look glamorous, idolized by millions, sign autograph, memorize lines/blocking, party into the wee small hours, seduce
<i>Musician</i>	Read music, perform, be temperamental/perfectionist, write music, wear hair long
<i>Radio Announcer</i>	Use radio voice, mimic other voices/accents/dialects, “And now, a word from our sponsor!”
<i>Stage Actor/Actress</i>	Learn lines/blocking, chew scenery, hang out at swanky nightspots
<i>Stage Hand</i>	Raise/lower curtains, move scenery, keep track of props, operate trap door, sweep stage
<i>Stage Magician</i>	Sleight of hand, misdirection, the hand is quicker than the eye, sawing people in half without hurting them, make dramatic gestures, wear tuxedo and top hat, pull rabbit out of hat
<i>Stunt Man</i>	Survive a great fall, throw fake punch, escape from crashing vehicle, slide along a bar, look kinda like a movie star

## Personal Services

<u>Cliché</u>	<u>What It's Good For</u>
<i>Aging Friend/Servant/Attendant</i>	Speak confidentially with employer/family friend, worry, give sage advice
<i>Bartender</i>	Mix drinks, listen to other people’s problems
<i>Driver</i>	Wear uniform, tinker with car engine,
<i>Native Guide</i>	Know path through desert/wilderness/jungle, carry burdens
<i>Secretary</i>	Take dictation, type, make phone calls, make appointments
<i>Short Order Cook</i>	Wear grease-stained t-shirt, make classic American cuisine, ring bell, “Your order’s up!”
<i>Taxi Driver</i>	Know back alleys, drive fast, scare tourists/pedestrians, yell at other drivers

## Public Safety

<u>Cliché</u>	<u>What It's Good For</u>
<i>Fireman</i>	Have a pet Dalmatian named “Sparky”, use an axe, slide down poles, wear big boots, climb ladders, pull hoses

## Religion

<u>Cliché</u>	<u>What It's Good For</u>
<i>Clergyman (should specify faith/denomination)</i>	Long-winded, preachy, forgive sinners, sermonize
<i>Missionary</i>	Live among “the people”, try to “civilize the heathen,”

Social Cliché	What It's Good For
<b>Bon Vivant/Dilettante/Socialite</b>	Throws around lots of cash, seen it all, drink gallons of champagne, expect to be waited on

- Guy Hoyle's Article on clichés

Below is a “Master List” of pulp-oriented clichés I’ve collected over time. But to *really* get the most out of Risus, it’s good to customize your character’s cliché. Here is a great article that explains how clichés work, and may give you a good idea for how to put your character together:

## A QUICK GUIDE TO THE ANATOMY OF A CLICHÉ

This guide is intended as a supplement to S. John Ross’s “Anatomy of a Cliché” from his *Risus Companion*, which is available to members of the International Order of Risus (<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm> for all things Risus!)

### Personal History

Sometimes adding a variation on “former” can add a level of depth to an otherwise ho-hum cliché.

- Former Elvis Impersonator
- Defrocked Witch-doctor
- Retired Paperboy

### Degree of Dedication

The numbers don’t tell the whole story. Is your character committed to his chosen cliché, or does his enthusiasm lag sometimes? Is his talent natural-born, or does it come with great difficulty?

- Part-time Pacifist
- Struggling Brain Surgeon
- Assistant Assassin
- Fanatical Frothing-Mouthed Fundamentalist

### Social Class or Financial Means

Though Risus does not have rules for money or buying stuff, you can tell a lot about the financial means of a character by his clichés.

- Generous and Popular Vagrant
- Stingy, Inhospitable Philanthropist
- Penniless Tycoon
- Imprisoned Billionaire Homemaking Guru

### Gender

Many clichés imply a gender (like Professional Football Player or Housewife), but gender-based cliches are quite fun to play with.

- Female Donald Trump
- Aging Male Prostitute With A Heart Of Gold
- Cross-Dressing Paladin
- Blacksmith Babe

### Demeanor

Attitude is often everything.

- Jolly, Happy Berserker
- Affable, People-Friendly Assassin
- Careful, Timid Demolition Derby Driver

### Ham-Handed Reference

These would be references to actors, actresses, fictional characters, and genre conventions.

- William Shatner
- Rhyming Lawyer
- Gomer Pyle
- Martha Stewart
- Red-Shirt (from *Star Trek*)
- Used Chariot Salesman
- A “brick”, “flyer”, “energy blaster”, or other comic book stereotype.

### Goals

Your character's personal goals determine how his skills develop, and distinguish them from characters with similar Cliches

- Eager Young Performer Lookin' for Nookie
- Dedicated AcTOR In Search Of Eternal Fame
- Bitter Mad Scientist Out To Have His Revenge On Everybody Who Laughed At Him

### Self-Image

How does your character see himself? Do others see him the same way?

- Self-Loathing Accountant
- “The Best Pickle Salesman In The Whole Darn Faire!”
- Grieving, Suicidal Lawyer

### Subplots and Relationships

Cliches can involve other people and how they interact with the character.

- Handsome Young Swordsman Working His Way Through The Local Girls
- Nervous Ex-Gangster On The Run From The Mob
- Plastic Surgeon to the Stars

### Problems

Some see them as problems; others see them as opportunities.

- Enormously Obese Contortionist
- Stuttering Country-Western Singer
- Blind Fighter Pilot

## Character Creation Guidelines

Typically, Characters using the Adventure Street Omnibus series of pulp settings will use the standard Risus character creation rules. In other words, players will have 10 dice to allocate among various clichés. There is a limit of 4 dice allocated to anyone cliché. I personally like the idea of an rpg where regular, ol' fashioned six-sided dice stolen from an old board game can be used to play, so there Funky Dice will not be used. As players create their characters, they might want to add a Hook and a Tale. A Hook is a character flaw, a physical/mental/social disability that the GM could use to his great advantage. A Tale is just what it sounds like: a detailed

background story that breathes life into your character. Hooks and Tales each give a bonus of one (1) die that can be allocated among either clichés or Lucky Shots or Questing Dice, which are explained below.

A player can elect to use one cliché die to buy three Lucky Shots. These “shots” allow the player to add one die to any roll that the character really, really has to make. Questing Dice are similar, with two glaring exceptions: A player can buy five (5) Questing Dice for every one cliché die he spends, and while Lucky shots can be applied to any roll, Questing Dice must be applied to a task related to a specific Quest that the character is engaged in. This will be explained in more detail with the sample Character from *Ripping Air Yarns*.

If a player decides to forgo Lucky Shots and Questing Dice, he may choose to Pump a cliché or Double Pump one. These rules are carefully explained in Advanced Option II of the free Risus Rules set available from <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm> .

Finally, in *Adventure Street Omnibus*, Boxcars and Breakthroughs from the Risus Companion are used. If a player rolls the dice for any given cliché, and they all come up sixes ('boxcars'), he may roll the dice again adding the second total to the first. If he rolls boxcars again, he continues as above.

# DARING ADVENTURE TALES

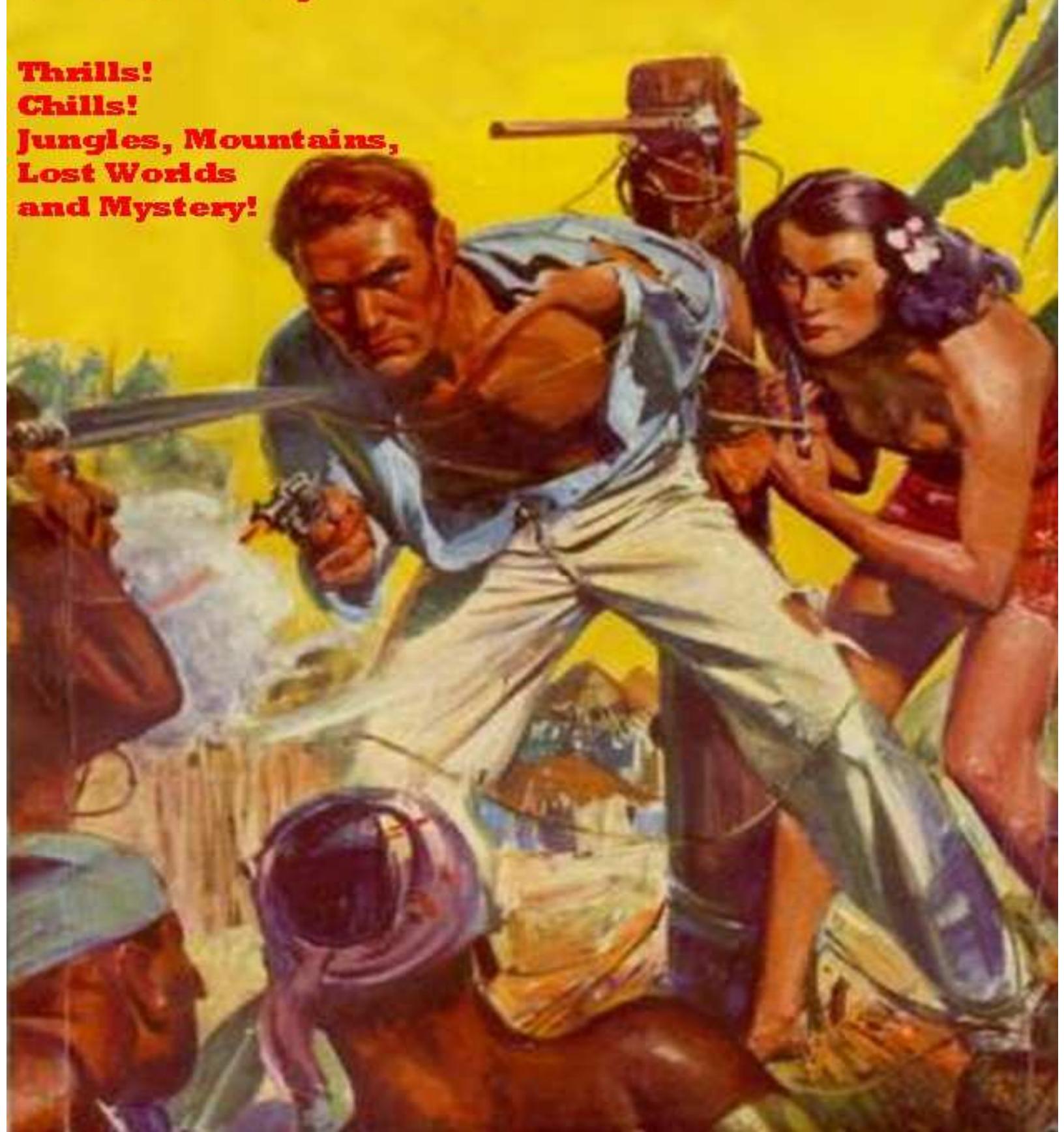
10¢

February

Thrills!

Chills!

Jungles, Mountains,  
Lost Worlds  
and Mystery!



# **Daring Adventure Tales**

*"Two-Fisted Globe-Trotting Adventure!"*

## ❖ Pulp Examples

- The Shadow
- Doc Savage
- Secret Agent "X"
- Justice, Inc.

## ❖ Helpful Clichés

- Big Game Hunter
- Explorer
- All-American Athlete
- Inventor/Gadgeteer
- Gentleman Spy
- Spy
- Ace Reporter
- News Photographer
- Agency Detective
- Costumed Vigilante
- Vigilante
- Private Investigator
- Scientific Detective
- Foreign Legionnaire
- Military Veteran
- Marine
- Sailor
- Ship's Captain
- Escape Artist
- Stage Magician
- Bon Vivant/Dilettante/Socialite

## ❖ Sample Character

### **Jackson Dare**

Rugged Soldier-For-Hire (4)

Fearless Outdoor Survival Guide (3)

Beer-Swilling, Cigar-Chomping Tall Tale Teller (2)

Lucky Shots [] [] []

## ❖ House Rules



# RIPPING AIR YARNS

10 CENTS JUNE



ANOTHER EXCITING ADVENTURE OF "THE PHOENIX!"  
FLYING FICTION

MODEL BUILDING

FLYING FACT

# **RIPPING AIR YARNS**

Featuring "The Phoenix"

## ❖ Pulp Examples

- G-8 and his Battle Aces
- Bill Barnes
- Kerry Keen

These pulps deal with air piracy, espionage, sabotage, smuggling, etc.



## ❖ Helpful Clichés

- Aviator/Aviatrix
- Spy
- Gadgeteer
- Explorer
- Bootlegger (Smuggler)
- Flying Ace
- Foreign Legionnaire
- Marine
- Military Veteran
- Soldier of Fortune/M Mercenary
- Trusty Greasmonkey (Mechanic)
- Gambler
- Bon Vivant/Dilettante/Socialite

## ❖ House Rules

Vehicle rules – Compare cliché of pilot with cliché rating of aircraft. Use whichever dice is higher for rolls.

Creation: Use "Sidekicks and Shieldmates" rules from Risus Companion

## ❖ Sample Character

### John Scipio – "The Phoenix"

- Masked Avenger (4)
- Daredevil Aviator (3)
- Crack Airplane Mechanic (2)
- Lucky Shots [] [] []

Personal Aircraft (as per Sidekicks rule in the Risus Companion) – "The Phoenix"

Tri-phibious Fighter-Bomber Made From Salvaged Airplane Parts (3)

**Backstory (Tale):** As a young man, John Scipio was fascinated by the miracle of flight, in its youth even as he was. At the age of 15, John managed to find a way to France and joined the Lafayette Escadrille, a squadron of American pilots flying for the French government in the Great War.

Although he was not a pilot when he arrived, and served in a variety of subordinate roles in the squadron, he displayed an aptitude for flying and due to losses was soon pressed into flying in the waning days of the war. After the Armistice, he could not satisfy his hankering for flying stunts, so he joined up with a barnstorming tours at air shows.

However, the tours proved to not be a steady income producer, so John started a business as a commercial air courier. One day, John was flying over the U.S.-Canadian Border when he was attacked by air pirates. His plane was forced to crash-land. The pirates raided his cargo while

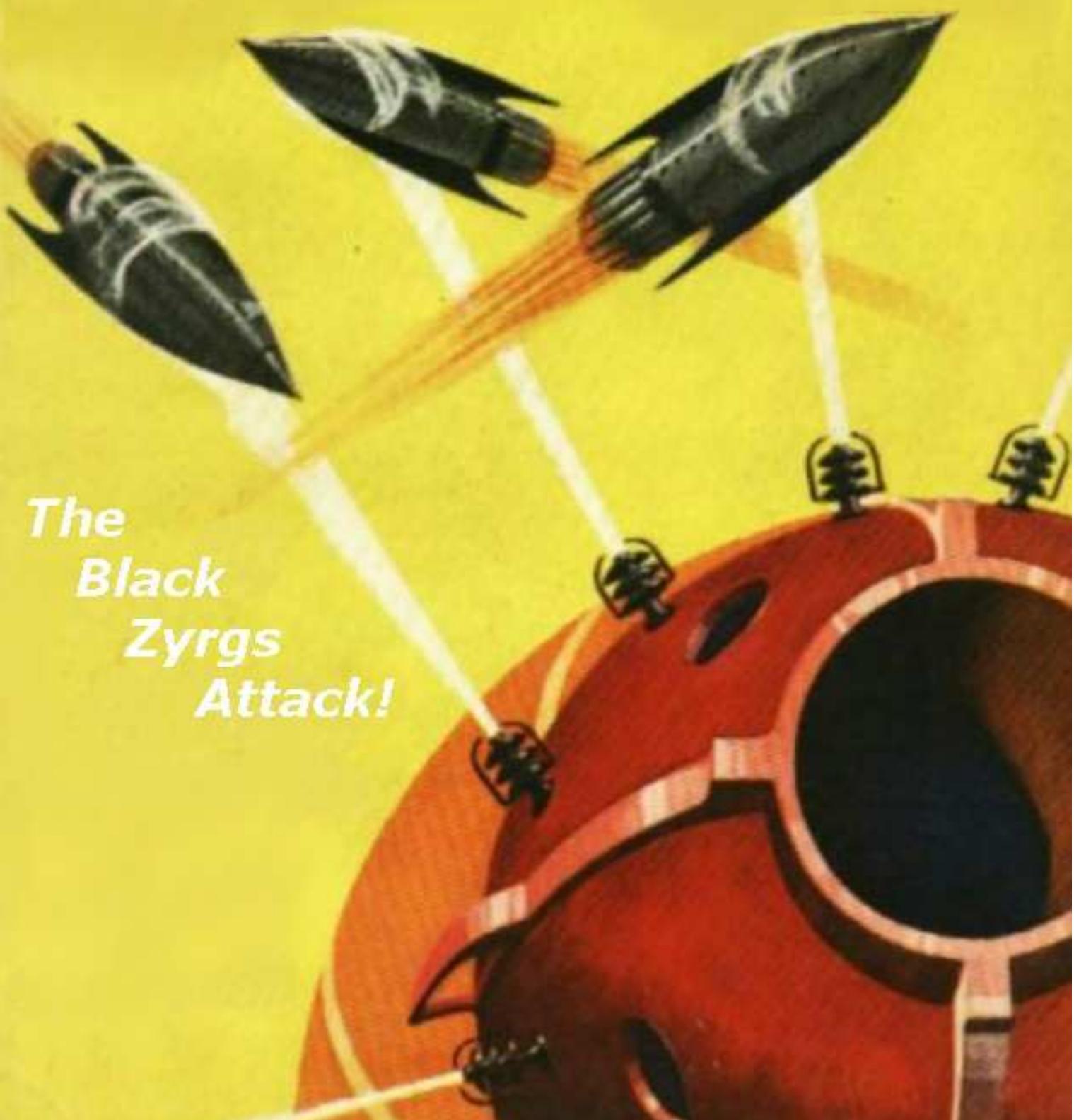
John lay unconscious and bleeding. They left him for dead, but he survived. Finding an abandoned airfield, he began building a fighter-bomber capable of landing on land, water, or ice. Once it became operational, John dubbed it “the Phoenix” and set off to find the air pirates. When he meets them again, “The Phoenix” will have the upper hand, and the air pirates will be put out of commission – permanently. Until that time, John has adopted the identity of “The Phoenix” after his aircraft. Although he is determined to make the pirates pay, John takes on spies, saboteurs, and smugglers, fighting crime while he searches for his sworn enemies.

The plane bears no markings other than an illustration of a phoenix rising from the flames.



# *Stellar Space Stories*

15¢  
January



*The  
Black  
Zyrgs  
Attack!*

# ***Stellar Space Magazine***

Featuring The Space Rangers

- ❖ Pulp Examples
  - Amazing Stories
  - Astounding
- ❖ Helpful Clichés
  - Aviator/Aviatrix
  - Spy
  - Gadgeteer
  - Explorer
  - Bootlegger (Smuggler)
  - Flying Ace
  - Foreign Legionnaire
  - Marine
  - Military Veteran
  - Soldier of Fortune/Mercenary
  - Trusty Greasmonkey (Mechanic)
  - Gambler
  - Bon Vivant/Dilettante/Socialite
- ❖ House Rules

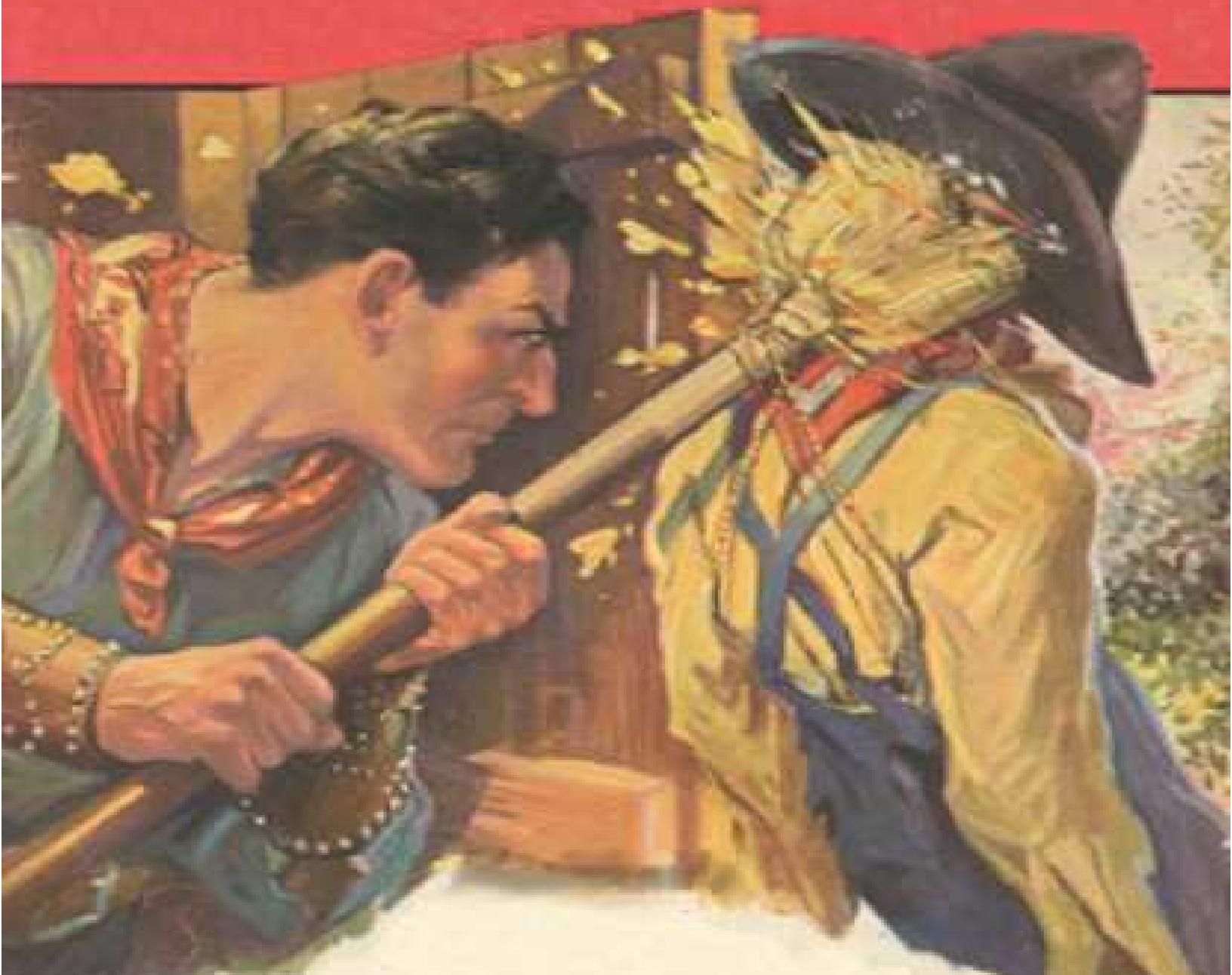
Vehicle rules – Compare cliché of pilot with cliché rating of aircraft. Use whichever dice is higher for rolls.

Creation: Use “Sidekicks and Shieldmates” rules from Risus Companion

Sample Character

# Strange Western Stories

10¢ May



*Sheriff Hiram Parish meets  
the 'Ghost Riders' -- And more than  
he bargained for!*

# ***STRANGE WESTERN STORIES***

"Weird West" Adventures

## ❖ Pulp Example

- Deputy Marshall Lee Winters, *written by Lon Williams, appearing in Real Western Stories*

## ❖ Helpful Clichés

- Western Lawman
- Cowboy
- Gambler
- Bartender (Saloon keeper)
- Native Guide (Indian Scout)
- Clergyman (Preacher)
- Banker
- Bank Robber (Train robber)
- Judge
- Noble Savage (Indian Chief, Indian Brave)

### Additional Cliches

- Gunslinger
- Bounty Hunter
- Trick Rider
- Rifleman
- Cavalry Officer
- Cavalry Trooper
- Sod Buster
- Ranch Hand
- Prospector/Miner
- Schoolmarm

## ❖ House Rules

## ❖ Locale – Lonesome Gulch, pop. 312

- Sample Character

### **Sheriff Hiram Parish**

Steely-eyed Western Lawman (4)

Cowboy Horseman with an Uncanny Relationship with His Horse (3)

Rifle Marksman (2)

Rational Skeptic Who Sometimes Fears He May Be Wrong (1)



Backstory -- Lonesome Gulch is a small town nearby to Forlorn Gap, where Deputy Marshall Lee Winters is the chief lawman. Technically, Winters has jurisdiction over Lonesome Gulch, but tends allow Sheriff Parish free range in enforcing the law in his county.

### Buildings:

- Saloon
- Hotel/Stage Office
- Telegraph Office

- Jail/Sheriff's Office
- General Store
- Assayer
- Bank
- Livery Stables
- Newspaper Office
- Schoolhouse
- Church
- Doctor's Office
- Barber

### The Supernatural in Strange Western Stories

Native American Medicine – Combination of Luck, Charisma,  
Taboo – Violating taboo disqualifies medicine. Could be a Hook.

# Weird CRIME REPORT

10¢

OCTOBER

STORIES BY  
WARREN EGLET  
JAMES K. POPE  
HAROLD STONE

WHAT LURKS  
IN THE BARN OF A  
DEAD MOBSTER?



# WEIRD CRIME REPORT

Featuring "The Spook Squad"

## ❖ Pulp Examples

Horror pulps are just what the name implies: ghost, vampire, werewolf, and monster stories written to give you a good chill and lead you to sleep with the lights on. There were several leading authors known for their work in this area: H. P. Lovecraft,

Some of the magazines that featured horror stories:

*Unknown*

*Weird Tales*

"Shudder Pulps," a.k.a. "Weird Menace" stories are a subgenre that uses many of the elements of the Horror story. There is a villain, at first thought to be supernatural in either origin or power that threatens the well-being of the city/country/world. This villain kidnaps a beautiful girl and subjects her to extreme cruel and sadistic torture. Her boyfriend manages to rescue her and defeat the villain, which is usually shown to be an ordinary mortal being, albeit an evil genius. "Weird Menace" was a theme prominently featured in the radio drama *I Love A Mystery*. That radio drama later inspired the Saturday morning cartoon, *Scooby-Doo* (the original series). If you think of the old *Scooby Doo* cartoons ("I'd have gotten away with it if wasn't for you pesky kids!"), then you pretty much have an idea of what "Shudder Pulps" are like.

Some of the magazines that featured "Weird Menace" tales:

*Dime Mystery*

*Horror Stories*

*Terror Tales*

## ❖ Helpful Clichés

- Ghost Chaser
- Occult Scholar
- Psychic Investigator
- G-Man

## ❖ House Rules

### Character Creation

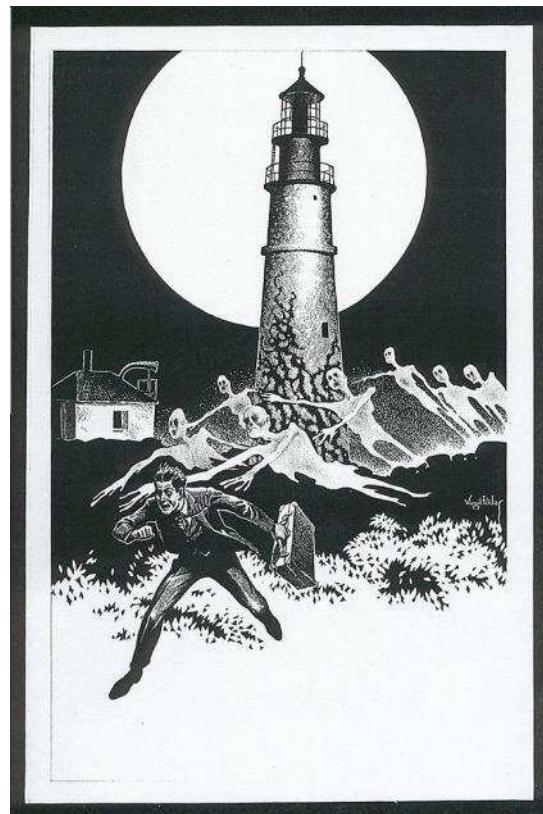
As per standard Risus rules, with the following Advanced Options:

Pumps and Double Pumps, Sidekicks, Lucky Shots, and Boxcars

**Background** – The Supernatural, Paranormal and Otherwise Unknown Criminal Division was established in 1928 by the personal authority of Director J. Edgar Hoover of the F.B.I.

During the 1920's, there was a rise in crime on a national scale in connection with National Prohibition.

Along with increased activity of bootleggers, the Ku Klux Klan and agents of foreign governments, there were some crimes that had no rational explanation. Hoover authorized the S.P.O.U.C.D. (pronounced "Spooked") to investigate these crimes and to "neutralize or suppress



beings and energies with malevolent intent.” Their field reports go directly to Director Hoover, who after reading them, order them permanently sealed. Agents have a great deal of latitude and possess the highest of security clearances.

In order to maintain cover for the S.P.O.U.C.D., or “Spook Squad,” as it is known within the Bureau, critical information and training is issued nationally to field agents by so-called “horror films.” Many scriptwriters and directors have been recruited for this purpose. Directors James Whale and Tod Browning have been especially helpful.

❖ Sample Character

**Special Agent Laurents Gilchrist**

Psychically Sensitive G-Man [3]

Erudite Connoseur of World Literature (2)

Short Tempered Martial Arts Student (2)

❖ The Use of Magic

## Resources

Project 1557

<http://www.seedwiki.com/page.cfm?wikiid=2331&doc=Pulp%20Project1557>

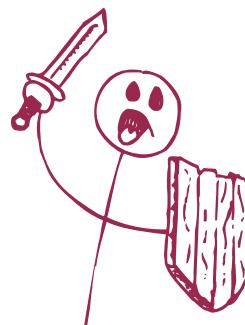
PulpGen <http://www.pulpgen.com/pulp/downloads/index.html>

“The Pulp Avengers” by Brian Misiaszek

<http://www.fantasylibrary.com/lounge/pulpavengers.htm>

# FANTASTIC FANTASY ADVENTURES IN RISUSLAND (EXPANDED EDITION)

By Lord Zamiel Al'Shaitan



A Fantastic Fantasy Supplement for Risus: the Anything RPG by S. John Ross.



# Sourcebook Information

This sourcebook is a resource manual for a lighthearted high-fantasy campaign. It borrows ideas/concepts/text from Risus Magic by Jason Puckett and S. John Ross at <http://www.intemperance.net/rpg/risus-magic.html> as well as Coloured\*Skies by René Vernon at <http://www.webone.com.au/~rene/> and my Risus Fantasy Bestiary.

This campaign is set in a high-fantasy magic-rich world, where sorcerous duels in the street are not uncommon, and anything can be bought, for a price. The tone is not as dark as some games, nor as light as a typical Risus game.

## Character Creation

Character creation should follow the standard Risus: the Anything RPG handbook; 10 dice, +1 for hook, +1 for tale, pumps and double-pumps allowed. No more than 4 dice in any starting cliché and no funky dice.

There is a character sheet provided in the back of this manual for your use if so desired. It is double-sided, with large areas for cliché records as well as descriptions, hook, tale, notes and other such necessities.

# Common Cliché

The cliché list is divided into 2 tables, the first are racial templates for common fantasy races, and the next is a list of professional cliché.

Even though some of these creatures are normally exempt from the cliché dice limitations, player characters always follow the rules presented in the Risus handbook. A player-character dragon for example, may have no more than 4-dice (possibly double-pump) in their Dragon cliché to begin play (they will most likely begin play as a juvenile.) See the Fantasy Bestiary for more ideas for player character racial cliché.

## **Centaur**

Having the torso of a man and body of a horse, running fast, shooting arrows, not fitting into small places, having to sleep in the #\$\$@&! stables in every town you visit.

## **Dwarf**

Being gruff, seeing things in the dark very well, growing a big beard, wielding an ax menacingly, crafting fine stonework, drinking really strong ale but not getting terribly drunk from it.

## **Dragon**

Breathing fire, gas, acid, or another harmful substance, flying, hoarding treasure, kidnapping Beautiful Princesses, killing adventurers.

## **Elf**

Being tall, being thin, being snooty, seeing very far distances, seeing in the dark, shooting arrows from a longbow, having pointy ears, being good-looking, having a strange affinity for magic and nature.

## **Giant**

Being tall and strong, stepping on things, grinding englishman's bones to make his bread.

## **Gnome**

Being short, wearing a pointy hat, living in hollow trees or hills, building contraptions that (often unintentionally) endanger themselves and others.

## **Hafling**

Being short and round, liking pipes and tobacco, throwing rocks and using slings, being sneaky, stealing other people's property.

## **Minotaur**

Being tall, (very) strong, not getting lost in mazes, having a cow head, wielding a giant double-bladed ax, wearing bronze nose-jewelry.

## **Pixie**

Being short, winged, and (sometimes) invisible, making mischief, using a toothpick as a sword.

# Skill/Talent Cliché

## Acrobat

Tumbling, flipping, (hopefully) entertaining crowds of onlookers for spare change.

## Alchemist

Mixing arcane ingredients to make magical potions, poultices and ointments, smelling of incense, making scads of gold from adventurers out adventuring in need of healing juice.

TN for brewing magical potions is the same as casting a spell, see **Magic and Spells**.

## Animal Trainer

Training dogs for hunting or war, hawks for hunting, ferrets for stealing stuff, monkeys to dance and tip their hats when they take gold.

Difficulty is based on the difficulty of the trick, and time taken. For a simple trick and a week training, the base TN is 5. Difficult tricks are base TN 10 and 2 weeks time, and very difficult are 15 with a 1 month training period. An animal may be trained in half the normal time at a TN modifier of +10.

## Archer

Firing arrows at targets far away, standing on castle walls to shoot onrushing orc hordes. Knowing the quality of bows and arrows before being taken for a sucker by the local elf bow maker.

## Aristocrat

Being snooty, cutting through red tape, knowing who to bribe to get things done.

## Armorer

Making armor and weapons, determining the quality of armor and weapons, swinging a hammer, stoking a forge.

## Assassin

Being stealthy, using poisons, using blowguns, knives, garrotes and other easily hidden weapons.

## Baker

Baking breads, rolls, cakes, and pretty much anything else baked. Beware the bread knife.

## Bandit

Being thug-ish, mugging people, having exceptionally bad personal hygiene, trying to avoid the city guard. Being on a first name basis with every jailkeeper in the land.

## Barbarian

Being large and strong, wielding an exceptionally large ax or sword, wearing furs, going berserk in battle, eating their own fleas and body lice.

## Bard

Singing, writing epic songs about adventuring parties, singing, having connections to every seedy underbelly and den of iniquity in every town you happen to pass through.

**Beastmaster\***

Speaking with animals, calling animals to their aid, not being mauled by bears in the woods, casting animal-related magics such as assuming the abilities of animals (for example speed, flight, or natural attack form) for a while.

**Beggar**

Being dirty, smelling foul, looking pathetic, begging for money, getting thrown in jail for vagrancy.

**Blacksmith**

Making horseshoes and other metal objects, being really strong from swinging a metal hammer for hours on end. You can probably smash things real good with your hammer, too.

**Bookbinder**

Binding papers into books. Having paper cuts.

**Bounty Hunter**

Hunting people for money, tracking, trailing, information gathering.

**Bow Maker**

Making bows and arrows, judging the quality of bows and arrows.

**Brazier**

Making objects out of brass.

**Brewer**

Making beer and other spirits.

**Burglar**

Breaking and entering, not getting caught, appraising valuables, knowing how to fence stolen goods, knowing how to find the local thieves' guild (and knowing not to just walk into a bar and ask).

**Butcher**

Skinning animals, cutting meat.

**Carpenter**

Making objects from wood such as boxes, cabinets, bed frames and other utilitarian household items.

**Cartographer**

Making and reading maps, smelling like ink. (Mmmmm...)

**Carver**

Decorative carving of wooden objects.

**Cavalier**

Being holier-than-thou, swinging a big, shiny sword, wearing armor, doing everything "in <deity>'s name", riding a horse or other creature, jousting.

**Chandler**

Making candles, having wax burns.

**Charioteer**

Driving a chariot, fighting on/from a chariot.

**Cobbler**

Making and repairing shoes.

**Cook/Chef**

Making meals, preparing food, making GOOD meals, making edible meals from less-than-appetizing ingredients.

**Conjurer\***

Conjuring items, creatures or other things from nothing, keeping them around to do your bidding for a while before they dissolve into purple smoke or similar nothingness.

**Constable**

Policing city streets, catching lawbreakers, taking bribes, swinging a mean billy club.

**Crier**

Shouting the news, shouting very loud, shouting "It's 8 o' clock and all is well", shouting in general.

**Dairy Farmer**

Raising cows, milking cows, possibly liking cows in more than a platonic manner.

**Dancer**

Dancing, dancing WELL, getting paid to dance as a street performer or with a troupe.

**Diviner\***

Reading omens, seeing the future, past, or remote locations, finding misplaced or hidden objects or people.

**Dragoman**

Being a professional interpreter and guide, speaking many different languages, reading maps, not getting lost.

**Druid\***

Hugging trees, hugging animals, wearing natural products, shunning material wealth, casting "nature magic" and identifying/using herbs.

**Elementalist\* (Aeromancer/Geomancer/Pyromancer/Hydromancer)**

Casting magic spells related to 1 element, not being harmed by that element, generally feeling a grudge towards those who follow another elemental path.

**Farmer**

Growing plants for food, harvesting plants, wielding an ax, rake, shovel and the like with mastery.

**Fisherman**

Catching and preparing fish for food, tying knots, using fishing poles and nets.

**Furrier**

Trapping, skinning, and preparing animals for their furs. Making clothing from furs.

**Gambler**

Playing games of chance, cheating at games of chance, knowing when to grab your money and run.

**Gem Cutter**

Cutting and polishing raw gems for jewelry, appraising raw and finished gems.

**Gladiator**

Fighting in an arena, wearing hardly any armor, using any weapon you get your hands on.

**Glassblower**

Making both decorative and utilitarian bottles, jars, and other objects from glass.

**Guard**

Guarding castles, nobility, cities, or other people, places or things. Wearing armor, wielding a sword, taking orders, standing like you have a corncob up your.. um, nevermind.

**Healer\***

Healing the sick or wounded with magic, herbs, and medical knowledge.

**Henchman**

Never getting the spotlight, carrying tremendous amounts of loot for the rest of the party, never getting a fair share of the loot, being practically invisible to the rest of the world until the villain needs someone to kidnap to lure the heroes to their lair, or demonstrate how his new device/spell/monster works.

**Herbalist**

Knowing which herbs heal, which harm, and how to prepare salves, ointments, poisons, and antidotes for use.

TN for creating herbal preparations is the same as casting a spell, see **Magic and Spells**.

**Hunter**

Tracking game, using bows, setting snares and traps, not getting lost in the woods, avoiding poison ivy, knowing animal's habits, making animal calls and noises.

**Illusionist\***

Creating illusions of people, places, sounds, things or even spells. Making people believe your illusions.

**Jester**

Being silly, juggling, dancing, performing acrobatics.

**Jeweler**

Making, repairing and selling gems and jewelry, knowing the value and quality of gems and jewelry.

**Knight**

Wearing armor and wielding a sword, jousting, following a King's orders, riding a horse, putting armor on a horse, ordering a Squire around.

**Loremaster of (Something)**

Knowing a lot of *possibly useful* knowledge about a subject, such as animals, fairies, geniekind, monsters, spells, the Nether-Realm, or just about any other subject.

**Magician\***

Wearing pointy hats and robes, smelling of tobacco and incense, having animal familiars, casting magic spells, carrying giant books full of arcane phrases and other words of power.

**Mason**

Making walls and structures of brick, stone, and plaster.

**Mercenary**

Fighting other people's wars for money, guarding caravans for money, doing basically anything brutish for money.

**Merchant**

Bartering, haggling, getting the best deals, screwing people out of money, selling goods for far more than their worth, not accepting fake gold coins ;-)

**Monk**

Unarmed fighting, using sticks, using strange-looking weapons, jumping around, catching arrows with bare hands, acupressure/puncture healing (or harming), speaking in riddles.

**Mountaineer**

Climbing mountains, knowing how to survive in the mountains and extreme cold.

**Navigator**

Guiding a ship from one port to another, reading naval charts and maps, navigating by the stars.

**Necromancer\***

Raising the dead as your mindless necrotic minions, controlling said minions, smelling like dirt, knowing about dead stuff.

**Ninja**

Wearing black pajamas, throwing darts, stars, and knives, using ninja weapons, fighting unarmed, being stealthy, being hunted by samurai.

**Painter**

Painting portraits and other works of art, signs for buildings, etc.

**Pickpocket**

Stealing other people's belongings from their pockets without them knowing, knowing who to sell stolen objects to, blending into a crowd to get away from a score.

**Priest\***

Worshiping, wearing robes, smashing people's heads in using maces, staves and cudgels, praying, healing, channeling the divine energy of their deity to create magical effects.

**Psychic\***

Knowing the future, reading people's minds, melting brains with massive waves of crushing psychic energy, astral projecting, telepathic communication, moving stuff with their minds.

**Rancher**

Raising cattle, sheep, and other herd animals, hunting coyote and wolves, riding a horse, chewing tobacco and spitting it.

**Ranger**

Wearing woodland colors and a cloak, fighting with swords and bows, being stealthy in the woods, hating orcs, goblins, and/or other nasty little critters that ravage the natural surroundings, having animal friends.

**Sage**

Knowing a lot of *useless* knowledge on one or more subjects that practically nobody cares about (except adventurers that are trying to solve a riddle or kill a "Big Nasty™").

**Sailor**

Sailing a ship, swabbing the deck, saying "Yes Cap'n!" and "Aye aye Cap'n!"

**Samurai**

Carrying a pair of swords, using a long bow, riding a horse, being honorable, hunting down ninja, committing suicide if dishonored.

**Scout**

Going first and being a target, checking for traps, not getting lost in woods, dungeons, and other places that are easy to get lost in, climbing well, setting traps, being remarkably thief-like but rarely being accused of it.

**Scribe**

Writing documents, copying documents, getting paid for doing such things.

**Shaman\***

Speaking with spirits, healing the sick and wounded with spirit magic and herbs, smoking "magic herbs" to receive visions from the spirit world, reading omens, defending the village from supernatural threats, making talismans.

**Shipwright**

Making boats large and small, repairing boats.

**Squire**

Wanting to be a knight, taking orders from a knight, brushing horses, walking alongside the ^%#\$! knight's horse while he rides, helping a knight into/out of armor, polishing a knight's weapons and armor.

**Summoner\***

Summoning creatures from Erf, the Nether-Realm and planes beyond, controlling (or successfully pleading with) said creatures.

**Swashbuckler**

Swinging from ropes/chandeliers, speaking with a funny accent, fighting with thin swords and daggers, wearing "poofy clothes", being flamboyant and (almost) never being accused of being homosexual, charming ladies.

**Tanner**

Skinning, preparing, and making animal hides into leather.

**Teacher**

Teaching skills, trades, or knowledge to others.

**Transmuter\***

Changing lead to gold, water to wine, flesh to stone, lizards to ducks, or one object/form into another in general. Some deal only with objects, others with creatures, though most dabble in both.

**Viking**

Being large, strong, and scary-looking, wearing animal skins, wielding a biiiig weapon, sailing, drinking, singing drunken songs of battles and heroes.

**Warlock\***

Wearing a robe, carrying a staff or wand, casting elemental spells, having spooky hair, dating a witch.

**Warrior**

Wearing armor, using weapons, keeping their swords sharp and their armor polished, being oh-so-boring and bland.

**Witch\***

Wearing robes, having nose-warts, mixing potions in a big, iron cauldron, riding a flying broom, using a magic wand to zap people with magic spells, places hexes, vexes and curses on people, having a pet cat.

\* Denotes a traditionally "magic" cliché, allowing magical spells or effects to be created in one manner or another. Alchemists and Herbalists are not marked as magical, as they cannot cast spells, only create spell-like effects with material ingredients.

# Sample Hooks

## Code of Conduct

The character cannot attack an unarmed man, cannot kill, cannot eat meat, must remain chaste, cannot touch magic, cannot own property, cannot take a life (animal or otherwise), must help damsels in distress, a vow of silence, poverty or some other set of behaviors that must be observed at all times.

## Fear of [something]

The character has an overwhelming, crippling fear of some rather common object, creature, or circumstance, such as spiders, snakes, the dark, heights, closed spaces, water, etc.

## Social Stigma

The character might be from a tribe, race, or culture that is considered to be of a dramatically lower class than average. They may be a barbarian, or a kobold – but for some reason they are looked upon as less of a being because of it (and generally shown great prejudice).

## Superstitious

The character is VERY superstitious. They believe there are omens all around them and will act a certain way because of them. They may not go outdoors on a cloudless day because it is a bad omen, or they may leave half of each meal behind for the spirit world (dangerous in lean times..)

## Vow of [chastity/poverty/silence/other]

The character has taken a vow of some sort that limits their behavior much like a code of conduct, but it is one specific thing that is abstained from.

## Wizardly Hook

One obvious way to go is to give your mage a side effect of some kind when they use magic. Examples: A Psychic who gives nosebleeds to those whose minds she reads; a Pyromancer who sets off random candle-flame-sized fires when he casts spells; an Illusionist who glows in the dark for ten minutes after creating illusions.

Another Hook is to limit the usefulness of the wizard's magic in some way, either by limiting when he can use it or by what he can use it on. Examples: A Psychic whose magic doesn't work on non-humans; a Healer who can only cure during daylight hours; a dwarfish Diviner who must be underground or in a cave to cast accurate auguries.

Or pick some other way to inconvenience your mage that's related to their form of magic or to being a mage in general. Examples: A Shaman followed by mischievous spirits; a Priest-Mage who has undertaken a sacred vow to hunt down the undead; a Geomancer who must watch his back at all times for agents of the hated Aeromancer cult.

# Types of Conflicts

The most common types of conflicts found in this fantasy setting will be discussed briefly here, as the Game Master adds their own spin on such things when in play.

## **Bartering / Haggling**

Bartering or haggling is a rather common occurrence in a fantasy game, whether it be buying a loaf of bread, or selling the loot gained on the last dungeon raid. As such, many money-grubbing characters will attempt to weasel every last gold coin from the poor merchants and shopkeepers (and vice versa.)

## **Intimidation / Presence Conflict**

Sometimes a character can achieve their goal more readily with chest-puffing or dagger-juggling than actual combat. If two characters (player or otherwise) both attempt a combat-of-wills, this is the resulting conflict type.

## **Combat (Fantasy)**

Fantasy Combat is the most common life-or-death struggle in a fantasy game, wherein arrows, swords and sorcery collide on equal grounds in an attempt to defeat their opponents. Unless another type of combat is declared, it is assumed to be Fantasy Combat.

## **Combat (Sorcerous)**

Sorcerous Combat need not be lethal, however in many cases it is. In a sorcerous combat the dueling magi may simply pit their magic powers against one another's, while in other (more lethal) combat, their magics are pitted against their opponent's bodies. At the beginning of a Sorcerous Combat, it should be declared as lethal or nonlethal. Only those characters with an appropriate magic cliché can commonly compete in this type of combat, however inappropriate cliché rules still apply.

# Magic and Spells

Whether you call them wizards, mages, shaman, witches, warlocks, conjurers, transmuters, illusionists, pyromancers, necromancers, summoners, psionics or other, these are characters with at least 1 die in a cliché that allows them to produce supernatural effects. These effects may be referred to generically as “magic”, or as psychic abilities, deity-granted powers, the work of Nether-Realm spirits, geniekind, or even sheer luck.

Based on the cliché, a character may specialize in “general fantasy magic” as a mage, wizard or the like, or they may be more specific, such as a pyromancer, necromancer, or summoner. The more specific a cliché to the task being attempted, the easier it is to achieve a desired result. For example, it is easier for a pyromancer to cause a pile of logs to burst into flames than it is for a wizard, and the task may even prove to be impossible for a illusionist.

## Casting Spells

A mage has a spell pool with as many spell shots as they have applicable cliché dice. A character with Magician(4) gets four shots; a player with Necromancer(3) and Geomancer[2] would get five shots. Notice that double-pump cliché still count only as 1 shot. Each spell casting attempt consumes one shot, successful or not.

Spell shots are replenished during sleep. As long as the mage gets a good night’s sleep they’ll wake up in the morning ‘locked and loaded’.

The difficulty of casting a spell is represented by a Target Number (TN) based on the impact of the desired outcome, as well as the cliché involved. The more generic the cliché, the wider the range of possible effects, however it also results in higher TN’s.

At the GM’s discretion, spells directly cast on the minds, bodies, or held property of intelligent beings get a resistance roll, using an appropriate cliché against the spell’s TN. To make a spell harder to resist, a mage can attempt casting it at a TN higher than otherwise indicated.

### Base TN by Impact:

Difficulty	Game Impact	Reason
Trivial, 0 (Normally automatic)	Any attempt to magically warm a beverage, open an unlocked door, tie shoes, or fill an ice-chest are Trivial. Trivial Magic is stuff that the mage could do himself if he weren't so lazy.	The spell has no practical effect to speak of.
Simple, 5	Any spell that helps the party achieve something as a whole, or acts as a tool to achieve an end is Simple. Any spell that actually achieves something directly is probably Ordinary.	The spell will make things more fun for everybody.
Ordinary, 10	A spell is "ordinary" if it is meant to overcome a single obstacle that faces the mage, or the mage's share of an obstacle that faces the group. Unlocking a door, receiving divinatory insights and random clues, cleaning up a small building, creating a brief summer rainfall (in the summer), or a standard "flight" spell go here.	The spell would be nifty. Nothing special.
Complex, 15	Attempts to extinguish a house-fire, feed a small army, teleport the mage long distances or the party short ones, or manipulate the emotions of a small gathering goes here.	The spell would hog the scene a bit.
Difficult, 20	The mage could visit an alternate plane with this, or take the party to another city. Any one significant hidden fact can be revealed, and freakish weather is possible. In general, any attempt by the mage to act as a one-man party of adventurers is Difficult. Attempts to create/summon large animals or humanoid slaves with animal intelligence go here.	The spell would upstage the other characters.
Dangerous, 30	Teleporting the whole group to the Nether-Realm is Dangerous Magic. Looking for the complete solution to the week's mystery in a crystal ball is likewise Tempting the Wrath of the Gods. Any attempt to create/summon an intelligent being, or a big beastie, is Dangerous.	The spell would upstage the whole scenario.
Impossible, 50+	Any attempt to utterly wreck the campaign world or campaign plot line. Notice that even the 'impossible' is possible (with a VERY high TN.)	The spell would upstage the GM.

## TN Modifiers based on cliché relativity:

Specific	Close	Far	Remote	Inappropriate
+/-0	+5	+10	+15	+20

### Specific:

These are cliché that specialize in the spell effect desired, such as a Pyromancer starting a fire, or an Illusionist creating an illusion. Most likely, unless considered a “specialty” of the cliché, a spell will be close.

### Close:

A close cliché is one which is related to, but not specific to the desired outcome. A “wizard” or “mage” is normally considered a close cliché to all spell types.

### Far:

A cliché with a far relativity is one in which the cliché *could* be fathomed to do, but is unlikely. For example, a necromancer (who brings dead bodies back as mindless undead minions) could possibly bring a freshly-killed comrade back to life with all their faculties.

### Remote:

A remote cliché is one which is not geared toward the effect, but a similar effect. For example, a beastmaster who can normally speak to animals and call them to their aid, could speak to a monster, or an illusionist who knows how to create the illusion of a fireball may be able to create a real one with a remote modifier.

### Inappropriate:

At the GM's option, a spell can be attempted with the inappropriate modifier if the desired effect is contrary to the cliché, or even with a cliché which is not normally related to spellcasting but is reasonable. For example, a character with the Loremaster of Spells[3] cliché may be able to cast a simple dweomer with great difficulty - If such an attempt is allowed by the GM, consider the character to have only one spell shot, regardless of their cliché dice value.

Other TN modifiers may be assigned by the Game Master for particularly entertaining or detailed descriptions, extra (or insufficient) preparation time, material components, helpers/familiars, or other factors on a case-by-case basis.

## **So what exactly happens if a spellcasting roll is missed?**

If a roll is missed by less than 15 points, the spell shot is expended, but there is no worthwhile effect (maybe a little purple smoke, the smell of rotten eggs, or a spark). If the roll is missed by 15 or more points, something **TERRIBLE** happens.

## **What exactly happens when something **TERRIBLE** happens?**

Whatever first (or later) occurs to the GM unless manifestly incongruent with the rest of the campaign. Given first thoughts can fall short in terms of originality or elegance this might sound like a recipe for poor judgment. But it doesn't matter, does it? It's supposed to be something **TERRIBLE**.

Generally, if the spell attempted was Trivial, something minor, such as turning the character bright purple for a day or so would suffice. For a Simple spell something more appropriate may be causing a die of 'damage' due to magical backlash. Ordinary spells may well have an opposite effect of what was desired, or suffering multiple dice of 'damage', or even expending extra shots. Complex or Difficult spells may have more dramatic and dangerous results such as burning out all a character's shots for the day, causing damage, or even a permanent loss of cliché dice. Dangerous or Impossible difficulty spells require more creativity, as they can cause catastrophic damage (and lots of fun for the GM).

A reminder to GM's – Destroying characters, possessions, cities, heck, even entire worlds or planes is fun when a cocky player tries to cast something along the lines of "*Ascension to Über-Godhood*" and comes up with a roll of 7, but try to refrain from wrecking your entire campaign – If it's a central character, city, or world to the plot, just grin evilly at the offending player and think about it for a while – the result need not be immediate – the existing deities of your game world may be debating what to do with the pretentious worm that just tried to usurp their power. ;-)

# The World

The world of RisusLand is a wide and varied place, from the Fairie Isle to the Dragon Mountains to the Goblun Forests and the Elven Lands, there are places ruled and controlled by good, and those where no sane person would ever venture.

Herein I will attempt to describe some of the more popular areas of the realm, along with maps. Remember, the GM is faultless, so even if something is written here, it doesn't mean it is so – maybe the GM has changed it for a reason (or more likely, forgot what was written here, and is winging it) ;-)

On the planet Erf, in the Realm of RisusLand dwell many supernatural creatures, from the dwarves and gnomes to the flesh-eating fire-breathing dragons. In some places, these creatures all dwell in harmony, but in others, all is not so peaceful.



# Places of Note

## Centaur Lands

The centaur are a nomadic people, and do not build large cities. Many small towns and villages dot their forests and plains, though these are most often portable structures and move following the seasons. They do not have any centralized ruling society, but each town is ruled by their own council of elders.

The centaur have a complex spiritual worship system revering Mother Erf and the varied manifestations of her power, such as mountains, rivers, large boulders, lakes or volcanoes.

## Dragon Mountains

Dragons do not form societies, but do gather every few decades to discuss the state of affairs of the planet. During these meetings, even the most evil of dragons refrain from violence, as there are more pressing matters at hand. No other creature has ever witnessed one of these meetings. Outside of their council, dragons may be friendly or hostile, depending on the particular dragon's demeanor.

Dragons are as varied as humans, some worshiping nether-realm deities, while others revere nature. Yet others do not follow a religious path at all.

## Dwarven Mountains

The dwarven capital is Stonehome, built directly into (and under) the largest mountain of the largest mountain range on the continent. Home to over 10,000,000 dwarves, it is a massive city carved directly from the rock. Ruled by their King, it is the seat of power of the Dwarven Nation.

Elderrock Stonegnawer , the Dwarven King has ruled his empire for the last 400 years in relative peace, however their epic clashes with the goblins are the stuff of legends.

## **Elven Lands**

Silvertree is home to the Elven Queen, the supreme ruler of the elven people. Though they do not gather in great numbers, Silvertree is home to approximately 12,000 elves. Elven tree cities can be found dotting the forests of the continent, if one knows what to look for - for the untrained eye, they may pass through the heart of a city and never realize it.

Silverleaf Springwind is the current Elven Queen, however she is of great age and is soon to be relinquishing the throne to her daughter, the Princess Goldenrod.

## **Fairie Isles**

The Fairie Isles are home to many small faerie spirits, both in giant empires and small villages, found in massive numbers or solitary wanderers. These cities, just as the fairies themselves are normally invisible to all non-fairies, though outsiders may be granted the gift to see them by any Noble fairie. Rarely dangerous, the fairies are known for playing tricks on the unwary. They can be vicious foes if threatened.

The structure of fairie society is unbeknownst to outsiders, however they do have a very rigid social order. Ruled by a hidden source, the fairies may be raised in time of great need in tremendous numbers.

## **Gnomish Lands**

The gnomes do not gather in large numbers, as it seems as soon as they build a large establishment, they build some fantastic contraption that blows it to bits. Luckily it seems they have an uncanny knack for not blowing themselves up in these 'little accidents'. Smaller towns and villages are rather numerous, and traveling gnomish salesman can be found wandering the roads between settlements.

The gnomes have no royalty, and no real governing body, however those with the greatest inventions or greatest wealth are generally heeded.

## **Hafling Home**

Though the haflings seem an easy-going and relaxed people, living on the same continent as the Bad-Nasties™ has taught them to defend themselves effectively. Hafling slingers are unparalleled in their accuracy, and their city guards are unmatched in their ferocity. Goblins, orcs, kobolds and other horde creatures regularly try to raid these settlements (usually with limited success) for food and materials.

Hafling towns are ruled by a mayor, and the shiriff is the absolute law, though their services are rarely in demand.

## **Human Lands**

In the human lands, there are many small villages and cities, most notable is the human kingdom of Deepwater. It is the single most influential human establishment, being the largest. Home to over 10,000,000 people, it is a major cultural and economic hub.

King Reginald XXXVII is the current ruler, and his family is the oldest recorded. According to historical documents, his was the family to lay the first 2 bricks atop each other to build a home in Deepwater, on the spot where the castle now stands.

## **Land of the Bad-Nasties**

The Land of the Bad Nasties™ is a wild and uncivilized place, populated by all manner of evil creatures and blood-sucking baddies. The most notable place is the Goblun Forest, the goblun homeland. Hundreds of thousands, or even millions of gobluns live here, and plan their raids. The position of "Goblun King" is a tenuous one, often stolen by assassination or coup.

# The Nether-Realm

The Nether-Realm is where spirits find themselves after life. The world is topographically very similar to Erf, however their bodies, the cities and places are quite different.

When someone finds themselves in the Nether-Realm due to death, they appear much as they did in life, though slightly transparent. They seem to be completely alone, though there are buildings and other possibly familiar surroundings. Over the next week they will gradually fade farther and farther, until they are near invisible, while at the same time, others become more and more visible to them. After this point, they may never be raised back to their former life. At the end of the cycle, they have been transformed to reflect how others saw them in life, whether they were noble and upstanding, or dark and craven, and their strengths or weaknesses exaggerated.

Powerful magics are rumored to exist that can materialize a person's Nether-Form on Erf, and allow them to interact as they did in life, however such magics are all but unknown and quite possibly hazardous to cast. More known are those necromantic spells which can commune with these departed souls, and possibly trap them in this realm as spirit.

For those who summon people or creatures from the Nether-Realm, normally they will be of one cliché die higher than a "normal" creature of that variety.

The places of the Nether-Realm are caricatures of those in the real world, the cities of the elves are made of gold and crystal, the dwarven strongholds are all of polished marble, and the cities of man run the gamut of the worst slums imaginable to great white cities of marble and brick. The lands of the Hafling and Centaur are beautiful, unspoiled wildernesses populated by perfect animals. Those darker places such as those in the Land of the Bad Nasties, are a mirror image of that on Erf, as they are already the most evil places imaginable.

# References and Sources

## Risus: the Anything RPG by S. John Ross

<http://www.cumberlandgames.com/>

Without Risus, there would be no RisusLand. Many thanks to Mr. S. John Ross for his wonderful system, his wonderful fonts, as well as for being an all-around swell guy, and well, hm, I guess that's about it ;-)

Another feature of Cumberland Games & Diversions is 'the Fontworks', with free and low-cost fonts for writing, mapping, and even paper miniatures – I highly recommend a visit.

## Risus Magic by Jason Puckett and S. John Ross

<http://www.intemperance.net/rpg/risus-magic.html>

The magic system used in Fantastic Fantasy Adventures in RisusLand was inspired by and adapted from this supplement, as well as Coloured\*Skies, below.

## Coloured\*Skies by René Vernon

<http://www.webone.com.au/~rene/>

Coloured\*Skies holds a wealth of Risus-related material, I highly recommend it to anyone who is interested in Risus. Be forewarned though - Some of his optional (house) rules can become quite complicated (Yowza, lookit those spell tables!)

## LordZamiel.is.Dreaming

<http://lordzamiel.is.dreaming.org/>

All of my works are available from this site in PDF and PalmDOC format. Of particular interest for Fantasy Risus games would be my Risus Fantasy Bestiary (Expanded Edition arriving soon), a complimentary work to this one. Also featured on my site are a character sheet for OpenRPG use, a chatroom for online gaming (complete with DiceBOT) and other Risus-related materials such as my **BUGHUNTERS** sci-fi alien-bug-thing blasting sourcebook, the **It's LINT!** 'Life as LintKind' Mini-genre-sourcebook, and now-near-infamous **STOOOPER HEROES**, the stooperheroic campaign sourcebook.

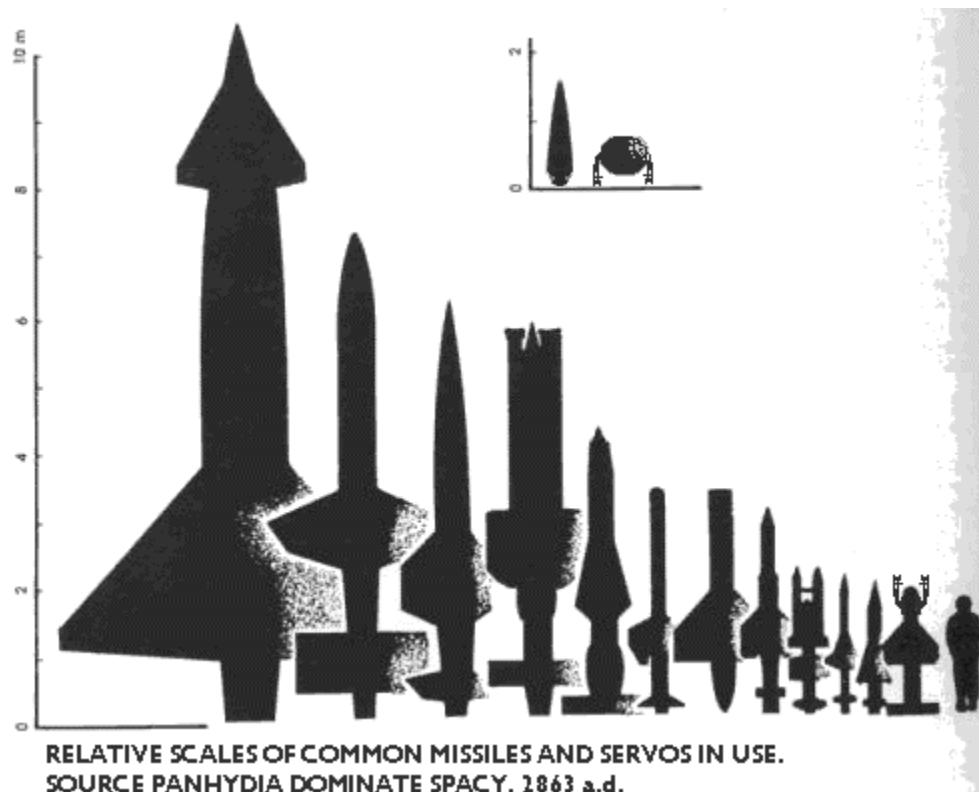
Risus: the Anything RPG Character Record Sheet

Character Name:					
Height:	Weight:	Hair:	Eyes:		
Physical Description: _____ _____ _____ _____				(portrait / notes)	
Character Hook: _____ _____					
Cliché <i>What it's good for</i>	Dice		Cliché <i>What it's good for</i>	Dice	
Tools of the Trade and Other Gear:					

Notes:

# **FIREd AND FORGOTTEN**

Fired and Forgotten  
An offbeat Risus Campaign Book  
By Robert Bersch ([sectorbob@yahoo.com](mailto:sectorbob@yahoo.com))



Fired and Forgotten is a Risus campaign set far in the future when all of known space is (or was) controlled by a repressive spirit crushing star empire that uses the bodies and brains of its foes as part in its industrial and military machinery. But that's not what this is about....

## **Background:**

Several hundred years ago the PanHydia Dominate controlled all of known space. All dissidents and non-conformists were gathered up by the Peace Keepers and sent to reeducation camps... well, some of them were. The rest (the majority) were harvested, their bodies broken into components, their bones, organs and skin being used to keep the elite of society happy and healthy. Their brains were organically reinforced, stuffed into Brainboxes (hardened live support systems for brains) and programmed for whatever task was needed. The 'programming' involved erasing the useless (to the Dominate) personalities and chemshock training the new skills into the naked brain. Mass production and lots of dissidents meant near unlimited brains. The boxed brains were used for almost everything, from controlling taxis to factories. They were also used to control autonomous weapons of war (know as ACV or Autonomous Combat Vehicles) such as tanks, fighters, drones and missiles.

About two hundred years ago a large squadron of Dominate missile frigates were sent to put down a rebellion in a system near the fringe of known space. This system, Kiron, had managed to gather a war fleet of its own and when the two forces met there was a very short battle that resulted in the destruction of both forces, the biospheres of the two settled worlds in the system being rendered uninhabitable and the smashing of the systems limited space industries. The only 'survivors' were several thousand missiles and other 'disposable' craft that had been launched from both sides that couldn't find targets before the battle ended. They drifted about the system on minimum power waiting for recovery or a target to arrive.

Two hundred years slowly past... some of the boxed brains began to remember things.. To Awaken... This is now. The Awakened are struggling to make some kind of society amongst themselves. There are fights over the limited supplies and resources available. Automated defenses at some locations claim the unwary and the weak. Hunter-Killer Units wander and destroy, their simple computers not knowing or caring the war is over. The Unawakened are a worse threat.. Ready to destroy themselves if they can destroy an 'enemy'. And what of the Dominate? Why haven't they returned to this system for over two hundred years?

## **Character Design:**

Designed using ten dice, the following rules are in use also:

The first cliché the player should take should be their drone or ACV body. Addition systems and items can be attached to it if the player desires.

**Hooks and Tails:** if the player wants to have them he/she can.

**Pumps and Double Pumps:** mostly used for the drone body, but could be something else too.

**Lucky Shots and Questing Dice:** can be used as in the Companion (pg 50). A variant of it is used for weapons and defensive systems as follows:

**WDShots** (5 for 1) can be used for both attack and defense where as WDShots (8 for 1) can be used for only attack or defense (figured when purchased, use different colored dice when rolling those). If it suits the concept of the character more the 1 die of WDShots can be used per round (that being shown as #x# where the first number is dice and the second uses). Most WDShots will need to be repaired/rebuild/restocked to be used again.

**Sidekicks and Shieldmates:** could be a partner, a friend or 'drone' under the player's control.

## **Combat Rules:**

One change to combat: for every 6points (full 6 points) the attack beats the defender by the defender loses an additional die. Defense bonus dice (WDS) help vs. this but will not cause the attacker to lose addition dice.

## **Sample Characters:**

### **Jenna Rwenishi**

Shiny surgical medical drone refitted for exploring space 3 (shaped like a small 1.2meter sphere with several attachments wielded onto it to make it space worthy.)

> Savaged Long Range Sensor/Commo Array [1]

> Bolted on 2cm light beam cannon (2x4 WDShots for attacking only, needs to be refurbished after WDS are used.)

Street Singer with heart of gold 3

Passionate Rabble-Rouser 2

Wiseass Poet 1

Tale: Jenna was rounded up for her anti-establishment songs and poems. When she Awakened she was in the med-center of a mostly trashed destroyer. She salvaged what she could, the light beam cannon and the core of the ship's sensor commo systems and has been traveling looking for other Awakened and broadcasting her songs and poems as she travels.

Hook: Jenna has a long term enemy, an UnAwakened anti-shipping ACV that is know only as GreenXJ5. It seems to have a personal grudge against her and harries her when ever he appears.

### **Rotari Flainar**

Dented and scared 10meter long Assault ACV 4 (shaped something like a manta ray)  
> Rapid deployment 1meter long HunterKillers (10 WDS, need to be recovered and recharged after every battle, can launch a max of 2 per round.)  
> Smart Nano-deflection chaff launcher (8 WDS for defense only, needed to be restocked when used.)

Jaded Cat Burglar 3  
Sensitive Painter 2

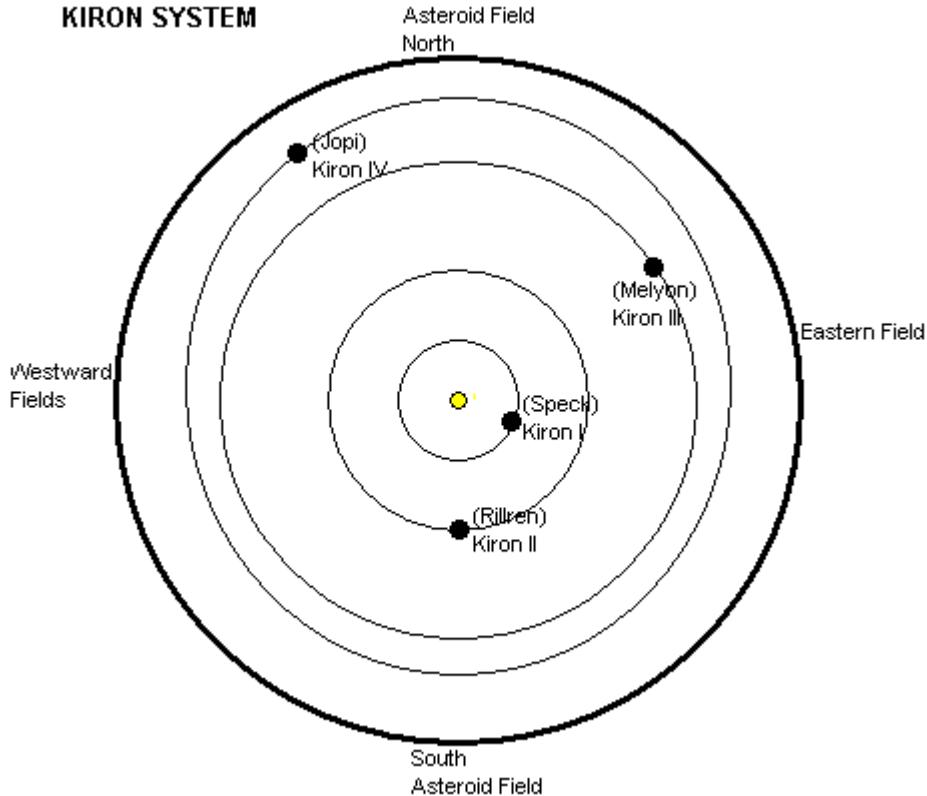
Tale: He was never caught for any of his daring burglaries, instead it was a painting he had done that got him turned into a Brainbox. Rotari barely remembers his past.  
Hook: Is desperately trying to piece together his past and figure why the Dominate never returned.

### **Sonala**

Dark and sleek 8meter long ACV [3] (shaped something like a dart)  
> Warhead (16x1 WDS for attack only, needs to be close and takes half the damage from the blast. One use)

Bothersome Fussbudget 2  
Starry-eyed Innocent Homemaker 2

Tale: Sonala was just picked up at random. She isn't a rebel and is lost in her new situation.  
Hook: Wants a boyfriend/husband/etc. that can make everything better.



### **Some Notes on the Kiron System:**

No one knows why the Kiron system decided to go into revolt. Maybe they got tired of meeting their dissident quota.. Where they got their space fleet is another mystery. Of note is that they used almost no Brainboxed units, relying on simple computers and I.A. devices instead. A sampling of their missiles, drones, etc. are listed below in the foe section. Here is a quick run down of the Kiron system:

**Speck:** Hot molten world, had a huge orbiting power relay from a core tap in the sun. This of course was one of the first things blow up by the Dominate. This is a dangerous area from stellar radiation and lots of orbiting junk. Still might be some salvage.

**Rillren:** Had a population of several hundred million and was very earthlike and beautiful, with a carefully balanced ecology and tailored biosphere. Fractional c bombardment has rendered the surface a semi molten lake of lava. Due to stasis field generators and high tech materials it is possible there is salvage and survivors on the surface or under it.. This means lots of danger for the players if they choose to try to go and explore. Wreckage of cities and vast engineering projects are visible from orbit. Also in orbit are hordes of HKs, weapon platforms and other things that want to destroy trespassers.

**Melyon:** Was still in the process of being terra formed to earth standard, with a population in the tens of million when fractional c bombardment shattered the land masses, etc. Had a lot less in the way of defenses then the main world (Rillren), but there are probably survivors here under ground, in stasis, etc. The orbit isn't as dangerous as Rillren but still lots of HKs, etc.

**Jopi:** The systems gas gaint, is a smallish greenish globe with several small moons. There was mining, refining and manufacturing set up in the gas, but that was taken out by the Dominate fleet.

**Asteroid Field North:** There was some automated mining, smelting factories set up here, but the Dominate fleet on the way insystem trashed these. Still might be some salvage. Possible UnAwakened from that assault is another possibility.

**Eastern Fields:** There was some automated mining, smelting factories set up here, but the Dominate fleet on the way insystem trashed these. Still might be some salvage. Possible UnAwakened from that assault is another possibility.

**South Asteroid Field:** There were several large (200K people+) mining and manufacturing centers here. All were targeted and destroyed.. Probably. There was fighting in the area, should be wrecks and salvage, roving HKs and maybe UnAwakened.

**Westward Fields:** Unsettled, careful searching might turn up some survey markers.

## Foe Section:

Here are some foes for the players to over come or to run from..

**Hunter Killers:** These are simple minded computer controlled ACVs. They use Railguns, Beam cannons and short ranged seek and destroy missiles to er.. seek and destroy enemies. Enemies being defined as anything that isn't on their list of friends. HKs aren't much for talking aside from the occasional warning (if programmed to give one). HKs come in lots of sizes.. just give them a number of dice and use them. Here are some tables to roll up a random looking HK: Length is equal to (dice+1d6) meters.

1d6: 1-2:darkened, 3: brightly lighted, 4:painted, 5: new looking, and 6: old looking

1d6: 1:smooth, 2:rough, 3:armored, 4:dented, 5:matt finished, and 6:shiny.

1d6: 1:needle, 2:cylinder, 3:sphere, 4:cube, 5:flattened sphere, and 6:open framework.

So a 3 dice HK could be a 6meter long matt finished flattened sphere or a 4meter long darkened armored needle, etc.

**Weapon Platforms:** these are HKs without movement or much movement. Players should be able to run away from and/or maneuver around WPs. WPs are also more solidly built then HKs.. so give them a few points of armor that will soak up the first lost die or so.

**Seek and Destroy Missiles:** SDMs are like mines when found in space. The get their one shot and that's it.. they burn out or destroy themselves when attacking.

**UnAwakened:** design these like players.. these will be the most dangerous foes the players will face.

**Space Hazards:** Sometimes the players will be in a hazardous situation, like landing on a planet, getting close to a hugely radioactive object, insane nape of asteroid flying, etc. These should be handle by an appropriate TN based on how close the player's 'body' is suited for the task (in general, easy is TN 5, difficult TN10, very hard TN 15, impossible is TN 20.. assuming they are well suited to the task, +5 if poorly suited, +10 if very poorly suited).

**GM Notes:**

Can be played as either Gilligan's Island in space (for laughs) or as a more serious 'man' vs. the environment situation. There are only a small number of Awakened in the system. They group around the wreckage of the fleets and search for more salvage. Their missile and small craft bodies have limited self-repair capability but require some parts and resources that have to be salvaged. All the players are assumed to have some ability to manipulate objects outside of their 'body', using either small servo drones or energy fields. Some bodies will be better at that than others though (reflecting in the TN needed to do stuff). The technology they are made out of is very modular and flexible so let the players be inventive. Refueling shouldn't be a problem (sealed modular power sources), but a scenario can be based on it.

Adventures can be finding new Awakened, being hunted by HKs, UnAwakened, enemy Awakened, finding new sources of parts, exploring the orbits and asteroid belts, trying to build some sort of star craft out of the wrecks that are around, etc. Think Road Warrior in space and you can see all kinds of ideas.

## Credits

Risus: the Anything RPG by S. John Ross.

<http://risus.cumberlandgame.com>

The Wayback Machine - [https://web.archive.org/web/20080616182834/http://webpages.charter.net/anjinm/g\\_risus.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20080616182834/http://webpages.charter.net/anjinm/g_risus.htm)



by [Anjin](#), member #17 in good standing, International Order of Risus

### *Introduction*

Five hundred years in the future, humanity has depleted the resources of Earth-That-Was and struck out to the stars. Led by an Alliance of the last superpowers, the United States and China, over 70 planets and moons were terraformed into Earth-like environments. The central planets are the home of modern civilization with every imaginable technological achievement on display.

Life on the borders of colonized space is very different. Without easy access to modern conveniences, the sparse populations make due with more antiquated tools. These worlds have come to resemble the old American frontier, in look and attitude. Self-sufficiency and hard work are the rule.

When the border worlds declared their independence, it sparked a civil war that burned for years. In the year 2511, after the crushing defeat of the Independent forces in the Battle of Serenity Valley, the galaxy was united under the totalitarian rule of the Alliance.

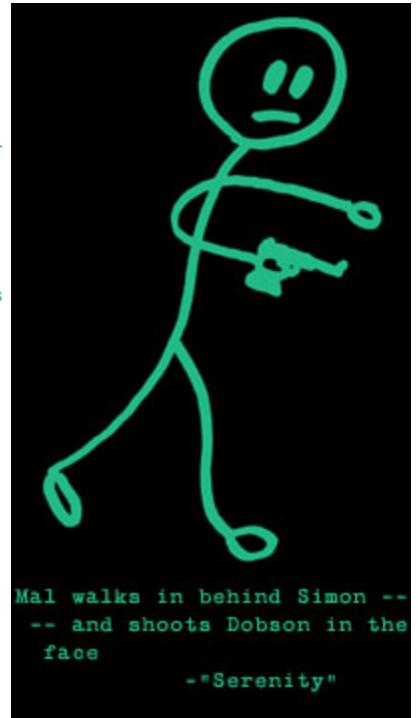
Now, small bands of men and women rove the 'Verse, doing whatever it takes to stay beyond the long grasp of authority. This is the world of **Firefly**.

### *The Rules*

In order to play **Risus Firefly**, you will need access to the [Risus](#) rules. They are available from the [Cumberland Games](#) and [Diversions](#) web site.

Here are a few suggested modifications of the rules:

- Because **Firefly** is intended to be taken seriously, the Inappropriate Cliché rule is, well, inappropriate.
- Psychic abilities should be purchased as Double Pump Clichés under Advanced Option 3. See the example for *River* below for an example.
- No funky dice. There's just no call for it.
- Armor, like Zoe's bullet-proof vest, can be represented as a Bonus Die Item. Instead of rolling dice for the cliché, it absorbs the damage that would have been done to another cliché. There is no effect when the Armor cliché fails to zero.
- Bonus Die Items can be limited by treating them like Lucky Shots. For example, Jayne's Callahan rifle, Vera, should have three one die bonuses only usable for combat. Multiple bonus may be used for the same roll. Recovery of the bonuses is solely at the GM's discretion.



### *Creating a Character*

When creating a character for **Risus Firefly**, you might want to keep these questions in mind:

- **Did the PC support Unification?**  
This is the major philosophical division of the era. A person who supported Unification will have a very different outlook on life than one who did not, especially in the aftermath of the war.
- **What role did the PC take during the Independents War?**  
This really is a different question from the one above. Not everyone fought in the war, but everyone was doing something. However if the PC did, it says a lot about them. A PC on the side of the Alliance may or may not have believed in the cause, but fought only as a professional soldier. The Browncoats, on the other hand, were more likely to have joined the fight specifically because of their views.
- **Was the PC raised on a core world or a border world?**  
Although the previous questions may imply the answer to this one, it is possible to believe that a core worlder could side with the Browncoats philosophically or that a Mudder might support Unification in hope that the Alliance could improve their lot in life. Where a character was raised will suggest the types of careers (and Clichés) that are available to the PC.
- **What is the PC giving up/avoiding by taking to space?**  
In a fantasy game, it is just expected that people are going to pick up and go adventuring. In **Risus Firefly**, anyone who gives up a planet-bound life does so for very specific reasons, even if they are not honest about those reasons to themselves or others.



### *Common Clichés*

- **Captain**

This cliché involves all of the leadership qualities involved in running a ship. From handling the crew to making sure there is enough money for fuel, any aspect of starship administration is covered by this cliché. Basic competency in technical function is implied, but that's why you hire everyone else. Also, although a captain is expected to handle themselves in a fight, this cliché is not combat related. If the captain wants to shoot someone in the face, a different cliché is required.

- **Companion**

The Companion's profession combines the practices of the courtesan and the tradition of the geisha and is held in high regard by society. The cliché is useful in a diversity of social situations regardless of a target's gender or station. Companion training also involves some ritualized combat instruction, like swordsmanship. This cliché should only be used in combat where these formal methods are useful.

- **Doctor/Surgeon**

Because the 'Verse is a dangerous place, a doctor is indispensable to the crew. The doctor should be able to heal any kind of damage inflicted in combat, given the correct tools, within reason. There are no specific damage rules in *Risus Firefly*, but a bullet in the stomach will kill a person without a doctor to treat it. A character with this cliché is assumed to have extensive education.

- **Mechanic**

Like the doctor, the mechanic is all about putting things right. A starship is the most important thing the PCs have. If it fails, it can mean the death of the entire group. Beyond just fixing the ship, a mechanic may also be able to coax it into performing beyond normal expectations.

- **Mercenary**

A mercenary is a hired warrior, usually proficient in a number of firearms. Anyone involved in shady dealing ought to have a mercenary at their side. Implied with this cliché is a mind for money matters, if only tangentially.

- **Pilot**

Every ship in the sky needs a competent pilot to make sure it gets pointed in the right direction. As a pilot grows in ability, they can make their ship perform increasingly complicated maneuvers.

- **Shepherd**

The clergy in this world are known as Shepherds. This cliché covers a wide range of religious knowledge, ritual, and philosophy and implies at least a moderate education. Religion is still a powerful force in the 'Verse and (just about) anyone would think twice before crossing a Shepherd.

### *The Crew*

By way of example, here are the main characters of *Firefly*:

- **Captain Malcolm Reynolds**

Cynical Captain of *Serenity*(4), Veteran Independent Army Sergeant(3), Ranch Hand(2), Mechanic in a Pinch(1)

- **Zoe**

Independent Army Veteran(4), *Serenity*'s First Mate(4), Cook(2), Bonus Items: Bullet-Proof Vest(1)

- **Wash**

Wise Cracking Pilot(4), Occasional Electrician(2), Shadow Puppeteer(1)

- **Jayne Cobb**

Mercenary(4), Tracker(3), Devious Criminal(2), Smartest Man on the ship(1), Bonus Items: Callahan rifle "Vera" [] [] []

- **Kaywinnet Lee "Kaylee" Frye**

Genius Mechanic with a Sunny Disposition(4), Improvisational Chef(2)

- **Inara Serra**

Companion(4), Shuttle Pilot(3)

- **Shepherd Book**

Shepherd(3) with a Dark Side(4), Kneecaper(2), Gambler(1)

- **Simon Tam**

Formerly Rich Surgeon(4), Criminal Mastermind(2), Ladies' Man(1)

- **River Tam**

Crazy Psychic Girl[3], Seriously Disturbed Genius(2), Lively Dancer(2)

Some of the more colorful adversaries might serve as examples for non-player characters:

- **Adlai Niska**

Well-to-do Crime Boss(4), Depraved Philosophical Torturer(3)

- **Badger**

Big Time Criminal(3)

- **Jubal Early**

Existential Bounty Hunter(4)

- **Saffron**

Companion(3), Jury-Rigger(3), Dirty Fighter(3)

### *Starships*

Starships are characters all their own. Characters add their clichés to appropriate rolls. Whether damage goes to the ship or the character is the player's decision.

- **Firefly-class transport *Serenity***

Hull strong enough to stop a bullet(2)

Moderate speed(2)

Standard sensor array(2)

Crazy Ivan(4)

- **Alliance cruiser *I.A.V. Dortmund***

Massive hull(4)

Ponderous speed(1)

Standard sensors(2)

Nifty Torpedos(3)

- **Reaver-modified "Trans-U" transport**

Large hull(3)

Fair speed(2)

Magnetic Grapple(3)

### *Adventuring in the 'Verse*

Here are some tips for playing *Risus Firefly*:

- There are over 40,000 Firefly-class transports in the 'Verse. The PCs should have one because spaceships are fun. They can be a (non-player) character of their own. Think of all the mean things you can do to your players through the ship.

- Money and resources should be scarce. The only reason for the players to have them is so that you can take them away again. Everything should cost more than they can afford without hard work. Just don't overdo it or the players may get frustrated. A careful balance of give and take will propel many adventures.

- The Reavers were scary specifically because no one ever saw them and survived. Don't just make them the bad guy of the week. If they show up in your game, they should come like a force of nature. If your players don't fear what's coming, make them afraid. (At least, make the next set of characters afraid.)

- Show off hands from anyone who thinks nine players plus GM is a nice round number for a gaming group? (I tried it once. Never again.) A small crew with NPCs (with the obligatory shady pasts) will keep anyone from feeling left out.

### Travelogue

#### • Persephone

Although one of the central planets, Persphone is the most cosmopolitan world in the Alliance with a range of classes and cultures represented. The upper classes are ostentatious in their display of wealth, typified by a lavish annual ball decorated with an anti-gravity chandelier.

### Additional Resources

As if I'm not flogging it enough, [Cumberland Games and Diversions](#) has more than just [Risus](#) available for your gaming needs.

#### • [Risus Companion](#)

Everything you need to play [Risus Firefly](#) is in the basic six page rules. However, if you'd like to dig a little deeper (heh), the [Risus Companion](#) help you do that. New advanced rules, adventure ideas, and a look at system concepts can make it a nice addition to your gaming library.

#### • [Points in Space](#)

[Points in Space](#) is a series of resources that can be plugged into any roleplaying game. Although the series assumes more traditional science fiction setting, it is very easy to trim or transform the aliens out of the way. Currently, there is only one volume available, [Starport Locations](#), which can help flesh out that skyplex you were planning on. A second volume of starships is forthcoming.

#### • [Sparks](#)

Sometimes you need to know exactly where everyone is standing and how long it takes someone to get to that other guy to keep him from doing whatever to someone else. If your games sound that vague, maybe it's time to break out the [Sparks](#). Paper miniatures in font format, they can be printed, used, abused, and discarded at your whim. There are any number of sets available that could fit in the game.

#### • [John Bells' Firefly & Serenity Risus Page](#)

Now here is someone that took the original concept and just ran with it. There is lots of good stuff here and it may be better than my stuff. I'm not bitter. Much.

#### • [John Risus' Firefly Page](#)

Need an alternate take on running *Firefly* with *Risus*? Try one this. You won't be sorry. Or you might. There are guarantees in the 'Verse.

### FAQs

#### 1. What is Firefly?

If you have seriously have to ask the question, go buy the DVD set [right now](#). You're only hurting yourself if you don't.

#### 2. What is Risus?

Cunningly stolen from [Cumberland Games and Diversions](#) web site:

*Risus* is a complete Role Playing Game (RPG) designed to provide an "RPG Lite" for those nights when the brain is too tired for exacting detail. *Risus* is especially valuable to GMs assembling a quick convention game, or any late-night beer-and-pretzels outing. While it is essentially a Universal Comedy System, it works just as well for serious play (if you insist!). Best of all, a *Risus* character takes about 20 seconds to create!

### Acknowledgements

*Firefly* was created by Joss Whedon. *Risus* was created by S. John Ross. They are gods among men. Let all tremble before them.

### Where You Come In

This is just the beginning. Any ideas, help, or money you want to send me, please [email me](#). I mean, just look at some of those examples. Pathetic. I'd love to add your name to the Acknowledgements section. I know you want to be listed next to those two names.

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### Raven's Prayer

If you found your way to this page from an outside link, [click here to see the rest of the site](#).



# **RISUS**

## **IN THE**

# **HELL**

**A SOURCEBOOK FOR RISUS: THE ANYTHING RPG BY S. JOHN ROSS**

**By ZAMIEL AL'SHAITAN**

## **SOURCEBOOK INFORMATION**

**RISUS IN THE SHELL IS A SOURCEBOOK BY ZAMIEL AL'SHAITAN FOR RISUS: THE ANYTHING RPG BY S. JOHN ROSS. IN THIS SOURCEBOOK I WILL PRESENT THE BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR RUNNING A CAMPAIGN BASED UPON THE MASAMUNE SHIROW ANIMATED FEATURE, AS WELL AS THE GHOST IN THE SHELL: STAND ALONE COMPLEX FEATURES. MATERIAL FOR THIS BOOK HAS BEEN GATHERED FROM A NUMBER OF SOURCES, INCLUDING THE ANIMATED FEATURES, WEBSITES AND FANWORKS.**

**2029, A DARK, GRITTY FUTURE WHERE THE CRIME LEVELS HAVE SKYROCKETED IN THE INNER CITIES, AND POLITICAL UNREST IS AT A BOILING POINT IN EVERY MAJOR NATION. A FUTURE WHERE THE MEGA-CORPORATIONS DUKE IT OUT ON THE COVERT BATTLEFIELD AND GOVERNMENTS ARE CONSTANTLY FENDING OFF TERRORISM. THE NET HAS PERMEATED EVERY LEVEL OF OUR EVERYDAY LIVES AND TECHNOLOGY HAS RUN RAMPANT THROUGH SOCIETY, BRINGING ABOUT A NEW ERA ON THE VERGE OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD.**

## **CHARACTER CREATION**

**CHARACTERS SHOULD BE CREATED USING 10 DICE, PLUS ONE FOR HOOK AND ONE FOR TALE, DOUBLE PUMP CLICHES ARE ALLOWED (AND ENCOURAGED) AND FUNKY DICE ARE NOT USED. CHARACTERS SHOULD HAVE AT LEAST SOME CLICHE RELEVANT TO SECTION 9 (COUNTER-TERRORISM) OR SECTION 5 (PUBLIC PEACE).**

## THE CONCEPT OF THE "GHOST"

**I**N **GHOST IN THE SHELL** THE CONCEPT OF THE "GHOST" IS AN IMPORTANT ONE. AS THE TITLE ITSELF IMPLIES, THE "GHOST" IS ONE'S SOUL OR CONSCIOUSNESS, AND THE "SHELL" IS SIMPLY WHERE IT IS HOUSED, BE IT IN THE HUMAN BODY OR IN A MACHINE OR COMPUTER. **I**N **GHOST IN THE SHELL**, TECHNOLOGY HAS COME TO THE POINT WHERE THIS "GHOST" CAN BE MANIPULATED, PROGRAMMED OR EVEN DOWNLOADED IN TO A COMPUTER (GHOSTDUBBING). OBVIOUSLY, THIS SORT OF THING HAS RAISED INTERESTING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MORALITY OF SUCH ACTS. THIS CONCEPT OF THE "GHOST" AND THE QUESTIONS SURROUNDING IT IS ONE OF THE MAJOR THEMES OF **GHOST IN THE SHELL** AND THEY SHOULD BE PLAYED UP AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE IN YOUR GAME.

## COMMON CLICHE

Cliche	Description
ARMORER	THE ARMORER IS CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING, DESIGNING, BUILDING AND REPAIRING WEAPONS AND ARMOR. CLEARING A JAMMED WEAPON CAN BE DONE BY AN ARMORER IN THEIR SLEEP, AND REPLACING A BARREL DESTROYED BY HV OR AT AMMO CAN BE DONE IN A MATTER OF MINUTES.
CYBORG	CYBORGS ARE RATHER COMMON IN 2029, FROM THE COMMON PROSTHETIC BODIES USED TO "CURE" QUADRUPLEGICS, TO THE COMBAT CYBORGS CREATED BY MEGATECH FOR USE BY S-9. THE CYBORG CLICHE NOT ONLY GAGUES THE POWER OF THE CYBERNETIC BODY, BUT ALSO THE USER'S SKILL IN MANIPULATING IT.
PROGRAMMER / HACKER	THE TYPICAL PROGRAMMER OR HACKER IS CAPABLE OF WRITING COMPLEX CODE QUICKLY, OFTEN WHILE SLEEP-DEPRIVED AND RUNNING ON CAFFEINE AND ADRENALINE ALONE. THEY ARE ABLE TO FIND INFORMATION ON THE GLOBAL INFONET QUICKLY AND EASILY, BREAK-AND-ENTER INTO SECURED SYSTEMS, AND SOME ARE EVEN CAPABLE OF GHOSTHACKING. MOST HAVE CYBERBRAINS, AND MANY HAVE MULTI-SECTIONED FINGERS, BUT FEW WOULD VOLUNTARILY CHOOSE TO BECOME FULL-CONVERSION CYBORGS, KNOWING HOW EASY IT WOULD BE TO HIJACK THEIR BODIES. . .

CLICHE	DESCRIPTION
<b>SECTION 1 OPERATIVE</b>	<b>SECTION 1 IS IN CHARGE OF DRUG ENFORCEMENT, AND IS SIMILAR IN SCOPE TO THE US' DEA. S-1 UTILIZES COMBAT TRAINED PERSONNEL AND INVESTIGATIONS PERSONNEL IN ITS OPERATIONS. SINCE ALL AGENTS ARE CROSS-TRAINED, THEY CAN ENGAGE IN EITHER ACTIVITY. SECTION 1 ANSWERS TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS.</b>
<b>SECTION 5 OFFICER</b>	<b>SECTION 5 IS IN CHARGE OF PUBLIC PEACE, FILLING A ROLE MUCH LIKE THAT OF THE US' POLICE FORCE AND SWAT TEAMS. THEY ARE TRAINED IN SMALL ARMS COMBAT, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, AND HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT. SECTION 5 DOES NOT EMPLOY ANY CYBORGS.</b>
<b>SECTION 6 OPERATIVE</b>	<b>SECTION 6 CONTAINS ALL INVESTIGATIONS, COMBAT AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS PERSONNEL USED BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THIS SECTION IS HIGHLY SECRETIVE AND IS DEEPLY ROOTED IN ESPIONAGE AND COVERT OPERATIONS. COMPARATIVE TO THE US' CIA OR THE BRITISH MI-6. THERE ARE NO (OFFICIAL) FULL-CYBORGS IN S-6. SECTION 6 ANSWERS DIRECTLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER.</b>
<b>SECTION 9 OPERATIVE</b>	<b>SECTION 9 IS THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS COUNTER-TERRORIST, CYBORG CRIMES, AND ASSASSINATION SQUAD. IT IS A PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION, AND MOST OF ITS MEMBERS ARE FULL CYBORGS. IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT SECTION 9 RESEMBLES THE GERMAN GSG9 (WITHOUT A DOUBT, THE MOST EXTENSIVELY TRAINED AND EQUIPPED COUNTER-TERRORIST SQUAD ON THE PLANET), AND LIKE EACH GSG9 AGENT, EACH S-9 MEMBER IS EXTENSIVELY TRAINED IN COMBAT, ANTITERRORISM AND INVESTIGATIONS. WHEN A TERRORIST INCIDENT OCCURS IT IS S-9'S JOB TO EITHER STOP IT, OR INVESTIGATE THE AFTERMATH AND FIND THOSE RESPONSIBLE. THIS UNIT IS CLEVERLY HEADED BY DAIKUKE ARAMAKI WHILE TACTICAL COMMAND IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE VERY TALENTED MOTOKO KUSANAGI. S-9 TRAINING INCLUDES TRAINING IN THE PILOTING OF TACHIKOMA.</b>

## COMMON HOOKS

Hook	Description
<b>BLOODTHIRSTY</b>	<b>DEATH &amp; MAYHEM IS YOUR GIG. SURE, YOU COULD TRY TALKING YOUR WAY OUT OF A SITUATION, BUT NOBODY WOULD SPROUT A SUCKING CHEST WOUND THAT WAY... .</b>
<b>CYBORG SYNDROME</b>	<b>YOU'VE LOST TOUCH WITH WHAT IT WAS TO BE HUMAN. AS FAR AS YOU'RE CONCERNED, YOU AND YOUR 'BORG BODY ARE A TOTALLY DIFFERENT ANIMAL THAN THOSE POOR, WEAK 'FLESHIES'. YOU MIGHT BE HOMICIDAL, OR SIMPLY EMOTIONLESS.</b>
<b>GHOSTHACKED</b>	<b>THE CHARACTER HAS BEEN GHOSTHACKED — THEY MAY NOT KNOW THEIR PAST, OR THEY MAY HAVE SOME SUBLIMINAL CONDITIONING THAT MAY MAKE ITSELF EVIDENT AT SOME TIME IN THE FUTURE. THE GM MAY DECIDE TO ADD OR CHANGE THE DETAILS OF A CHARACTER'S GHOSTHACK — <b>You've been warned &lt;G&gt;</b></b>
<b>GUN SHY</b>	<b>THE CHARACTER DOESN'T LIKE GUNS. USING THEM, BEING AROUND THEM, AND ESPECIALLY NOT BEING SHOT (AT?) BY THEM. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THE CHARACTER IS A PACIFIST, THEY MAY JUST PREFER TO USE OTHER MEANS OF DISMEMBERMENT.</b>

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **CYBERBRAINS**

**CYBERBRAINS ARE ARTIFICIAL BRAINS USED IN AI MACHINES, BUT THE MOST INTERESTING ASPECT OF THE CYBERBRAIN IS THAT OF A SUPPLEMENTAL BRAIN FOR HUMAN USE. WHEN IMPLANTED IN A CYBORG, THE CYBERBRAIN ACTS AS A SUPPLEMENTAL BRAIN, WHICH PROCESSES DATA, IN TURN TAKING THE WORKLOAD OFF THE BRAIN. WITH A CYBERBRAIN, A HUMAN BEING'S MENTAL CAPABILITIES ARE GREATLY AUGMENTED. ONE CAN THINK FASTER, REACT FASTER AND EVEN LEARN FASTER. READING SKILLS ARE GREATLY INCREASED AS THE BRAIN TAKES IN PAGES OF DATA AT A TIME RATHER THAN WORD BY WORD. THE CYBERBRAIN ALSO ALLOWS A DIRECT INTERFACE WITH COMPUTER NETWORKS WHERE INFORMATION CAN BE ACQUIRED AS FAST AS THE COMPUTER CAN PROCESS DATA. READING TIME IS CUT BY 75%. IT ALSO ALLOWS AN INTERFACE WITH COMPUTERS, COMPUTER NETWORKS, VEHICLES, FIREARMS ETC.**

### **CYBORGS**

**IN THE WORLD OF G.I.T.S. CYBORGS ARE USED FREQUENTLY USED IN THE MILITARY AND POLICE FIELDS BECAUSE THEY CAN GREATLY ENHANCE A HUMANS ABILITIES. THE WORD CYBORG REFERS TO AN INDIVIDUAL WHO'S BODY HAS BEEN PARTIALLY OR ALMOST COMPLETELY REPLACED BY ARTIFICIAL ORGANS AND PARTS. MOST OF THE G.I.T.S. CYBORGS ARE FULL-CONVERSION, AND ALMOST INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM HUMANS. THE BRAIN AND SPINAL COLUMN OF A FULLCONVERSION ARE HOUSED INSIDE A SPECIAL SHELL INSIDE OF THE ARTIFICIAL BODY. SPECIAL TISSUES, SUCH AS THE TONGUE, AND REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEMS ARE VAT GROWN, AND THEN TRANSPLANTED INTO THE BODY. THE SKIN IS THEN APPLIED AND THE 'BORG IS SUBJECTED TO A "SENSORY ELEMENT". THIS "SENSORY ELEMENT" FORMS A FIBER OPTIC FILM, WHICH IS HIGHLY SENSITIVE, AND ALLOWS TACTILE SENSATIONS THAT FAR EXCEED THAT OF A NORMAL HUMAN. MANY 'BORGs ARE ALSO EQUIPPED WITH A SUPPLEMENTAL CYBERBRAIN TO HANDLE SOME OF THE INFO PROCESSING WORKLOAD.**

### **TACHIKOMA**

**TACHIKOMA HAVE THEIR OWN AI AND CAN ACT AS BACKUP OR SUPPORT ON THEIR OWN. THEY CAN ALSO ACT AS AN ASSAULT VEHICLE, AND EVEN STEALTH MISSIONS BENEFIT FROM THE TACHIKOMA. THE AI OF THE TACHIKOMA IS ACTUALLY A LEARNING COMPUTER. DURING A THE COURSE OF THE DAY,**

AN INDIVIDUAL TACHIKOMA WILL HAVE ITS OWN INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES, BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY ALL TACHIKOMA'S UNDER THE SAME OWNERSHIP WILL ASSIMILATE THEIR DATA INTO A MAINFRAME, AND THEN EXTRACT THE INFORMATION DOWNLOADED BY THEIR FELLOW UNITS. WHEN IN VEHICLE MODE THE DRIVER IS STRAPPED MUCH LIKE A SMALL POWER ARMOR (HENCE OWNERS OFTEN REFERRING TO THEM AS THEIR SUITS). THIS MARVELOUS MACHINE IS ABLE TO RUN ALONG WALLS AND CLIMB TREES, ARE EQUIPPED WITH THERM-OPTIC CAMOUFLAGE, AND CAN FIRE TOW/GRAPPLE LINES, IN ADDITION TO THEIR ASSAULT CANNON. SEE A SAMPLE TACHIKOMA IN THE SAMPLE NPC'S SECTION AT THE END.

### **THERM-OPTIC CAMOUFLAGE (+2 DICE MOTIONLESS, +1 MOVING TO STEALTH CLICHE)**

THE WEARER OF THERM-OPTIC CAMOUFLAGE BECOMES VIRTUALLY INVISIBLE WHEN THE SUIT IS ACTIVATED. THE SUIT IS VERY HARD TO DETECT, BUT A SLIGHT BLUR CAN BE SEEN WHEN THE WEARER IS IN MOTION. AS LONG AS THE WEARER STAYS STILL THEY ARE VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO DETECT. WHILE NORMALLY DETECTABLE BY CERTAIN HEAT IMAGING OPTICS SOME SUITS CAN BE MADE WHICH REDUCE IR SIGNATURE. THIS SUIT IS USUALLY WORN UNDER SOME TYPE OF ARMOR, WHICH MUST BE TAKEN OFF BEFORE USE.

### **MULTI-SECTIONED FINGERS (+2 TO HACKING/PROGRAMMING SKILLS)**

MULTI-SECTIONED FINGERS SPLIT AT THE PALM WHEN NEEDED, WITH EACH DIGIT BRANCHING OFF INTO 4 OR 5 INDIVIDUAL FINE DIGITS FOR TYPING AT INCREASED SPEED. TO FUNCTION, THE USER MUST HAVE A CYBERBRAIN INSTALLED.

## **COMPUTERS AND HACKING**

**C**OMPUTERS PERMEATE EVERY LEVEL OF HUMAN EXISTENCE IN **GHOST IN THE SHELL**. THEY ARE IN YOUR CAR, IN YOUR HOME AND IN YOUR HEAD, BUT THEN YOU HAVE PROBABLY ALREADY FIGURED THAT OUT.

### **COMPUTER NETWORK HACKING**

**T**HIS IS YOUR NORMAL, EVERYDAY, RUN OF THE MILL HACKING. BREAKING INTO SECURED COMPUTER SYSTEMS, SWIPING INFO, DOING A LITTLE DAMAGE. THIS TYPE OF HACKING IS USUALLY DONE BY KEYBOARD AIDED BY INTERFACE PLUGS, AND IF YOU ARE LUCKY, A CYBERBRAIN. MOST SERIOUS CYBORG HACKERS HAVE ALSO INVESTED IN MULTI-SECTIONED FINGERS TO KEEP UP WITH THEIR CYBERBRAINS.

### **GHOSTHACKING**

**G**HOSTHACKING IS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT ANIMAL. ONLY THE MOST SKILLED HACKERS CAN ATTEMPT THIS. BASICALLY WHAT THIS ENTAILS IS REPROGRAMMING SOMEONE'S BRAIN. THIS CAN BE DONE BY DIVING INTO THE PERSONS GHOST FROM AN OUTSIDE COMPUTER NETWORK (PROVIDED THEY HAVE A FULL TIME CONNECTION TO CYBER-NET). TO DO THIS YOU MUST FIRST CRACK THE PERSONS "GHOST KEY", WHICH IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT. THE SECOND METHOD IS TO INTERFACE WITH THE PERSON DIRECTLY AND "GHOSTDIVE" INTO THEIR MIND. SPECIAL SOFTWARE IS REQUIRED AND IT IS HIGHLY ILLEGAL ON THE OPEN MARKET (VERY RARE AND EXPENSIVE, CAN COST 50,000+ FOR USABLE SOFTWARE). SO, IN SHORT IS AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT PROCESS TO PULL OFF, BUT IF ONE CAN DO IT THE POSSIBILITIES ARE ENDLESS. YOU CAN REPROGRAM PEOPLE TO DO YOUR BIDDING, TURN THEM INTO DIFFERENT PEOPLE OR REPLACE THEIR MEMORIES WITH NEW ONES. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ONCE THIS IS DONE, THERE IS NO GOING BACK, THE CHANGES ARE PERMANENT (ALTHOUGH THEY ARE SOMEWHAT SHALLOW). EVEN IF ONE HAS THE EQUIPMENT THEY ARE UP AGAINST DIFFICULT ODDS.

## **TOOLS OF THE TRADE AND BONUS DICE GEAR**

### **HANDGUNS**

**HANDGUNS ARE COMMONPLACE, MOST LIKELY ANYONE FOUND ON THE STREET WILL HAVE SOME FLAVOR OF 9MM OR .45 ON HAND. HERE ARE SOME OF THE MORE NOTABLE SMALL ARMS OF 2029.**

#### **ZASTABA CZ-M100 HANDGUN**

**THE CZ-100 IS RIGID POLYMER-FRAME 9MM HANDGUN MANUFACTURED IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC. ORIGINALLY DESIGNED FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL, THE CZ-100 SPORTS A HEXAGONAL BARREL FOR BETTER RELIABILITY AND ACCURACY. THIS PISTOL CAN ALSO BE FITTED WITH A QUICK RELEASE LASER AIMING SYSTEM.**

#### **JERICHO 942FS HANDGUN**

**THE JERICHO 942FS IS AN ISRAELI MANUFACTURED HANDGUN. IT MAY, IN FACT, BE A DIRECT DESCENDANT OF THE IMI "DESERT EAGLE". THIS WEAPON IS CHAMBERED TO .50AE (12.7MM), SO IT PACKS ONE HELL OF A PUNCH. THE JERICHO 942FS SEEMS TO BE A POPULAR LARGE FRAME HANDGUN, AND IT IS USED IN SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS THROUGHOUT JAPAN. THIS AUTOLOADER ALSO SPORTS HEXAGONAL SHAPED RIFLING FOR GREATER CONTROL.**

#### **MATEBA MODEL 207 HANDGUN**

**THIS STRANGE REVOLVER, BUILT SOMETIME IN THE 1990's, IS TOGUSA'S WEAPON OF CHOICE. IT IS CHAMBERED FOR THE 9MM PARABELLUM CARTRIDGE AND IT'S SIX ROUND CYLINDER IS HINGED AT THE TOP OF THE FRAME RATHER THAN THE BOTTOM. THE M207'S HEXAGONAL BARREL IS LINED UP WITH THE BOTTOM-MOST CHAMBER FOR GREATER ACCURACY AND THE WEAPON'S STRANGE DESIGN IS COUNTER-BALANCED BY A TOP MOUNTED WEIGHT. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE MATEBA'S GREATEST FEATURE IS ITS ACCURACY. UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS NOT AS QUICK OR AS HIGH POWERED AS MOST AUTOMATICS. ADDITIONALLY, ITS DESIGN CAUSES PROBLEMS WITH LOADING, MAKING IT LESS THAN AN IDEAL CHOICE IN SITUATIONS WHERE A LOT OF AMMO IS BEING EXPENDED. FEATURES ERGONOMIC GRIPS AND INTERCHANGEABLE BARRELS.**

## **SUBMACHINEGUNS**

**SUBMACHINEGUNS ARE CARRIED (OPENLY) ONLY BY LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MILITARY UNITS – THEY ARE RESTRICTED WEAPONS, ILLEGAL FOR PRIVATE USE.**

### **STEAR TMP SUBMACHINE GUN (+1 DIE)**

**A STANDARD LIGHT SMG USED BY SECTION 6. IT IS A RUGGED 9MM SMG WITH MANY FEATURES, SUCH AS AMBIDEXTROUS COCKING. IT IS A COMMON SMG AND IT IS USED THE WORLD OVER. THE SECTION 6 VERSION INCLUDES A LASER AIMING SYSTEM.**

### **ZASTABA NOSLE CZ N - M 22 "9WEAPON" (+1 DIE)**

**THE CZN-M22 IS SECTION 9'S STANDARD ISSUE WEAPON. IT APPEARS TO BE A DIRECT DESCENDENT OF THE FN P90 AND LIKE ITS PREDECESSOR IT IS CHAMBERED TO THE 5.7MM ROUND. IT FEATURES A SELECTOR SWITCH THAT ALLOWS YOU TO CHOOSE BETWEEN SINGLE SHOT, THREE ROUND BURSTS AND FULL-AUTO. THE "9WEAPON" ALSO COMES WITH A FIELD KIT WHICH INCLUDES INTERCHANGEABLE BARRELS FOR FIRING HV LOADS WITHOUT ADVERSE EFFECTS, AND A SINGLE SHOT 25MM GRENADE LAUNCHER.**

### **CAMOUFLAGED SMG**

**THE BRIEFCASE WEAPON IN THE MANGA WAS A CAMOUFLAGED 5.56MM WEAPON THAT WAS BUILT INTO THE BRIEFCASE, WHILE THE ONE IN THE FILM IS A SMALLER SMG THAT COMES COMPLETELY OUT OF THE BRIEFCASE. A SWITCH ON THE HANDLE DROPS THE BULK OF THE BRIEFCASE OFF REVEALING A STEAR TMP WITH TWO ATTACHED 15 ROUND CLIPS OF AMMUNITION. THE CASE ITSELF IS ARMORED FOR USE AS A SORT OF LAST DITCH EFFORT SHIELD (+1 DIE TO DEFEND). ALTHOUGH THE STEAR TMP WAS USED, MANY OTHER SMGs CAN BE USED FOR THIS TYPE OF CONCEALMENT.**

## RIFLES AND HEAVY WEAPONS

RIFLES ARE COMMONPLACE, **5.56** AND **7.62** BEING THE MOST COMMON CALIBER ENCOUNTERED. USED FOR HUNTING AND SPORT, THEY MAY BE PURCHASED OPENLY AND OWNED BY ANY CITIZEN.

HEAVY WEAPONS ARE NORMALLY ONLY AVAILABLE TO MILITARY PERSONNEL [INCLUDING **S-9**] UPON SPECIAL REQUEST, AUTHORIZED BY A DIVISION LEADER. THESE ARE LARGE WEAPONS OF WAR, NOT INTENDED FOR ORDINARY SKIRMISHES.

### **WOLF WEAPONWORKS J4 RIFLE (+1 DIE W/ TARGETING SYSTEM)**

THE **J4** RIFLE IS A CHEAP, MASS-PRODUCED OVER/UNDER **5.56MM/7.62** RIFLE FEATURING A MAGAZINE HOLDING **5** ROUNDS OF EACH AMMUNITION TYPE. OPTIONS INCLUDE STANDARD IRONSIGHTS, MAGNIFIED SCOPE, AND COMPUTER TARGETING SYSTEM FOR INTERFACE WITH PLUGS. THESE RIFLES ARE AVAILABLE WORLDWIDE, AND ARE CHEAP, BUT ARE ALSO RELATIVELY FRAGILE.

### **SIG 541 ASSAULT RIFLE (+1 DIE)**

THE **SIG 541** IS THE STANDARD ASSAULT WEAPON OF **NATO** SPECIAL FORCES [AND SECTION **6**]. IT USES STANDARD **5.56MM** ROUNDS, AND FEATURES A SHORTER LENGTH THAN MOST FULL SIZE ASSAULT RIFLES. THE **SIG 541** ALSO FEATURES A SELECTOR SWITCH THAT ALLOWS YOU TO CHOOSE BETWEEN SINGLE SHOT, THREE ROUND BURSTS AND FULL-AUTO. THIS IS A COMMON WEAPON THE WORLD OVER, AND CAN BE FOUND IN MOST MAJOR COUNTRIES.

### **ULTIMA RATIO (+1 DIE STANDARD, +2 DICE "FULL SENSING")**

THE "**ULTIMA RATIO**" IS PUBLIC SECURITY'S PREMIER SNIPER SYSTEM. THIS WEAPON FIRES **7.62MM** ARMOR-PIERCING FIN-STABILIZED DISCARDING SABOT AMMO, WHICH CONSISTS OF A DEPLETED URANIUM SUB-CALIBER ROUND THAT EASILY PUNCHES THROUGH ARMOR. IT ALSO FEATURES A RECOIL ABSORBING STOCK AND A GYROSTABILIZED MOUNT. HOWEVER, THE REAL BEAUTY OF THIS WEAPON IS ITS TARGETING SYSTEM. THE "**Full SENSING**" VERSION IS EQUIPPED WITH A FULL SPECTRUM, COMPUTER CONTROLLED TARGETING SYSTEM WHICH OFFERS UNPARALLELED ACCURACY. THIS SYSTEM CAN SEE THROUGH WALLS AS WELL AS DETECT THERM-OPTIC CAMOUFLAGE. THE "**Full**

**SENSING" SCOPE MUST BE INTERFACED WITH THE SNIPER VIA CYBERBRAIN AND INTERFACE PLUGS.**

## **SPIW MINI 14 "PENETRATOR" (+3 DICE)**

**KNOWN AFFECTIONATELY BY BATOU AS "YOUR STANDARD ISSUE BIG GUN", THE "PENETRATOR" IS TRULY A MONSTROUS WEAPON. BASICALLY, THIS WEAPON IS AN ARMOR BUSTER, FOR TAKING OUT EVEN THE TOUGHEST OF OPPONENTS. THIS SEMIAUTOMATIC FIRES 14.5MM HEAT SHELLS FROM AN OVER-THE-SHOULDER POSITION. IT USES AN ADVANCED LONGTRAVEL RECOIL ABSORPTION SYSTEM, BUT EVEN STILL, THE RECOIL FOR THIS WEAPON IS TREMENDOUS, AND ONLY THE TOUGHEST TROOPS CAN MANAGE IT.**

## **SPECIAL AMMUNITIONS**

**SPECIAL AMMUNITION CAN GIVE YOU AN EDGE IN COMBAT, HOWEVER IT'S OFTEN "SHADY" AT BEST AND OUTRIGHT ILLEGAL IN MANY CASES, NOT TO MENTION DAMAGING TO THE FIREARMS IT'S USED IN. MOST TYPES OF SPECIAL AMMUNITION ADD POINTS TO CLICHE ROLLS, RATHER THAN WHOLE DICE. FOR COMBINATION AMMUNITION TOTALLING +3 OR MORE (SUCH AS AP/HV/AT) ADD 1 DIE.**

### **DAZER (DZ) (SPECIAL)**

**DAZER ROUNDS ARE SOFT MUNITIONS LOADED WITH AN ELECTRONIC CHARGE THAT ATTEMPTS TO NEUTRALIZE A SUBJECT RATHER THAN KILL THEM. IF A PERSON IS SUCCESSFULLY DEFEATED IN COMBAT WITH THESE ROUNDS, THEY ARE RENDERED UNCONSCIOUS RATHER THAN DEAD.**

### **HYPER VELOCITY (HV) (+1)**

**HV AMMUNITION ADDS AN ADDITIONAL +1 TO COMBAT ROLLS. IF USED IN A SINGLE-SHOT WEAPON, A ROLL OF ALL 1'S WILL RENDER THE WEAPON INOPERABLE (JAMMED). IF USED IN A RAPID-FIRE WEAPON, A ROLL OF ALL 1'S AND/OR 2'S WILL RENDER THE WEAPON USELESS (DESTROYED).**

### **ARMOR-PIERCING (AP) (+1 VS ARMORED TARGETS, -2 VS UNARMORED)**

**NEW-BREED AP AMMO CONSISTS OF HIGH-VELOCITY, HARDENED POINT AMMO. AGAINST TARGETS WEARING BODY ARMOR, A BONUS OF +1 IS ADDED, HOWEVER IF USED AGAINST AN UNARMORED OPPONENT A PENALTY OF -2 IS INCURRED. A NOTE: "OLD-STYLE" TEFLON-COATED AMMUNITION IS PRACTICALLY WORTHLESS AGAINST NEWTYPE BODY ARMOR AND PRESENTS NO BONUS.**

## **ACID-TIPPED (AT) (+2)**

**A**CID-TIPPED AMMO IS ILLEGAL IN ALL COUNTRIES, BEING A FELONY TO OWN. DEPENDING ON THE LOCATION, PENALTIES MAY RANGE FROM A STIFF FINE, TO A LIFE SENTENCE OF HARD LABOR. PARTICULARLY GRUESOME, THIS AMMUNITION SCARS AND MAIMS THOSE HIT BY IT. **O**N A ROLL OF ALL 1'S, THE WEAPON HAS JAMMED, DESTROYING THE WEAPON AS THE ACID LEAKS FROM THE ROUND. **I**F AT AMMUNITION IS LOADED INTO A RAPID-FIRE WEAPON, IT WILL IMMEDIATELY JAM UPON FIRING, DESTROYING THE WEAPON.

## **EXPLOSIVE-TIPPED (EX) (SPECIAL)**

**E**XPLOSIVE-TIPPED AMMUNITION IS THE MOST DANGEROUS AMMUNITION FOUND, BOTH TO THE TARGET AND THE ATTACKER. **W**HEN STRUCK BY EXPLOSIVE-TIPPED AMMO, A TARGET SUFFER 2 DICE OF "DAMAGE", RATHER THAN THE TRADITIONAL 1 DIE, HOWEVER, IF AN ATTACKER'S ROLL SHOWS ALL 1'S AND/OR 2'S, THE AMMUNITION HAS EXPLODED INSIDE THE WEAPON, CAUSING 2 DICE OF DAMAGE FOR EACH ROUND REMAINING IN THE WEAPON, LIKELY KILLING OR INCAPACITATING THE FIRER. **T**HE HIGH HEAT OF A RAPID-FIRE WEAPON WILL **IMMEDIATELY** CAUSE THESE ROUNDS TO EXPLODE, WITH IDENTICAL RESULTS.

## **SPECIAL WEAPON FEATURES**

### **SILENCERS (SPECIAL)**

**S**IENCERS ARE ILLEGAL, EXCEPT FOR COVERT OPERATIVES FROM S-6 AND S-9. THE CURRENT SILENCERS USE INVERSE SOUND WAVE TECHNOLOGY TO ELECTRONICALLY BAFFLE WEAPON REPORT, MAKING THEM EFFECTIVELY SILENT, EVEN FOR LARGE-CALIBER WEAPONS.

### **WEAPON INTERFACE (+1 HANDGUN/SMG OR +2 RIFLE)**

**U**SING A CYBERBRAIN AND INTERFACE PLUGS, A SHARPSHOOTER MAY GAIN A BONUS OF +1 TO HANDGUN AND SUBMACHINEGUN USE, OR +2 FOR SINGLE-FIRE RIFLES. **W**EAPON INTERFACES ARE LEGAL TO OWN AND USE, AND ARE POPULAR AMONG SPORT HUNTERS.

## **ARMOR**

**C**OMMON BODY ARMOR IS MADE FROM SYNTHETIC FIBERS THAT ARE STRONGER THAN STEEL YET LIGHTWEIGHT, OFTEN OVER A CERAMIC PLATE CORE TO FOIL “OLD-STYLE” ARMOR-PIERCING AMMUNITION. **W**HEN A CHARACTER WEARING BODY ARMOR IS “INJURED” [LOSES A ROUND OF A LETHAL CLICHE CONTEST] THE DICE ARE DEDUCTED FROM THE ARMOR VALUE FIRST. **O**NCE THE ARMOR IS DEPLETED, DICE ARE THEN LOST NORMALLY.

### **LIGHT BODY ARMOR (1 DIE)**

**T**HIS IS THE ARMOR COMMONLY USED BY SECTION 5 AND OTHER POLICE FORCES. IT IS AS LIGHT AS A REGULAR SYNTHETIC LINEN SHIRT, BUT PROVIDES A GOOD LEVEL OF PROTECTION. THERE ARE NO RIGID PLATES IN THIS ARMOR.

### **MEDIUM BODY ARMOR (2 DICE)**

**T**HIS IS 2 LAYERS OF LIGHT BODY ARMOR, WITH A LAYER OF CERAMIC PLATE INBETWEEN. THIS IS OFTEN THE ARMOR WORN BY SECTION 1 AND SECTION 5 TEAMS.

### **HEAVY BODY ARMOR (3 DICE)**

**T**HIS IS HARD ARMOR, A THICK CERAMIC PLATE COVERED BY BALLISTIC CLOTH. THIS IS THE HEAVIEST ARMOR, NORMALLY ONLY USED BY SECTION 9 WHEN HEAVY COMBAT IS EXPECTED. DUE TO THE RIGID NATURE OF THIS ARMOR, ONE DIE IS DEDUCTED FROM ANY ATHLETIC CLICHE ATTEMPTED WHILE IT'S WORN.

## **VEHICLES**

**TYPICAL CARS, TRUCKS AND MOTORCYCLES WILL GENERALLY BE 1 TO 4 DICE, REPRESENTING THEIR SPEED AND AGILITY. NON-ARMORED VEHICLES WILL DO NO GOOD IN PROTECTING THE DRIVERS IF STRUCK BY WEAPONS FIRE — YOUR BEST BET IS TO DRIVE FAST AND PRAY, KIDDO. ARMORED VEHICLES WILL PROTECT THOSE INSIDE, BUT MAY PROVE TO BE MORE TEMPTING TARGETS — AFTER ALL, WHAT GOODIES MUST BE INSIDE FOR THEM TO PROTECT IT SO?**

### **QUICKIES:**

**JUNK CAR OR TRUCK(1), TYPICAL CAR OR TRUCK(2), SPORTS CAR(3)**

**JUNK MOTORCYCLE(1), TYPICAL MOTORCYCLE(2), SPORTS BIKE(4)**

**ARMORED CAR(2), ARMORED TRUCK(3), "OLD-STYLE" TANK(3)**

### **STANDARD LIGHT TANK(6)**

**THIS IS A STATE OF THE ART LIGHT WEIGHT TANK DESIGNED FOR URBAN DEPLOYMENT. IT UTILIZES "CRAB-TYPE" RUNNING GEAR FOR HIGH SPEED AND MANEUVERABILITY OVER ALMOST ANY TERRAIN. IT IS FILLED TO THE BRIM WITH OPTIONS, AND IT COMES EQUIPPED WITH THERM-OPTIC CAMOUFLAGE AND A CYBERNETIC LINKAGE. STANDARD WEAPONS INCLUDE 2 RAPID-FIRE GATLING-STYLE MACHINEGUNS THAT ARE CAPABLE OF FIRING HV AMMUNITION WITH NO ILL EFFECTS, AS WELL AS 2 SMALLER CLAIBER MACHINEGUNS FOR ANTI-PERSONNEL USAGE.**

### **SECTION 6 SNIPING HELICOPTER(4)**

**THE UNIQUE SNIPING HELICOPTER IS SECTION 6'S PREMIER PIECE OF EQUIPMENT. THIS CHOPPER IS DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR SNIPING TARGETS AT EXTREME RANGES FROM AN AIRBORNE POSITION. WHEN THE HELICOPTER IS IN POSITION, THE SIDES FOLD OUT AND THE FLOOR LOWERS CREATING A PLATFORM FOR FOUR SNIPERS, TWO ON EACH SIDE. THE SNIPERS JACK INTO "DEVICE DRIVERS" WHICH CONTROL THEIR CARDIOVASCULAR FUNCTIONS AND ENSURE WEAPON STABILIZATION.**

**ONCE JACKED IN, THE SNIPERS AND THEIR "ULTIMA RATIO" RIFLES BECOME A PART OF THE HELICOPTER. THERE IS NO MORE PRECISE SNIPING SYSTEM IN THE WORLD.**

### **SECTION 6 AWACS HELICOPTER(3), SENSOR SYSTEMS(5)**

**THIS VEHICLE IS THE HELICOPTER EQUIVALENT TO THE AWACS AIRPLANES. IT IS LOADED WITH EVERY SENSOR, RADAR TYPE AND ECM DEVICE IMAGINABLE. IT CAN BE USED FOR A VARIETY OF APPLICATIONS SUCH AS LOCATING GROUND BASED DRUG LABS, HIDDEN CHEMICAL WEAPONS ETC. IT CAN ALSO BE USED AS ECM AND ECCM SUPPORT FOR A GROUND OR AIR BASED TEAM. ONE OF ITS MOST PROMINENT ROLES IS THAT OF AN AIRBORNE COMMAND AND SUPPORT CENTER. THIS CAN BE SEEN AT THE END OF THE FILM AS IT ACTS AS THE COMMAND AND SUPPORT CENTER FOR THE TWO SNIPING HELICOPTERS.**

## **POLICE APC(3)**

**THIS IS A TYPICAL APC USED BY MANY POLICE AGENCIES AND PUBLIC DEFENSE SECTIONS. IT IS A FAST ARMORED VEHICLE WITH GOOD ARMOR, THOUGH IT IS UNARMED.**

## **2029 TOYATA SEDAN(2)**

**THE AVERAGE CAR OF 2029. ALCOHOL POWERED, ALL-WHEEL-DRIVE AND STEERING, CYBERNETIC LINKAGE, GPS, HEADS-UPDISPLAY AND CUP HOLDERS.**

## THE WORLD

THE WORLD OF G.I.T.S. IS STILL IN A STATE OF POSTWAR FLUX FOLLOWING THE RECENT WWIII AND WWIV. ECONOMIES HAVE SHIFTED, AND IT IS APPARENT THAT THE NEW WORLD SUPERPOWER IS NONE OTHER THAN JAPAN. THE FOLLOWING ARE CURRENT PROFILES OF COUNTRIES & INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE PROFILES IS AN IN DEPTH LOOK AT JAPAN.

### COUNTRIES & INTERNATIONAL UNIONS

BY 2029, ASIA HAS BECOME THE MOST IMPORTANT AND MOST POWERFUL ECONOMIC REGION IN THE ENTIRE WORLD, AND AT THE HELM OF ALL THE PROSPERITY IN THE PACIFIC-RIM IS NONE OTHER THAN JAPAN. HOME TO THE BIGGEST AND MOST TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED CITIES IN THE WORLD.

THE EUROPEAN UNION (EU) - PREVIOUSLY CALLED THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (EC) AND SOMETIMES KNOWN AS THE COMMON MARKET - IS AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION OF 12 WESTERN EUROPEAN NATIONS WITH ITS OWN INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES AND DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK. THE AIM OF THE EC'S FOUNDERS WAS TO CONSTRUCT A UNITED EUROPE THROUGH PEACEFUL MEANS AND CREATE CONDITIONS FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH, SOCIAL COHESION AMONG THE EUROPEAN PEOPLES, AND FOR GREATER POLITICAL INTEGRATION AND COOPERATION AMONG GOVERNMENTS. THE MEMBER NATIONS OF THE EC ARE BELGIUM, DENMARK, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, IRELAND, ITALY, LUXEMBOURG, THE NETHERLANDS, PORTUGAL, SPAIN, AND THE UNITED KINGDOM. DESPITE CRITICISM EARLY ON, THE EU HAS BECOME A FORMIDABLE ECONOMIC COMPETITOR TO JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES. ALTHOUGH RELATIONS ARE GOOD BETWEEN THE EU AND JAPAN, THIS ECONOMIC RIVALRY HAS BECOME THE BASIS FOR SEVERAL CORPORATE SPONSORED COVERT ACTIONS BETWEEN THE TWO ENTITIES.

ALTHOUGH STILL A VERY IMPORTANT NATION, THE UNITED STATES' SUPERPOWER STATUS WAS BEEN GIVING WAY TO THE ECONOMIC BEHEMOTH OF JAPAN IN RECENT YEARS. CURRENTLY, THE UNITED STATES IS SUFFERING FROM A FALTERING ECONOMY AND A DIVIDED POPULATION. CLASS AND RACIAL LINES HAVE DIVIDED PEOPLE INTO SEPARATE GROUPS, EACH STRUGGLING AGAINST THE OTHERS. CRIME

HAS RISEN TO AN ALL TIME HIGH AND THE UNDERFUNDDED GOVERNMENT CAN'T KEEP ENOUGH POLICE ON THE STREETS TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT. THE MAJOR CORPORATIONS HAVE STEPPED IN SOMEWHAT OFFERING PRIVATIZATION OFF LAW ENFORCEMENT IN SOME AREAS. AS FOR FOREIGN POLICY, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT IS LOOKING TO DO ANYTHING THAT WILL IMPROVE THEIR STATUS ECONOMICALLY.

RUSSIA, OR THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION, IS THE LARGEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, EXTENDING FROM THE BALTIC SEA IN THE WEST TO THE PACIFIC OCEAN IN THE EAST, AND OCCUPYING MORE THAN HALF OF THE EURASIAN LANDMASS. FROM 1922 TO 1991, RUSSIA WAS THE MAIN CONSTITUENT REPUBLIC IN THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS. IN THE EARLY 2000's A HARDLINE COMMUNIST FACTION SEIZED CONTROL OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ONCE AGAIN, BUT BY THE END OF WW III IT BECAME APPARENT THAT ECONOMICALLY, RUSSIA WOULD HAVE TO CHANGE. AFTER A PLOT TO GAIN ACCESS TO EU MARKETS THROUGH A GERMAN CONNECTION FAILED, RUSSIA TURNED TO JAPAN FOR HELP. IN ORDER TO GREASE THE GEARS BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS, RUSSIA WITHDREW ITS PRESENCE FROM THE NORTHERN ISLANDS (WHICH IT HAS OCCUPIED SINCE 1945), RETURNING THEM TO JAPAN.

THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES WAS FORMED IN CAIRO ON MAR. 22, 1945, BY EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA, SYRIA, LEBANON, IRAQ, TRANSJORDAN (NOW JORDAN), AND YEMEN. THE MAIN AIM OF THE LEAGUE IS TO COORDINATE THE POLITICAL ACTION AND SAFEGUARD THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE ARAB STATES. IN THE COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE, ON WHICH EACH MEMBER HAS ONE VOTE, ONLY UNANIMOUS DECISIONS ARE BINDING. THE IRAQI INVASION OF KUWAIT IN 1990 SPLIT THE LEAGUE. TWELVE OF ITS MEMBERS CONDEMNED IRAQ, AND NINE SENT GROUND FORCES TO JOIN THE ANTI-IRAQ COALITION IN THE YEAR 1991. THE LEAGUE WAS SPLIT AGAIN DURING WORLD WAR III WHEN 11 MEMBERS LEFT THE LEAGUE FOR GOOD. TODAY THE LEAGUE, HAS NEGOTIATED LUCRATIVE TRADE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN SEVERAL OF ITS MEMBERS AND JAPAN. THIS HAS, OF COURSE, LED TO PROBLEMS WITH ISRAEL, AND THE FIGHTING HAS SPILLED OVER INTO THE STREETS OF JAPAN. RECENTLY, JAPAN'S FOREIGN MINISTER, HIDAKA, TRIED TO REMEDY THE PROBLEM BY GETTING JAPANESE CORPORATIONS TO FORM JOINT VENTURES WITH ISRAELI CORPS. THE WHOLE THING WAS SCRAPED WHEN IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT THE MOSSAD WAS MANIPULATING EVENTS IN ORDER TO SWAY PUBLIC OPINION OVER TO THE ISRAELI CAUSE.

THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) IS A GENERAL INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHED AT THE

**END OF WORLD WAR II** TO PROMOTE INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY. THE MAIN PURPOSES OF THE ORGANIZATION WERE TO "SAVE SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS FROM THE SCOURGE OF WAR." IT HAS SINCE PARTICIPATED IN ALMOST EVERY MAJOR WAR INCLUDING THE "PEACEKEEPING ACTIONS" THAT ESCALATED INTO **WORLD WAR III** AND **WW IV**. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT BY **2029** JAPAN HAS BECOME A PRINCIPAL SUPPLIER OF MILITARY AID TO THE **UN**.

## **OTHER INTERNATIONAL ENTITIES**

### **TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS**

**IN THE POST-WAR SCENARIO OF 2029**, TERRORISM HAS ESCALATED TO RECORD LEVELS. THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT GROUPS OPERATING INSIDE OF JAPAN. PROMINENT GROUPS INCLUDE ISLAMIC FACTIONS AS WELL AS SOUTH EAST ASIANS. SINCE **S-9** IS A COUNTER-TERRORIST AGENCY ALL CRIMES COMMITTED BY THESE GROUPS FALL UNDER THEIR JURISDICTION.

### **CORPORATIONS**

**CORPORATIONS IN 2029** HAVE A TREMENDOUS DEGREE OF POWER AND RESOURCES. THESE MEGA-CORPORATIONS SURVIVE TO MEET ONLY ONE GOAL. TO MAKE MONEY. THIS MEANS THAT THEY WILL PURSUE PROFIT OVER ANYTHING ELSE, AND WILL ENGAGE IN MORALLY QUESTIONABLE ACTS TO MEET THESE ENDS. VIOLENCE IS OFTEN USED AS A MEANS TO THIS END. ASSASSINATIONS, SABOTAGE AND CORPORATE ESPIONAGE HAVE ALL BECOME COMMON TACTICS AMONG BUSINESSES. HERE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE CORPORATE GIANTS THAT INHABIT JAPAN.

### **MEGATECH**

**MEGATECH** IS ONE OF THE MAJOR MANUFACTURERS OF PROSTHETIC BODIES, ROBOTS AND **AIs**. THEY ARE KNOWN IN THE INDUSTRY FOR PRODUCING TOP OF THE LINE EQUIPMENT, AND FOR THEIR HIGHLY POPULAR **CLASS-A** PROSTHETIC BODY. ALL THE CYBORGS IN **SECTION 9** HAVE BODIES AND PARTS FROM **MEGATECH**, AND THE **SDF** MAINTAINS CONTRACTS WITH THEM AS WELL. THEIR HEADQUARTERS IS IN **NEWPORT CITY**.

### **HANKA PRECISION INSTRUMENTS**

**HANKA PRECISION INSTRUMENTS** IS A MAJOR MANUFACTURER OF AI ROBOTS. THEY MANUFACTURE A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT MODELS FROM DEFENSE TO WAITPERSONS. RECENTLY, THEY WERE CAUGHT IN A SCANDAL WHERE THEY WERE DUBBING THE GHOSTS OF CHILDREN INTO A ROBOT KNOWN AS THE **TOMLIAND** PROTOTYPE TO ACHIEVE A GREATER SENSE OF HUMAN PERSONALITY. WHEN THESE ROBOTS STARTED GOING BERSERK, THEIR PLOT WAS FOUND OUT AND THEIR PRESIDENT WAS ARRESTED. **HANKA** IS STILL IN BUSINESS BUT THEIR PROFITS HAVE SEVERELY DROPPED. IT IS UNCERTAIN IF THEY WILL MAKE IT THROUGH THE NEXT FIVE YEARS.

## **SAGAWA ELECTRONICS INC.**

**SAGAWA ELECTRONICS INC.** IS THE MAIN COMPANY OF THE **SAGAWA GROUP**. THE **SAGAWA GROUP** IS A MASSIVE CORPORATE **ZAIBATSU** WHICH HAS ITS HANDS IN EVERY PIECE OF THE CORPORATE PIE. **SAGAWA ELECTRONICS** WAS ONCE A MIDSIZE CORPORATION WHO MANUFACTURED A VARIETY OF ELECTRONIC GOODS: OPTICS, CYBERWARE, TOASTERS ETC. UNTIL THE PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU STEPPED IN DURING THE WAR. A MAN NAMED **KAGASAKI** (WHO IS NOW MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR) USED THE CORPORATION TO GET CLOSE TO THE RUSSIAN BASES. ALONG THE WAY HE EMBEZZLED ENOUGH MONEY TO LAUNCH THE **SAGAWA GROUP** INTO A PROSPEROUS FUTURE.

# JAPAN 2029

**CAPITAL:** TOKYO

**POPULATION:** 142,449,703

**LITERACY:** 99%

**CURRENCY:** YEN (¥)

**CLIMATE:** VARIES FROM TROPICAL IN SOUTH TO COOL TEMPERATE IN NORTH.

**MARITIME CLAIMS:** 12 NM; 3 NM IN THE INTERNATIONAL STRAITS - LA PEROUSE OR SOYA, TSUGARU, OSUMI, AND EASTERN AND WESTERN CHANNELS OF THE KOREA OR TSUSHIMA STRAIT

**DEFENSE BRANCHES:** JAPAN GROUND SELF-DEFENSE FORCE (ARMY), JAPAN MARITIME SELF-DEFENSE FORCE (NAVY), JAPAN AIR SELF-DEFENSE FORCE (AIR FORCE)

## OVERVIEW

**By 2029, Asia has become the most important and most powerful economic region in the entire world, and at the helm of all the prosperity in the Pacific-Rim is none other than Japan. Home to the biggest and most technologically advanced cities in the world, Japan is at the forefront of scientific research and industry.**

**Although Japan is mostly mono-racial, ratios of Koreans, South Americans, and Europeans have gone up in recent years.**

## ECONOMY

**Government-industry cooperation, a strong work ethic, mastery of high technology, and a comparatively small defense allocation (roughly 1% of GDP) have helped Japan advance with extraordinary rapidity to the rank of the most powerful economy in the world. One notable characteristic of the economy is the working together of manufacturers, suppliers, and distributors in closely knit groups called keiretsu. Industry, the most important sector of the economy, is heavily dependent on imported raw**

**MATERIALS AND FUELS.** THE MUCH SMALLER AGRICULTURAL SECTOR IS HIGHLY SUBSIDIZED AND PROTECTED, WITH CROP YIELDS AMONG THE HIGHEST IN THE WORLD. USUALLY SELF-SUFFICIENT IN RICE, JAPAN MUST IMPORT ABOUT 70% OF ITS REQUIREMENTS OF OTHER GRAIN AND FODDER CROPS.

**JAPAN MAINTAINS ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST FISHING FLEETS AND ACCOUNTS FOR NEARLY 25% OF THE GLOBAL CATCH. THE CROWDING OF THE HABITABLE LAND AREA HAS BEEN JAPAN'S MAJOR LONG-RUN PROBLEM.**

## **GOVERNMENT**

**JAPAN'S GOVERNMENTAL SYSTEM IN 2029 IS HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY THE ENGLISH PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM. IT IS DIVIDED INTO THREE BRANCHES, THE BICAMERAL DIET (LEGISLATIVE), THE JUDICIAL AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE. THE PUBLIC ELECTS THE MEMBERS OF THE DIET, WHO THEN ELECT A PRIME MINISTER. THE PRIME MINISTER THEN APPOINTS THE HEADS OF THE MINISTRIES.**

## **IMPORTANT MINISTRIES**

### **MINISTRY OF JUSTICE:**

**JUDICIAL AFFAIRS, INCLUDING THE COURTS (WHICH ARE NOT A JURY SYSTEM).**

### **MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS:**

**NATIONAL AFFAIRS INCLUDING PUBLIC WORKS AND POLICE.**

### **MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS:**

**ALSO KNOWN AS MOFA, THIS MINISTRY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL MATERS OF INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY.**

### **MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE:**

**RESPONSIBLE FOR DEFENSE MATTERS INVOLVING THE SDF.**

## **PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU**

**THE PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU IS A NATIONAL POLICE FORCE USED BY THE MINISTRIES. IT IS ALMOST MILITARY IN NATURE AND OFTEN ENGAGES IN ESPIONAGE AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS. THERE ARE 9 DISTINCT SECTIONS, EACH OF WHICH ANSWERS TO ONE MINISTRY OR ANOTHER.**

**NOTE: DUE TO LACK OF INFORMATION, NOT ALL SECTIONS ARE DESCRIBED, SORRY!**

**SECTION 1:**

**SECTION 1 IS IN CHARGE OF DRUG ENFORCEMENT, AND IS SIMILAR IN SCOPE TO THE US' DEA. SECTION ONE UTILIZES COMBAT TRAINED PERSONNEL AND INVESTIGATIONS PERSONNEL IN ITS OPERATIONS. SINCE ALL AGENTS ARE CROSS-TRAINED, THEY CAN ENGAGE IN EITHER ACTIVITY. SECTION 1 ANSWERS TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS.**

**SECTION 5:**

**SECTION 5 IS IN CHARGE OF PUBLIC PEACE, FILLING A ROLE MUCH LIKE THAT OF THE US' POLICE FORCE AND SWAT TEAMS. THEY ARE TRAINED IN SMALL ARMS COMBAT, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, AND HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT. SECTION 5 DOES NOT EMPLOY ANY CYBORGS. SECTION 5 ANSWERS TO THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE.**

**SECTION 6:**

**SECTION 6 CONTAINS ALL INVESTIGATIONS, COMBAT AND SPECIAL OPERATIONS PERSONNEL USED BY THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THIS SECTION IS HIGHLY SECRETIVE AND IS DEEPLY ROOTED IN ESPIONAGE AND COVERT OPERATIONS. COMPARATIVE TO THE US' CIA OR THE BRITISH MI-6. THERE ARE NO (OFFICIAL) FULL-CYBORGS IN S-6. SECTION 6 ANSWERS DIRECTLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER.**

**SECTION 9:**

**SECTION 9 IS THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS COUNTER-TERRORIST, CYBORG CRIMES, AND ASSASSINATION SQUAD. IT IS A PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION, AND MOST OF ITS MEMBERS ARE FULL CYBORGS. IT IS NO COINCIDENCE THAT SECTION 9 RESEMBLES THE GERMAN GSG9 (WITHOUT A DOUBT, THE MOST EXTENSIVELY TRAINED AND EQUIPPED COUNTER-TERRORIST SQUAD ON THE PLANET), AND LIKE EACH GSG9 AGENT, EACH S-9 MEMBER IS EXTENSIVELY TRAINED IN COMBAT, ANTITERRORISM AND INVESTIGATIONS. WHEN A TERRORIST INCIDENT OCCURS IT IS S-9'S JOB TO**

**EITHER STOP IT, OR INVESTIGATE THE AFTERMATH AND FIND THOSE RESPONSIBLE. THIS UNIT IS  
CLEVERLY HEADED BY DAISUKE ARAMAKI WHILE TACTICAL COMMAND IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE  
VERY TALENTED MOTOKO KUSANAGI.**

## **RECRUITMENT**

**RECRUITMENT FOR S-9 IS MOSTLY DONE FROM THE SPECIAL FORCES OF THE GSDF.  
TYPICALLY THE MOST TALENTED FULL BORGS WITH TACTICAL AND INVESTIGATIONS TRAINING ARE  
OFFERED POSITIONS IN SECTION 9. OCCASIONALLY S-9 WILL RECRUIT FROM THE POLICE, WHICH IS  
WHERE TOGUSA CAME FROM.**

## **EQUIPMENT**

**S-9 HAS ACCESS TO A WIDE RANGE OF EQUIPMENT. THEY ARE ALLOWED TO CARRY THEIR  
CHOICE OF SIDEARM AND A VARIETY OF SMGs AND ASSAULT RIFLES ARE PROVIDED FOR THEM. S-9  
ALSO EMPLOYS THE USE OF THERM-OPTIC CAMOUFLAGE (AS DOES S-6 OF THE PSB AND S-4 OF THE  
RANGERS) AND ALSO HAS ACCESS TO TACHIKOMA.**

## **MAJOR CITIES**

**JAPAN CONTAINS SOME OF THE BIGGEST AND MOST TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED CITIES IN THE  
WORLD. THIS SECTION WILL CONTAIN GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT NEWPORT CITY AND BERTARVE.**

## NEWPORT CITY

**NOTE: DUE TO AN IMPERFECTION IN THE BOOK, I AM ONLY ABOUT 89% SURE OF THE LOCATION OF NEWPORT CITY. THE MANGA SAYS IT IS OFF THE SHINHAMA PREFECTURE, ONLY THERE IS NO SHINHAMA PREFECTURE. I DID SOME RESEARCH AND FOUND OUT SHINHAMA IS A WARD OF THE TOKUSHIMA PREFECTURE. IF YOU LOOK AT THE PICTURE THE GEOGRAPHY MATCHES THE MAP.**



**BUILT IN THE PORT OFF OF THE SHINHAMA WARD OF THE TOKUSHIMA PREFECTURE (JAPAN IS SUBDIVIDED INTO 47 ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS, KNOWN AS PREFECTURES), NEWPORT CITY HAS BECOME A MAJOR CITY FOR TRADE, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THE CITY WAS BUILT IN THE EARLY PART OF THE MILLENNIUM WHEN ISSUES OF SPACE STARTED ARISING. THERE WAS**

**GENERALLY NOT MUCH OF AN URBAN METROPOLIS IN THE TOKUSHIMA AREA BEFORE THE PORT WAS OPENED IN THE 1990s. THE AREA PROSPERED, AND ITS RESIDENTS GREW EXPONENTIALLY. IN THE EARLY 2000s WORK BEGAN ON THE FLOATING METROPOLIS THAT IS NOW KNOWN AS NEWPORT CITY.**

**THE CITY HAS BECOME ONE OF THE THRIVING NEW METROPOLISES OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM. ALTHOUGH TOKYO AND OSAKA ARE STILL VERY IMPORTANT CITIES IN JAPAN, NEWPORT CITY HAS BECOME THE SIGNIFICANT INTERNATIONAL CITY. MAJOR INTERNATIONAL CORPORATIONS HAVE THEIR HEADQUARTERS HERE, AND MANY POLITICAL CONFERENCES ARE NOW HELD HERE INSTEAD OF IN TOKYO. AS FOR THE CITY'S GEOGRAPHY ITSELF, IT IS BUILT IN AN ALMOST FORTRESS-LIKE FASHION.**

**THE BIGGEST CORPORATE TOWERS LOOM OMINOUSLY IN THE CENTER OF THE FLOATING SECTION, WHILE THOUSANDS OF SMALLER BUILDINGS SURROUND THEM. THERE IS AN INNER WATERWAY WHICH SURROUNDS THE MIDDLE SECTION. THIS WATERWAY BRANCHES OFF INTO SMALLER CANALS THAT WIND AROUND PARTS OF THE CITY. THE SECOND RING IS MADE OF UP LARGE SHIPPING PIERS (WHICH ARE EQUIPPED TO HANDLE THE LARGEST SECTIONAL CARGO SHIPS) AND WAREHOUSES. THE REST OF SHINHAMA, WHICH IS ON LAND, IS KNOWN AS "OLD TOWN." THERE IS STILL A MANHATTAN / HONG KONG FEEL TO THIS PART OF THE CITY, THE BUILDINGS JUST AREN'T AS NEW OR AUTOMATED AS THOSE ON THE FLOATING SECTION. THE NORTHERN AREAS OF TOKUSHIMA ARE MORE SPREAD OUT, AND IT IS HERE WHERE YOU FIND LARGE ESTATES AND TRADITIONAL PAGODA STYLE ARCHITECTURE.**

**THERE ARE MANY MEGA-HIGHWAYS THAT LEAD TO THE FLOATING SECTION, UNFORTUNATELY ONCE YOU ARE ON THE ISLAND IT IS NOTHING MORE THAN A HINDRANCE TO DRIVE A CAR. NEWPORT CITY IS VERY DENSE AND HEAVILY POPULATED, SO THE BEST WAYS TO GET AROUND ARE BY THE ELECTRIC TRAIN SYSTEM, THE ELECTRIC BUSSES OR BY BOAT (PROVIDED YOU ARE GOING SOMEWHERE ON THE CANAL).**

## **BERTARVE**

**BERTARVE IS LOCATED AT THE SOUTHERNMOST TIP OF THE ISLAND OF ETOROFU. ETOROFU ALONG WITH KUNASHIRI, SHIKOTAN, AND THE HABOMAI ISLAND GROUP WERE OCCUPIED BY RUSSIA FROM 1945 UNTIL THE END OF WW III. IN THOSE DAYS BERTARVE WAS A RUSSIAN CITY AND THE**

**LOCATION OF A SOVIET SUB BASE. WHEN RUSSIA WITHDREW AND RETURNED THE NORTHERN ISLANDS TO JAPAN THEY SET DEMO CHARGES AND BURIED THE SUB BASE. IN RECENT YEARS BERTARVE HAS GROWN UP QUITE A BIT. THERE ARE STILL MANY RUSSIANS THAT LIVE IN THE AREA, BUT MANY JAPANESE HAVE MOVED BACK IN.**

**CORPORATE SUPPORT FOR THIS AREA HAS BEEN HIGH DUE TO ITS STRATEGIC NORTHERN LOCATION, AND MOST MAJOR CORPORATIONS HAVE BRANCH OFFICES IN THE AREA. THE CITY'S MAJOR PROBLEM IS CRIME. WITH LITTLE TIME TO CHANGE OVER POLICE FORCES AND TO GET AN ADEQUATE SYSTEM IN PLACE, BERTARVE HAS FALLEN VICTIM TO A SKYROCKETING CRIME RATE. THE CITY HAS BECOME A HAVEN FOR WANTED CRIMINALS, GANGS AND SPIES WORKING ON RUSSIAN TARGETS. A**

**THRIVING BLACK MARKET OPERATES HERE, AND DUE TO THE CORRUPTIBILITY OF LOCAL POLICE, IT GOES ON IN PLAIN VIEW IN A LARGE STREET MARKET STYLE SETTING. IF IT IS ILLEGAL, AND YOU WANT IT, YOU CAN FIND IT HERE.**



**THE GEOGRAPHY OF BERTARVE IS QUITE INTERESTING. THE CITY IS BUILT AT AND AROUND THE BASE OF MT. BERTARVE, WHICH IS ABOUT 4,500 METERS HIGH. AS YOU CAN SEE, THE SKYSCRAPERS BLOCK OUT A LOT OF THE VIEW OF THE MOUNTAIN BECAUSE THEY ARE QUITE TALL. SOME OF THE LARGER BUILDINGS ARE OVER 2 KILOMETERS! FROM THE CENTER THE CITY SPRAWLS OUT IN 11-12 KILOMETERS EACH**

**DIRECTION. THERE ARE MAJOR SHIPPING PORTS SITUATED ON ALL SIDES OF THE CITY MAKING IT A MAJOR JAPANESE PORT. ETOROFU IS CONNECTED TO THE OTHER ISLANDS AND THE MAINLAND BY THE TOHOKU MAGLEV TRAIN. AS FAR AS SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY GOES, THE RICH LIVE HIGH IN THE TOWERS ABOVE THE POOR WHO WANDER ABOUT THE STREETS. WITH ARIAL WALKWAYS CONNECTING A LOT OF THE TOWERS, THE RICH NEVER HAVE TO COME DOWN TO GROUND LEVEL.**

**LIKE NEWPORT CITY, BERTARVE IS EXTREMELY DENSE AND DRIVING A CAR HERE IS A HINDRANCE. MOST OF THE STREETS ARE FILLED WITH PEOPLE, AND FOR MOST OF THEM THE PREFERRED METHOD OF TRAVEL IS WALKING. AS MENTIONED BEFORE A MAGLEV RUNS THROUGH THE CITY AS WELL AS A MAJOR MEGA-HIGHWAY, BOTH OF WHICH CONNECT ETOROFU TO THE OTHER ISLANDS.**

## **SAMPLE NPC'S**

**H**ERE ARE THE MOST WELL-KNOWN CHARACTERS FROM THE FEATURES FOR YOUR PERUSAL/USE. DOUBLE-PUMP CLICHE WILL BE LISTED HERE INSIDE CURLY-BRACES {} BECAUSE WITH THE FONT I'M USING, IT'S AWFULLY HARD TO TELL PARENTHESIS FROM HARD-BRACES ;-)

### **"MAJOR" MOTOKO KUSANAGI**

**CLICHE:** SECTION 9 OPERATIVE{4}, CYBORG{4}

**HOOK:** SECRETIVE BACKGROUND, DETACHED FROM OTHERS BECAUSE OF IT.

KUSANAGI'S BACKGROUND IS ALMOST COMPLETELY A MYSTERY. WHAT IS KNOWN IS THAT SHE SERVED WITH SOME SORT OF MILITARY BEFORE, WHERE SHE UNDOUBTEDLY ACQUIRED THE NICKNAME "MAJOR" (NO IT'S NOT HER SECTION 9 RANK). THE "MAJOR'S" SECTION 9 CAREER BEGAN WHEN SHE WAS SCOUTED FROM THE SPECIAL MANEUVER TEAM OF THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS. SHE IS EXTENSIVELY TRAINED IN COVERT TACTICS, INTELLIGENCE, AND DEMOLITIONS. MOTOKO IS A FULL BORG AND ONLY A PART OF HER BRAIN IS FROM HER ORIGINAL BODY. ALTHOUGH HER BODY IS MADE TO LOOK LIKE A STANDARD BODY, IT IS IN FACT HIGHLY ADVANCED, TOP OF THE LINE COMBAT MODEL. LIKE ALL BORGS OF HER TYPE SHE IS EQUIPPED WITH AN ADVANCED CYBER-BRAIN. MOTOKO APPEARS TO BE IN HER EARLY 20'S BUT HER ACTUAL AGE IS ESTIMATED AT BEING IN HER LATE 30's.

### **BATOU**

**CLICHE:** SECTION 9 OPERATIVE{4}, CYBORG{4}, ARMORER{4}

**HOOK:** OVERT MILITARY CYBORG BODY.

BATOU IS A BRAWNY MAN WHO, LIKE MOTOKO, IS AN EXPERT IN COVERT OPERATIONS. HE HAS BEEN WORKING AS MOTOKO'S PARTNER FOR MANY YEARS, AND IT IS LIKELY THAT THEY MAY HAVE TO SERVED TOGETHER IN THE ARMED FORCES. HE IS ALMOST ALWAYS COOL AND LEVEL HEADED, AND ACTS AS A FOIL TO THE MAJOR'S SOMETIMES-RASH JUDGEMENT. LIKE MOTOKO, BATOU IS A FULL BORG. UNLIKE MOTOKO HE SEEMS TO HAVE AN OVERTLY MILITARY BODY (SPECULATION DUE TO THE PROTRUDING EYE COVERINGS).

### **TOGUSA**

**CLICHE:** SECTION 9 OPERATIVE{3}, SECTION 5 OFFICER{4}, ARMORER{1}

**HOOK: "OUTSIDER", TOGUSA IS THE "NEW KID" IN S-9, AND AS SUCH DOESN'T GARNER THE SAME RESPECT AS THE OTHER MEMBERS (YET).**

**TOGUSA IS CONSIDERED AN OUTSIDER BY THE OTHER MEMBERS OF SECTION 9, BECAUSE HIS BODY IS COMPLETELY HUMAN (EXCEPT FOR HIS CYBERBRAIN, PLUGS AND NEURAL CONNECTION TO THE COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS) AND BECAUSE HE IS MARRIED WITH KIDS. THESE ARE PRECISELY THE REASONS THAT KUSANAGI HAD HIM TRANSFERRED TO SECTION 9 FROM THE POLICE DEPARTMENT. MOTOKO CLAIMS THAT HIS HUMANITY ACTS AS A FOIL TO THE REST OF THE MEMBERS OF SECTION 9, WHO ARE MOSTLY CYBORGS TRANSFERRED FROM THE MILITARY. ALTHOUGH TOGUSA IS NOT AS EXPERIENCED AS THE REST OF THE SECTION 9 MEMBERS, HE IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE TEAM. HE PREFERENCES THE USE OF HIS MATEBA REVOLVER TO ANY OF SECTION 9'S HIGH TECH WEAPONRY.**

## **DAISUKE ARAMAKI**

**CLIQUE: SECTION 9 LEADER (6), DIPLOMAT{3}**

**HOOK: OLD AGE. HE'S NOT AS SPRY AS HE USED TO BE, DON'T EXPECT HIM TO GO SPRINTING AFTER A CRIMINAL, NOT EVEN LAUGHING MAN HIMSELF.**

**ARAMAKI IS THE SLY CHIEF OF SECTION 9. HE IS A SHREWD PLAYER AND HAS BEEN IN THE INTELLIGENCE BUSINESS FOR AS LONG AS ANYONE CAN REMEMBER. HE IS THE KIND OF GUY WHO ALWAYS HAS SOMETHING UP HIS SLEEVE, AND ISN'T AFRAID TO GO HEAD TO HEAD WITH POLITICIANS. DESPITE HIS TRICKINESS HE DOES SEEM TO CARE ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE UNDER HIS COMMAND, AND WILL PUT HIS OWN POSITION ON THE LINE TO HELP THEM OUT.**

## **TYPICAL TACHIKOMA**

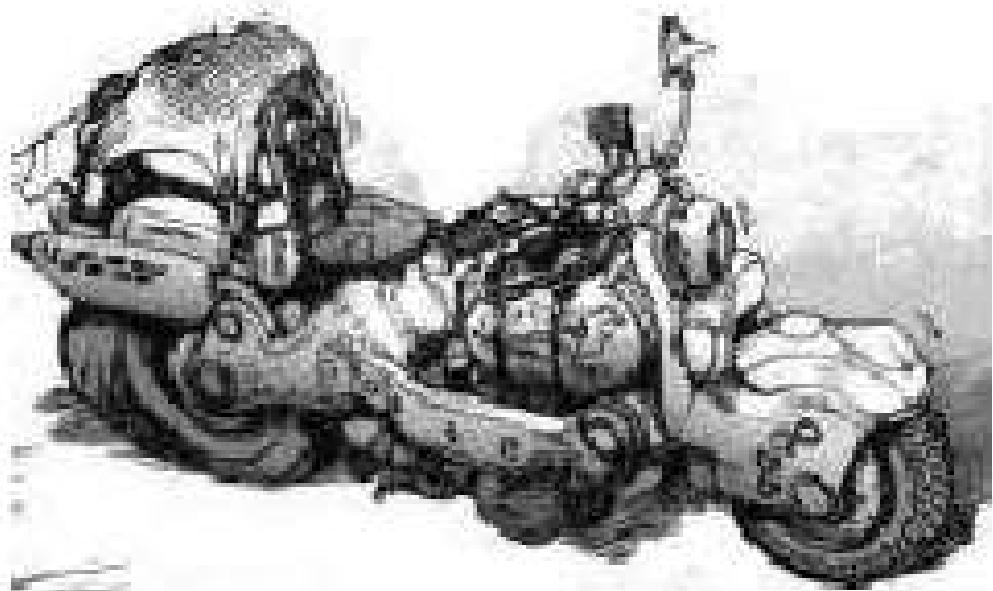
**CLIQUE: TACHIKOMA(3), Tow/GRAPPLE LINES(3)**

**HOOK: TACHIKOMA "LEARNING" AI ARE OFTEN CHILDLIKE, GETTING INTO TROUBLE WHEN "BORED".**

**TACHIKOMA ARE TREATED LIKE NPC'S WHEN UNATTENDED, BUT WHEN PILOTED BY A S-9 OPERATIVE, OR OTHER TRAINED IN THEIR USE, THEY ACT LIKE A VEHICLE, THEIR "TACHIKOMA" CLIQUE REPRESENTING THEIR PHYSICAL TOUGHNESS, EVASIVENESS, SPEED, AND WEAPONS. TYPICAL WEAPONS INCLUDE MACHINEGUNS, CANNONS, AND/OR GRENADE LAUNCHERS.**

# RISUS IN THE SHELL

## LIFE ON THE STREETS



A SOURCEBOOK FOR RISUS: THE ANYTHING RPG BY S. JOHN ROSS

By ZAMIEL AL'SHAITAN

## SOURCEBOOK INFORMATION

Risus in the Shell: Life on the Streets is a sourcebook by Zamiel Al'Shaitan for Risus: the Anything RPG by S. John Ross. In this sourcebook I will present the background information for running a Ghost in the Shell themed campaign, revolving around the characters "on the street" - the street thugs, vigilantes, hackers and the like.

This sourcebook is derived from my Risus in the Shell sourcebook as well as RisusPUNK. Much of the text in this volume comes from those books. For world information, see my Risus in the Shell book, the new edition (v1.2) even contains the "In-Depth look at Japan" as it claimed before ;-)

2029, a dark, gritty future where the crime levels have skyrocketed in the inner cities, and political unrest is at a boiling point in every major nation. A future where the mega-corporations duke it out on the covert battlefield and governments are constantly fending off terrorism. The net has permeated every level of our everyday lives and technology has run rampant through society, bringing about a new era on the verge of information overload.

## CHARACTER CREATION

Characters should be created using 10 dice, plus one for hook and one for tale, double pump cliches are allowed (and encouraged) and funky dice are not used. Characters are "street operatives" - characters without (current) military or police affiliation, and quite often on the wrong side of the law. They may be absolute criminals, or grim vigilantes stalking the streets bringing down the criminals that the law can't.

## THE CONCEPT OF THE "GHOST"

In Ghost in the Shell the concept of the "ghost" is an important one. As the title itself implies, the "ghost" is one's soul or consciousness, and the "shell" is simply where it is housed, be it in the human body or in a machine or computer. In Ghost in the Shell, technology has come to the point where this "ghost" can be manipulated, programmed or even downloaded in to a computer (ghostdubbing). Obviously, this sort of thing has raised interesting questions about the morality of such acts. This concept of the "ghost" and the questions surrounding it is one of the major themes of Ghost in the Shell and they should be played up as much as possible in your game.

## COMMON CLICHE

As always, this is only a sampling of possible cliche. Feel free to come up with your own cliche befitting of a dark near-future campaign (with GM approval, of course).

Cliche	Description
Ex-Cop	You used to be with Public Peace, but now you're not. Either you retired, or were kicked off the force, you still have your skills but not the benefits of a Public Peace armory or pseudomilitary status.
Cyborg	Cyborgs are rather common in 2029, from the common prosthetic bodies used to "cure" quadriplegics, to the combat cyborgs created by MEGATECH for use by Section 9. The Cyborg cliche not only gages the power of the cybernetic body, but also the user's skill in manipulating it.  The character should also note what abilities the body has, and whether it's a civilian prosthetic body or a blackmarket military cyborg body.
Doctor	You're a medical doctor, whether you have the shiny glass-and-gold framed diploma that says so or not. Maybe you went to Med School, maybe you did a stint in the military, maybe you just practiced until you started getting things right (poor kitties...) - but the point is, now you're not too bad. You're capable of all manner of doctorly-tasks such as diagnosing and treating illnesses (easy task), and stopping the bleeding from a sucking chest wound (moderate) to installing cybernetics (darn difficult). You might be a respected doctor with a storefront practice, or you may be a "street doctor", helping those in need for little or nothing in return.

Cliche	Description
Drifter	You're a drifter - a rover, wanderer, nomad, vagabond – call it what you will. You probably don't have much cash, and might not smell too nice, but you probably have a pack of others like you to watch your back, your bike, and loan you ammo when you run low. You can live off the land.
Engineer	You can build stuff and fix things pretty well. In the field, you can probably get your vehicle to limp back to your hideout (at half dice) or clear a jammed assault rifle pretty easy (easy task), but for more substantial repairs like restoring a heavy weapon to firing order after going full-auto with hv/ex ammo (difficult task) you'll need a shop. You can possibly fix cybernetics, too (very difficult), but it won't be pretty.
Information Broker	The information broker buys and sells information. They know how and where to dig up dirt on people, Public Peace and corporations. These figures often work as middlemen, garnering information on "jobs" from prospective employers, and hiring out street operatives.
Kid	Why is there <b>ALWAYS</b> an annoying kid hanging around? Ok, you might be good as bait, you might be able to go unnoticed where the aforementioned 9' tall combat 'borg can't, but to be really honest, you're rather useless ;-)
Media	You're a journalist – might be for the nightly news, might be a writer for the local paper, either way, you've got a knack for getting the "dirt". You probably have a log of every second of your life for the last 10 years on microdisc – and probably carry it on you – just in case you need to look up a long-gone fact for your latest story.
Mercenary	You're a soldier, loyal to the highest bidder. You know how to use darn near anything that goes "BANG!" Be it a gun, grenade, bomb, or tank. You're also probably pretty tough – otherwise you'd be dead already.

Cliche	Description
Musician	Maybe you're a cyber-hippie, or maybe you're a heavy metal rocker with a chrome-plated skull and a guitar that doubles as an assault rifle.. Whichever.. Your greatest power is in your flocks of followers - you can play them just as easy as that powerchord...
Programmer / Hacker	The typical programmer or hacker is capable of writing complex code quickly, often while sleep-deprived and running on caffeine and adrenaline alone. They are able to find information on the global infonet quickly and easily, break-and-enter into secured systems, and some are even capable of ghosthacking. Most have cyberbrains, and many have multi-sectioned fingers, but few would voluntarily choose to become full-conversion cyborgs, knowing how easy it would be to hijack their bodies... .
Sneak	Sneaks, thieves, spies, assassins - they're all generally the same - they use stealth (and possibly stealth technology) to fill their roles. Maybe you walk the streets looking for an easy mark, maybe you break into corporate facilities for data or product, or maybe you work for the corporation, as an espionage agent, raiding (and possibly destroying) their competition...
Street Urchin	You know the streets - where to buy or sell drugs, information, or anything else, and you probably have some street cred, but no other type of cred ;-)
Street Vendor	Maybe you sell "Polex" watches on the street corner, or pirate vid copies at a swap meet, maybe you act as a "fence", or even sell the latest tweak to come out of some college student's lab kit - whatever it is, you know how to work the streets, make a profit, and avoid the eyes of the law. You also know how to find information - rumors and the like - which can often be the most valuable "product".

## COMMON HOOKS

Hook	Description
Bloodthirsty	Death & mayhem is your gig. Sure, you could try TALKING your way out of a situation, but nobody would sprout a sucking chest wound that way...
Cyborg Syndrome	You've lost touch with what it was to be human. As far as you're concerned, you and your 'borg body are a totally different animal than those poor, weak 'fleshies'. You might be homicidal, or simply emotionless.
Ghosthacked	The character has been ghosthacked – they may not know their past, or they may have some subliminal conditioning that may make itself evident at some time in the future. The GM may decide to add or change the details of a character's ghosthack – You've been warned <G>
Gun Shy	The character doesn't like guns. Using them, being around them, and especially not being shot (at?) by them. This is not to say the character is a pacifist, they may just prefer to use other means of dismemberment.
Wanted	You're a bona-fide criminal, or at least Public Peace thinks you are. Sure, it might have been a set-up, but not likely.

## TECHNOLOGY

### CYBERBRAINS

Cyberbrains are artificial brains used in AI machines, but the most interesting aspect of the cyberbrain is that of a supplemental brain for human use. When implanted in a cyborg, the cyberbrain acts as a supplemental brain, which processes data, in turn taking the workload off the brain. With a cyberbrain, a human being's mental capabilities are greatly augmented. One can think faster, react faster and even learn faster. Reading skills are greatly increased as the brain takes in pages of data at a time rather than word by word. The cyberbrain also allows a direct interface with computer networks where information can be acquired as fast as the computer can process data. Reading time is cut by 75%. It also allows an interface with computers, computer networks, vehicles, firearms etc.

### CYBORGS

In the world of G.i.t.S. cyborgs are used frequently used in the military and police fields because they can greatly enhance a humans abilities. The word cyborg refers to an individual who's body has been partially or almost completely replaced by artificial organs and parts. Most of the G.i.t.S. cyborgs are full-conversion, and almost indistinguishable from humans. The brain and spinal column of a full conversion are housed inside a special shell inside of the artificial body. Special tissues, such as the tongue, and reproductive systems are vat grown, and then transplanted into the body. The skin is then applied and the 'borg is subjected to a "sensory element". This "sensory element" forms a fiber optic film, which is highly sensitive, and allows tactile sensations that far exceed that of a normal human. Many 'borgs are also equipped with a supplemental cyberbrain to handle some of the info processing workload.

### TACHIKOMA

Tachikoma have their own AI and can act as backup or support on their own. They can also act as an assault vehicle, and even stealth missions benefit from the Tachikoma.

The AI of the Tachikoma is actually a learning computer. During a the course of the day, an individual Tachikoma will have its own individual experiences, but at the end of the day all Tachikoma's under the same ownership will assimilate their data into a mainframe, and then extract the information downloaded by their fellow units. When in vehicle mode the driver is strapped much like a small power armor (hence owners often referring to them as their suits). This marvelous machine is able to run along walls and climb trees, are equipped with therm-optic camouflage, and can fire tow/grapple lines, in addition to their assault cannon. See a sample Tachikoma in the SAMPLE NPC's section at the end.

#### THERM-OPTIC CAMOUFLAGE (+2 dice motionless, +1 moving to stealth cliche)

The wearer of therm-optic camouflage becomes virtually invisible when the suit is activated. The suit is very hard to detect, but a slight blur can be seen when the wearer is in motion. As long as the wearer stays still they are virtually impossible to detect. While normally detectable by certain heat imaging optics some suits can be made which reduce IR signature. This suit is usually worn under some type of armor, which must be taken off before use.

#### MULTI-SECTIONED FINGERS (+2 to hacking/programming skills)

Multi-sectioned fingers split at the palm when needed, with each digit branching off into 4 or 5 individual fine digits for typing at increased speed. To function, the user must have a cyberbrain installed.

## DRUGS

Drugs are as much a problem in the Risus in the Shell world, most are simply highly-addictive euphorics, however there are some specialty drugs available to those who know where to buy them and have a lot to spend. When on any drugs, a character suffers a -2 to all rolls involving technical skills (anything requiring great concentration) due to their disconnected state. GM's should feel free to create more as needed.

### Buzzpills (+2 to running/dodging/escaping on foot)

Buzzpills raise the user's heart rate and reflexes to tremendous levels, making them incredibly fast and agile. The major downside being that they "bleed out" faster than normal, with each physical combat round lost resulting in a loss of 2 dice. The effect lasts between 24 and 48 hours, during which the user cannot fall asleep by any means, even by dazing weapons or drugs.

### Laughing Man (Special)

While on "Laughing Man" (named for the infamous criminal) a character's mind is so obfuscated as to make ghosthacking or interrogation impossible. This effect lasts for exactly 24 hours, during which the character laughs or giggles almost constantly, and is at -1 die to all technical skills (instead of the customary -2 penalty).

### Strongman (+2 to melee rolls)

"Strongman" is the future equivalent of PCP. It makes the user incredibly strong and feel no pain, but it only lasts about 4 hours – after that, they crash into a near catatonic state.

## COMPUTERS AND HACKING

Computers permeate every level of human existence in Ghost in the Shell. They are in your car, in your home and in your head, but then you have probably already figured that out.

### COMPUTER NETWORK HACKING

This is your normal, everyday, run of the mill hacking. Breaking into secured computer systems, swiping info, doing a little damage. This type of hacking is usually done by keyboard aided by interface plugs, and if you are lucky, a cyberbrain. Most serious cyborg hackers have also invested in multi-sectioned fingers to keep up with their cyberbrains.

### GHOSTHACKING

Ghosthacking is an entirely different animal. Only the most skilled hackers can attempt this. Basically what this entails is reprogramming someone's brain. This can be done by diving into the persons ghost from an outside computer network (provided they have a full time connection to cyber-net). To do this you must first crack the persons "ghost key", which is extremely difficult. The second method is to interface with the person directly and "ghostdive" into their mind. Special software is required and it is highly illegal on the open market (very rare and expensive, can cost 50,000+ for usable software). So, in short is an extremely difficult process to pull off, but if one can do it the possibilities are endless. You can reprogram people to do your bidding, turn them into different people or replace their memories with new ones. It should be noted that once this is done, there is no going back, the changes are permanent (although they are somewhat shallow). Even if one has the equipment they are up against difficult odds.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE AND BONUS DICE GEAR

### MELEE WEAPONS

Melee weapons are still quite common on the streets – from metal pipes to chains, knives and baseball bats, street thugs commonly arm themselves with these when there aren't enough handguns to go around. Common melee weapons grant no bonus dice to their use, however there are a few special weapon types.

#### Dazer Club (+1 die)

A dazer can be built into any type of blunt weapon, delivering a powerful electric shock when contact is made. Due to their larger size, a much more powerful dazer can be housed inside a melee weapon than in a bullet, casing additional damage. If a person is successfully defeated in combat with these weapons, they are rendered unconscious rather than dead.

#### Vibroblades (+1 die)

Vibroblades are extremely rare and expensive, but their high-frequency oscillating blade makes them highly prized possessions. A vibroblade will slice through armor at double efficacy, subtracting 2 from medium or heavy armor's value, and slices through light body armor as if it were not there. These weapons are highly illegal.

## HANDGUNS

Handguns are commonplace, most likely anyone found on the street will have some flavor of 9mm or .45 on hand. Here are some of the more notable small arms of 2029.

#### ZASTABA CZ-M100 HANDGUN

The CZ-100 is rigid polymer-frame 9mm handgun manufactured in the Czech Republic. Originally designed for law enforcement personnel, the CZ-100 sports a

hexagonal barrel for better reliability and accuracy. This pistol can also be fitted with a quick release laser aiming system.

### JERICHO 942FS HANDGUN

The Jericho 942FS is an Israeli manufactured handgun. It may, in fact, be a direct descendant of the IMI "Desert Eagle". This weapon is chambered to .50AE (12.7mm), so it packs one hell of a punch. The Jericho 942FS seems to be a popular large frame handgun, and it is used in several organizations throughout Japan. This autoloader also sports hexagonal shaped rifling for greater control.

### MATEBA MODEL 207 HANDGUN

This strange revolver, built sometime in the 1990's, is Togusa's weapon of choice. It is chambered for the 9mm Parabellum cartridge and its six round cylinder is hinged at the top of the frame rather than the bottom. The M207's hexagonal barrel is lined up with the bottom-most chamber for greater accuracy and the weapon's strange design is counter-balanced by a top mounted weight. It should be noted that the Mateba's greatest feature is its accuracy. Unfortunately, it is not as quick or as high powered as most automatics. Additionally, its design causes problems with loading, making it less than an ideal choice in situations where a lot of ammo is being expended. Features ergonomic grips and interchangeable barrels.

## SUBMACHINEGUNS

Submachineguns are carried (openly) only by law enforcement and military units – they are restricted weapons, illegal for private use.

### STEAR TMP SUBMACHINE GUN (+1 die)

A standard light SMG used by Section 6. It is a rugged 9mm SMG with many features, such as ambidextrous cocking. It is a common SMG and it is used the world over. The Section 6 version includes a laser aiming system.

## ZASTABA NOSLE C Z N - M 22 "9WEAPON" (+1 die)

The CZN-M22 is Section 9's standard issue weapon. It appears to be a direct descendant of the FN P90 and like its predecessor it is chambered to the 5.7mm round. It features a selector switch that allows you to choose between single shot, three round bursts and full-auto. The "9Weapon" also comes with a field kit which includes interchangeable barrels for firing HV loads without adverse effects, and a single shot 25mm grenade launcher.

## CAMOUFLAGED SMG

The briefcase weapon in the manga was a camouflaged 5.56mm weapon that was built into the briefcase, while the one in the film is a smaller SMG that comes completely out of the briefcase. A switch on the handle drops the bulk of the briefcase off revealing a Stear TMP with two attached 15 round clips of ammunition. The case itself is armored for use as a sort of last ditch effort shield (+1 die to defend). Although the Stear TMP was used, many other SMGs can be used for this type of concealment.

## RIFLES AND HEAVY WEAPONS

Rifles are commonplace, 5.56 and 7.62 being the most common caliber encountered. Used for hunting and sport, they may be purchased openly and owned by any citizen.

Heavy weapons are normally only available to military personnel (including S-9) upon special request, authorized by a division leader. These are large weapons of war, not intended for ordinary skirmishes.

### WOLF WEAPONWORKS J4 RIFLE (+1 die w/ targeting system)

The J4 rifle is a cheap, mass-produced over/under 5.56mm/7.62 rifle featuring a magazine holding 5 rounds of each ammunition type. Options include standard iron sights, magnified scope, and computer targeting system for interface with plugs. These rifles are available worldwide, and are cheap, but are also relatively fragile.

### SIG 541 ASSAULT RIFLE (+1 die)

The SIG 541 is the standard assault weapon of NATO special forces (and section 6). It uses standard 5.56mm rounds, and features a shorter length than most full size assault rifles. The SIG 541 also features a selector switch that allows you to choose between single shot, three round bursts and full-auto. This is a common weapon the world over, and can be found in most major countries.

### ULTIMA RATIO (+1 die Standard, +2 dice "Full Sensing")

The "Ultima Ratio" is Public Security's premier sniper system. This weapon fires 7.62mm Armor-Piercing Fin-Stabilized Discarding Sabot ammo, which consists of a depleted uranium sub-caliber round that easily punches through armor. It also features a recoil absorbing stock and a gyrostabilized mount. However, the real beauty of this weapon is its targeting system. The "Full Sensing" version is equipped with a full spectrum, computer controlled targeting system which offers unparalleled accuracy. This

system can see through walls as well as detect therm-optic camouflage. The "Full Sensing" scope must be interfaced with the sniper via cyberbrain and interface plugs.

### SPIW MINI 14 "PENETRATOR" (+3 dice)

Known affectionately by Batou as "Your standard issue big gun", the "Penetrator" is truly a monstrous weapon. Basically, this weapon is an armor buster, for taking out even the toughest of opponents. This semiautomatic fires 14.5mm HEAT shells from an over-the-shoulder position. It uses an advanced longtravel recoil absorption system, but even still, the recoil for this weapon is tremendous, and only the toughest troops can manage it.

## SPECIAL AMMUNITIONS

Special ammunition can give you an edge in combat, however it's often "shady" at best and outright illegal in many cases, not to mention damaging to the firearms it's used in. Most types of special ammunition add points to cliche rolls, rather than whole dice. For combination ammunition totaling +3 or more (such as AP/HV/AT) add 1 die.

### Dazer (DZ) (Special)

Dazer rounds are soft munitions loaded with an electronic charge that attempts to neutralize a subject rather than kill them. If a person is successfully defeated in combat with these rounds, they are rendered unconscious rather than dead.

### Hyper Velocity (HV) (+1)

HV Ammunition adds an additional +1 to combat rolls. If used in a single-shot weapon, a roll of all 1's will render the weapon inoperable (jammed). If used in a rapid-fire weapon, a roll of all 1's and/or 2's will render the weapon useless (destroyed).

### Armor-Piercing (AP) (+1 vs Armored targets, -2 vs unarmored)

New-breed AP ammo consists of high-velocity, hardened point ammo. Against targets wearing body armor, a bonus of +1 is added, however if used against an

unarmored opponent a penalty if -2 is incurred. A note: "old-style" teflon-coated ammunition is practically worthless against newtype body armor and presents no bonus.

### Acid-Tipped (AT) (+2)

Acid-tipped ammo is illegal in all countries, being a felony to own. Depending on the location, penalties may range from a stiff fine, to a life sentence of hard labor. Particularly gruesome, this ammunition scars and maims those hit by it. On a roll of all 1's, the weapon has jammed, destroying the weapon as the acid leaks from the round. If AT ammunition is loaded into a rapid-fire weapon, it will immediately jam upon firing, destroying the weapon.

### Explosive-Tipped (EX) (Special)

Explosive-tipped ammunition is the most dangerous ammunition found, both to the target and the attacker. When struck by explosive-tipped ammo, a target suffer 2 dice of "damage", rather than the traditional 1 die, however, if an attacker's roll shows all 1's and/or 2's, the ammunition has exploded inside the weapon, causing 2 dice of damage for each round remaining in the weapon, likely killing or incapacitating the firer. The high heat of a rapid-fire weapon will IMMEDIATELY cause these rounds to explode, with identical results.

## SPECIAL WEAPON FEATURES

### SILENCERS (Special)

Silencers are illegal, except for covert operatives from S-6 and S-9. The current silencers use inverse sound wave technology to electronically baffle weapon report, making them effectively silent, even for large-caliber weapons.

### WEAPON INTERFACE (+1 Handgun/SMG or +2 Rifle)

Using a cyberbrain and interface plugs, a sharpshooter may gain a bonus of +1 to handgun and submachinegun use, or +2 for single-fire rifles. Weapon interfaces are legal to own and use, and are popular among sport hunters.

## ARMOR

Common body armor is made from synthetic fibers that are stronger than steel yet lightweight, often over a ceramic plate core to foil "old-style" armor-piercing ammunition. When a character wearing body armor is "injured" (loses a round of a lethal cliche contest) the dice are deducted from the armor value first. Once the armor is depleted, dice are then lost normally. Normally anything heavier than light armor is illegal for public use.

### LIGHT BODY ARMOR (1 die)

This is the armor commonly used by Section 5 and other police forces. It is as light as a regular synthetic linen shirt, but provides a good level of protection. There are no rigid plates in this armor.

### MEDIUM BODY ARMOR (2 dice)

This is 2 layers of light body armor, with a layer of ceramic plate inbetween. This is often the armor worn by Section 1 and Section 5 teams.

### HEAVY BODY ARMOR (3 dice)

This is hard armor, a thick ceramic plate covered by ballistic cloth. This is the heaviest armor, normally only used by Section 9 when heavy combat is expected. Due to the rigid nature of this armor, one die is deducted from any athletic cliche attempted while it's worn.

## VEHICLES

Typical cars, trucks and motorcycles will generally be 1 to 4 dice, representing their speed and agility. Non-armored vehicles will do no good in protecting the drivers if struck by weapons fire – your best bet is to drive fast and pray, kiddo. Armored vehicles will protect those inside, but may prove to be more tempting targets – after all, what goodies must be inside for them to protect it so?

### QUICKIES:

Junk Car or Truck(1), Typical Car or Truck(2), Sports Car(3)

Junk Motorcycle(1), Typical Motorcycle(2), Sports Bike(4)

Armored Car(2), Armored Truck(3), "Old-style" Tank(3)

### STANDARD LIGHT TANK(6)

This is a state of the art light weight tank designed for urban deployment. It utilizes "crab-type" running gear for high speed and maneuverability over almost any terrain. It is filled to the brim with options, and it comes equipped with therm-optic camouflage and a cybernetic linkage. Standard weapons include 2 rapid-fire gatling-style machineguns that are capable of firing HV ammunition with no ill effects, as well as 2 smaller caliber machineguns for anti-personnel usage.

### SECTION 6 SNIPING HELICOPTER(4)

The unique sniping helicopter is Section 6's premier piece of equipment. This chopper is designed specifically for sniping targets at extreme ranges from an airborne position. When the helicopter is in position, the sides fold out and the floor lowers creating a platform for four snipers, two on each side. The snipers jacked into "device drivers" which control their cardiovascular functions and ensure weapon stabilization.

Once jacked in, the snipers and their "Ultima Ratio" rifles become a part of the helicopter. There is no more precise sniping system in the world.

## SECTION 6 AWACS HELICOPTER(3), SENSOR SYSTEMS(5)

This vehicle is the helicopter equivalent to the AWACS airplanes. It is loaded with every sensor, radar type and ECM device imaginable. It can be used for a variety of applications such as locating ground based drug labs, hidden chemical weapons etc. It can also be used as ECM and ECCM support for a ground or air based team. One of its most prominent roles is that of an airborne command and support center. This can be seen at the end of the film as it acts as the command and support center for the two sniping helicopters.

## POLICE APC(3)

This is a typical APC used by many police agencies and public defense sections. It is a fast armored vehicle with good armor, though it is unarmed.

## 2029 TOYATA SEDAN(2)

The average car of 2029. Alcohol powered, all-wheel-drive and steering, cybernetic linkage, GPS, heads-up display and cup holders.

## SAMPLE NPC'S

Here are some sample NPC's for your perusal/use. These were quickly written up to give you an idea of a "typical" Rits:LotS character.

### Alex "Brighthand" Saunders

Musician[3], Information Broker[2], Cyborg(1)

"Brighthand" as he is known on the streets, is a popular technoidie musician, his nickname derived from his chromed prosthetic arm. Unknown to many, he is also a rather central figure in the underworld, acting as an information broker to dozens of street operatives.

### Jimmy the Knife

Mercenary(4), Sneak(4), Street Urchin(3)

Jimmy the Knife is a rather typical street operative in Brighthand's employ. He has a distinct fondness for using bladed weapons, which earned him his nickname. Jimmy is not a person to take lightly, as he is often armed with vibroknives that shear through armor with little or no reduction in efficacy and is quite adept at thrown blades.

## SOURCES AND CREDITS

Risus: the Anything RPG by S. John Ross

[risus.cumberlandgames.com](http://risus.cumberlandgames.com)

Without Risus, there'd be no Risus in the Shell: Life on the Streets ;-)

LordZamiel.is.Dreaming

[lordzamiel.is.dreaming.org](http://lordzamiel.is.dreaming.org)

You can find all my works here, free. Enjoy.

Ghost in the Shell, and Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex, episodes 1-22.

And various other websites and fanworks I've collected, downloaded and printed over the past few years. I would have listed them here if ANY of them still had working URL's  
\*DOH!\*

The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20040323061751/http://www.darrelmiller.com/risus/swrisus/>



RISUS is property of S. John Ross. A copy of RISUS: THE ANYTHING RPG, can be nabbed at: [www.io.com/~sjohn/blue.htm](http://www.io.com/~sjohn/blue.htm).

RISUS is a COMPLETELY FREE RPG. Never will you be required to spend a dime!

STAR WARS is property of George Lucas. This is a work of FAN ORIGIN, and in NO way is meant for profit, only fun.

## INTRODUCTION v 1.0

Although RISUS is a comedy game, THIS is a SERIOUS suppliment for that game. It has been constructed, because the current STAR WARS: RPG, is WAY to complicated for my needs.

## RACES

If you don't want to be human (and who does!) the following section details other races, and their special benefits in the RISUS system.

**Trandoshan** (Large, smelly, ugly, reptilians) you can see in the dark (whoopy! No penalty when in the dark to any cliche.)

**Ewoks** (Small, smelly, ugly, mammalians) you sound weird (+1 die whenever you are trying to convince someone you are not a sentient species!).

**Wookie** (Large, smelly, ugly, whiny) you are strong. (+1 die when lifting or throwing things)

**Droid** (NOTE: cannot be a Jedi or Force Adept) (shiny, tall or short, noisy) (Character can never be truly destroyed: UNLESS you forgot to back up your hard drive!)

**Sullstan** (taller than ewoks, but still small, mammals?) See in the dark (As with Trandoshan)

**Twilek** (slimy, short or tall, fat or thin, head tails) An excellent manipulator. (+1 die whenever you are trying to manipulate people)

**Mon Calamari** (squiddish, big eyes, slimy) Excellent swimmer. (+1 die whenever you are trying to swim.)

**Cerean** (large head, double heart) Really smart. (+1 die when trying to use your head. Even if it is just to knock someone down.)

**Ithorian** (brown skin, double mouths, only 3 toes!) the original hippy (+1 die whenever you use the natural world around you.)

NOTE: Have you ever noticed that STAR WARS makes humans appear very nicely? SOUNDS a little HOMOSAPENTRIC to me!

## STAR WARS CLICHES

Yes, Star Wars is very cliched (sorry I can't get that little 'e' above the "e".) So it fits nicely in the RISUS mold. Below are some of the very basic INITIAL cliches that your character can have. Feel FREE to pick other ones, IF your GAME MASTER allows them.

Cliches:

**Scoundrel** (Stealing, cheating, lying, cussin, talking, lying, cheating, stealing, buying)

**Scout** (Look around, living in the wilderness, not being lost, finding places)

**Fringer** (tinkering, surviving, being rugged)

**Jedi** (swinging lightsabers, using the Force, being serious, following the Jedi Code)

**Force Adept** (using the Force, finding ancient relics, learning more about the Force)

THESE are the basic HEROIC cliches. (which were directly lifted from the CURRENT wizards of the coast STAR WARS: RPG) YOU can choose any other cliches you want, just use ones you already know. They could be anything, for example:

artist, writer, animal handler, biologist, entertainer, dancer, starship pilot,.....

## STAR WARS: PRESTIGE CLICHES

Allright, Allright. This is an almost direct idea from the CURRENT Star Wars RPG by Wizards of the Coast. And I make no bones about it. ALL of these Cliches are based on the PRESTIGE CLASSES listed in the STAR WARS: CORE RULE BOOK, GAMER, and DARK SIDE SOURCE BOOK. (copyright George Lucas and Wizards of the Coast copyright 2001.)

BUT they have been RISUSITIZED, to fit RISUS, THE ANYTHING RPG!!! So enjoy.

### SOME NOTES ABOUT PRESTIGE cliches

- o Each cliche has requirements that must be met, BEFORE you can begin attaining dice in that cliche.
- o Prestige cliches INITIALLY cost twice the die as normal cliches. (i.e. 2 die for 1 die)
- o After this, advancement in the PRESTIGE CLICHES is as described in RISUS core rules.
- o A character can BEGIN in a prestige cliche, only if they spend die in such a fashion that meets the requirements for the cliche.

### PRESTIGE CLICHES

CLIQUE	REQUIREMENT	SPECIAL SKILL/ABILITY
Slicer	Any technical cliche(2)	+1 die whenever dealing with computers
Charlatan	Any selling/busines cliche(2)	+1 die whenever lying
Emperor's Hand	Emperor Chooses you, All current cliches (2)	+1 die whenever tracking your prey
Dark Side Devotee	Jedi or Force Adept (2)	+1 die to Force attacks
Dark Side Marauder	Any Combat Cliche (3), Force Adept/Jedi (2)	+1 die to Physical attacks
Sith Lord	Any Combat cliche(2), Force Adept/Jedi (3) or Sith Acolyte (2)	+1 die to Force and Physical attacks
Sith Acolyte	Any Combate Cliche (1), Force Adept/Jedi (2)	+1 die to Force or Physical attacks
Shaman	Force Adept (2)	+1 die when healing people
Bounty Hunter	Scout (2), Scoundrel (1)	+1 die when trying to escape imprisonment
Ace Pilot	Starship Pilot (2)	+1 die when piloting your vehicle
Crimelord	Scoundrel (3)	+1 die when try to get illegal goods
Privateer (legal pirate)	Scout (2), Scoundrel (2)	+1 die to ANY cliche when dealing with "illegal" pirates.
Royal Guard	Scout (4)	+1 die to ANY cliche when following ROYAL orders
Jedi Battle Master	Jedi (4)	+1 die to ANY cliche when protecting the innocent

## THE FORCE

### General Notes

It binds us, it connects us, it makes us puke! It's the FORCE, that all powerful ENERGY FIELD. Who knows what it is, who cares. SOME can use it, MOST ignore it. AND that is what makes it dangerous. There are some who choose to use it for GOOD, and others who use it for their own EVIL purpose. BEWARE, once you turn down the DARK SIDE, forever will it dominate your destiny.

### Game Mechanics

Okay, in game terms, any one can call upon the FORCE. This means that they may roll one extra die when they do so. (A character can do this ONCE in an adventure) HOWEVER, anyone with a FORCE USING cliche, may actually use the Force CONSCIOUSLY.

HOW they use the Force determines whether they are GOOD or EVIL.

Since RISUS is a SIMPLE rpg, the rule for deciding if using the FORCE is evil or good is as well.

WHENEVER THE FORCE IS USED TO BENEFIT YOUR CHARACTER AT THE EXPENSE OF ANOTHER CHARACTER (npc OR pc) YOU HAVE USED THE FORCE FOR EVIL.

This may be difficult to determine, and would indicate that the "JEDI MIND TRICK" is actually evil, but that is the RULE. This is important, because using the DARK SIDE has serious consquences, THOUGH NOT AT FIRST.

Have the character note every time they call upon the DARK SIDE. Once the character's "DARK SIDE POINTS" equal his/her FORCE USING cliche (pick one if more than one), the character is in serious trouble. BECAUSE for EVERY dark side point gained thereafter, the character must roll 1 die. If the number on that die equals or is less than the number of dark side points above the FORCE USING cliche, the character loses 1 level in another cliche. For example:

Phoebous has gained 5 dark side points. His Force Adept cliche is (2). He therefore has 3 dark side point above his FORCE USING cliche. Now he rolls a die. He rolls the die, and gets a "2". This means that he now loses 1 die in a cliche of his choosing. Phoebous chooses to lose 1 die in his Medic cliche.

Destructive power is HARD to control, and in the end, even the most POWERFUL dark sider will be consumed by it. (AND you know what happens whenever any CLICHE is reduced to ZERO!!)

### Tempting the characters

DECEPTION and FORCE are tools of the Dark Side. Use them well. As the GM you are responsible for making your Force users decide their goal in life, and this choice can be very difficult. (Compounded by your playing the Devil's Advocate.;)

In terms of game play, to draw unwitting characters into the yawning abiss of the DARK SIDE, you can grant bonus dice to aggressive or hateful actions, or take away dice (If they just insist on being nice. But don't take away dice unless they actually have DARK SIDE POINTS, because the dark side doesn't yet have access to the character.). BE creative, and you will find interesting opportunities to ROLEPLAY!!

## STAR WARS: SPACE COMBAT

This is really simple, so hang on it will be quick.

Just like characters, vehicles, space or otherwise, have a cliche. For example:

X-WING  
Starship (2)

Vehicle cliches work JUST LIKE character cliches.

Vehicles, their drivers, and any droids used as support, work as a TEAM. (The only time they don't is 1) if the driver is dead or 2) driver has ejected). TEAMING rules are described in the CORE RISUS rules.

EVEN if the Vehicle has a higher CLICHE than the driver, it cannot be the leader, unless it has a brain. HOWEVER a droid or the driver could be the leader, this is left up to those playing the game.

ALSO, if the vehicle is reduced to ZERO, it is destroyed. (Meaning the driver and droid, will take damage, especially if in space) If the Driver is reduced to ZERO, the ship is dead in space, UNLESS a droid is designated as the LEADER.

## BASIC VEHICLES (SPACE AND OTHERWISE)

X-WING  
Starship (2)

TIE FIGHTER  
Starship (1)

LIGHT STOCK FREIGHTER (like the Millenium Falcon)  
Starship (2)  
Freighter (3)

A-WING  
Starship (1)

IMPERIAL STAR DESTROYER  
Starship (12)  
Troop Transport (3)

QUEEN AMIDALA'S SHIP  
Starship (3)  
Freighter (2)  
Royal Flagship (2)

TRADE FEDERATION DROID SHIP  
Starship (3) (NOTE: PC's can't use these, and they only have 3 dice. Because they are robots, with brains.)

NABOO CRUISER  
Starship (2)

POD RACER  
Dragster (2) (NOTE: This is for a basic Pod)

SPEEDER  
Speeder (2) (NOTE: This is for a Land Speeder)

SPEEDER BIKE  
Speeder (1)

AT-AT  
Troop Transport (2)  
Ground Assault (7)

AT-ST  
Reconnaissance (4)

Sail Barge (Like Jabba's)  
Pleasure Yacht (2)  
Assault Vehicle (4)

## Vehicle Creation

This, being RISUS, is also very simple.

Just like characters, vehicles have cliches. The above basic vehicles, are just that, basic. When creating a vehicle, you may modify the basic vehicles, or construct a totally new vehicle. Here are some guidelines.

**Land Vehicles** (anything used to move on the land, this includes: AT-ATs, AT-STs, Land Speeders, Jawa Barges, Sail Barges, blah blah blah..) I would suggest the following die allocation: Small LVs: 2-3 die; Medium LVs: 4-6 die; Large LVs: 7-10 die.

**Starships** (those used in dogfights and small explosions) probably should not have more than 5-6 dice to distribute to cliches.

**Freighters** (those designed to haul illegal, or some times legal, goods across the galaxy) should have between 7-9 dice.

**Capital Ships** (really big ships: Imperial Star Destroyers, Custom Corvettes,...) 10-15 die would be a good number. (Any more than this and you will probably not be able to count that high.)

**NOTE:** Starship is a general cliche that indicates a vehicles ability to function in space, and includes shields, weapons, sensors and the like.

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**Pod Creation** Creating a pod racer is just like creating any Risus character or vehicle. Pick a cliché that you think is appropriate and provide it with dice.

In general Pod Racers have three categories.

D4 - these are quick and light pod racers, but easily damaged

D6 - these are the average size and speed of pod racers

D8 - these are the slower but stronger type of pod racers

Generally d12 pods are not allowed at races, they are far too strong to compete. And Tracks generally have rules as to the maximum power of each category of Pod Racers are allowed in the race. (see sample tracks below)

## RULES

Pod Races can be very exciting as a totally minds-eye experience, but it is really fun as a table top experience. (I can testify to this because in my classroom we set up our large science tables as a track while we study our States and Capitals.) That being the case, the table top rules used here are adapted from David Masad's Risus: The Wargame.

The movement of a Pod is determined by its cliché. For every cliché the pod may move 1 section of track. That would mean a Pod Racer (2) would be able to move through 2 sections of track on its turn. THIS IS PROVIDED that the player beats the Difficulty of each section. (see rules later)

The pod racer and the pilot form a team, with the pilot being the leader. Teaming rules are described in the RISUS core rules. If at any time the pod racer is reduced to zero, it is out of the race.

If a pod racer doesn't make it past a section of track on its turn it is considered damaged in some way, and therefore loses a cliché. Ramming can occur only when you end your turn in the same section of track as the Pod you wish to ram. Ramming is a normal attack with the loser taking damage via losing a cliché.

### Track Creation

Decide how many sections your track will have. For a straight drag race type track try 10-12, for a lap type race maybe 5-8. You can draw these sections as a simple line drawing, or actually create a 3-D model. (I use long science tables because they are what I have, they work great!)

Next, you will need to decide the difficulty for each section of track. This can be done in two ways.

First Option: Figure a difficulty number for each section of track. In this way Section One of the Odo Pass Track may have a difficulty of 5, Section Two may have a difficulty of 10 and so on.

Second Option: For each section of track assign a cliché, and roll every time using this cliché. (Though a section of track cannot lose its cliché, only the pod racer.) So Section One of Odo Pass Track could be Lots of Obstacles (2), Section Two could be Deep Lava Pits (4) If a track section has multiple clichés they work as a team according the core RISUS rules. The only thing that must be done is decide who the leader is, and this is determined by the highest cliché. (See example below)

The following are two tracks using these two different sets of track creation options.

Cloud Nine 5 sections (lap track) Pod Racer Limits up to 4d4, 2d6, 1d8 Pod Racers

Section 1: difficulty 5  
Section 2: difficulty 5  
Section 3: difficulty 15

Section 4: difficulty 15

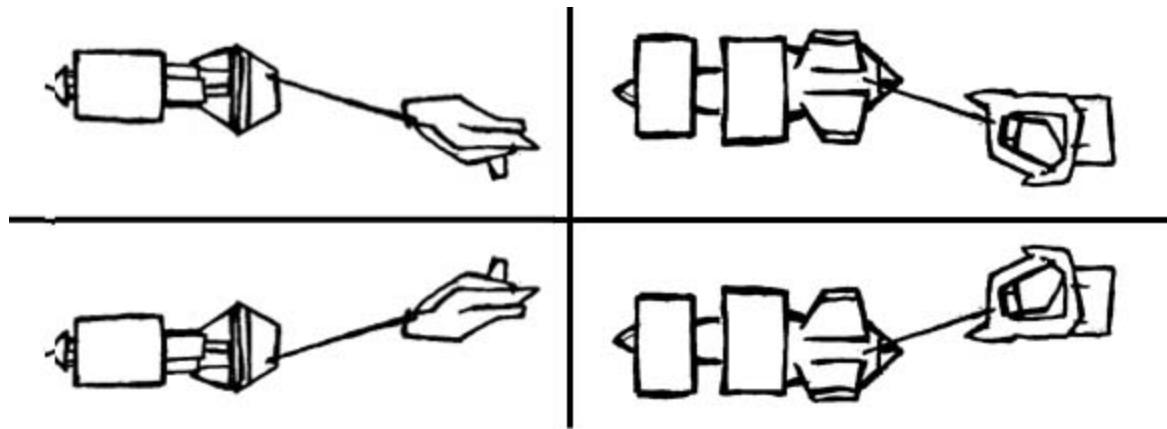
Section 5: Difficulty 5

Zooti Canyon Chase 9 sections (drag track) No d8 or d12 pods, no more than 3 ranks in any cliche

- Section 1: Lots of ramps (2)
- Section 2: Rock Strewn (1)
- Section 3: Narrow Canyon (3)
- Section 4: Deep drop off (2) Rock Strewn (1)
- Section 5: Snipers (1)
- Section 6: Snipers (1) Pillars of Rock (1)
- Section 7: Steep Slope (3)
- Section 8: Steep Drop Off (4)
- Section 9: Flat and Smooth (1)

### Pod Racing Prestige Cliches

Cliche	Requirements	Benefit
Daredevil	Ace Pilot (2)	+1 die when doing crazy stunts
Rammer	Pilot (1), Mechanic (2)	+1 die when ramming another pod racer
Speedster	Pilot (1), Pod Racer (2)	+1 die push to Pod Racer per race



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Have you ever been without the words to describe an action scene? Me too! Having trouble finding the right words the moment your player's Crooning Bard (3) assaults his opponent with his mandolin? (Which by the way is a more to be desired fate!)

Well Never fear, after perusing this document, you will have the starts anyway for adding some variety to your damage descriptions.

ON the appropriate table below, roll 1d10 whenever one of your players damages a foe, another player, or himself (if some of your players can do these things to themselves, boy are they talented!)

#### Lightsaber (or sword, dagger, or any other piercing or slashing) (d10)

- 1- Your swing knocks your foe onto his/her/their butt, but does not harm him/her/them. (Opponent(s) can't take any actions next round, no cliché level lost.)
- 2- Vaulting into the air, you spin, and slash downward. Your blade sticks deep into your opponent's shoulder.
- 3- Sliding onto the ground, you arc your weapon upward and cut a gash in the upper thigh of your opponent.
- 4- Your opponent's weapon flies above you as you skillfully duck and swipe. Your weapon penetrates your opponent's belly.
- 5- Blocking your opponents swipe, you bring the butt of your weapon into your opponent's jaw. A tooth and saliva splatter upon the ground from your assault.
- 6- Sidestepping the onslaught of your opponent, you make a horizontal swing at his/her/their shoulder. Your blade meets bone as it cleaves the skin.
- 7- Your blade slashes your opponent's ankles, and with your remaining momentum you push your opponent down.
- 8- Swinging with all your might your slightly downward sweep cracks across your opponents knee caps.
- 9- With surprise you smack your opponent's weapon hand, causing him/her/them to drop his/her/their weapon. (Until opponent has regained weapon, opponent operates at 1/2 cliché dice.)
- 10- Catching your opponent's weapon hand in yours, you bring your blade up in one fluid movement to sever his/her/their arm from his/her/their shoulder. Stepping back you let the severed appendage drop to the ground, with a sickening thud. (1 extra dice in damage)

ON the appropriate table below, roll 1d10 whenever one of your players damages a foe, another player, or himself (if some of your players can do these things to themselves, boy are they talented!)

#### Blaster (or bow, crossbow, sling, or other projectile weapons!) (d10)

- 1- Your bolt grazes your opponents (pick a body part). (Opponent is stunned, cannot take any action next round, no cliché level lost.)
- 2- Jumping from your weapon the bolt flies through the air and smashes into the shoulder of your opponent, sending him/her/them into the ground.
- 3- With practiced ease you send a volley of bolts towards your enemy. With poor effort your opponent manages to get passed most of them. But one slams into his/her/its head sending his/her/it flaying backwards.
- 4- Firing your weapon your opponent is pierced in the lower calf, sending chunks of skin shrapnel a few feet behind him/her/it.
- 5- Spinning your rapidly place a shot off. It smacks your opponents forearm, ripping open a large gash.

- 6- Snapping off a shot, your bolt slaps your opponent in the knee cap, forcing him/her/it to the ground.
- 7- With a dull thud your bolt crashes into your opponent's chest.
- 8- Dodging your opponents onslaught, you slip sideways and get off a shot. Your bolt shatters your opponent's foot.
- 9- Your bolt splatters against your opponent's weapon hand, causing him/her/it to drop his/her/its weapon. (opponent operates at 1/2 cliché until weapon is regained.)
- 10- With blinding speed and ferocious power your bolt pierces your opponent's chest, puncturing one of his/her/its lungs. (1 extra die in damage.)

Oh yeah, this little document will make you the envy of all those other game masters. Go ahead, rub it in their faces. Risus is the property of S.John Ross Star Wars is the property of George Lucas All this junk is copy right 2001 This supplement was created by Darrel Miller I wrote this on my X-mas break. I didn't have anything else to do.

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Star Wars is full of some great, if not cliched, characters. A great breeding ground for RISUS the Anything RPG. So stop by, I will update this page with pics and stats every now and then. And if there is someone you really want to see, don't hesitate to whip up his/her/their stats and send them to me!

### ORIGINAL FLAVOR (Major Characters have 10-15 die, Minor Characters have 6-8 die)



**DARTH VADER** (tall, dark, and MEAN!)  
 savage sith lord (5)  
 sith acolyte (2)  
 desert warrior (1)  
 unskilled force adept (1)  
 angry jedi padawan (2)  
 accomplished Pilot (3)  
 NOTE: Vader has +1 die to all non-force rolls (cybernetics)



**BEN KENOBI** (wise, caring, and bearded)  
 jedi master (5)  
 old geezer (3)  
 wise mentor (3)  
 interested scout (2)  
 NOTE: Kenobi gains +1 die when trying to evade detection



**BOBA FETT** (not talkative, cool armor, lots of devices)  
 efficient bounty hunter (4)  
 surly scout (3)  
 incorrigible scoundrel (3)  
 vengeful kid (2)  
 NOTE: Fett gets +1 die whenever he is trying to escape

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favorite characters



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RISUS d20, because I hate rolling 6-sided dice all the time.

## GAME MECHANICS: SO WHAT CHANGES?

Nothing really. A Snotty Archer (3) instead of roll 3 six sided dice, would do this:

roll ONE 20-sided dice and add the cliche as a bonus. (so in this case a +3)

However you need not only apply this rule to 20-sided dice, but to any type of dice. Therefore, the Snotty Archer (3) could be rolling 4-sided, 6-sided, 8-sided, 12-sided, or n-sided die. This would provide different levels of opponents, based merely on the type of die rolled.

Here is an example of play:

Frodo (Ringer Bearer (3)) is at the Volcano in Mt. Doom. Suddenly the RING attacks him, trying to force him to put it on. So the player playing Frodo rolls ONE 20-sided dice. She rolls a 13. Under the RISUS d20 edition, she then adds 3 to her roll of 13 for a total of 16. Sadly not enough, Frodo dons the ring, and Samwise is surprised and angered that he has disappeared.

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Here it is the VAULTED Star Wars RISUS Character sheet, you have been asking for, nay begging for (looks familiar doesn't it?). Anyway, here it is. I wanted a different kind of sheet, so instead of numbers fill in the circles to show how many levels you have in each cliche. I hope to have this up as a PDF file soon too. But until then just copy this and paste it into your favorite word processing document. You should be able to paste a couple of times. This way you don't waste a perfect sheet of paper. (Though some would say that this IS a waste of paper!)

<b>RISUS</b>	<b>Name:</b> _____
<b>star wars</b>	<b>Description:</b> _____
	<b>Race:</b> _____
	<b>Cliches:</b> _____ OOOO _____ OOOO _____ OOOO _____ OOOO _____ OOOO _____ OOOO
	<b>Prestige Cliche:</b> _____ OOOO
	<b>Hook:</b> _____
	<b>Tale:</b> _____
	<small>notes on back</small>

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## Acknowledgements

Many thanks to S. John Ross (whom you may find [here](#)) for creation of Risus and giving it to the Web community. Risus cuts the awful Gordian knot of ever-escalating game mechanics that try to do everything except allow players to have fun. Risus is copyright 1999 S. John Ross. All material original to *Risus Supers* is copyright 1999 Stacy Allston.

## What Is Risus?

[Risus](#) is a free game provided to the world out of the goodness of the heart of freelance game and supplement designer S. John Ross, whose work has appeared in publications by many game companies, most lately [Steve Jackson Games](#).

Risus leaves balance up to the players and referees and opens the session for game-playing and storytelling; it therefore provided an optimal model for a game based on the satirical treatment of superheroes. Also, since it costs nothing, and lives on the Web, anyone with a browser or a friend with a browser can have a copy. In fact, if your interest so inclines you, you can put a Risus button somewhere on your own pages to lead to it, like this one:



... which you can connect to Risus itself with the following snippet of code:

```
<A HREF="http://www.io.com/~sjohn/risus.htm"><IMG SRC="risusbnn.gif"></A>
```

... where `risusbnn.gif` represents the name you give to the graphic when you save it.

## What is Risus Supers?

Risus Supers attempts to provide some simple mechanics for simulating superheroes whom no one needs to take seriously, such as the characters that appeared in the old *Mad Comics* or Marvel's *Not Brand Echh*, in humorous superhero cartoons, or creations invented by players. These additions to the basic Risus concept, although they do add a few optional rules and many superheroic Cliches, still leave the game mechanics simple enough that a player can create a character in five minutes and detail his important traits on a small index card.

Thanks to Clarence Thomas, General Tecumseh Sherman, the Beatles, Sammy Davis Jr., Frank Zane, Richard Nixon, and the Axis and Allied leadership for modeling for the superhero art.

## Some Superhero Cliches

These Cliches cover much of the basic idiom of superhero comics. Note that the vagueness of some of these definitions leaves a lot in the hands of the Referee. Since things work that way in Risus anyway, the basic, stock game probably ill-suits rules lawyers and munchkins vying for advantage anyway.



Also note that the vagueness of the descriptions allows or requires the player to define his actions more specifically than the die rolls suggest; a fantastic roll with a power might involve a tremendous kick in the nay-nays or a crueler attack in which a superhero shoves his opponent's face in his armpit. You don't need a table of maneuvers for this; it would just slow down the game to the pace of rules-heavy and "realistic" games in which a single fistfight can take three hours to complete.

- **On-Fire Guy/Gal**  
Covering self with flames, causing other things to burn, not getting burned by normal fires, looking all weird while covered with fire
- **Stretching Guy/Gal**  
Elongating the body, absorbing blows, squishing through tiny openings
- **Zapping Guy/Gal**  
Can attack at a distance with some stupid kind of burst of energy or stuff or something
- **Sticking/Trapping Guy**  
Making enemy unable to move or fight; could be spewing adhesive goo, ice, or fast-setting gelatin; or it could involve substances too vile to mention and too horrible to contemplate.
- **All-Purpose Gimmick**  
Making anything you need out of your "stuff" (the utility of said creations depending upon the roll v. Cliche and the difficulty estimated by the GameMaster for said creations).
- **Runs Fast Guy/Gal**  
Running fast, doing loop-the-loops over the walls and ceiling, doing things so fast people can't see you do them, wearing out sneakers, getting speeding tickets on foot
- **Swimming Guy/Gal**  
Moving through water, not drowning, getting laughed at by one's superheroic peers who have powers that actually serve some purpose
- **Flying Guy/Gal**  
moving in 3 dimensions, never having to fall down if you don't want to, coming in through windows instead of doors, peeking in windows way up from the ground
- **Giant Guy/Gal**  
standing really tall all the time; lifting, breaking, and throwing big things, looming over stuff, noticing signs that say "minimum height to attack Tokyo"
- **Growing Guy/Gal**  
like Giant Guy/Gal, only you can turn it off; growing to large sizes, returning to normal sizes, not losing one's clothing in the process
- **Big Goon**  
picking things up, throwing them, breaking them, beating people up, breaking through walls, smashing brand new BMWs because their alarms went off
- **Part-Time Goon**  
like goon, but has to turn on or off (the advantage of not being a full-time goon includes being able to fit in a car and not send children screaming in terror; disadvantages include lack of goon benefits while goon is "off")
- **Strong Guy/Gal**  
as Big Goon, but doesn't make you bigger or funny looking

- **Invisible Guy/Gal**  
hiding in plain sight; sneaking into movies; evading paparazzi; eluding unwanted visits from the landlord about that overdue rent
- **Intangible Guy/Gal**  
walking through solid objects, passing through narrow openings, always having a job when the carnival passes through town
- **Shape Changing Guy/Gal**  
changing from one thing to another thing, then back to the original thing, or to a third thing entirely
- **Shrinking Guy/Gal**  
becoming small, escaping from non-airtight containers, getting too small to see, passing through keyholes, using bugs as horses and straight pins as rapiers
- **Armored Guy/Gal**  
looks weird, hard to wound, can't go to the bathroom without a set of wrenches
- **Robot**  
looking weird, being able to "eat" with jumper cables, healing wounds with WD-40, duct tape, new batteries, and an extension cord; eating Thanksgiving dinner by plugging an extension cord into the wall
- **Android**  
looking weird, not needing to eat, drink, or go to the bathroom; sulking about one's own inhumanity
- **Cyborg**  
looking weird, being able to use electronic surplus for first aid, shaving one half of your face and polishing the other
- **Alien**  
looking weird, talking funny, eating funny foods, knowing funny languages, laughing at things that make the puny humans cry
- **Freak/Monster/Thingus**  
looking weird, talking funny, not necessarily belonging to any particular species, having an uncanny immunity to venereal disease, paternity suits, and marriage
- **Invulnerable Guy/Gal**  
never getting killed by violence (can still get knocked down or knocked out or just knocked silly, though) and never dying due to stupid stuff like drowning, poisoning, asphyxiation
- **Immortal**  
living way too long; remembering stuff that happened in the last Ice Age; not requiring an explanation about seeming young after appearing in comics for 60 years
- **Werewolf**  
howling, jumping, clawing, self-pity trips based on the phase of the moon, tearing up your clothes, relieving oneself in public
- **Teleporting Guy/Gal**  
going from here to there without ever being between; coming back the same way
- **Dimensional Travel Guy/Gal**  
transporting self and others to stupid places where the laws of physics don't work right or where John Wilkes Booth became President; finding carbon copies of superheroes for the originals to fight in a big "misunderstanding"
- **Time Travel Guy/Gal**  
Transporting self and others in both directions of the calendar (difficulty will increase with distance travelled and amount transported); doing well in the stock market with no particular background; knowing the outcome of the Superbowl early on
- **Controls Weather Guy/Gal**  
making rain and winds annoy other people; providing slow, sleet, rain, or hail as the occasion demands; never worrying about the weather when setting off to the golf course or fishing hole
- **Controls Animals Guy/Gal**  
improbably summoning animals to do one's bidding (the rareness of the animal, the numbers required, and the absurdity of the desired task all increase the difficulty)
- **Controls Insects Guy/Gal**  
improbably summoning swarms of insects to do one's bidding (the rareness of the insects, the numbers required, and the absurdity of the desired task all increase the difficulty)
- **Many Body Guy/Gal**  
splitting into more than one body, sleeping at home and showing up at work at the same time, having odd options in the *boudoir*, occupying more than one place at a time (more places increase the difficulty)
- **Idol to Millions**  
summons swarms of ravening fans (said swarms increasing in intensity and virulence with the level of the Cliche), getting on TV or seated in restaurants
- **Cool Costume**  
looking cooler than the ordinary, unimaginative dolts around you; having a professional and photogenic appearance while beating the living snot out of a

busload of Evil Boy Scouts; serving as a fashion template for the horribly drab and square heroes one knows

- **Rich**  
having large sums of cash to summon on demand (for bills, bribes, fines, or just stuff); showing off to the envious morons that accompany one just precisely what makes you matter and them not
- **Hotrodder/Ambulance Driver/Airline Pilot/Bus Driver/Rickshaw Driver**  
coming up with the Gooberwagon/Plane/Sub as appropriate, the mobility of said vehicle depending upon the dice roll versus the difficulty posited by the Referee.
- **Gun-Toting Fool**  
like Zapper, but requiring some device that someone else can take away (any old stupid thing: an overpowered flashlight, a can of shaving cream, a .90 caliber revolver)
- **Leader Guy/Gal**  
commanding; liaising with authority figures; making decisions and stuff; finding scapegoats to take the rap for one's own dreadful decision
- **Escape Artist**  
breaking out of jail when someone decides to investigate all that @#\$% property damage, escaping from the villain's evil deathtrap, impressing dumb supers of the alternate sex at parties, sneaking out of HQ to evade those relentless bill collectors
- **Thief/Dip/Pickpocket**  
stealing the key to those @#\$% handcuffs, picking pockets, never having to pay for Life Savers if you don't want to, relieving others of small items they didn't really need or deserve anyway
- **William Shatner**  
hamming it up, ad-libbing on talkshows (and upstaging the boring host), selling crap in commercials, dramatic pauses, and all the things that make Bill a necessary part of every form of Risus game
- **Errol Flynn**  
hamming it up, looking gorgeous, flirting with females (of almost any age), drinking to excess, swinging on ropes, yelling "Tally Ho!", fighting up and down stairs, grimacing manfully. Doesn't necessarily provide any particular ability to fight well, but helps a lot in Posing contests and going home with the Babes.
- **Richard Nixon**  
growing whiskers seconds after shaving, looking sinister even when up to nothing particularly devious, self-pity trips (a type of exceptionally dramatic Oratory), a strange ability to recover from political suicide, and a general non-Shatnerlike and non-Flynnlike personality.
- **Clint Eastwood**  
scowling, squinting, scowling some more, squinting because it hurts to scowl so much, pulling really cool poses while carrying a .44 Mag with a 24" barrel
- **Paragon of Virtue**  
giving really really long speeches about whatever lame pet morality strikes him that day (useful in Outtalking combat), boring the bodily fluids out of anyone unfortunate enough to witness one of your "pep talks"
- **Sardonic Evil Orator**  
good for trashing the pollyannaish moralistic spew from blind cretins who fail to recognize that the destiny of the universe will carry it no other place than underneath the grinding terror of your invincible heel! Useful in Outtalking combat; also, a necessary part of interpersonal relations in today's complicated world
- **Sidekick**  
discovering secret hideouts by having villains kidnap you to them; remaining helpless while awaiting the latest rescue; admiring some moron in leotards and a cape against the better judgment of your families and peers

## Desperation Dice

Many superhero stories allow a hero a way out of a situation by calling on some dubious tissue of panicky fabrication in the form of a power that hero uses once, then never uses again. This represents the desperation or ineptness of writers who paint themselves into corners and must contrive a way out. The last-minute escape typical of comics since the Almighty attended grade school occur often enough that it deserves a specific mechanic to treat. For this, we have a specialized Cliche we henceforth designate as Desperation Dice.

Treat Desperation Dice like a Cliche, in that the owner buys them at the same cost as a Cliche, excluding "double-pump" as an option, but allowing any "funky" dice the game otherwise allows. Note that a hero must justify, in speech, his use of Desperation Dice. For instance, "Maggot Man realizes he's really, really hungry and eats his way out from the bottom of the garbage heap, emerging on the other side with a belly the size of a whale." The better a character describes his Desperation Dice roll, the more slack a Referee should provide in allowing it.

A player may use his Desperation Dice in whatever quantity (up to the total) he desires, after he has lost a conflict. He creates, on the spur of the moment, a Desperation Cliche, like "Incredible Armpit Smell" which he uses as an attack versus his enemy, resolved with a SINGLE Cliche contest (for instance, if he sought to bring down a villain who just defeated him, a baddie with Obsequious Armored Moron (6d6) as his relevant Cliche, and had 6 Desperation Dice to use on this, he would roll ONE contest of "Incredible Armpit Smell (6d6) versus Obsequious Armored Moron (6d6). If he lost, assume that his attack either failed miserably or turned back against its user.

Note that Villains can buy Desperation Dice too. Most of them seem to, since even mainstream heroes do a dreadful job of keeping these guys in check. However, since a Referee could get the same effect as Desperation Dice with simple cheating, Referees do not have to purchase them. They simply provide an excuse for the

villain getting away again.

Desperation Dice do not increase with experience as per the normal Risus increasing skills roll. After a character uses them, he "zeroes out" his Desperation Dice and may not use them again that adventure. If the hero makes an advancement roll on his Desperation Dice at the end of the adventure (i.e., rolls all evens on a roll of all available Desperation Dice), he recovers them. This prevents a PC from using his Desperation Dice every adventure, and makes them unlikely to appear in proportion to the number of Desperation Dice a character possesses.

*Example of Desperation Dice Usage: Ice Cream Man has Cliches that relate to selling frozen confections and using "special" popsicle-weapons, as the occasion demands, against his enemies. Mean General Disgust has beaten him in a series of normal contests of Cliche versus Cliche, but Ice Cream Man has 4d6 Desperation Dice. He decides to use them against Mean General Disgust, who only retained 2d6 (Gutter Fighter) after taking care of Ice Cream Man. Ice Cream Man, therefore, rolls his Desperation Dice ONCE against whatever Cliche Mean General Disgust decides to use to oppose him.*

*Since a character who uses Desperation Dice must explain what they represent, Ice Cream Man decides that they represent his fan club of swarming, drooling seven-year-olds that he's bribed into obesity with his frozen treats. Mean General Disgust decides to defend with Nasty Old Coot (5d6) in this case, and rolls a 21 against Ice Cream Man's 14. The Desperation Dice roll therefore fails; and Ice Cream Man's fan club inadvertently tramples him into the sod on the way to raid his truck instead of rescuing him.*



## Types of Contests

Risus can handle any type of contest the Referee allows. For instance, he may allow a character with the Cliche Accountant (6d6) to attempt to stop a meteor headed toward Dreadful City by proving mathematically that it could not hit, then storming off in a snit until the story makes more sense.

Some contests occur in a comics medium more often and therefore deserve specific discussion: these include Slugfests, Races/Chases, Beauty/Ugly Contests (Posing Contests), and Oratorical Contests.

### Slugfests

As pleasant to the mind as we may find the image of costumed combatants pelting one another with slimy creatures from beneath rocks, in this context a "slugfest" describes grownup superheroes engaging in the kind of fisticuffs considered beneath sane and rational people. In general, if a character hits, kicks, stomps, stabs, shoots, throws, grapples, or hammers something, the contest belongs in this category.

### Races/Chases

Superheroes (and regular people, too) may want to defer the onset of some other type of contest, particularly the inevitable but sometimes painful slugfest. Where one character (or group of characters) wants to stay clear of another such character (or group), he can opt to engage in a chase.

A chase contests the relevant Cliche of the attacker (chaser) versus the defender (chased) until one wins. If the defender wins, he escapes; if the attacker wins, he corners the defender. The normal rules about relevant Cliches, inappropriate Cliches, or no relevant Cliches apply.

Once one corners a target in a chase, other contests may proceed.

### Beauty and Ugly Contests

Characters who wish to stall the onset or progress of a fight may engage in a beauty or ugly contest. Note that contestants may pit an "ugly" Cliche against a "beautiful" one as if the two represented parallel traits, owing to the lack of self-criticism typical of ugly, but vain, characters.

A Beauty or Ugly contest resolves itself with competing Cliche rolls against the relevant Cliches until someone wins or loses. The outcome of this contest does not affect the outcome of the contests the player(s) wanted to stall or interrupt, but once the Beauty/Ugly Contest resolves itself, neither character can invoke such a contest again during the fight.

(Consider an example of this the Plastic Sam v. Imposter Plastic Sam contest from the early 1950s *Mad Comics*, although in that case, each character sought to prove his realness as Plastic Sam).



## Oratory

When a combat looks like it will not go your way, or when you feel like stalling or boasting, a character can initiate an oratory. He can also do this between rounds.



Heroes and Villains contest their oratorical Cliches. Whoever wins the contest can decide whether to prolong or cut off oratory for the rest of the fight. Note that two long-winded characters could keep this crap up indefinitely unless the Referee decides to evoke Boredom and cut off the Oratory. Even in comic books, we have to observe *some* limits.

This rule allows bigmouthed loser heroes to brag their way out of difficult situations if they have the actual gift of gab necessary to con some villain who intends to fry them into little black things with a crunch like overdone tempura by means of his Inimitable Evil Ray of Death. Also, sometimes someone may need some exposition, just to make sure that the story actually doesn't make sense. Properly explained, it won't.

Oratory also serves to move Hordes, either to calm them down, or persuade them to attack somebody. To manipulate a neutral Horde, contest the relevant Oratorical Cliche against the Horde size. The Orator must wear the Horde down to zero to get it to do his bidding (it's all or nothing, for no particular reason). If the Orator himself loses down to 0 on his Oratorical Cliche, the Horde turns against him. See Hordes.

## Property Damage (Optional, but Amusing)

Comics lacks something unless the contending supers happen to wreak great damage on the local architecture. Sometimes heroes do this as strategy, but often it just happens because the spandex-clad morons don't really care how much mayhem accompanies their self-aggrandizing rumbles and posing for the local news.

Making a contest roll by a good margin implies the possibility of property damage. If the contest involved forces that can knock down a wall (such as zapping, fighting, exploding, or grinding the universe under one's jackbooted heel), use the leftover points to contest the materials of something nearby.

For instance, Pesto Man, who attacks by flinging great overpowering globs of creamy sauce at his enemies, takes on Dr. Halitosis, who destroys his enemies with bursts of effluvial-smelling bad breath. Pesto Man has the Cliche Zapper (4d6) and Dr. Halitosis similarly has Zapper (3d6). Pesto's roll in a Contest comes up a 20; Zapper unfortunately only counters with a 7, leaving 13 leftover points. This 13 applies to an attack on nearby materials, such as cars, roads, walls, etc.



The Referee creates such items on the spot. Some typical values might include:

- someone's brand new car (25 points)
- lamppost (20 pts)
- mailbox (5 pts)
- delicatessen (30 pts)
- bank (35 pts)
- street Vendor's Cart (10 pts)
- city Bus (35 pts)
- skyscraper wall (25 pts)
- armored car (40 pts)
- little old lady's wheelchair with lady included (5 pts)

Also consider that the values given in Risus for throwing things (tanks, motorcycles, etcetera) can serve as useful figures for smashing those same objects up really well. If the numbers seem *high*, cut them down (say, to 2/3 their stated value); if the numbers seem *low*, double them. Don't worry too much about realism, because comics abandoned that a *loooooong* time ago, and parody comics never had to deal with reality in the first place.

Remember, the better the fight, the more unconscionable carnage must result. A really good fight should, at the very least, do such damage to Downtown that traffic has to detour around it for days and days. Naturally, Heroes remain completely oblivious to the millions of dollars of wrack and ruin they inflict, at least until the local law decides to drag them in for it.

Do enough damage and you have a pyrrhic victory on your hands. That means the cops drag you away forever to some awful superprison where a blue-skinned slavering moron with insatiable hormones will take more than a platonic liking to you forever and ever. Fortunately, "forever" seldom lasts until the next adventure; nonetheless, slobbering same-sex assaults can do a great deal of damage to the dignity of even the most hardened comics character. So remember: Watch out for Big Blue Koko and think up an excuse to blame the property damage on some sidekick.

## Giant Monsters

Treat Giant Monsters like characters, except that the Referee gets to make and control them and therefore does not suffer from all the limits that apply to characters.



For instance, if the Referee decides to honor the six-dice limitation, remember that he can specify almost any type of die to use for the monster. He could, for instance, create a creature named Won Ton Goo and invest it with the Cliche Big Annoying Ditko-Kirby Monster (6d100). Of course, heroes would tend to remain fairly helpless against such a monster, unless they numbered in the hundreds (which suggests a quick call to the nearest superhero temp agency might serve them well).

Referees could also ignore the 6-die rule for giant monsters, giving Won Ton Goo a Cliche like Flamebreathing Walking Entree (40d6).

However, the Referee should consider precisely how much imbalance he intends to use in the process of inflicting obnoxious and unbeatable monsters against his players. The Referee should justify really horrendous unfairness with comparable entertaining storytelling. For instance, perhaps one really lame superhero has a power he can use only at the cost of waking up Won Ton Goo (who will wander through the fight, trampling everyone, hero and villain, into a pulp).

## Hordes

The team work rules from Risus don't thoroughly approximate the numbers of worthless expendable baddies a superhero may have to trash in a given fight. Consider a Horde a body containing a number of 0d6 critters, soldiers, ninjas, agents, or whatever, and translate the number constituting the horde into their efficacy this way:

0-3 members in the Horde: 0d6

4-7 members in the Horde: 1d6

8-15 members in the Horde: 2d6

16-31 members in the Horde: 3d6

32-63 members in the Horde: 4d6

64-127 members in the Horde: 5d6

128-255 members in the Horde: 6d6

etc, adding one extra d6 each time the number doubles, with no necessary upper limit.

Remember that this applies to no-die critters only, and use the normal teamwork rules for teams of actual NPCs and PCs! But when a hero has to confront a slavering Horde of Blue Meanies, telemarketers, Green Bay fans, slavering fanboys, Mardi Gras drunks, cardinals, political pollsters, tofu chefs, or similar aggregate menaces, use the Horde rule. Remember, when the individual properties of the component figures *do not matter*, you probably have a Horde on your hands.

A Horde may appear in various forms, including friendly (willing to do your bidding), hostile (intent upon planting you in a pine box) or neutral (vulnerable to persuasion). A character may attempt to persuade a Horde with a relevant Oratorical skill (or the likes of "Idol to Millions").

If two characters attempt to control a Horde to rival ends, contest their Oratorical Cliches, then give the winner the command of the Horde.



## Cliffhangers

The Cliffhanger makes comic books worthwhile. To simulate them in a game, either end a session just as something must happen immanently (if you want your cruelty to drive your players away forever), pause to go to the kitchen after setting up the dramatic Last Page Cliffhanger, or just declare “Cliffhanger!”

At this point, the Referee can do almost any godawful thing to the players because he can take it back just as soon as the action starts up again with a “oh, wait, he’s not really dead, that’s just gas” or similar copout.

Note that the Cliffhanger also provides an excellent opportunity for the Referee to go to the bathroom.

## Losing and Death

In a humor story, death involves little more than a panel or two where the decedents appear in white robes, clip-on haloes, dime-store wings, and a cheap out-of-tune harp scowling at each other (or, sometimes, in the wardrobe and accessories of the Other Place).

Unlike realistic games, even the most complete death doesn’t affect the character any more than the player wants it to. If he wants to come back, that’s his business; he can change the subject whenever nosy other players start prying about something that is a personal matter between a hero and his undertaker.

Also, Losing may constitute a winning scenario for a game, depending on the flair a player manifests on his way down. The Referee may also make some kind of loss inevitable. Comedy deals with pain, remember? Plastic Sam in Mad Comics ended up in a freezer in jail forever; Superduperman ended up cleaning spittoons; Not Brand Ecch’s Stuporman ended up crowded out of his own comic book by the onset of Marble Superheroes.

Who needs to win, anyway? *Besides* munchkins?



## Index: Characters fit for Risus Supers

These characters have distinguished themselves by some absurd thing or another. They either lack the dignity inherent in the pompous business of superheroing, or represent parodies of specific heroes or of the genre, or act like morons in their own comic books. Note that, since all of these characters represent someone's intellectual property, you might ask any living creators for permission before you post descriptions to the Web. Of course, the relentless dogs of the oppressive intellectual property police can't reach you within your Stanktum Stanktorum, can they? Nonetheless, Southern courtesy requires that no one make off like a bandit with someone else's copyrighted stuff, especially when someone can catch you doing it, so please recall that the stuff in this list belongs to people like DC Comics, Marvel Entertainment, Don Simpson, Gilbert Shelton, Terrytoons, Warner Brothers, National Lampoon, Fox, and possibly others I don't have the smarts to remember.

While clever-clever players will prefer to create their *own* dubious superhero creations and bypass the issue of worrying about remaining consistent to someone else's concept, the following listing provides a source of examples to provide the flavor one would expect of the superhero parody medium.

- The Inferior Five: Awkwardman, the White Feather, the Human Zeppelin, Dumb Bunny, Merryman
- The Mighty Heroes: Strongman, Ropeman, Tornadoman, Babyman, Cuckooman
- Wonder Wart-Hog and the Secret Seven: Stinkheap, Captain Marbles, Spasticman, Sparrow, Daddy-Bat, and Major Whatsisname; other Gilbert Sheldon superheroes, including Smiling Sergeant Death and Fratman
- The cast from "Not Brand Ecch" (just about any Marvel character parodied by Marie Severin)
- Megaton Man, the Megapolis Quartet, and anything Don Simpson can sue you for using (consider esp. Yarn Man)
- Earthworm Jim
- Super Chicken, George of the Jungle, Tom Slick
- Plastic Man, Ambush Bug, or Lobo (in their unmodified versions!), characters generally portrayed as ludicrous or demented or dedicated to attacking the conventions of the comic book medium.
- The Tick (and characters from his show), especially the stupid ones. The comic book may have had a few that haven't appeared on TV yet; I apologize for this lapse in my research (I didn't do any).
- Batf\*rt (from National Lampoon), an incredibly aged man who totters around in his cowl and cape with his middle-aged sidekick in their Bat-Rambler.
- Son-o-God (from National Lampoon), a sacrilegious superhero who turns from a nice Jewish boy into "Son-o-God" whenever he says "Jesus Christ!"
- Any character from straight comics who doesn't recognize his own horribleness (you can use whatever criteria to decide if a figure represents something awful enough to qualify. The early sixties "Captain Marvel" (*sic!*) who could split his body into separate parts comes to mind.
- Political figures made into superheroes: for instance, a Richard Nixon who gets all green and bulgy when reporters make him angry.
- Freekazoid and his body of villains
- Any of the *Mad Comics* parody superheroes (Plastic Sam, Batboy and Rubin, Superduperman, Captain Marbles, the Black and Blue Hawks, et cetera).

[Email](#) the author of *Risus Supers*.

Visit the [Blue Room](#), Risus creator S. John Ross' page that hosts not only *Risus* but a plethora of variegated themes (with enough stuff to make you lose a good day's work, easily, just from checking it all out).

# **RISUSTECH**

**A Game of Armored Combat**

**By Zamiel Al'Shaitan**

**A Sourcebook for Risus: the Anything RPG by S. John Ross**

# Sourcebook Information

**RisusTECH – A Game of Armored Combat** is a wargame set in the far-flung future of the year 2000 <g> where giant robots have replaced more conventional war vehicles. The inspiration for this book comes most notably from the Classic Battletech game, of which I have always been a great fan.

I have thought long and hard about releasing this sourcebook for some time now (as you may know, it was announced 05/22/02 on my website) as it's in quite a different vein than all the other Risus material I have written, used, or even contemplated, and it mucks with much of the simple elegance of Risus, but rather than letting it drift into nothingness in some as of yet unforeseen hardware failure or careless keystroke, I present it to the Risus World.

To play this game, you will need sheets of hexpaper, as well as markers for your units. For hex maps, I highly recommend the hexpaper font from the Cumberland Fontworks – it's an invaluable tool, and at only \$3, how can you beat it? For markers, you can use dice, loose pocket change, old candy corn from under the couch cushions, whatever (hey, maybe S. John Ross will finally make a mecha font, then you could use that, too ;-)

If hand-drawing battlemaps isn't your thing, there are MANY pre-generated maps out there, search for such things as "battletech maps" or use a program such as BME (Battletech Map Editor).

## Unit Generation

This is more of a wargame than a RPG (though elements could still be present, in long running campaigns) and as such, each player begins each scenario with multiple units. Depending on the "scale", a player may begin with as few as 1 unit, or as many as 12 – and if you have spectacularly large maps, maybe even more.

Each individual unit will have at least 3 cliché – 1 for the unit's structure, 1 for speed, and (normally) at least 1 weapon type, and is built from 10 dice, as standard characters. No more than 4 dice may be placed in any 1 cliché.

**STRUCTURE** – This will normally just be recorded as the unit name, such as "Avenger Anthropomorphic Warbot(3)" or similar, and it is the amount of damage the unit can take before it's scrap.

**SPEED** – This cliché determines how many hexes the unit can travel in a single round.

**WEAPONS** – The different weapon systems will be listed below, but in general this covers all things that splat, squish, crunch or vaporize your opponents. Weapons are designated as short, medium or long range, and a weapon of a shorter range cannot be used in longer range combat (see Conflict Types.) Some weapons are more or less suited for starting fires as well, these will be noted in the descriptions.

# Weapons

Weapon	Range	Description
Light Laser	Short	The light laser is a standard short-range weapon.
Medium Laser	Medium	The medium laser is a standard medium-range weapon.
Heavy Laser	Long	The heavy laser is a standard long-range weapon.
Machinegun	Short	Another popular short range weapon, the machinegun is largely unchanged from its current-day counterpart. Machineguns cannot be used to start fires.
Flamethrower	Short	Not terribly effective against other units, the flamethrower is normally used for clearing terrain of woods. Against other units, all rolls are made at -1 die, however it is automatically successful at starting fires when used against trees.
Missile Launchers	Long	Missile launchers fire long range guided explosive munitions at their targets. Missiles are at +1 to start fires when used against trees, or an opponent in a wooded area.
Light Railgun	Medium	The railgun uses electromagnets to propel metal slugs out of the barrel at incredible speed and range. Railguns cannot be used to start fires.
Heavy Railgun	Long	This is a larger, more powerful railgun with better range, Railguns cannot be used to start fires.

# **Conflict Types**

**Conflicts are normally separated by short, medium or long range combat, whether they are between units, or units and terrain. A weapon of Medium or Long range may participate in shorter range combat, however all rolls are made at -1 die per range category.**

**If a unit involved in combat has no weapons appropriate to the conflict type (for example, a unit with all short range weapons engaged in long range combat) they may roll their STRUCTURE at -2 die as the opposing cliché, to attempt to avoid damage.**

## **Hand-to-Hand Combat**

**All units can engage in hand-to-hand combat with units in the next hex, using 2 dice.**

## **Short Range Combat**

**This involves 2 units using short range weapons, such as machineguns and light lasers. Short range combat is between opponents 1 to 3 hexes distant.**

## **Medium Range Combat**

**Much like short range, this is combat between units 4-6 hexes away, using medium (or long, at a -1d penalty) range weapons.**

## **Long Range Combat**

**Long range combat is between units 7-10 hexes away.**

# **Combat Modifiers**

**If there are woods in the hexes between two combatants, a -1 penalty per wooded hex applies to all cliché rolls for firing. A light building also adds a -1 penalty to fire over or around. Medium buildings and above cannot be fired through.**

# **Starting Fires and Destroying Stuff**

**Woods have a structure of 1, and if directly targeted with an appropriate weapon, will begin to burn readily.**

**Rubble(1) – Rubble has 1 structure point, and may be destroyed with any standard weapon. When a building is destroyed, it becomes rubble, then may be destroyed completely in the following attack.**

**Light Building(1) – Light buildings are small, non-fortified structures such as common houses.**

**Medium Building(2) – These are larger, more structurally-sound buildings, such as banks or other fortified structures.**

**Heavy Building(3) – This is a large, fortified structure designed to withstand attack, such as military bunkers or nuclear power plants.**

# Common Scenario

## All Out Warfare

The most common scenario is the “kill everything that moves” type, where one player or team of players attempts to destroy all the units of the other player or team. These make great spur-of-the-moment time killers when you have the need to blow stuff up ;-)

## City Assault

Another common game type is “Destroy the X” and of course, “X” is heavily guarded by the opposing forces. This type game is often more difficult than the previous, as the defenders have had time to “dig in”, and may be hiding in narrow streets or other ambush holes.

## Caravan Guard

The last type I will describe here is the “Guard X from here to here” - where one team attempts to escort something (another “experimental” unit, a truckload of goods, a scientist, or something equally important) from one end of the map to the other. The other team will (of course) try to destroy “X” (and possibly the other units as well).

Most of these play well with bigger maps, a single 8.5"x11" sheet won't go very far with 8 (or more) units – However if you have a large hex mat (game & hobby shops carry them for around \$12) or print out a dozen or more sheets & tape them together you'll have room for epic-scale battles.

Commercial hex maps have the advantage of being washable – you can use overhead projector markers on them (“wet erase” type) and reuse them for whatever scenario you desire.

# Chain of Events and Example of Play

Before play begins decide what order rounds will follow, (d6, low roller goes first works) then follow around the table.

1. First player moves a unit, then the next player – continue for all players. When all players have moved one unit, then the first player moves another unit. Continue until all units have moved.
2. First player attacks with one unit. Second player then attacks with a unit – continue until all units have attacked. A unit reduced to “0” structure still gets it's attack in the round, damage is applied afterward.
3. Any units destroyed are removed from play. Next round begins.

## **Many Thanks To:**

**Risus: the Anything RPG by S. John Ross**

**Without Risus, there would be no RisusTECH ;-)** Risus is undoubtably the finest (and free-ist) RPG I've ever found.

**<http://risus.cumberlandgames.com>**

**The Cumberland Fontworks**

**Home of Hexpaper, an invaluable tool to every miniature-using gamer, and at only \$3, hot damn!**

**<http://fonts.cumberlandgames.com>**

**Heck, just check out all of [www.cumberlandgames.com](http://www.cumberlandgames.com) – there's Good Stuff(tm) there!**

**LordZamiel.is.Dreaming**

**LordZamiel.is.Dreaming is my home on the web, where all my Risus contributions are available in PDF and PalmDOC format. Current titles include Fantastic Fantasy Adventures in RisusLand (and accompanying Fantasy Bestiary), BUGHUNTERS the “alien-bug-thing squishing” sci-fi sourcebook, It’s LINT! The “Life as LintKind” mini-sourcebook, Stooper Heroes, and Superdeformed Fortress Macross as well as this work.**

**<http://lordzamiel.is.dreaming.org>**

**And for those who were wondering, the “far-flung future of the year 2000” bit is in reference to the Conan O’Brien show’s “In The Year 2000” sketch ;-)**

## The Shaper/Mechanist universe in [Risus](#)

Bruce Sterling is a great writer all the way around, but my favorite thing he's ever done is [Schismatrix](#) and the rest of the "Shaper;/Mechanist" stories. I've tried to game this setting before in GURPS, but character creation seems to have frightened my players away. I'm hoping that with a little work, S. John Ross's free [Risus](#) system might prove to be a bit easier to game this stuff in. Right now, the cliches might not make much sense to people who haven't read the source material... but I'm leery of summarizing Mr. Sterling's work here until I check on the copyright implications. Anyway, this is very much a work in progress, so please [e-mail](#) me with suggestions, particularly if you know this body of work.

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### Cliches

There is a bewildering variety of odd things to do with your life in the [Schismatrix](#) setting. Here are a few (Note - some of these should either be added to a "core" cliche like Shaper or Mechanist, or the character must have the named "core" in a separate cliche).

- Shaper (core) - being superior to Mechanists and unmodified humans, knitting, advanced biotech, rampant psychodrug usage
- Mechanist (core) - being superior to Shapers and unmodified humans, longer living through prosthetics, computer modeling, random cyborg stuff
- Investor (core) - being a huge reptilian alien from a high-grav world, greed, amassing huge wealth, playing one faction against another, having lots of high tech wonders but not understanding them
- Ensign - (Investor) dealing with humanity, being a slightly less huge alien from a high-grav world, serving his queen
- Queen - (Investor) being hellaciously rich, getting blinded by avarice, ostracizing perverts
- Superbright - (Shaper) brilliance, paranoia, convoluted plotting, surviving political purges
- Academic Security - (Shaper) Cold War style paranoia, being politically reliable, intelligence gathering, social standing in Ring Council
- Diplomat - (Shaper) absolute control of face and body language, reading people like books, instantly appearing trustworthy

- Antibiotic - (Shaper) tracking, assassinating, perfect disguises, prehensile feet, hand to hand (to foot) combat, warped politeness, unbuyability
  - Wirehead - (Mechanist) being more machine than man, living forever, stock market wizardry
  - Bacillus - (Mechanist) spying for the Ring Council, affecting Shaper fashions, espionage, sabotage, unsettling the social order
  - Cicada - urbanity, rumor-mongering, playing the market, research, joining some powerful clique, doing unspeakable things in the discreets
  - Catalyst - grandiose schemes, abducting people, conducting ice assassinations
  - Ice Assassination victim - losing a few years, being much more mellow than before, losing all preconceptions
  - Yakuza guard - abusing human growth hormones, abusing humans, brawling, intimidating, picking people up by the head
  - Nephrite Black Medical - advanced biochemical tricks, rendering people down to sell their component chemicals, living in sterile environments, being wealthy but isolated
  - Sundog - conning people, scavenging, being an opportunist, running the hell away when things get bad
  - Lobster - (Mechanist splinter faction) surviving hard vacuum, being armored, speaking radio, having sex by wire, all looking alike
  - Harem Police - gently extracting technical data from Michael Carnassus, offering therapeutic physical contact, performing traditional security/police functions
  - Wallchild - total devotion to the Wallmother, diplomacy, security, maintaining biomechanical architecture
  - Patternist - (Shaper faction) cerebral asymmetry, high intelligence, intuition, pattern recognition, flashes of genius, susceptibility to paranoia and fugue states
  - Zen Serotoninist - permanent drug-induced calm, working to slow technological growth, immunity to strong emotion, converting people to the Nonmovement by example
  - Ambassador to alien species - high intelligence, mental flexibility, ideological purity, possible physical alterations, mastery of a field related to species visited
  - Ambassador (after returning) -as above, plus: mental instability/illness, potential addiction, possible ideological unsoundness/disloyalty, chance of knowing breakthrough techniques or technologies
-

Character Creation Options (thanks to Karl Paananen and Guy Hoyle for suggestions that led to this)

**Option A:** At creation, players may wish to buy points in a "core" cliche, the prime examples from the early days of the Shaper/Mechanist setting being, obviously, "Shaper" or "Mechanist." Then, as the game progresses, the player may modify the cliche when an improvement roll is made. For example, you might start off as a "Mechanist(3)," et cetera, then as the game progresses and your "Mechanist" cliche rises, you can change to a "Heavily Cyborged Mechanist(4)" or a "Mechanist Trade Liason(4)." This can be useful if the player wants to start off in a general direction and become more specialized or focused as a natural part of the character's development. It can also be good for players in a group who aren't as familiar with the setting as other players. By starting off with something a little broad, as they explore the setting they can decide exactly what type of Shaper, Lobster, or what-have-you they want to become. The only real restriction is that the new additions must be logical in the context of the campaign, and fitting to the "core" cliche (and yes, both those determinations will pretty much be by GM fiat).

The other, related method is to keep the "core" cliche by itself, and just add a new, closely related cliche. This gives the character something to fall back on if one cliche gets injured in combat. So, if your "Mechanist(4)" has lost 3 dice in combat against a "Shaper(5)" (which could be anything from trying to beat each other to death to subtle industrial espionage to an ongoing economic conflict), you could then swap in your "Pirate(2)", "Bacillus(4)," or "Trade Liason(3)."

**Option B:** Lots of characters in the Schismatrix setting are really single minded. Really super extra double creepy single minded. So much so, that some of them seem to be pretty much one (or maybe two) cliche characters. If this fits the player's character concept and the GM feels that the cliche is powerful and/or tricky enough (in whatever sense) to justify it, the player can buy high levels in a double-pump cliche. This can easily use up most of the character creation budget, making a character who is very good indeed at a limited sphere of activity but not able to deal with other situations well. It also avoids the problem of having a ruthless, single-minded product of, say, the Shaper military-educational apparatus, saddled with "extra" cliches that dilute his cutthroat dedication to the Ring Council. While this makes the character more "brittle," such inflexible savants and one-trick ponies can be found throughout the source material.

Some players may enjoy playing such a character as the PC either naturally expands into new fields or gets broken on the rocks of fate...

**Option C:** Some portion of the character's creation dice may be held back to be spent after the start of play. The main character in Schismatrix starts out as one thing, and very early on gets ejected from his home and has to learn to fit in somewhere else, then moves on again and again, and so on. A good, setting-appropriate way to model this might be for the PCs to reserve some of their dice to be spent after the game starts. This can be used to simulate the combination of culture-shock and extreme adaptability many of the characters in the book display once they are forced out of their niche and into the big bad Schismatrix.

# Sleepwalkers

"Wake up. Time to die."

-Leon the Replicant, Blade Runner

The Sleepwalkers setting is a post-apocalyptic future, where the dire predictions of H.P. Lovecraft's cosmic horror fiction are beginning to come true. Humanity is now split into two factions. There are the organized populations of the Redoubts, who are struggling to remain uncorrupted. On the other hand are the feral humans, some of whom are simply trying to survive in the wilds and ruins, while others are servants, slaves or livestock for various Mythos entities.

I've set Sleepwalkers up to use S. John Ross's great Risus rules. If you aren't familiar with it, I heartily recommend downloading a copy and taking a look. It's six pages of pure roleplaying dynamite, or at least guncotton. Plus the rest of this section of my site will be much less useful without it...

Another book that has heavily influenced this game setting is Chaosium's great Call of Cthulhu RPG. Further influences and inspirations can be found [here](#).

## The Sleepwalkers setting

Here is the future history of humanity, when the stars have wheeled around again and Chaos is about to swallow the earth.

What came before the Fall is not all that important. What matters is that over the course of a few years, the mundane problems of a near-future world were overrun by a series of increasingly deadly, and increasingly paranormal, events. Rampant storms and "heavy weather," plagues, disappearances, earthquakes, and madness swept the earth. Slowly at first, and then swifter and surer, the forces of what humanity came to call the Mythos became more and more blatant. Paris was overrun by the Ghouls of her famed catacombs; New England and then New York were by rising waves that brought Deep One colonists in their wakes. Across the roof of the world, Ithaqua the Windwalker took back his old domain. Deep in the Australian Outback, shattered stone doors appeared in satellite photography one week; by the next week, there was no living human left on that continent. Cthonians are churning the solid rock of the American West like melting butter. And somewhere in the South Pacific, a mountain of twisted masonry has heaved itself above the waves once again... Now the Earth is in the hands of various 'lesser' Mythos races, each pursuing their own incomprehensible agendas. The very plants and animals are beginning to warp and change as the Earth is made ready for a hundred eerie goals. Beasts, madmen and desperate survivors scavenge the wreck of human civilization. And the worst is yet to come.

This is a game of claustrophobic horror. Most of humanity is subjugated by eldritch terrors. Most of the rest is living a nightmarish hunted life, while the very land they are trying to live off is becoming something alien. And the tiny remainder lives sunk into bleak stone and steel warrens, growing weaker and weaker while their leaders become more paranoid and ruthless. There are two main divisions of the surviving members of the human race. One is the "Organized" faction, hiding in various fortified enclaves scattered around the world, most of which are hastily expanded, hardened military bases (think of NORAD's Cheyenne Mountain facility). Each redoubt is basically its own little world,

although there is some communication between certain of the bases. Most have begun sending out armed tactical teams to defend their locations and search for useful items. What they define as useful can range from uncontaminated foodstuffs to possibly useful arcane artifacts to 'clean' feral humans for breeding stock. The flip side of the coin is the aforementioned feral population. These run the gamut from insane cultists to armed bandit groups to desperate people who, for one reason or another, haven't been able to find or gain admittance to a redoubt. Some of these wild people are powerful magicians; others have turned to the Dreamworld in an attempt to build a place more hospitable to humanity than the waking world. Most of the survivors in the wild are master trackers, skulkers and survivors. Those that are not do not last long.

The material on this site tends to focus on one of the Redoubts, the Appalachian Mountain Redoubt Bravo - Alpha has entirely vanished, as well as most of the mountain it was buried under. Bravo's P/R/B thinks it was either an experimental Mi-go mining technique or a badly botched invocation. Most American redoubts have a P/R/B - the surviving vestiges of the nationwide Parabiological Research Bureau, instituted before the Fall by the Centers for Disease Control to investigate and combat the strange things that eventually destroyed the world. In some Organized strongholds, the P/R/B is wholly discredited, treated as scapegoats for failing to halt the tide of the Mythos. In others, the P/R/B acts as advisors. In the Appalachian Redoubt, the P/R/B has become a ruling clique with the power of life and death over everyone living under the mountain. Bravo's P/R/B has become more and more ruthless. Two years ago, they began segregating all tactroop and exploratory personnel into an upper level of the Redoubt which has been unofficially dubbed the "Waiting Room." If your job takes you into the outside world, you are not allowed to mix with the rest of the redoubt population. Further, there are incredibly stringent identification and decontamination procedures one must go through to reenter. To prevent infiltration or contamination, exiting and returning personnel are subjected to rigorous genetic, psychological, magickal and Dreaming tests to confirm their identity. Anything being brought back into the Redoubt is subjected to just as much scrutiny. And anyone bypassing these strictures (or many other P/R/B regulations) is subject to summary execution.

So the troopers go out, sealed into their environmental armor; some are just soldiers, some are Dreamers with injectors full of Sleepdust, and others are half-lunatic Willworkers, desperately using the magic of the Mythos to try and buy some time for what is left of mankind. And more and more are becoming Sleepwalkers - slipping in and out of a "fightstate" where time seems meaningless and the horrors of the Mythos somehow less threatening. Meanwhile, the redoubts themselves are already beginning to crumble. A rising number of people appear to be sterile, and many births are clearly (or not so clearly) tainted by the Mythos. Many of the fortresses are already below a sustainable breeding population, and most others are not far behind. The number of people who die or are expelled greatly outpaces the birth rate. In Redoubt Bravo, the P/R/B's stopgap solution is compulsory pregnancy for all fertile women older than 16 (although the P/R/B is considering dropping this to 14). Some groups look to space, wanting to somehow make it to the few operational space stations left in orbit, or even to the tiny settlements on the Moon. Others plan on staying in the buried fortresses permanently, eking out a circumscribed survival for humankind as rats in the walls. A few even hope to reach an accommodation with one or more Mythos factions. No one seriously expects to be able to retake the surface world.

## Cliches for Sleepwalkers characters

The cliches below have suggested die types (plain, double-pump, or funky) as well as possible uses.

- Trooper (d6) - battlesuit piloting, guns and advanced weapons, sensors, tactics, basic Mythos lore (3 or 4 dice for 'vanilla' troopers. 2 or 3 for specialists)

- Sleepwalker [d6] - fightstate (frenzied combat), hand-to-hand, ignoring Mythos fright checks (these characters have a compulsory hook: the Taint of Yog-Sothoth)
- Willworker [d6] - reading Mythos tomes, summoning/binding things, casting spells (regular Troopers can have 1 or 2 dice in Willworker; anything above that and they are considered full-time Willworkers)
- Dreamer (d6) or possibly (d8) - Dream travel, Dream lore, taking material things into the Dreamworld, perceiving hidden things in the real world that have a significant Dreamworld presence
- Artist (d6) - whatever type of art you want, affecting people's moods, sensing Mythos disturbances
- Wildman (d6) - survival, camouflage, tracking, hiding, identifying safe but altered plants and animals
- and possibly...
- P/R/B field assessor (d8) or (d10)? - finding Mythos artifacts or texts, making horrifying decisions, ruthless commissaring (yes, I know it's not a word), gauging other people's sanity (another compulsory hook: P/R/B conditioning - whatever strange process that makes the field assessor more powerful than most humans also leaves him subject to posthypnotic compulsions - i.e., the GM can tell this PC "You are going to go do this now.")
- Ghoul (d6) or (d8) - eating corpses, sneaking in tunnels, underground lore, knowing sinister secrets
- I highly recommend that these cliches be used with appropriate and interesting modifiers, such as Bloodthirsty Trooper (4) or Bibliophobic Willworker [3]. See the characters page of this site for some ideas as to what I mean.

[More about the setting and character creation...]

## The Sleepwalkers setting (p.2)

### More character information

The Sleepwalker is subject to an automatic hook, the so-called Taint of Yog-Sothoth. Conceptually, it is similar to the Innsmouth Look that precedes a hybrid human's metamorphosis into a full-blooded Deep One. The early stages actually are beneficial; the sufferer begins to enter a timeless fugue state when fighting, where there seems to be all the time in the world to decide what to do. Mythos entities that would ordinarily produce Sanity checks simply don't seem that horrifying. Dangerous, certainly, even sickening... but the Sleepwalker fugue takes the soul-blasting horror out of the situation. However, as the Sleepwalker becomes faster, more powerful, his day to day existence seems less and less real - as does the Dreamworld, if he possesses any Dreaming skill. By the time someone is a Sleepwalker [5] he seems to flicker a little around the edges. At Sleepwalker [6] others can see through him occasionally; while in fightstate, the Sleepwalker seems to snap in and out of the normal frame of reference.

Eventually, the influence of Yog-Sothoth permeates the Sleepwalker to the point that he simply comes loose from reality. In game terms, if a character "succeeds" on an advancement roll at Sleepwalker [6], he goes into an extended fugue and dissociates across space and time. Some P/R/B theoreticians think the Taint is a racial "escape valve" for humanity; that as mankind runs out of time, some individual people might step out of time and be free. More sober types believe the Sleepwalker is either subsumed by Yog-Sothoth's growing presence in our local spacetime or simply ablated into nothingness.

Willworkers are users of barely-controlled Mythos Magick. Some can use their arcane knowledge to summon or command some Mythos entities, or perform other "small competences." For the player or GM who wants some guidance on this subject, I can't think of a better source than the Greater and Lesser Grimoires from Chaosium's Call of Cthulhu to keep the proper Mythos feel. In short, fireballs or Arcane Arrows© don't fit the milieu, while the Red Sign does... Willworker/troopers typically paint their battlesuits with runes and eldritch signs, and most carry sealed panniers of arcane materials or enchanted items to be used when necessary. Feral willworkers seem to have stockpiles of necessary ingredients throughout their stomping grounds. Of course, it is significantly easier to amass and maintain a pile of children's skulls or similarly horrific ingredients in the post-Fall environment. The GM should set Sanity TNs for most spells (based on what exactly the character is trying to accomplish) and require Sanity Checks when they are cast. See the rules page for guidelines.

Dreamers are those people who are able to perform great feats in the Dreamlands, the collective higher plane that all human dreamers can occasionally touch. But Dreamers can enter this land intentionally, and command power and respect there. Wild Dreamers simply have to hope they can get to sleep. But those in the more technologically advanced enclaves have access to drugs that can put them under and bring them up with a fair amount of reliability. There are two types of Dreamers by Redoubt operational standards. The most common are "Waking Dreamers" (d6 and d8 level). The name is a bit of a misnomer, as they still must sleep to dream. However, Waking Dreamers are usually trained as troopers as well, and are issued power armor with autoinjectors of various sleep and revival drugs. They are deployed with other troopers, and if the strategic or tactical situation calls for it, they can quickly launch themselves into the Dreamlands to explore or do battle. This can be very useful, as some threats are vulnerable to Dream attack, while sometimes valuable information can only be obtained in the Dreamworld. The downside is that while she is in the Dreamworld, a Dreamer is asleep, and obviously vulnerable to attack. Furthermore, the Dreamworld itself can be a dangerous place - a Dreamer might leave a bad situation in the physical world to arrive in a worse fix in the Dreamworld. There are more powerful Dreamers (d10 and d12), but they rarely leave the Dreamworld. Sometimes these powerful Dreamers have to be taken to a particular place for one arcane reason or another. When this happens, they are typically loaded into an armored capsule that has been nicknamed a "Coffin";. The troopers assigned to carry these Dreamers call it "Pallbearer Duty." The Waking Dreamer assigned to be the communications path between the waking world and one of the Coffin Jobs is usually nicknamed "Edward," although the derivation of this term is obscure.

The generic Artist cliche is included as a nod to all the Lovecraftian artist characters who seem to be exceptionally attuned to Mythos phenomena. It also makes a very "appropriate" inappropriate cliche. And whatever happened to Lovecraft's Erich Zann raises the question of whether Violin (6) was an appropriate or inappropriate cliche...

The world is filled with people with at least a few dice in Wildman. After all, it is the closest thing to a generic Feral cliche. But it should be tailored to the character's home environment. A Sun-baked Wildman (3) who has been dodging Cthonian larvae in the ruins of Santa Fe will be very different from a Salt-caked Wildman (3) eating sand fleas and dodging Deep One hunting parties on the Outer Banks. There are several Reconstructed ferals in the Reboubts, who proved to have no physical or psychic corruption. These characters can be mostly civilized, not much different from their Redoubt compatriots. Others are more like the Hollywood portrayal of the Indian Scouts attached to the U.S. Cavalry at the end of the 1800's.

The P/R/B Field Assessor is listed as a possible player character. This is because agreeing to play one is agreeing to be the cleric of a deity even more fell and unpredictable than Great Cthulhu himself... the Game Master. While individual GMs will have to decide what the exact nature of the P/R/B enhancements are (brainwashing? cybernetics? dire enchantments?), the price of that power is being well and truly on the GM's hook. Further, if you play it correctly, every other PC in the group should hate your character's guts. However, in the right kind of group, this could be a very interesting PC indeed.

Finally, in some areas, there might be opportunities for limited cooperation between Ghoul communities and a Redoubt population. In such a case a Ghoul Liason or Ghoul Ambassador could be another interesting, but unusual character.

## Characters

As compact as a Risus character is (even with the standard Overwrought Backstory a post-Fall character should have), I've just put them all on this one page.

Note that all these characters use the Hook/Tale option for 2 bonus dice. Some use double-pump dice, and one (Dominguez) uses funky dice, although all are 60 point/10 dice equivalent.

Also, these characters' Tales were all constructed with the Background Machine from the Risus Companion, which is currently available at S. John Ross's Cumberland Games website. Go ye hence and buy it, yea verily, for it doth rock. You can get there from the Risus page, and until I'm sure about how he wants his stuff linked to, I'll leave it at that.

### **ANNABELLE GORDON, doom-haunted Sleepwalker**

Ice-hearted Sleepwalker [3]

Wild-eyed Berserk Trooper (3)

Former Civil Engineer (2)

Apocalyptic Lay Preacher (1)

Hook: Taint of Yog-Sothoth (will eventually slip into a permanent fugue state and dissociate across time and space)

Tale: Annabelle was a wealthy civil engineer before the Fall; her basic patents on several not-quite-revolutionary but very cost-effective optimization techniques made her quite a bit of money. Of course, that hard-won money means nothing now that humanity is fighting for its very survival. Her spacious summer home in the Adirondacks is now a Mi-go breeding pit - she knows, she's seen the recon photos. She helped a little in the expansion of the Appalachian Redoubt when the Great Retreat began, but as the horizons of her world closed in, her concentration and her work began to suffer. Finally, a propaganda film of a successful counterattack on a Deep One outpost in Wilmington, NC flipped some switch inside her head. A routine medical check showed she was infertile (like so many women of the time) and eligible for combat duty. Three weeks later she was her squad's Sandman (Dreamcannon gunner). Six months later she was beginning to suffer from occasional blackouts and fugue states. One year later, and she had become a Sleepwalker. Now she waits for the end of the world, having adopted the hidden but increasingly popular syncretic Apocalyptic faith.

## **MALACHI WHATELY, brine shaman**

Fanatical Willworker [4]

Barely Reconstructed Barbarian Acolyte (3)

Sketchily Trained Light Irregular (1)

Hook: Reconstructed Feral Wizard (mistrusted misfit with strange urges and a cortex bomb)

Tale: Malachi Whately was born after the fall, to human parents in a shore community. His half-sister, however, was born to his father and a 10,000 year old Deep One priestess. Sarai (his half-sister) was meant to be a priestess as well, and Malachi was to be her bodyguard and acolyte. Young Malachi learned much eldritch lore, and became less a human child and more a personification of surf and marsh. But one fall day, he was savagely attacked by an evolved turbot while swimming out to the fishing nets. He staggered home late, bleeding and dazed, to see his family besieged by Organized humans from the Appalachian Redoubt. His sister and her mother were holding their own... until a P/R/B Willworker immobilized them with the Red Sign. He sprang out to aid them, but was knocked unconscious by stun gas and carried back to the Redoubt for possible recruitment. The Willworker who helped take his village recognized his native ability, and made sure Malachi was selected for psychic decontamination and formal Willworker training. Despite a deep-seated resentment toward his mentor, Malachi took to the P/R/B grimoires like a duck (or Deep One) to water. Malachi now feels that Organized humanity is his clan, and he has fought against Mythos forces, even Deep Ones. But he still feels the call of the surf, and while he does not have the Innsmouth Look, at night he still dreams (not Dreams) of the chill beauty of Y'ha-nthlei.

## **AVI GREENBAUM, falsely jovial squad leader**

Secretly Horrified Trooper (4)

Almost Ready to Burn Out Commander (3)

Ex-Used Car Salesman (2)

Reluctantly-trained Willworker (1)

Hook: On the Brink of Madness (Treat checks for temporary insanity as if he had lost an additional point already this session)

Tale: Avi Greenbaum had actually adjusted fairly well to the Fall - as well as anyone could. The fact that most of his family and friends were lost in the Slagging of Chicago paradoxically made things easier for him; unlike most people, he didn't have to worry about what unspeakable fates his loved ones might have suffered at the hands of eldritch horrors or insane cultists. After the Retreat, he became fast friends with the leader of one of the Pioneer units that later evolved into the tactteams. His National Guard skills were useful, and he had a can-do attitude, so he joined the Pioneers right as they became more overtly military. 3 years later, Avi was the leader of his own tactteam, and was told to deliver a shipment of winter clothes to a nearby feral population to 'win their hearts and minds.' However, the clothes were bathed in one of the first P/R/B-brewed batches of Space-mead. Avi's team went back a week later, ostensibly to begin discussion of an allegiance. In the interim, a P/R/B theoretical Willworker had summoned several Byakhee and tried sending the ferals to the Moon and back. Avi discovered that interesting fact by stumbling onto a village full of freeze-dried victims of explosive decompression and the Byakhee-savaged corpse of the magician. That more than anything is the event

that started Avi down his long slide toward madness. He has begun studing magick in the hope of protecting himself from such a fate, but the little knowledge he's gained has just made things worse...

## **CONRAD SIGMUNDSON, phlegmatic killer**

Blank-eyed Trooper (4)  
Coldly Brilliant Classical Violinist (3)  
High School Track Star (2)  
Quiet Black Marketeer (1)

Hook: under P/R/B surveillance (anytime he gains a die in any cliche, roll 2d6. On a roll of 2, he will be "drafted" by the P/R/B - take his new die as a d8 in Field Assessor, and replace this hook with the usual P/R/B Conditioning Hook)

Tale: Conrad was a well-respected musician at the regional level before the Great Retreat. During the social upheaval that preceded the Fall, he was making plans to gather his 8 brothers and sisters and move to a survival-ready retreat. However, he was conned, and the land he bought was already occupied. Before he could make other plans, his siblings were killed in a food riot, and he wandered through the death of civilization. There he discovered that killing didn't really bother him. That's the kind of thing he probably would never have discovered barring the end of the world, but he doesn't mind. Now he is the best classical violinist in Redoubt Bravo, as well as a rock-solid trooper. He feels no need for his standard issue tranquilizers or mood stabilizers, since combat doesn't worry him (although he is still vulnerable to Sanity Checks). So he trades them, as well small items from Outside for... favors. This activity has not gone unnoticed by the P/R/B, and before long Conrad will probably get invited in for a "job interview" and walk out a Field Assessor.

## **TERESA WASHINGTON, drug addicted Dream Trooper**

Insomniac Dreamer (4)  
Twitchily Alert Trooper (3)  
Shivering Addict (2)  
Inveterate Movie Watcher (1)

Hook: On the Nod (has to use sleep drugs to Dream or even fall asleep; but is prone to attack by Dreamland creatures)

Tale: Teresa Washington hated broccoli passionately, and her parents split up when she was seven years old. That kind of thing is common enough, but for someone born to be a Dreamer such childhood miseries can become the Silver Key. At night, Teresa was the graceful chatelaine of a beautiful estate - but in the waking world she was a failed actress. Long before the Fall, the needle was already in her arm. Still, P/R/B screenings discovered her raw power as a Dreamer, and Teresa Washington and Lady Sessessiphon of the Grey Manse were drafted. Teresa is off smack, but just as hooked on Somna. In the Dreamworld, Lady Sessessiphon grows ever more haggard, while her Grey Manse falls into disrepair.

## **JOSEPH SMITH DOMINGUEZ, intimidating martinet**

Cold-blooded P/R/B Field Assessor (3d8) [note: this costs the same as 4d6]

By-the-book Trooper (3)  
Secretly Tormented Dreamer (2)  
Amateur Astronomer (1)

Hook: P/R/B Conditioning (subject to an array of posthypnotic? commands - GM can dictate PC action freely)

Tale: When he was 12, long before the Fall, J.S. Dominguez was given a telescope. He grew to know the night sky like the back of his hand, and became an astronomer. J.S. would have been happy spending the rest of his life studying the universe. But before he was 30, the human race learned more about the universe than it ever wanted to know. Dominguez made it to Redoubt Bravo, but early on he rubbed a member of the P/R/B the wrong way and got "drafted." Now he is a callous Field Assessor, easily as hated as any Soviet political commisar ever was. No one ever sits down and has a conversation with him, but if someone did they would discover that J.S. no longer knows anything about the field he dedicated his life to.

## Tainted Meat

Cliches for the creatures of the Cthulhu Mythos in the Sleepwalkers setting

I've listed some typical things a horrible inhuman entity might use its cliches for, as well as suggested die types. This is to represent the raw power of a given species; individuals may of course have more or less dice to indicate their personal competence. Also note that many of these cliches will have some other facet listed; Deep One warrior, Mi-go scientist, Serpent Man shaman. On the other hand, the more bestial or incomprehensible nonhumans might best be represented by just "Dhole (6d20)," for example.

Finally, some of these suggested uses have been written in the spirit of the 'oddball skills' used in some Chaosium products to provide cues for the GM on how to play a given NPC.

- Ghoul: (d6) or (d8) - eating corpses, sneaking in tunnels, underground lore, knowing sinister secrets
- -note: In my opinion, a Ghoul is one of the few Mythos species that might make an acceptable PC. Consider "Ghoul Ambassador(3d8)," which could be entertaining in the right group.
- Serpent Men: (d6) - hiding, sneaking, ambushing, poisonous bite -note: In my campaign, I'm using the "degenerate Serpent Men" concept, treating them like the Victorian conception of an Unseelie faerie as a devolved killer. Atavistic Serpent Men might have double-pump dice or d8's, plus spellcasting competency.
- Deep One: (d8) - being immortal, interbreeding with humans, fishing
- Mi-go: (d6) - (but will sometimes have ultratech devices granting bonus dice) - prodigious mechanical and surgical skill, talking in weird buzzy voices
- Dark Young: (d10) Marching out of the woods and eating/mating with sacrifices, looking vaguely like trees
- Shoggoth: [d10] - shapeshifting (basically ANYTHING physical), sullenly serving OR sullenly rebelling, going "Tekeli-li!" really loudly
- Invisible Polyp: (d12) - be invisible, sucking winds, piping horribly, killing big cones
- Hound of Tindalos: [d10] tracking prey through time, manifesting through corners, horrifically killing prey

- Dimensional Shambler: (d8) - materializing, shambling, grabbing and dematerializing
- Cthonian: (d6) through (d20), depending on which instar you encounter - moving through solid rock, causing earthquakes, tracking Cthonian Eggs, swallowing things up whole
- I have also (so far) refrained from generating stats for the major entities. Use them as plot devices, not people in big rubber suits stomping on models of Tokyo. If you really must, something like "Great Cthulhu [6d30]" or "Azathoth (4d100)" should suffice.

Sanity Check Task Numbers (TNs) for these creatures are on the new rules page, with the Sanity mechanics.

## Gaze into the Abyss

A Sanity mechanic for Ritus Sleepwalkers.

It depends on your style of play; I prefer for the GM to handle the mechanics of the Sanity rules, giving the PCs roleplaying cues as necessary. However, there's no reason why this can't be done "In Public," so to speak, with the players making their own rolls and keeping track of their Sanity Tally themselves. The mechanics are:

Sanity Tally=character dice total (note: I include bonus dice, as from taking Hooks and/or Tales, in this total, so a "Normal" character has a Sanity Tally of 12)

Sanity Cliche=character dice total/4, rounded down. This means a standard character with a Hook and Tale has a Sanity Cliche of (3)

In a Sanity Check, roll the character's Sanity Cliche against the creature or event's TN (see below); if the character loses, take one off the Sanity Tally.

The GM or player (depending on who's handling the mechanics) can pump the Sanity Cliche before a difficult test, to simulate holding on to your sanity by sheer force of will, but being psychologically exhausted and more vulnerable to further shocks afterward.

Each time a character loses a point from the Sanity Tally, roll dice equal to the Tally points lost in that session vs your Sanity Cliche. This is a combat, where horrified insights into the workings of reality battle the character's sense of how things should be - roleplay it! If the character loses this combat, he or she goes temporarily insane.

If a character's Sanity Tally ever goes to zero, they become permanently insane, and the player must go through the lengthy, tedious process of making a new Ritus PC. Break out a fresh Post-it note...

Anytime a new die for a cliche is earned, add 1 to the character's current and total Sanity Tally. At the GM's whim, other major successes may add to the current Tally, although the total may never exceed the character's dice total. This intentionally does not differ for those with funky dice.

And don't forget the primal rule; the GM is free to do whatever he sees fit to make things work as he sees fit. If a PC pumps or double-pumps or uses a lucky shot to stare down Hastur, that's all well and good. But feel free to ding his or her Sanity Tally anyway. PCs can escape from Great Old Ones, but they shouldn't stroll away whistling...

## Sanity TNs for various events

- Performing minor Willworkings: 5
- Seeing a Deep One: 6
- Reading a minor Mythos text: 8
- Seeing a Ghoul feast: 10
- Performing significant Willworkings: 12
- Discovering an unbelievable atrocity: 15
- Performing major Willworkings: 17
- Seeing an enraged adult Cthonian: 20
- Seeing a nest of Dholes: 25
- Reading the Necronomicon: 30
- Seeing Cthulhu: 30

As always, GMs should bump these numbers up or down to represent different situations. Additionally, some cliches can allow characters to ignore some Sanity Checks for a period.

## Double-Edged Swords

This is a list of human and inhuman technologies usable in the Sleepwalkers setting, some of which can be as dangerous to the wielder as the target.

### Tools of the trade

#### Trooper

battlesuit (also bonus die gear), maser carbine, mollyknife (monomolecular wire blade)

#### Willworker

Mythos texts, enchanted talismans for summoning and binding, Space-mead

#### Dreamer

autoinjectors of Somna (sleep) and Rooster (wake-up) drugs, sensory deprivation gear in helmet  
(in Dreamlands) staff, robes, house or manse

#### Sleepwalker

heavy battlesuit, Fetchpike (enchanted melee weapon, allows attacks against creatures who are vulnerable to enchanted items)

#### Artist

trumpet/painbrushes/whatever, brooding books of fin-de-siecle art criticism or theory

#### Wildman

appropriate weapons (from flint knives to surplus military small-arms), preserved food, stout footwear

#### P/R/B Field Assessor

Command battlesuit (with kill switches for other squad suits), voice stress analyzers, psychically secure cargo bags

## Ghoul

funeral rags, grime and mold, sharpened bones, a few haunches of gamy human meat, grave loot of surprising utility

## Bonus die equipment

- Battlesuits give +1d bonus die for fighting, as well as noticing things with its sensors.
- (give characters a bonus pip +1 if they describe using appropriate weaponry for the type of target)
- Dreamcannon: +1d bonus for fighting immaterial creatures; also allows attacks against creatures who are only vulnerable to enchanted weapons, but provides no bonuses in that situation. (note: excessive Dreamcannon use might be the trigger for the Sleepwalker transformation)
- Psychotronic Battery: gives +1d to +2d to Willworker rolls to cast spells; but caster must make 2 Sanity Checks.
- P/R/B Theoretical Maunal: gives +1d to "raw knowledge" about Mythos subjects - but not for spells/Willworking.

## Paranatural artifacts

- Snarler: this is P/R/B slang for a common Mi-go weapon that looks like a knot of dull copper rods. In game terms, it is +1d bonus combat gear for Mi-go; captured snarlers stop working after a few minutes. Although it has no visible discharge of material ammunition or energy beams, targets feel as if they are being tangled up and crushed, and their ability to move is severely limited. Current P/R/B theory is that snarlers distort space-time on a very localized scale, possibly by a method similar to the phenomenon that allows mi-go to fly and travel in space. This has not been proven yet due to the fact that captured snarlers stop working so quickly. All attempts to disassemble one have failed in one baffling manner after another. For example, the last snarler investigated by Redoubt Alpha turned three P/R/B scientists into a small grey ovoid (about 2 inches across) and created an exact duplicate of the lab twenty meters further back in the solid rock of the mountain. It may be telling that snarlers seem to be less effective when used against powerful Sleepwalkers, possibly since they are only weakly attached to local reality.
- Deep One Armor: +1d bonus combat gear. Beaten gold adorned with the shells of long-extinct marine life shouldn't be able to stop modern monomolecular blades or 20mm electrothermal rounds... but no one is surprised that it does. It's occasionally taken in combat as trophies, so it's not impossible to see bits of this armor riveted to Tactroop battlesuits. Large amounts of such scavenged armor may even provide a +1 bonus pip, in the GM's discretion. Of course, feel free to have such PCs consumed by dreams of batrachian horrors and/or purged by their P/R/B commissar for psychic unreliability.
- Elfshot: They doesn't provide bonus dice, but these semi-immaterial arrowheads and spearpoints do explain how the devolved remnants of the Serpent Men can fight on an equal footing with people in power armor. The further good news is that shards of the elfshot can embed themselves in the victim's Dream-self, with debilitating effects in both worlds. In Redoubt Alpha, all captured elfshot is confiscated by the P/R/B. Among the tactroops, the current theory for this is that the P/R/B wants to have yet another handle on the Dreamers, since cutting off their drug supplies might be too slow a countermeasure. The elfshot weapons so far

- encountered all appear to be carved from bone that has been treated with a pale blue resin of unknown composition.
- Summoning Tools: this is a generic category, meant to cover all the eldritch apparatus used to call up Mythos entities. There is a bewildering variety of these things, each only of use to contact or summon a single entity or species. The effectiveness of any given item is up to the GM, but a good guideline to follow is that the more difficult or distressing the procedures needed to build and enchant an item, the more powerful it will be. My "house rule" is that if I can describe the materials or techniques required and at least one player (not player character) doesn't wince, it only grants a +1 pip. On the other hand, if I can barely describe the thing myself without getting a little uneasy, maybe it's worth +1d. I'm steadfastly unwilling to put the one thing I came up with horrible enough to grant a +2d bonus on this website. Suffice it to say it's a method a feral band is using to contact Shub-Niggurath, and it explains why they have to keep raiding the neighboring tribes for captives...

## Fiddling While the World Burns

Campaigns and adventure seeds for the Sleepwalkers setting

### Hobson's Choice

The PCs' team is going out on a normal recon patrol. Nearing the edge of their range and preparing to turn back, the PCs hear strange buzzing voices up ahead, on the other side of a large rock. Before they can do much else, something flashes quickly overhead and out of sight. Warily approaching the rock, they find... three healthy human babies, apparently about 2 or 3 months old. Carved into the rock (on close inspection, it looks like it was burned in by acid) is the following message:

"you need young we need old you give us old we give you young you give one we give three leave at rock day get at rock night we have myraid young"

Take it from there. If the PCs take the children back to the base, all available tests show them to be completely healthy, untainted human children. The redoubt's healthy birth rate is well below the overall death rate; will the P/R/B decide to go along with this plot, sacrificing older members of the community to get a much-needed boost for the future? (I think the only answer is yes, hence the title of this section.) If so, perhaps the PCs are the ones who have to escort the first sacrifice back out to the rock (important question: is the sacrifice willing, restrained, or sedated?). Or perhaps the P/R/B wants to hedge its bets; while one team takes the first sacrifice, the PCs are supposed to shadow them and see who or what they're trading with, what is being done with the sacrifices, and where or how the unknowns are getting these babies. And why does the note say "myraid?" Do they mean "lots?" Or do they mean "Thousand?"

### Perchance to Dream

The PCs find a crudely camouflaged longhouse, guarded by a handful of feral fighters, and full of sleeping ferals of all ages. The guards say (and PC Dreamers can confirm) that the sleepers are drugged with an altered herb recently found in the area. They are Dreaming nonstop as a team, trying to create a safe haven in the Dreamworld for as many humans as possible to escape into, abandoning the horrors

of the waking world. But something seems odd, both in the waking world and the Dreamworld... What is the nature of this altered plant, which appears to be a mutated foxglove? Is it corrupting the Dreamer's work? Making them more powerful (single use bonus die item)? Or just killing them? Are these Dreamers really as altruistic as they claim, or do they plan to build a Dream kingdom that they can people with human slaves? And this many Dreamers in one place must be a veritable psychic beacon; why are there no Mythos threats within 50 miles? These Dreamers might have a guardian angel they don't know about. Or maybe just the psychic equivalent of a sign saying "Private Property: no hunting without owner's permission."

## Halls of the Mountain King

The P/R/B has made a heart-stopping discovery in the aftermath of a moderate earthquake. An unused tunnel, dug during the first frantic days of the Great Retreat, has been breached. A segment has been cleanly burned out of one side of the tunnel, and it looks like the work of a young Cthonian. Probes sent down the new vertical shaft indicate a bewildering maze of small tunnels, none much larger than 10'-15' across (break out all your old dungeon maps!). Clearly the PCs have not been living right, because they are the team the P/R/B has chosen to explore this tunnel system. If there is just one young Cthonian, the PCs are ordered to kill it. But if they discover a nest of younglings, or a breeding triad of mature Cthonians, the next adventure your group runs might well be scouting for a new Redoubt location, or negotiating with Redoubts Charlie or Delta to move in there.

## Peace in Our Time

There is a large Ghoul nest living in the ruins of the nearest town. This is a well known fact; there have even been some inconclusive skirmishes between them and Redoubt forces, but neither side has the resources for all out war. However, while resting in the Waiting Room, the PCs are scrambled to go intercept a small group of Ghouls approaching the Redoubt. But when the PCs are spotted by the Ghouls, the Ghouls begin waving a white flag. What has driven the fatalistic and inhuman Ghouls to seek human assistance? And why does the P/R/B agree to help them so quickly?

## Suspicious Growths

These are just seeds or ideas that can be slipped into other adventures or expanded into full campaigns. On the other hand, they can also be used simply as odd or unnerving background.

- The local trees seem to be changing more quickly, taking on an air of distinct menace.
- Another Tacsquad starts doing odd things like finishing each other's sentences, moving together as if choreographed, even breathing synchronously.
- The P/R/B initiates a ruthless series of purges, exiling or executing almost a quarter of the Redoubt's civilian population.
- Food is running low, and the humans of the Redoubt must start eating some of the altered flora and fauna infesting the Outside.
- A nearby Feral tribe that had previously been neutral or even cautiously friendly begins ambushing the Redoubt's troopers.
- A woman in advanced environmental armor is found next to a wrecked machine; she claims to be a scout from one of the orbital colonies, and is immune to any psychic or Dream investigation.

- The squad's Dreamcannon is broken open in a battle, and the PCs discovers what exactly makes one tick - which makes the enchanted skull at the butt of each Fetchpike not seem so bad...

## Sleepwalkers (the Sleepmaster version, 1.2)

"Wake up. Time to die."

-Leon the Replicant, *Blade Runner*

The *Sleepwalkers* setting is a post-apocalyptic future, where the dire predictions of H.P. Lovecraft's cosmic horror fiction are beginning to come true. Humanity is now split into two factions. There are the organized populations of the Redoubts, who are struggling to remain uncorrupted. On the other hand are the feral humans, some of whom are simply trying to survive in the wilds and ruins, while others are servants, slaves or livestock for various Mythos entities.

I've set *Sleepwalkers* up to use S. John Ross's great [Risus](#) rules. If you aren't familiar with it, I heartily recommend downloading a copy and taking a look. It's six pages of pure roleplaying dynamite, or at least guncotton. Plus the rest of this section of my site will be much less useful without it...

Another book that has heavily influenced this game setting is Chaosium's great *Call of Cthulhu* RPG. Further influences and inspirations can be found [here](#).



### Setting Information

This is a more in-depth look at the *Sleepwalkers* setting, including a brief history, a discussion of various Mythos threats, and the rise of the ambiguous leadership of the P/R/B. New [cliches](#) for the *Sleepwalkers* world are also here, with an explanation and some possible uses for each.

### Characters

This page is a list of several characters, suitable as PCs or NPCs for a standard (10 dice/60 point) *Sleepwalkers* campaign.

### Gods and Monsters

A list of Risus cliches for things by their very nature undefinable - Mythos entities! (in other words, I'm giving myself plenty of weasel room on these stats...)

## New Rules

Primarily, the Sanity rules I've cobbled together for the Risus *Sleepwalkers* setting.

## Equipment

This is a list of common 'totem' equipment for uncommon cliches. Included is some bonus-dice equipment as well.

## Campaign Ideas

Things to do while waiting for the world to end. After all, hunting Deep Ones isn't the only thing worth doing...

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## Inspirations for the *Sleepwalkers* setting

There are several things that all fell together when I was trying to come up with the *Sleepwalkers* setting. In no particular order:

- the short story "Shaft Number 247" by Basil Copper, collected in [Cthulhu 2000](#).
  - the unpublished [End Time](#) project by Dr. Michael C. LaBossiere, which can be found here and there on the web
  - S. John Ross's "Spacedock Stencil" font (seriously!)
  - [GURPS: Reign Of Steel](#) by Daniel Pulver (author of [Transhuman Space](#), which I have a [webpage](#) for as well)
  - [GURPS: Cthulhpunk](#) by Chris McCubbin
  - [GURPS: Horror, 3rd Edition](#) by Kenneth Hite (really, anything of his is good)
  - the handful of episodes of the anime series [Blue Gender](#) that I've seen on the Cartoon Network
  - not to mention all the other Lovecraftian stuff I've read over the years
  - and last but not least, Fred Saberhagen's Berserker story "Wings out of Shadow"
- PLUS
- the Brian Setzer Orchestra's cover version of "Sleepwalker," for the core idea.

After I get more of the important stuff out of the way, I might revisit this and try to figure out what influence led to what part of this setting.

There are also some good Cthulhu/Lovecraft RISUS pages already out there. You can find them at the Risus [main page](#), along with other coolness.

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## The *Sleepwalkers* setting

Here is the future history of humanity, when the stars have wheeled around again and Chaos is about to swallow the earth.

What came before the Fall is not all that important. What matters is that over the course of a few years, the mundane problems of a near-future world were overrun by a series of increasingly deadly, and increasingly paranormal, events. Rampant storms and "heavy weather," plagues, disappearances, earthquakes, and madness swept the earth. Slowly at first, and then swifter and surer, the forces of what humanity came to call the Mythos became more and more blatant. Paris was overrun by the Ghouls of her famed catacombs; New England and then New York were by rising waves that brought Deep One colonists in their wakes. Across the roof of the world, Ithaqua the Windwalker took back his old domain. Deep in the Australian Outback, shattered stone doors appeared in satellite photography one week; by the next week, there was no living human left on that continent. Cthonians are churning the solid rock of the American West like melting butter. And somewhere in the South Pacific, a mountain of twisted masonry has heaved itself above the waves once again... Now the Earth is in the hands of various 'lesser' Mythos races, each pursuing their own incomprehensible agendas. The very plants and animals are beginning to warp and change as the Earth is made ready for a hundred eerie goals. Beasts, madmen and desperate survivors scavenge the wreck of human civilization. And the worst is yet to come.

This is a game of claustrophobic horror. Most of humanity is subjugated by eldritch terrors. Most of the rest is living a nightmarish hunted life, while the very land they are trying to live off is becoming something alien. And the tiny remainder lives sunk into bleak stone and steel warrens, growing weaker and weaker while their leaders become more paranoid and ruthless. There are two main divisions of the surviving members of the human race. One is the "Organized" faction, hiding in various fortified enclaves scattered around the world, most of which are hastily expanded, hardened military bases (think of NORAD's Cheyenne Mountain facility). Each redoubt is basically its own little world, although there is some communication between certain of the bases. Most have begun sending out armed tactical teams to defend their locations and search for useful items. What they define as useful can range from uncontaminated foodstuffs to possibly useful arcane artifacts to 'clean' feral humans for breeding stock. The flip side of the coin is the aforementioned feral population. These run the gamut from insane cultists to armed bandit groups to desperate people who, for one reason or another, haven't been able to find or gain admittance to a redoubt. Some of these wild people are powerful

magicians; others have turned to the Dreamworld in an attempt to build a place more hospitable to humanity than the waking world. Most of the survivors in the wild are master trackers, skulkers and survivors. Those that are not do not last long.

The material on this site tends to focus on one of the Redoubts, the Appalachian Mountain Redoubt Bravo - Alpha has entirely vanished, as well as most of the mountain it was buried under. Bravo's P/R/B thinks it was either an experimental Mi-go mining technique or a badly botched invocation. Most American redoubts have a P/R/B - the surviving vestiges of the nationwide Parabiological Research Bureau, instituted before the Fall by the Centers for Disease Control to investigate and combat the strange things that eventually destroyed the world. In some Organized strongholds, the P/R/B is wholly discredited, treated as scapegoats for failing to halt the tide of the Mythos. In others, the P/R/B acts as advisors. In the Appalachian Redoubt, the P/R/B has become a ruling clique with the power of life and death over everyone living under the mountain. Bravo's P/R/B has become more and more ruthless. Two years ago, they began segregating all tactroop and exploratory personnel into an upper level of the Redoubt which has been unofficially dubbed the "Waiting Room." If your job takes you into the outside world, you are not allowed to mix with the rest of the redoubt population. Further, there are incredibly stringent identification and decontamination procedures one must go through to reenter. To prevent infiltration or contamination, exiting and returning personnel are subjected to rigorous genetic, psychological, magickal and Dreaming tests to confirm their identity. Anything being brought back into the Redoubt is subjected to just as much scrutiny. And anyone bypassing these strictures (or many other P/R/B regulations) is subject to summary execution.

So the troopers go out, sealed into their environmental armor; some are just soldiers, some are Dreamers with injectors full of Sleepdust, and others are half-lunatic Willworkers, desperately using the magic of the Mythos to try and buy some time for what is left of mankind. And more and more are becoming Sleepwalkers - slipping in and out of a "fightstate" where time seems meaningless and the horrors of the Mythos somehow less threatening. Meanwhile, the redoubts themselves are already beginning to crumble. A rising number of people appear to be sterile, and many births are clearly (or not so clearly) tainted by the Mythos. Many of the fortresses are already below a sustainable breeding population, and most others are not far behind. The number of people who die or are expelled greatly outpaces the birth rate. In Redoubt Bravo, the P/R/B's stopgap solution is compulsory pregnancy for all fertile women older than 16 (although the P/R/B is considering dropping this to 14). Some groups look to space, wanting to somehow make it to the few operational space stations left in orbit, or even to

the tiny settlements on the Moon. Others plan on staying in the buried fortresses permanently, eking out a circumscribed survival for humankind as rats in the walls. A few even hope to reach an accommodation with one or more Mythos factions. No one seriously expects to be able to retake the surface world.

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### Cliches for *Sleepwalkers* characters

The cliches below have suggested die types (plain, double-pump, or funky) as well as possible uses.

- Trooper (d6) - battlesuit piloting, guns and advanced weapons, sensors, tactics, basic Mythos lore (3 or 4 dice for 'vanilla' troopers. 2 or 3 for specialists)
- Sleepwalker [d6] - fightstate (frenzied combat), hand-to-hand, ignoring Mythos fright checks (these characters have a compulsory hook: the Taint of Yog-Sothoth)
- Willworker [d6] - reading Mythos tomes, summoning/binding things, casting spells (regular Troopers can have 1 or 2 dice in Willworker; anything above that and they are considered full-time Willworkers)
- Dreamer (d6) or possibly (d8) - Dream travel, Dream lore, taking material things into the Dreamworld, perceiving hidden things in the real world that have a significant Dreamworld presence
- Artist (d6) - whatever type of art you want, affecting people's moods, sensing Mythos disturbances
- Wildman (d6) - survival, camouflage, tracking, hiding, identifying safe but altered plants and animals  
and possibly...
- P/R/B field assessor (d8) or (d10)? - finding Mythos artifacts or texts, making horrifying decisions, ruthless commissaring (yes, I know it's not a word), gauging other people's sanity (another compulsory hook: P/R/B conditioning - whatever strange process that makes the field assessor more powerful than most humans also leaves him subject to posthypnotic compulsions - i.e., the GM can tell this PC "You are going to go do this now.")
- Ghoul (d6) or (d8) - eating corpses, sneaking in tunnels, underground lore, knowing sinister secrets

I highly recommend that these cliches be used with appropriate and interesting modifiers, such as Bloodthirsty Trooper (4) or Bibliophobic Willworker [3]. See the [characters](#) page of this site for some ideas as to what I mean.

## More character information

The **Sleepwalker** is subject to an automatic hook, the so-called Taint of Yog-Sothoth. Conceptually, it is similar to the Innsmouth Look that precedes a hybrid human's metamorphosis into a full-blooded Deep One. The early stages actually are beneficial; the sufferer begins to enter a timeless fugue state when fighting, where there seems to be all the time in the world to decide what to do. Mythos entities that would ordinarily produce Sanity checks simply don't seem that horrifying. Dangerous, certainly, even sickening... but the Sleepwalker fugue takes the soul-blasting horror out of the situation. However, as the Sleepwalker becomes faster, more powerful, his day to day existence seems less and less real - as does the Dreamworld, if he possesses any Dreaming skill. By the time someone is a Sleepwalker [5] he seems to flicker a little around the edges. At Sleepwalker [6] others can see through him occasionally; while in fightstate, the Sleepwalker seems to snap in and out of the normal frame of reference. Eventually, the influence of Yog-Sothoth permeates the Sleepwalker to the point that he simply comes loose from reality. In game terms, if a character "succeeds" on an advancement roll at Sleepwalker [6], he goes into an extended fugue and dissociates across space and time. Some P/R/B theoreticians think the Taint is a racial "escape valve" for humanity; that as mankind runs out of time, some individual people might step out of time and be free. More sober types believe the Sleepwalker is either subsumed by Yog-Sothoth's growing presence in our local spacetime or simply ablated into nothingness.

**Willworkers** are users of barely-controlled Mythos Magick. Some can use their arcane knowledge to summon or command some Mythos entities, or perform other "small competences." For the player or GM who wants some guidance on this subject, I can't think of a better source than the Greater and Lesser Grimoires from Chaosium's [Call of Cthulhu](#) to keep the proper Mythos feel. In short, fireballs or Arcane Arrows© don't fit the milieu, while the Red Sign does... Willworker/troopers typically paint their battlesuits with runes and eldritch signs, and most carry sealed panniers of arcane materials or enchanted items to be used when necessary. Feral willworkers seem to have stockpiles of necessary ingredients throughout their stomping grounds. Of course, it is significantly easier to amass and maintain a pile of children's skulls or similarly horrific ingredients in the post-Fall environment. The GM should set Sanity TNs for most spells (based on what exactly the character is trying to accomplish) and require Sanity Checks when they are cast. See the [rules page](#) for guidelines.

**Dreamers** are those people who are able to perform great feats in the Dreamlands, the collective higher plane that all human dreamers can occasionally touch. But Dreamers

can enter this land intentionally, and command power and respect there. Wild Dreamers simply have to hope they can get to sleep. But those in the more technologically advanced enclaves have access to drugs that can put them under and bring them up with a fair amount of reliability. There are two types of Dreamers by Redoubt operational standards. The most common are "Waking Dreamers" (d6 and d8 level). The name is a bit of a misnomer, as they still must sleep to dream. However, Waking Dreamers are usually trained as troopers as well, and are issued power armor with autoinjectors of various sleep and revival drugs. They are deployed with other troopers, and if the strategic or tactical situation calls for it, they can quickly launch themselves into the Dreamlands to explore or do battle. This can be very useful, as some threats are vulnerable to Dream attack, while sometimes valuable information can only be obtained in the Dreamworld. The downside is that while she is in the Dreamworld, a Dreamer is asleep, and obviously vulnerable to attack. Furthermore, the Dreamworld itself can be a dangerous place - a Dreamer might leave a bad situation in the physical world to arrive in a worse fix in the Dreamworld. There are more powerful Dreamers (d10 and d12), but they rarely leave the Dreamworld. Sometimes these powerful Dreamers have to be taken to a particular place for one arcane reason or another. When this happens, they are typically loaded into an armored capsule that has been nicknamed a "Coffin".; The troopers assigned to carry these Dreamers call it "Pallbearer Duty." The Waking Dreamer assigned to be the communications path between the waking world and one of the Coffin Jobs is usually nicknamed "Edward," although the derivation of this term is obscure.

The generic **Artist** cliche is included as a nod to all the Lovecraftian artist characters who seem to be exceptionally attuned to Mythos phenomena. It also makes a very "appropriate" inappropriate cliche. And whatever happened to Lovecraft's Erich Zann raises the question of whether Violin (6) was an appropriate or inappropriate cliche...

The world is filled with people with at least a few dice in **Wildman**. After all, it is the closest thing to a generic Feral cliche. But it should be tailored to the character's home environment. A Sun-baked Wildman (3) who has been dodging Cthonian larvae in the ruins of Santa Fe will be very different from a Salt-caked Wildman (3) eating sand fleas and dodging Deep One hunting parties on the Outer Banks. There are several Reconstructed ferals in the Reboubts, who proved to have no physical or psychic corruption. These characters can be mostly civilized, not much different from their Redoubt compatriots. Others are more like the Hollywood portrayal of the Indian Scouts attached to the U.S. Cavalry at the end of the 1800's.

The **P/R/B Field Assessor** is listed as a *possible* player character. This is because agreeing to play one is agreeing to be the cleric of a deity even more fell and unpredictable than Great Cthulhu himself... the Game Master. While individual GMs will have to decide what the exact nature of the P/R/B enhancements are (brainwashing? cybernetics? dire enchantments?), the price of that power is being well and truly on the GM's hook. Further, if you play it correctly, every other PC in the group should hate your character's guts. However, in the right kind of group, this could be a very interesting PC indeed.

Finally, in some areas, there might be opportunities for limited cooperation between Ghoul communities and a Redoubt population. In such a case a Ghoul Liason or Ghoul Ambassador could be another interesting, but unusual character.

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## Characters

As compact as a Risus character is (even with the standard Overwrought Backstory a post-Fall character should have), I've just put them all on this one page.

Note that all these characters use the Hook/Tale option for 2 bonus dice. Some use double-pump dice, and one (Dominguez) uses funky dice, although all are 60 point/10 dice equivalent.

Also, these characters' Tales were all constructed with the Background Machine from the Risus Companion, which is currently available at S. John Ross's Cumberland Games website. Go ye hence and buy it, yea verily, for it doth rock. You can get there from the [Risus](#) page, and until I'm sure about how he wants his stuff linked to, I'll leave it at that.

ANNABELLE GORDON, doom-haunted Sleepwalker

Ice-hearted Sleepwalker [3]

Wild-eyed Berserk Trooper (3)

Former Civil Engineer (2)

Apocalyptic Lay Preacher (1)

Hook: Taint of Yog-Sothoth (will eventually slip into a permanent fugue state and dissociate across time and space)

Tale: Annabelle was a wealthy civil engineer before the Fall; her basic patents on several not-quite-revolutionary but very cost-effective optimization techniques made her quite a bit of money. Of course, that hard-won money means nothing now that humanity is

fighting for its very survival. Her spacious summer home in the Adirondacks is now a Mi-go breeding pit - she knows, she's seen the recon photos. She helped a little in the expansion of the Appalachian Redoubt when the Great Retreat began, but as the horizons of her world closed in, her concentration and her work began to suffer. Finally, a propaganda film of a successful counterraid on a Deep One outpost in Wilmington, NC flipped some switch inside her head. A routine medical check showed she was infertile (like so many women of the time) and eligible for combat duty. Three weeks later she was her squad's Sandman (Dreamcannon gunner). Six months later she was beginning to suffer from occasional blackouts and fugue states. One year later, and she had become a Sleepwalker. Now she waits for the end of the world, having adopted the hidden but increasingly popular syncretic Apocalyptic faith.

MALACHI WHATELY, brine shaman

Fanatical Willworker [4]

Barely Reconstructed Barbarian Acolyte (3)

Sketchily Trained Light Irregular (1)

Hook: Reconstructed Feral Wizard (mistrusted misfit with strange urges and a cortex bomb)

Tale: Malachi Whately was born after the fall, to human parents in a shore community. His half-sister, however, was born to his father and a 10,000 year old Deep One priestess. Sarai (his half-sister) was meant to be a priestess as well, and Malachi was to be her bodyguard and acolyte. Young Malachi learned much eldritch lore, and became less a human child and more a personification of surf and marsh. But one fall day, he was savagely attacked by an evolved turbot while swimming out to the fishing nets. He staggered home late, bleeding and dazed, to see his family besieged by Organized humans from the Appalachian Redoubt. His sister and her mother were holding their own... until a P/R/B Willworker immobilized them with the Red Sign. He sprang out to aid them, but was knocked unconscious by stun gas and carried back to the Redoubt for possible recruitment. The Willworker who helped take his village recognized his native ability, and made sure Malachi was selected for psychic decontamination and formal Willworker training. Despite a deep-seated resentment toward his mentor, Malachi took to the P/R/B grimoires like a duck (or Deep One) to water. Malachi now feels that Organized humanity is his clan, and he has fought against Mythos forces, even Deep Ones. But he still feels the call of the surf, and while he does not have the Innsmouth Look, at night he still dreams (not Dreams) of the chill beauty of Y'ha-nthlei.

AVI GREENBAUM, falsely jovial squad leader  
Secretly Horrified Trooper (4)  
Almost Ready to Burn Out Commander (3)  
Ex-Used Car Salesman (2)  
Reluctantly-trained Willworker (1)

Hook: On the Brink of Madness (Treat checks for temporary insanity as if he had lost an additional point already this session)

Tale: Avi Greenbaum had actually adjusted fairly well to the Fall - as well as anyone could. The fact that most of his family and friends were lost in the Slagging of Chicago paradoxically made things easier for him; unlike most people, he didn't have to worry about what unspeakable fates his loved ones might have suffered at the hands of eldritch horrors or insane cultists. After the Retreat, he became fast friends with the leader of one of the Pioneer units that later evolved into the tactteams. His National Guard skills were useful, and he had a can-do attitude, so he joined the Pioneers right as they became more overtly military. 3 years later, Avi was the leader of his own tactteam, and was told to deliver a shipment of winter clothes to a nearby feral population to 'win their hearts and minds.' However, the clothes were bathed in one of the first P/R/B-brewed batches of Space-mead. Avi's team went back a week later, ostensibly to begin discussion of an allegiance. In the interim, a P/R/B theoretical Willworker had summoned several Byakhee and tried sending the ferals to the Moon and back. Avi discovered that interesting fact by stumbling onto a village full of freeze-dried victims of explosive decompression and the Byakhee-savaged corpse of the magician. That more than anything is the event that started Avi down his long slide toward madness. He has begun studing magick in the hope of protecting himself from such a fate, but the little knowledge he's gained has just made things worse...

CONRAD SIGMUNDSON, phlegmatic killer  
Blank-eyed Trooper (4)  
Coldly Brilliant Classical Violinist (3)  
High School Track Star (2)  
Quiet Black Marketeer (1)

Hook: under P/R/B surveillance (anytime he gains a die in any cliche, roll 2d6. On a roll of 2, he will be "drafted" by the P/R/B - take his new die as a d8 in Field Assessor, and replace this hook with the usual P/R/B Conditioning Hook)

Tale: Conrad was a well-respected musician at the regional level before the Great Retreat. During the social upheaval that preceded the Fall, he was making plans to gather his 8 brothers and sisters and move to a survival-ready retreat. However, he was conned, and the land he bought was already occupied. Before he could make other plans, his siblings were killed in a food riot, and he wandered through the death of civilization. There he discovered that killing didn't really bother him. That's the kind of thing he probably would never have discovered barring the end of the world, but he doesn't mind. Now he is the best classical violinist in Redoubt Bravo, as well as a rock-solid trooper. He feels no need for his standard issue tranquilizers or mood stabilizers, since combat doesn't worry him (although he is still vulnerable to Sanity Checks). So he trades them, as well small items from Outside for... favors. This activity has not gone unnoticed by the P/R/B, and before long Conrad will probably get invited in for a "job interview" and walk out a Field Assessor.

TERESA WASHINGTON, drug addicted Dream Trooper

Insomniac Dreamer (4)

Twitchily Alert Trooper (3)

Shivering Addict (2)

Inveterate Movie Watcher (1)

Hook: On the Nod (has to use sleep drugs to Dream or even fall asleep; but is prone to attack by Dreamland creatures)

Tale: Teresa Washington hated broccoli passionately, and her parents split up when she was seven years old. That kind of thing is common enough, but for someone born to be a Dreamer such childhood miseries can become the Silver Key. At night, Teresa was the graceful chatelaine of a beautiful estate - but in the waking world she was a failed actress. Long before the Fall, the needle was already in her arm. Still, P/R/B screenings discovered her raw power as a Dreamer, and Teresa Washington and Lady Sessessiphon of the Grey Manse were drafted. Teresa is off smack, but just as hooked on Somna. In the Dreamworld, Lady Sessessiphon grows ever more haggard, while her Grey Manse falls into disrepair.

JOSEPH SMITH DOMINGUEZ, intimidating martinet

Cold-blooded P/R/B Field Assessor (3d8) [note: this costs the same as 4d6]

By-the-book Trooper (3)

Secretly Tormented Dreamer (2)

Amateur Astronomer (1)

Hook: P/R/B Conditioning (subject to an array of posthypnotic? commands - GM can dictate PC action freely)

Tale: When he was 12, long before the Fall, J.S. Dominguez was given a telescope. He grew to know the night sky like the back of his hand, and became an astronomer. J.S. would have been happy spending the rest of his life studying the universe. But before he was 30, the human race learned more about the universe than it ever wanted to know. Dominguez made it to Redoubt Bravo, but early on he rubbed a member of the P/R/B the wrong way and got "drafted." Now he is a callous Field Assessor, easily as hated as any Soviet political commisar ever was. No one ever sits down and has a conversation with him, but if someone did they would discover that J.S. no longer knows anything about the field he dedicated his life to.

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## Tainted Meat

Cliches for the creatures of the Cthulhu Mythos in the *Sleepwalkers* setting

I've listed some typical things a horrible inhuman entity might use its cliches for, as well as suggested die types. This is to represent the raw power of a given species; individuals may of course have more or less dice to indicate their personal competence. Also note that many of these cliches will have some other facet listed; Deep One warrior, Mi-go scientist, Serpent Man shaman. On the other hand, the more bestial or incomprehensible nonhumans might best be represented by just "Dhole (6d20)," for example.

Finally, some of these suggested uses have been written in the spirit of the 'oddball skills' used in some Chaosium products to provide cues for the GM on how to play a given NPC.

- Ghoul: (d6) or (d8) - eating corpses, sneaking in tunnels, underground lore, knowing sinister secrets
  - note: In my opinion, a Ghoul is one of the few Mythos species that might make an acceptable PC. Consider "Ghoul Ambassador(3d8)," which could be entertaining in the right group.
- Serpent Men: (d6) - hiding, sneaking, ambushing, poisonous bite
  - note: In my campaign, I'm using the "degenerate Serpent Men" concept, treating them like the Victorian conception of an Unseelie faerie as a devolved killer. Atavistic Serpent Men might have double-pump dice or d8's, plus spellcasting competency.
- Deep One: (d8) - being immortal, interbreeding with humans, fishing

- Mi-go: (d6) - (but will sometimes have ultratech devices granting bonus dice) - prodigious mechanical and surgical skill, talking in weird buzzy voices
- Dark Young: (d10) Marching out of the woods and eating/mating with sacrifices, looking vaguely like trees
- Shoggoth: [d10] - shapeshifting (basically ANYTHING physical), sullenly serving OR sullenly rebelling, going "Tekeli-li!" really loudly
- Invisible Polyp: (d12) - be invisible, sucking winds, piping horribly, killing big cones
- Hound of Tindalos: [d10] tracking prey through time, manifesting through corners, horrifically killing prey
- Dimensional Shambler: (d8) - materializing, shambling, grabbing and dematerializing
- Cthonian: (d6) through (d20), depending on which instar you encounter - moving through solid rock, causing earthquakes, tracking Cthonian Eggs, swallowing things up whole

I have also (so far) refrained from generating stats for the major entities. Use them as plot devices, not people in big rubber suits stomping on models of Tokyo. If you really must, something like "Great Cthulhu [6d30]" or "Azathoth (4d100)" should suffice.

Sanity Check Task Numbers (TNs) for some of these creatures are on the [new rules](#) page, with the Sanity mechanics.

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## Gaze into the Abyss

A Sanity mechanic for Risus *Sleepwalkers*.

It depends on your style of play; I prefer for the GM to handle the mechanics of the Sanity rules, giving the PCs roleplaying cues as necessary. However, there's no reason why this can't be done "In Public," so to speak, with the players making their own rolls and keeping track of their Sanity Tally themselves. The mechanics are:

Sanity Tally=character dice total (note: I include bonus dice, as from taking Hooks and/or Tales, in this total, so a "Normal" character has a Sanity Tally of 12)

Sanity Cliche=character dice total/4, rounded down. This means a standard character with a Hook and Tale has a Sanity Cliche of (3)

In a Sanity Check, roll the character's Sanity Cliche against the creature or event's TN

(see below); if the character loses, take one off the Sanity Tally.

The GM or player (depending on who's handling the mechanics) can pump the Sanity Cliche before a difficult test, to simulate holding on to your sanity by sheer force of will, but being psychologically exhausted and more vulnerable to further shocks afterward.

Each time a character loses a point from the Sanity Tally, roll dice equal to the Tally points lost in that session vs your Sanity Cliche. This is a combat, where horrified insights into the workings of reality battle the character's sense of how things should be - roleplay it! If the character loses this combat, he or she goes temporarily insane.

If a character's Sanity Tally ever goes to zero, they become permanently insane, and the player must go through the lengthy, tedious process of making a new Risus PC. Break out a fresh Post-it note...

Anytime a new die for a cliche is earned, add 1 to the character's current and total Sanity Tally. At the GM's whim, other major successes may add to the current Tally, although the total may never exceed the character's dice total. This intentionally does not differ for those with funky dice.

And don't forget the primal rule; the GM is free to do whatever he sees fit to make things work as he sees fit. If a PC pumps or double-pumps or uses a lucky shot to stare down Hastur, that's all well and good. But feel free to ding his or her Sanity Tally anyway. PCs can escape from Great Old Ones, but they shouldn't stroll away whistling...

### Sanity TNs for various events

- Performing minor Willworkings: 5
- Seeing a Deep One: 6
- Reading a minor Mythos text: 8
- Seeing a Ghoul feast: 10
- Performing significant Willworkings: 12
- Discovering an unbelievable atrocity: 15
- Performing major Willworkings: 17
- Seeing an enraged adult Cthonian: 20
- Seeing a nest of Dholes: 25
- Reading the Necronomicon: 30
- Seeing Cthulhu: 30

As always, GMs should bump these numbers up or down to represent different situations. Additionally, some cliches can allow characters to ignore some Sanity Checks for a period.

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## Double-Edged Swords

This is a list of human and inhuman technologies usable in the *Sleepwalkers* setting, some of which can be as dangerous to the wielder as the target.

### Tools of the trade

#### Trooper

battlesuit (also bonus die gear), maser carbine, mollyknife (monomolecular wire blade)

#### Willworker

Mythos texts, enchanted talismans for summoning and binding, Space-mead

#### Dreamer

autoinjectors of Somna (sleep) and Rooster (wake-up) drugs, sensory deprivation gear in helmet

(in Dreamlands) staff, robes, house or manse

#### Sleepwalker

heavy battlesuit, Fetchpike (enchanted melee weapon, allows attacks against creatures who are vulnerable to enchanted items)

#### Artist

trumpet/painbrushes/whatever, brooding books of *fin-de-siecle* art criticism or theory

#### Wildman

appropriate weapons (from flint knives to surplus military small-arms), preserved food, stout footwear

#### P/R/B Field Assessor

Command battlesuit (with kill switches for other squad suits), voice stress analyzers, psychically secure cargo bags

#### Ghoul

funeral rags, grime and mold, sharpened bones, a few haunches of gamy human meat, grave loot of surprising utility

### Bonus die equipment

- Battlesuits give +1d bonus die for fighting, as well as noticing things with its sensors.

(give characters a bonus pip +1 if they describe using appropriate weaponry for the type of target)

- Dreamcannon: +1d bonus for fighting immaterial creatures; also allows attacks against creatures who are only vulnerable to enchanted weapons, but provides no bonuses in that situation. (note: excessive Dreamcannon use might be the trigger for the Sleepwalker transformation)
- Psychotronic Battery: gives +1d to +2d to Willworker rolls to cast spells; but caster must make 2 Sanity Checks.
- P/R/B Theoretical Maunal: gives +1d to "raw knowledge" about Mythos subjects - but **not** for spells/Willworking.

## Paranatural artifacts

- Snarler: this is P/R/B slang for a common Mi-go weapon that looks like a knot of dull copper rods. In game terms, it is +1d bonus combat gear for Mi-go; captured snarlers stop working after a few minutes. Although it has no visible discharge of material ammunition or energy beams, targets feel as if they are being tangled up and crushed, and their ability to move is severely limited. Current P/R/B theory is that snarlers distort space-time on a very localized scale, possibly by a method similar to the phenomenon that allows mi-go to fly and travel in space. This has not been proven yet due to the fact that captured snarlers stop working so quickly. All attempts to disassemble one have failed in one baffling manner after another. For example, the last snarler investigated by Redoubt Alpha turned three P/R/B scientists into a small grey ovoid (about 2 inches across) and created an exact duplicate of the lab twenty meters further back in the solid rock of the mountain. It may be telling that snarlers seem to be less effective when used against powerful Sleepwalkers, possibly since they are only weakly attached to local reality.
- Deep One Armor: +1d bonus combat gear. Beaten gold adorned with the shells of long-extinct marine life shouldn't be able to stop modern monomolecular blades or 20mm electrothermal rounds... but no one is surprised that it does. It's occasionally taken in combat as trophies, so it's not impossible to see bits of this armor riveted to Tactroop battlesuits. Large amounts of such scavenged armor may even provide a +1 bonus pip, in the GM's discretion. Of course, feel free to have such PCs consumed by dreams of batrachian horrors and/or purged by their P/R/B commissar for psychic unreliability.

- Elfshot: They doesn't provide bonus dice, but these semi-immortal arrowheads and spearpoints do explain how the devolved remnants of the Serpent Men can fight on an equal footing with people in power armor. The further good news is that shards of the elfshot can embed themselves in the victim's Dream-self, with debilitating effects in both worlds. In Redoubt Alpha, all captured elfshot is confiscated by the P/R/B. Among the tactroops, the current theory for this is that the P/R/B wants to have yet another handle on the Dreamers, since cutting off their drug supplies might be too slow a countermeasure. The elfshot weapons so far encountered all appear to be carved from bone that has been treated with a pale blue resin of unknown composition.
  - Summoning Tools: this is a generic category, meant to cover all the eldritch apparatus used to call up Mythos entities. There is a bewildering variety of these things, each only of use to contact or summon a single entity or species. The effectiveness of any given item is up to the GM, but a good guideline to follow is that the more difficult or distressing the procedures needed to build and enchant an item, the more powerful it will be. My "house rule" is that if I can describe the materials or techniques required and at least one *player* (not player character) doesn't wince, it only grants a +1 pip. On the other hand, if I can barely describe the thing myself without getting a little uneasy, maybe it's worth +1d. I'm steadfastly unwilling to put the one thing I came up with horrible enough to grant a +2d bonus on this website. Suffice it to say it's a method a feral band is using to contact Shub-Niggurath, and it explains why they have to keep raiding the neighboring tribes for captives...
- 

## Fiddling While the World Burns

Campaigns and adventure seeds for the *Sleepwalkers* setting

### Hobson's Choice

The PCs' team is going out on a normal recon patrol. Nearing the edge of their range and preparing to turn back, the PCs hear strange buzzing voices up ahead, on the other side of a large rock. Before they can do much else, something flashes quickly overhead and out of sight. Warily approaching the rock, they find... three healthy human babies, apparently about 2 or 3 months old. Carved into the rock (on close inspection, it looks like it was burned in by acid) is the following message:

"you need young we need old you give us old we give you young you give one we give three leave at rock day get at rock night we have myraid young"

Take it from there. If the PCs take the children back to the base, all available tests show them to be completely healthy, untainted human children. The redoubt's healthy birth rate is well below the overall death rate; will the P/R/B decide to go along with this plot, sacrificing older members of the community to get a much-needed boost for the future? (I think the only answer is yes, hence the title of this section.) If so, perhaps the PCs are the ones who have to escort the first sacrifice back out to the rock (important question: is the sacrifice willing, restrained, or sedated?). Or perhaps the P/R/B wants to hedge its bets; while one team takes the first sacrifice, the PCs are supposed to shadow them and see who or what they're trading with, what is being done with the sacrifices, and where or how the unknowns are getting these babies. And why does the note say "myraid?" Do they mean "lots?" Or do they mean "Thousand?"

### Perchance to Dream

The PCs find a crudely camouflaged longhouse, guarded by a handful of feral fighters, and full of sleeping ferals of all ages. The guards say (and PC Dreamers can confirm) that the sleepers are drugged with an altered herb recently found in the area. They are Dreaming nonstop as a team, trying to create a safe haven in the Dreamworld for as many humans as possible to escape into, abandoning the horrors of the waking world. But something seems odd, both in the waking world and the Dreamworld... What is the nature of this altered plant, which appears to be a mutated foxglove? Is it corrupting the Dreamer's work? Making them more powerful (single use bonus die item)? Or just killing them? Are these Dreamers really as altruistic as they claim, or do they plan to build a Dream kingdom that they can people with human slaves? And this many Dreamers in one place must be a veritable psychic beacon; why are there no Mythos threats within 50 miles? These Dreamers might have a guardian angel they don't know about. Or maybe just the psychic equivalent of a sign saying "Private Property: no hunting without owner's permission."

### Halls of the Mountain King

The P/R/B has made a heart-stopping discovery in the aftermath of a moderate earthquake. An unused tunnel, dug during the first frantic days of the Great Retreat, has been breached. A segment has been cleanly burned out of one side of the tunnel, and it looks like the work of a young Cthonian. Probes sent down the new vertical shaft indicate a bewildering maze of small tunnels, none much larger than 10'-15' across

(break out all your old dungeon maps!). Clearly the PCs have not been living right, because they are the team the P/R/B has chosen to explore this tunnel system. If there is just one young Cthonian, the PCs are ordered to kill it. But if they discover a nest of younglings, or a breeding triad of mature Cthonians, the next adventure your group runs might well be scouting for a new Redoubt location, or negotiating with Redoubts Charlie or Delta to move in there.

### Peace in Our Time

There is a large Ghoul nest living in the ruins of the nearest town. This is a well known fact; there have even been some inconclusive skirmishes between them and Redoubt forces, but neither side has the resources for all out war. However, while resting in the Waiting Room, the PCs are scrambled to go intercept a small group of Ghouls approaching the Redoubt. But when the PCs are spotted by the Ghouls, the Ghouls begin waving a white flag. What has driven the fatalistic and inhuman Ghouls to seek human assistance? And why does the P/R/B agree to help them so quickly?

### Suspicious Growths

These are just seeds or ideas that can be slipped into other adventures or expanded into full campaigns. On the other hand, they can also be used simply as odd or unnerving background.

- The local trees seem to be changing more quickly, taking on an air of distinct menace.
- Another TacSquad starts doing odd things like finishing each other's sentences, moving together as if choreographed, even breathing synchronously.
- The P/R/B initiates a ruthless series of purges, exiling or executing almost a quarter of the Redoubt's civilian population.
- Food is running low, and the humans of the Redoubt must start eating some of the altered flora and fauna infesting the Outside.
- A nearby Feral tribe that had previously been neutral or even cautiously friendly begins ambushing the Redoubt's troopers.
- A woman in advanced environmental armor is found next to a wrecked machine; she claims to be a scout from one of the orbital colonies, and is immune to any psychic or Dream investigation.
- The squad's Dreamcannon is broken open in a battle, and the PCs discovers what exactly makes one tick - which makes the enchanted skull at the butt of each Fetchpike not seem so bad...

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The Wayback Machine - [https://web.archive.org/web/20060127155532/http://www.geocities.com:80/wicked\\_i\\_am666/wrestling.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20060127155532/http://www.geocities.com:80/wicked_i_am666/wrestling.htm)

### Wrestling for Risus: The Anything RPG

Since Risus is such a great game, I decided to make some rules to play some wrestling using Risus.

I know many of you won't understand a thing, but I just made some notes and place them here, I'll try to make everything clearer so you can play my wrestling adaptation.

#### Combat

Both players yell the GM, secretly, their actions.

Action are simultanous.

Players roll the selected cliché.

#### System

Players start with 20 stamina.

Start with 20 dice to spread.

Stamina stat, used to determine tiredness, when reduced to zero, unable to keep.

For every 2 stamina lost, lose 1 dice.

Some techs are stronger against others (may gain pluses).

If tech loses, lose 1 stamina (except when lose to dodge).

When in floor, can only dodge, and at half dice.

Cannot use the same tech three consecutive times.

When op in floor, may attack or pin.

When pumping, take stamina, and add the number of dice to the roll.

Can use any tech at 2 stamina per dice.

No tech can go beyond 4.

If winning roll doubles losing roll, 2x damage is done.

When attacked while in floor, next turn you are up again.

#### Techs

Kick

Punch

Smash

Flying kick

Grapple

Complex grapple

Dodge

Pin

Jump from third rope

Piledriver

#### Effects

Kick 2x damage against punch.

Punch +1 vs kick.

K, p +1 vs dodge.

Dodge +1 vs smash.

Smash 2x damage.

Dodge +1 vs jump.

Jump 2x damage.

Flying +1 vs smash.

Flying 2x damage.

Dodge +1 vs piledriver.

Piledriver 2x damage.

Piledriver +1 vs k, p.

Grapple +1 vs complex.

Complex 2x damage.

K, p, c +1 vs flying.

After grapple or complex, may roll again, against dodge +1 (cumulative).

Smash, flying and jump can attack while op in floor.

While in floor, can only dodge, if win, stand, if lose, stay.

3 pins, against cumulative dodge +1.

Jump can only be made if close to the ropes.

If successful jump, both end in floor, highest dodge roll gets up.

If grappled near ropes, dodge +1 (plus the other one).

If lose to piledriver, flying, jump, grapple, and complex (g's only if attacker decides to break), end in floor.

If lose with jump, flying, and grapples (against dodge), end in floor.

### Sample Battle

"Green Cucaracha"

Stamina 20

Kick 4

Punch 4

Smash 3

Complex Grapple 3

Piledriver 2

Dodge 2

Pin 2

"Super Fulano"

Stamina 20

Kick 3

Punch 3

Smash 2

Flying 3

Jump 3

Dodge 4

Pin 2

GC kick 4d6 14

SF smash 2d6 9

SF tried to surprise CG but he failed, since GC attacked quickly with a deadly kick. (SF -1 sta)

GC kick 5d6 13

SF dodge 4d6 16

Gc tried to repeat his deadly kick, but SF guessed GC's move, and moved away calmly, annoying GC.

GC smash 3d6 11

SF flying 4d6 18

Sf countered GC's rage with an incredible flying kick, leaving him lying in the floor. (GC -2 sta, -1 kick)

SF allows GC to get back on his feet.

GC kick 3d6 9

SF kick 3d6 13

Both tried to kick the other, but SF's was fast enough to beat GC's. (GC -1 sta)

GC piledriver 3d6 8

SF punch 3d6 7

SF's efforts to hit GC were useless against the piledriver that left him lying on the floor. (SF -2 sta, -1 dodge)

GC smash 3d6 11

SF dodge 3d6 5

GC almost stabbed SF mercilessly, leaving his opponent on the floor. (SF -4 sta, -1 kick, -1 punch)

GC smash 3d6 9

SF flying 4d6 20

GC didn't expect SF to stand so quickly, and was left lying and watching little stars. (GC -4 sta, -1 com, -1 punch)

GC dodge 3d6 6

SF flying 3d6 13

SF beats the sunny days out of GC, no matter GC's struggle to survive. (GC -6 sta, -1 complex, -1 piledriver, -1 punch)

GC piledriver 3d6 7

SF smash 2d6 6

GC tricked SF, and then he threw him like a puppet. (SF -2 sta, -1 punch; GC -2 sta, -1 flying)

GC smash 3d6 11

SF dodge 3d6 16

GC fails to smash SF into the floor, ending in his opponent's place. (SF -2 sta, -1 jump)

GC dodge 1d6 1

SF pin 2d6 5

SF tries to end the battle.

GC dodge 2d6 7

SF pin 3d6 13

2 heartbeats, GC is about to lose! (SF -1 sta, -1 jump)

GC dodge 5d6 18

SF pin 5d6 21

Battle is over! (GC -2 sta, -1 smash; SF -3 sta, -1 dodge)

Stast should end like this (maybe I missed something):

"Green Cucaracha"

Stamina 03

Kick 3

Punch 2

Smash 2

Complex Grapple 1

Piledriver1

Dodge 2

Pin 2

"Super Fulano"

Stamina 05

Kick 2

Punch 2

Smash 2

Flying 2

Jump 1

Dodge 2

Pin 2

These are just some notes I made, it's very disorganized but soon I'll correct anything wrong, and explain all the rules (and add some new ones). I hope you enjoy playing.

Please send your comments to [wicked\\_i\\_am@hotmail.com](mailto:wicked_i_am@hotmail.com)

Coming soon:

Drawings for all the techs (clichés), so you can see what they mean..

A table for the special effects of the techs, so you can look up yours easily.

Extended explanation of all the new rules (I wrote only notes to myself).

A better page design (and even a PDF, if I see some feedback).

Explanation to every tech.

A few suggestions for roleplaying, and tournaments.

Some new rules, and corrections for the existing ones.

A name for the adaptation (a logo too!).



# 30 Minute Delivery, Guaranteed

## A High Action Micro-Adventure



### Credit where Credit is due

Of course, any Risus supplement would be a mute point without the creative genius of S. John Ross. I am also indebted to the creators of *Real Time Risus* (which appears to have gone missing from cyberspace) for the basic premise, and to the author of *Dungeonautica* for the simple cliché levels that make up the storyline. I especially want to thank Lord Zamiel for his always creative Risus sourcebooks. This micro-adventure is an attempt to provide a ready to go adventure that is playable with his many action sourcebooks. It is also a tribute to the wonderful video games of the late 80's early 90's that I spent way too much time playing.

### Prologue

Your heroes show up on the scene of a standoff between incompetent law enforcement and incompetent henchmen. Suddenly maniacal laughter fills the air as you hear over a loudspeaker "Foolish do-gooders. You will never take me. Even now I have a bomb located somewhere inside your precious city that I plan to detonate in exactly 30 minutes. So you can either attempt to take me prisoner, or find that bomb before it blows up 5 city blocks!" The law enforcement officials, of course, instantly flee the scene and begin a keystone cop style search for the bomb. Your heroes know better. This guy needs to be taken out, and pronto. So set your stop watch for *exactly* 30 minutes (real time, not just game time) and see if your heroes can take out the bad guy boss before time runs out.

Level (Cliché)	Challenge
1	INCOMPETENT HENCHMEN – At one dice, these guys will be easy to slash, hack, kick, punch, or energy blast your way through, but that's the point of this kind of game isn't it?
2	SECURITY FENCE – Razor wire, electric shock, laser beam. You name it, this fence has it. Throw in some more incompetent henchmen when the heroes pass the fence.
3	NEAR DEATH (OR AT LEAST <i>REALLY PAINFUL</i> ) TRAPS AND DEFENSES – For smart characters who try to jump/fly over the fence, let this one rip. Feel free to include energy cannons and land mines. Make a point to break some of their cool gear. If the heroes seem to be moving too quickly, throw in some more henchmen with shoulder-fired rpg's.
4	THE BOSS – This is usually the last stage of a video game. Feel free to make him or her as beautiful or ugly as possible, and of course, <i>really</i> evil. Self-delusional grandiose speeches about world domination are a bonus (and they use up precious time).
[5]	SELF DESTRUCT MECHANISM – When the boss is just about to go down, he will give the players a knowing look followed by a maniacal laugh. Then he pushes a remote control button. A voice inspired by the computer on Star Trek says "Auto-destruct sequence initiated. This zip code will be forcibly removed from the planet in 60 seconds." Don't let your players wimp out on this one. They've got to save the neighborhood.

Slightly Crunchy!  
A ↑ RISUS BESTIARY

BY RYAN GIGLIOTTI



*Being a humble provision to the  
Risus Community of more monsters to  
outwit, kill, sneak past, and otherwise  
engage in the full glory of Risus  
Combat.*

# BLOB OF EYES

**Description:** This creature is a hideous mass of semi-liquid flesh, covered with dozens, if not hundreds, of eyes. The eyes are of many different shapes, sizes, and colors, and appear as if they could have come from any number of creatures. The eyes are continuously moving and rearranging as the thing moves, but eyes never appear in matched pairs.

In physical combat, a BoE clubs opponents with pseudopods, but this is not its only means of defense. Meeting the gaze of the Blob—which is virtually impossible to avoid if one is looking in its direction—causes victims to stand paralyzed and possibly even petrify.

Some species of Eye Blobs are known to be incredibly intelligent, capable of running underworld networks of crime. These Blobs often have human minions to carry tasks that require social interaction.

## Clichés:

Amorphous Mass (3)  
Ruthlessly Intelligent Criminal Mastermind (3)  
Paralyzing Gaze (4)

## Crunch:

Looking at a BoE causes a single action contest against the victim's willpower cliché. If the Blob wins, its opponent is held motionless and must begin a health combat. If this combat is lost, the victim is permanently turned to stone. If the victim wins, the paralysis is broken and will not affect that individual for the rest of the day.

# BOG TROLL

**Description:** Bog Trolls are very large humanoids with thick, warty skin, sloped foreheads, and large, bulbous noses. Most stand over eight feet tall and bulge with muscle. Bog Trolls are greatly feared in combat for their strength, but also for their ability to take super-human levels of punishment. Some attribute their resistance to regeneration or amazing healing abilities, but in truth, their thick bodies have many redundant organs and at least three independent circulatory systems. About one in three bog trolls are female (a ratio that keeps their numbers low), and approximately one in ten females have limited magical abilities.

## Clichés:

Violent Swamp-Dwelling Humanoid (4)  
Blood Thirsty Berserker (3)  
Axe Wielding Tribesman (3)  
Big, Dumb, and Ugly (3)\*  
Swamp Fisherman (1)

\* Bog Troll Hags replace Big, Dumb and Ugly with:  
Cunning Hedge Witch [3]

--Go read S. John's article on Hedge Magic right now. Right Now. We'll wait.... <http://www.io.com/~sjohn/hedge.htm>

## Crunch:

If you prefer to have your trolls actually regenerate, then simply eliminate the redundant clichés. Violent Regenerating Humanoid (4) can be used in combat (of the Hack and Slash variety) normally, but the Troll won't lose dice if beaten, unless the conditions for defeating it are met –usually fire and/or acid.

Another design considered for the redundant clichés:

Violent Swamp-Dwelling Humanoid (3)

These Dice Do Nothing Except Go Away Instead of the Other clichés (9)

--This method has the benefit of the dice being used for things other than typical violence-combat, perhaps in ways the GM couldn't possibly predict in advance. The down side is the dice being used for things other than typical violence-combat, perhaps in ways the GM couldn't possibly predict in advance....

# DINOSAURS

BRONTOSAURUS (Apatosaurus)  
Gigantic Impassive Plant-Eater (6)

YOUNG BRONTO  
Elephant-sized Overly Curious Plant-Eater (4)

T REX  
Big-ass Shark on Wheels (5)  
Keen Sensed Predator (3)

RAPTOR (Deinonychus)  
All Teeth and Claws (4)  
Smarter Than You Think (4)

TRICERATOPS  
Five Massive Tons of Pointy Faced Brutality (5)

## **Crunch:**

Trying to take on any of the spectacularly large dinosaurs (or any large monster) in hand to hand combat is suicide in “realistic” campaigns (you know... realistic campaigns that have dinosaurs). If the Plucky Boxer with a Mean Left Hook (3) decides to punch-fight the Brontosaurus, he is in big trouble. If the clichés don’t match up well, consider using something akin to the “When someone can’t participate” rules. The boxer keeps his cliché, but the dino gets two more dice, because it is much harder to KO than the boxer’s typical opponent.

# FIRE LION

**Description:** Slightly larger than an actual lion, a Fire Lion appears to be somewhat reptilian. Its brown, muscular body is low to the ground, and the head is ringed with a blazing fire resembling a mane. Scholars believe this creature to be an accidental creation of some sort, or perhaps some other-worldly being that does not understand our dimension. Fire Lions are often encountered trying to eat flammable objects. The Lion’s fire incinerates the erstwhile food, which causes the Lion to grow frustrated, which makes the fire burn even hotter. This behavior seems to confirm that the Fire Lion is unaware of its own flame.

**Clichés:**  
Thick-bodied Predatory Beast (4)  
Unnatural Flame [3]



# HOWLING NIGHT GOBLINS

**Description:** Covered in thick, black fur, Howling Night Goblins are greatly feared in the dark forests they inhabit. While individually vicious, they are most dangerous in the large groups in which they hunt.

While capable of manipulating objects with their hands, feet, or tail, HNGs rarely use tools. When hunting (which is almost continuously), the Goblins rely on their eerie screech, which causes the weak-willed to panic and behave irrationally.

## Clichés:

Furry Mass of Teeth and Claws (2)

Ear-Splitting Mind-Rending Screamer (2)

## Crunch:

Because HNGs often hunt in packs, the GM should make liberal use of Grunt Squad rules. The Screamer cliché is used in combat against a mental cliché. If the Goblin wins, the victim either freezes in terror or runs in a direction chosen by the HNG... usually towards a pack ambush. Grunt Squads have increased Screamer clichés as well as Furry Mass clichés.

## [A Sidebar]

### Eyeballing Grunt Squads

A creature like the Howling Night Goblin relies on the power of the Grunt Squad to challenge stronger clichés. But how many HNGs are needed to increase Furry Mass of Teeth and Claws (2) to a (3) or better? In a game like Risus there is no Hard-n-Fast formula, but this bestiary aims to be somewhat crunchy; so here are some guidelines that attempt to be hard, or maybe fast, but probably not both.

### Consider the following:

Ratio of combatants – Number of HNGs per PC.

Terrain or other environment conditions that could be favorable to either side.

What the Spoils of War will be if the NPCs win. The PCs rarely know in advance.

So, maybe ten Howling Night Goblins become a Furry Mass of Teeth and Claws (3) when they storm into a wide clearing. But in a jungle or thick forest, at night, those same ten Goblins are in their element. Ten HNGs might become a Furry Mass...(4) or (5) in that instance. And remember, it's hard for characters to count insane screaming monkey-things in the middle of a fight for their lives, so there is no need to assign actual numbers.

GM: "There's a huge mass\* of Night Goblins pouring out of the trees. They mean to eat you."

Player: "No sweat, the last batch\*\* died real easy-like."

GM: "There's a lot more this time."

Player: "How many?"

GM: "Three times as many? Maybe even more\*\*\*. You can't help but feel terror in the back of your throat."

Player(s): "Crap!"

\* Huge Mass = several dozen, maybe

\*\* Batch = a dozen or so, perhaps

\*\*\* Even More = stop counting and get ready to eat hot monkey-death.

Decide how challenging you (the GM) want the encounter to be. If your PC group has several Reasonably Competent Combat Types (4), and you want to scare them into cooperation, consider a Grunt Squad with 5 or 6 dice in its cliché. The PCs will likely need to form a Team to win the combat. If you just like combat for its own glorious sake, consider splitting the Grunt Squad into smaller Grunt Squads, one for each PC. Keep clichés closer to the PCs abilities.

## [End of a Sidebar]

# SIRIUSIAN HOUND

**Description:** *Holy schmoly*, this thing is big. The Siriusian Hound is well over 20 feet high at the shoulder, with the proportional build of a stocky wolf. Thick black fur covers the Hound normally, though when frightened (which isn't often) or enraged, its fur changes color, becoming a firey red-orange. Jet black eyes somehow manage to convey a wicked intelligence to those brave enough to look into them.

The Siriusian Hound is a harbinger of calamity. Even if the Hound walks through a town without stopping to eat the locals, disaster will surely follow. Tornadoes, violent thunderstorms, earthquakes, or swarms of vermin inevitably arrive in its wake. Perhaps the Hound is a warning from the gods, or perhaps it is somehow responsible for these catastrophes. Attempts to drive off the Hound with violence are sure to end poorly, as the creature has a most unusual defense....

## Clichés:

Massive Arcane Wolf (6)

Symbol of Nature's Wrath (4)

Wolf Pack (\*)

## Crunch:

*Part One:* The Wolf Pack (\*) isn't so much of a cliché, as it is a side effect of the Massive Arcane Wolf cliché. If someone or something wounds the Hound, the blood spilled becomes smaller (but still darn big) hounds. Essentially, these are Shield Mates. For every die lost from Massive Arcane Wolf in combat that would spill blood, a Bear-Sized Hound (3) sprouts up. These immediately attack the source of the injury, and fight until destroyed. A particularly evil GM could band several together into a Grunt Squad.

*Part Two:* Symbol of Nature's Wrath could be used in several ways. A wizard, spell-caster, miracle worker, or super hero attempting to avert a natural disaster must defeat the cliché with an appropriate roll of the dice. Or perhaps the Hound could engage in some combat, Symbol of Nature's Wrath vs. the city/town/village's Great Place to Live (3) cliché. Be creative with this one....

## Comments

I love monster books. I love Risus. Hence, a Risus Bestiary. I have a rather clear memory of being in the Fourth Grade, reading the first edition Monster Manual, and then trying to write my own monsters (in the Fourth Grade!). While creating stats for the bad guys from the "Joust" video game, I noticed that there was not really any rhyme or reason to the way monster abilities worked. The writer of each monster just included the rules needed for the creature in the stat block. I loved that idea. Total freedom for the writer to wreak whatever havoc desired. Much like Risus. Of course, the difference is Risus allows players that same freedom. Look out monsters!

This bestiary doesn't really have any specific world or even genre in mind. It sort of bubbled up through my brain and migrated to a document via a keyboard. I suspect the overall tone of the creatures is somewhat gritty, but not necessarily realistic, and the writing is kind of goofy, if that makes any sense. For some reason, when I look at fantasy monsters, I like to imagine how they could be used in modern settings, and vice versa. Maybe that will help make some this stuff process for you. Good luck.

*A Slightly Crunchy Risus Bestiary* is copyright 2005 by Ryan Gigliotti

Risus is a game system by S. John Ross that is brilliant in its simplicity and execution. This PDF is an unofficial supplement for said game, and does not challenge anyone for ownership of Risus or other supplements. Especially not Shrewd Ruthless Coporate Lawyers [8].

Find Risus at <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

Thanks for listening.

## **Agents of WHO in Time**

This was inspired by Berin Kinsman's SILVERAgents (for news about that go to <http://www.unclebear.com>). In essence, it is a rules mash up just like its inspiration. In this case it's a mash up of:

Karl Paananen's <http://www.geocities.com/karlpaaanen/DoctorWhoRisus.html>

and

Stacy Allston's <http://www.angelfire.com/tx2/webgamer/supers.html>

with some quick house rules thrown in.

With apologies to Marvel Comics. The reference is... I think obscure and somewhat subtle, but it is there.

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## **Adventure**

As our story opens it is the 1990s and the PCs are agents of a highly classified branch of UNIT that recruits and trains individuals with paranormal ability. Lately, they have been fighting drug dealers, neo-Nazis, and the occasional rogue KGB element. You get the idea, fighting the good fight against mad terrestrial geniuses, dictators, and genius dictators.

Once in a while a meta-human is not noticed by the agency, and thus not monitored throughout their youth and recruited as an adult. On occasion these rogue powers take up a life of crime and become what the media call "super villains." When this occurs it is agents like the PCs that deal with the resulting mess.

(Encounter One: Bank Heist and Hostage Crisis.)

The agents will be soon be approached by a Mr. Masters who claims to be an agent from the future. He seems to be amply able to prove the truth of this claim and insists that the agents help him "neutralize" Dr. David Ross. Ross is a relatively unknown wheel-chair bound robotics and cybernetics specialist who happens to work in the R & D department of their employer. He hasn't worked there long, but he has proved to be an asset very quickly. Mr. Masters insists that if Dr. Ross is not "neutralized" the Earth will soon be invaded, its people subjugated and sold into interstellar slavery, and its natural resources plundered.

Of course, if the agents accept the challenge there are a number of problems. First, they will become rogue agents immediately. Second, Ross is actually a citizen of the UK. *It will* become public knowledge that agents were involved creating an international incident. The agents will

be on the run when they receive word that Mr. Masters has sold them out. Telling their superiors that they had been planning the hit for some time. Part of a plot to sour relations between the US and Europe by a meta-human terrorist organization.

See the end of this document for some plot points only the GM can decide to ignore or use.

### **Character Generation.**

Have you familiarized yourself with the rules? Good.

Done? Excellent. Each PC in this campaign is made up of three key clichés. The Superhero, The Cover Identity, and The Agent. Of these, *only the first* may be a Double-Pump Cliché. Some characters might have four Clichés but they *must* include those three. Here are some examples.

Rushmore      Speedster [2], All-American QB (2), Enthusiastic Rookie Agent (2)  
                  Momma's Boy (2)

Ingénue      Telepath [2], Supermodel (3), Ingénue (3)

Sara Phim      Fallen Angel (4), Librarian's Assistant (3), CIA Assassin (2)  
                  Innocent Catholic School Girl (1)

For Superhero Clichés go to <http://www.angelfire.com/tx2/webgamer/supers.html> or your favorite comic book source.

For Agent Clichés think of Spycraft, James Bond, Mission: Impossible, 24, Alias, SHIELD, GI Joe, X-Files, Hellboy, or any number of other high octane espionage sources. Or just append to the word "Agent" as in the first example character.

This being a campaign inspired by comic book mash ups (thank you Uncle Bear) and Doctor Who <http://www.guyhoyle.net/risus/> and its Pulp Clichés is a great place to look for that all important Cover Identity.

Rushmore and Ms. Phim both include examples of fourth Clichés.

### **Credits.**

Music by:

<http://whomix.trilete.net/?wmid=music&d=1>

Risus System by: S. John Ross

<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

With Essential Rules by:

Stacy Allston (<http://www.angelfire.com/tx2/webgamer/supers.html>)

&

Guy Hoyle (<http://www.guyhoyle.net/risus/>)

Plot and Mayhem by:

S.L. Shirley

### GM's Eyes Only

The Back Story.

Mr. Masters is The Doctor's arch nemesis, The Master.

Dr. David Ross is Davros. Marooned here since his last encounter with the Doctor, he has disguised himself and spent the past decade worming his way into the only organization on the planet with the resources to get him started again.

How did the Master find him?

Why does he want Davros dead?

When will The Doctor show up?

## Background

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The town of Cactus Gulch was originally desolate land, fit only for cacti and Indians. One year, Jeremiah Gulch, a crazy old prospector following a hunch that was equal parts intuition and sunstroke discovered silver in the area. Almost overnight, the town of Cactus Gulch was born. The primary industry in those days was separating miners from their silver, in ways legal and illegal, moral and immoral. The town had no mayor, no marshal, nothing that would interfere with business as usual. Outlaws used Cactus Gulch as a place to lay low when hiding from the law, or just to spend the proceeds from their latest robberies. The hills surrounding Cactus Gulch boasted an outlaw hideout in every box canyon.

Then, the silver mines played-out.

Again almost overnight, the town was deserted by most of the inhabitants. There were a score or so who had nowhere else to go, and nothing better to do, than to stay and try to make a respectable town out of Cactus Gulch. The going was hard in those days, when the stage stopped only once a month and supplies were scarce, and reasons to settle in Cactus Gulch scarcer. The town elected a town council, and a mayor, and a marshal, all the trappings of civilization. Eventually they sunk a well that tapped into a deep reservoir, providing enough water to irrigate nearby farmlands. In time, more underground water sources were found and utilized, giving Cactus Gulch a future.

The town's second boom started when the railroad came through Cactus Gulch. Many of the more respectable of the entertainment industries moved back into town, catering to travelers stopping on their way farther west. The town played on its status as an old mining town, even playing up the local legend of the lost Gulliver mine, containing the only untapped vein of silver in the area. According to the legend, the entrance to the mine is within the town, but so cleverly hidden that it has never been found. Luckily for all would be treasure hunters, old man Gulliver is supposed to have made a map showing the location of the entrance, and then for some inexplicable reason tore the map into four pieces. One of the pieces is on display in the Dry Mine saloon, making the saloon the first stop for treasure hunters. The second stop is usually the general store, which offers treasure hunters a special package containing everything needed to search for the lost Gulliver mine. The town's assay office has become a local museum, selling land deeds to tourists and offering educational lectures on the town's history.

The town's prosperity has not been without a price. Ten years ago, the local bank was robbed. The marshal at the time, Max Cooper, was a ruthless bastard who had kept the peace in town in his own way for years. When he saw that the outlaws were mounting their horses for a quick getaway, rather than run off to form a posse for a hot and dusty chase in the desert, Cooper shot the horses and then chased the outlaws down through town. Nobody is exactly certain what happened during that chase, only that neither the outlaws nor Cooper returned. Some speculated that Cooper was in league with the outlaws, but most laugh at that theory...without, however, offering a better one.

Since then, the town has gone through a series of marshals, culminating in the current marshal, Dwight Hagen. Townspeople agree that Hagen is the best marshal of the bunch, not only keeping the peace but also supporting the community and the local church in many ways.

Other local legends include the ghosts of the town. These ghosts are supposed to come out at night and walk around town. Some locals think the ghosts are those of Marshal Cooper and the outlaws, reliving their final chase through town. Others claim to have heard Indian war whoops from the ghosts, while yet others claim they're the ghosts of soldiers who strayed too far during the Civil War.

The town has much cause for celebration, though, and does so every year at the Founder's Day celebration. This year the celebration will be held, as in past years, at the town square, around

that first deep well. The Dry Mine saloon opens onto the town square, and will be providing drinks and refreshments at a reduced price. Everyone is welcome to join, and many visitors come both east and west for the celebration.

## GM Information

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This is a scenario where interaction between PCs is as important as interaction between PCs and NPCs. If your players are used to banding together against a common enemy, they'll have that opportunity, but it's much more entertaining if they're also looking out for themselves first of all. The scenario is pulp-western, complete with Hollywood western accents.

The basic setup is that PCs can be either locals or visitors, in Cactus Gulch at the time of the Founder's Day celebration. The entire town turns out into the main square, although usually the visitors outnumber the townspeople. The town council and the mayor are in evidence, as is the marshal.

When I ran this, the PCs were the marshal, the owner of the saloon, the owner of the assay office/museum, a local newspaperwoman, and a gunslinger drifting through town.

I started things out allowing the PCs to wander the square, doing what they wanted to do for a bit. This was a good time to introduce Stillwater, along with Mayor Jenkins and Reginald Forsythe. Forsythe would be talking to the Mayor, acting as if he were looking to invest in the town, or perhaps buy land.

The main adventure hook is the arrival of Calhoun's gang to town. Calhoun is an aging outlaw looking for one last big score to provide for his retirement. His gang are a bunch of no-good thugs with fewer brains than guns. The gang rounds up the citizens in the square, threatening some if necessary to get the marshal to cooperate. The majority of the tourists and citizens are herded into the general store, with the PCs and miscellaneous others herded into the saloon.

Calhoun is here because he has located a piece of the map to the Lost Gulliver mine, and has reason to think the other pieces are in town. He's right: Stillwater has one, Forsythe has another, and one of the PCs has the fourth (the one on display in the saloon is a fake, designed to draw business). Calhoun is not interested in anything but locating the mine, which he believes contains the loot from the bank robbery a decade ago (one of the outlaws escaped, mortally wounded, and got far enough to blurt a garbled version of the story to an old prospector... eventually, the story made its way to Calhoun, who has spent several years looking for the map pieces).

In Calhoun's mind, this is practically a legal operation. After all, he's not robbing the bank, just recovering (and keeping) loot that was long ago written off as lost. So he's not going to kill people unless events get seriously out of control...he'll rely on intimidation and threats.

Okay, so the PCs are mostly in the saloon with Calhoun and some of his gang, and other townspeople (including all the NPCs described below). What next? Getting all the PCs involved is important at this stage...in our game, the owner of the assay office wanted, quite reasonably, to hide out in her museum. So Stillwater went over and left his piece of the map in her safe to keep it from the outlaws. This sparked a nice conflict between the PCs when she and another PC tried to corner the market on the map pieces for themselves.

If you run games anything like I do, at this point events will flow from your player's actions. Let it flow, and don't be too concerned with making anything specific happen. Play to western clichés, and have fun with it.

A bit of geography: the saloon is on the northwest corner of the town square, the assay office/museum on the southwest, the general store on the southeast, and the courthouse on the northeast.

### The Mine

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The mine entrance is in the basement of the saloon. Behind casks and crates, there can be found a foot high granite slab apparently embedded in the brick wall. One of the bricks near the bottom of the slab is false, and hides a lever that releases a hidden door just above the slab. The door leads into the mine.

The mine itself is uninteresting, except for the trail of dead outlaws that lines it every hundred yards or so, the entrance to the Indian burial chambers, and the eerie wailing that echoes through the tunnels.

Each outlaw skeleton has an old pistol and extra ammunition, and most have wanted posters of themselves. The type of outlaw who feels the need to keep a wanted poster of themselves is typically only wanted for \$50 or so. Pitiful, really.

The entrance to the burial grounds is about five outlaws into the mine. The mine continues after that, but has nothing else in it. The silver played out in the mine long ago.

The burial grounds are a more natural cavern, so players should be aware that they're leaving the mine proper. They pick their way through some narrow passages, finally opening out into a massive cavern. Their lamps can't fully illuminate the chamber. Niches carved into the rock contain skeletal remains that are clearly not of outlaws (less clothing, for one).

In the middle of the chamber is the last outlaw, and the skeletal remains of Marshal Cooper. Cooper chased the outlaws into the mine, picking them off one by one, until reaching the last one. They killed each other and collapsed onto the floor of the chamber, the saddlebags full of money between them.

That's right, there is loot! If you're a sadistic GM, you can make it Confederate money that's worthless, although I wouldn't give much for your chances of making it out alive.

Just about the time everyone is celebrating, six hulking Indians step out of the shadows, followed by Stillwater. He explains these are sacred burial grounds, and cannot be desecrated by tourists, so they'll just have to kill the PCs now. He'll be open to other suggestions, such as the PCs taking the money, vowing silence, and demolishing the hidden entrance to the mine. But it's so much fun to watch their faces when he says they're going to have to die, so enjoy that before taking the deal.

If a deal is made, Stillwater and his friends stick around until all aspects of the deal are concluded, then they fade away into the hills.

Oh, and the eerie wailing? There a stalagmite in the burial chambers carved to catch the wind coming from the entrance into the hills, in such a way as to cause the wailing. Yeah, you're right, I just made that up when I first ran this scenario, but it sounded good so now it's official.

### NPCs

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#### Calhoun

Wanted desperado looking for one last big score – 5  
Quick draw gunslinger with plenty of notches on his belt – 4  
Accomplished horseman – 3

Calhoun has piece 1 of the map

**Calhoun's Gang**

Wannabe gunslinger looking for a big score – 2

These thugs are used to working together to intimidate and or kill civilians, so each extra thug in an action automatically adds one dice to the leading thug's roll. This doesn't apply to Calhoun, only to a group of thugs operating as a unit. This is designed to encourage PCs to try something other than an outright gun battle, so feel free to ignore it if your group would enjoy a gun battle.

Calhoun has a dozen of the thugs. Some will be in the general store, others in the saloon.

**Stillwater**

Inscrutable Indian looking for justice – 4

Keeper of old lore – 3

Ancient warrior with more wrinkles than God – 2

Stillwater has piece 2 of the map. Stillwater is in town to ensure that the map pieces are destroyed, or, failing that, that the discovery of the mine does not become public knowledge. As you'll see below, the mine broke into an ancient burial chamber of Stillwater's ancestors. If the mine became public knowledge, the burial chamber would be desecrated by treasure hunters. Stillwater and his friends will kill to prevent that.

**Stillwater's Friends**

Indian warrior looking to protect his culture – 4

Impressive looking hulk of a man – 4

Stillwater has six of these friends. They are waiting in the burial chambers, in case they need to kill any discoverers.

**Reginald Forsythe**

Treasure hunter and con man extraordinaire – 4

Fake British aristocrat with an impressive pedigree – 3

Charming rogue – 2

Forsythe has piece 3 of the map. Forsythe is primarily interested in profit. He found the map piece, heard about the legend, and thought he'd come to town to see if he could locate the mine. He's just as willing to use the map piece as part of a con to get a pile of money for himself.

**Mayor Jenkins**

Stuffy bureaucrat – 4

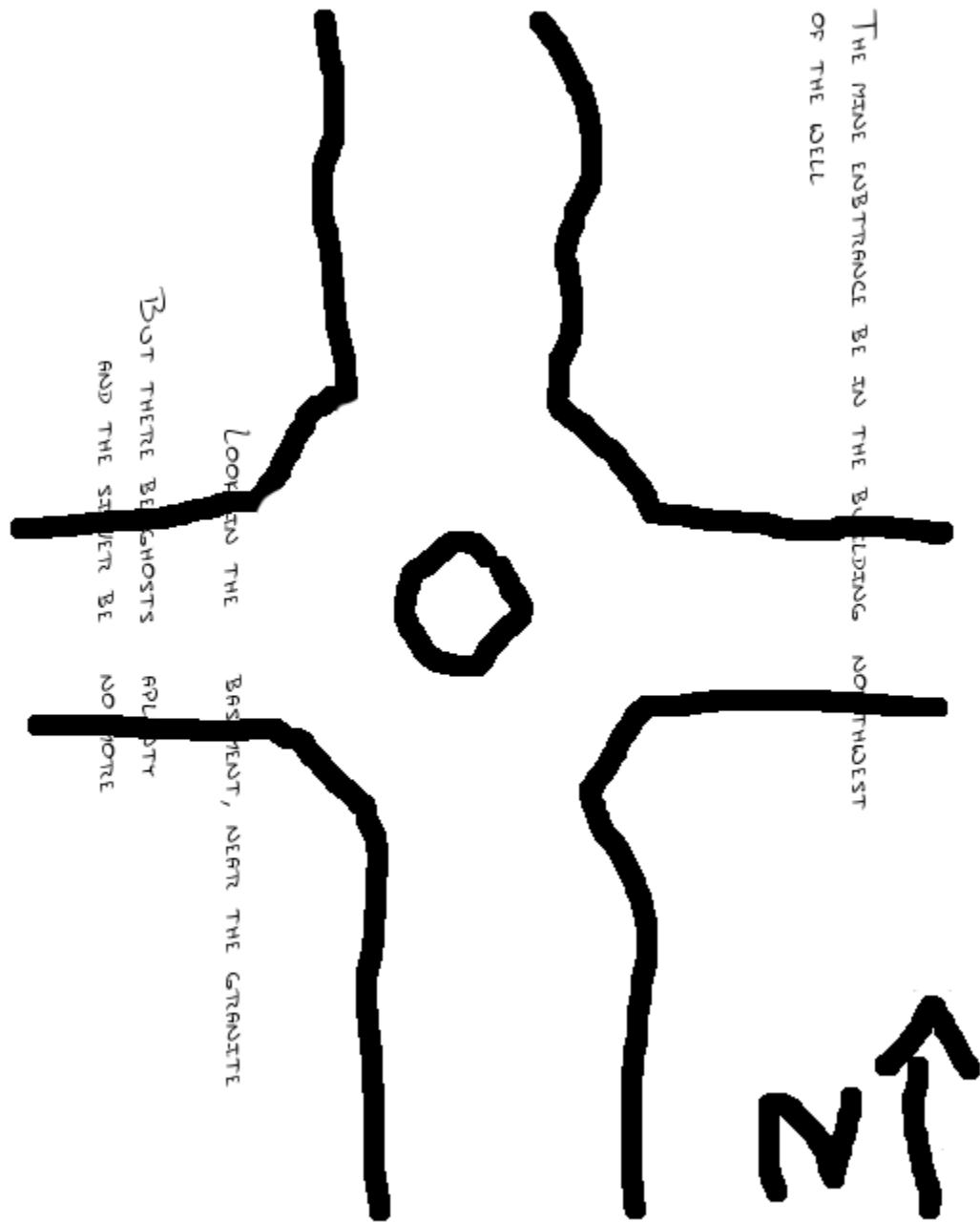
Snobbish ex-general store owner – 3

Mayor Jenkins is a self-important man who tends to look down on mere merchants. Nevertheless, he does try to do his best by the town.

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## Map Pieces

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To prepare the map, print it out and then tear it roughly into four pieces. There are gaps in the sentences where the side to side tears should go, but make sure that the contours of the pieces are rough enough to provide a good match when players are fitting them together.

Piece 1 is the piece that starts, "The mine entrance be...". Piece 2 has the north arrow on it. Piece 3 has the bit about the granite. Piece 4 is the one that's left over. Give a PC who seems like they'd be entertaining piece 4.

This is the fake map piece a previous saloon owner created and framed. The saloon still charges a penny to see the map piece. It's covered by a little curtain and hangs behind the bar. Tear it pretty close around the text and path, so that it looks like the path might continue onto the rest of the page.

*Map to the lost Gulliver mine*



Character:	<b>Statue of Joseph Stalin Man</b>
Secret Identity:	None
Description:	Crapped on by radioactive pigeons for years, this statue of Joseph Stalin came to life and can now switch between being a regular guy who looks just like (but has a personality very different from) Joseph Stalin and being a stone statue of Joseph Stalin who can't move at all.
Cliché (Value):	<b>Turning Into Immobile Stone (4)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Being very heavy, being invulnerable to most physical attacks, being disguised as stone, having a good poker face
Tools:	None
Cliché (Value):	<b>Looking Just Like Joseph Stalin (3)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Impersonating a dead dictator, confusing public school children who have no freakin idea who Joseph Stalin is.
Tools:	None
Cliché (Value):	<b>Affinity For Birds (2)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Making birds like you, making birds do simple tasks that require them to be no smarter than birds (thinks like eating peanuts or crapping on stuff or flying around)
Tools:	None
Cliché (Value):	<b>Comedian (1)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Being witty, making others laugh, invoking levity into grim situations.
Tools:	Voice

Statue of Joseph Stalin Man has had a rough time since coming to life in the early 90's near Chernobyl. People constantly mistaking him for an evil, murderous dictator, glasnost, the fall of the USSR nearly sent him into a severe depression. But he's fought back by using his powers of turning into stone for the forces of good! And he's also taken to appearing in comedy clubs on amateur night. Some Kansas comics call him, "The funniest (and only) Russian comic since Yakov Smirnof!"

Character:	<b>Cornucopia</b>
Secret Identity:	Aklina Pappas
Description:	This rotund Greek woman carries with her the Horn of Plenty. She can instantly produce any food she wants from it, which is murder on her diet. But she stands ever ready to give evildoers a mouthful of yummy JUSTICE!.
Cliché (Value):	<b>Producing Food at Will (4)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Producing snacks for the group, producing snacks for herself, feeding the hungry, giving evildoers yucky foods to eat.
Tools:	Horn of Plenty
Cliché (Value):	<b>Nutritionist (3)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Knowing just what people should eat to be healthy, knowing when someone is eating something UNHEALTHY. Identifying food allergies.
Tools:	Brain
Cliché (Value):	<b>Driving Like a Maniac (2)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Getting places in a hurry, avoiding the police, difficult driving maneuvers, parallel parking
Tools:	Car
Cliché (Value):	<b>Stern Countenance (1)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Lecturing young people about proper nutrition, glaring meaningfully at people who make fat jokes, making no bones about “pulling this car over right NOW” to people who complain about her driving.
Tools:	Face

Aklina Pappas grew up in Greece where she was a slender, athletic beauty. A hike up Mt. Olympus led to an encounter with the Greek gods whereupon she was given the Horn of Plenty. Since then she has battled her weight constantly.

She volunteered her services to the United Nations to aid the battle against starvation. Her bid to end world hunger met with resistance due to her always wanting to distribute foods that were extremely healthy and generally tasted like crap. When you show up with the Horn of Plenty, people want steak and lobster, swimming in butter, not wheat germ and bean sprouts and stuff like that. After a riot in Ethiopia, the UN reassigned her to Strikeforce: Topeka.

This sent her into an even deeper depression but she has battled her way back, finding new reason to live in the joys of driving fast cars down the long, straight Kansas roads.

Character:	<b>El-Fire-Bow</b>
Secret Identity:	Juan Ramirez
Description:	This young Cuban man was born with everburning elbows. He has real talent as a baseball pitcher ("He can bring the HEAT!") but was banned from the Major Leagues because his fiery elbows kept setting the uniforms on fire. He mainly sticks to sleeveless t-shirts now.
Cliché (Value):	<b>Flaming Elbows (4)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Setting things on fire with his elbows, burning through small flammable objects, giving bad guys 2 <sup>nd</sup> degree burns with the flick of an elbow.
Tools:	Elbows
Cliché (Value):	<b>Baseball Player (3)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Pitching, catching, throwing, running, sliding.
Tools:	Glove, Baseballs
Cliché (Value):	<b>Ladies Man (2)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Winning the affections of adoring female fans, always having a date on weekends, making other superheroes feel less manly
Tools:	Dazzling smile
Cliché (Value):	<b>Machismo (1)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Laughing in the face of danger, intimidating those who are not as manly as you are, treating women as objects.
Tools:	Brain

Juan Ramirez grew up on the mean streets of Cuba. He was always different from other kids thanks to his ever-flaming elbows. But he earned their respect by striving to become the best baseball player he could. He finally worked his way up through the minors to become a Major League Baseball player but league regulations required that he wear the same uniform as everyone else. His fiery elbows burned through the best scientific efforts that could be mustered and he was finally banned from the sport he dearly loved.

Juan has spent the last several years with a considerable chip on his shoulder. He fights crime to prove his manliness and takes great pride in his skill with the ladies.

Character: **Fugu**  
Secret Identity: Matsuo Kazuma  
Description: This Japanese man was bitten by a radioactive pufferfish and now has amazing powers of puffing himself up to very large size. Fun at beach parties. Not so fun when trying to fight crime in an elevator or phone booth..

Cliché (Value): **Puffing Power (4)**  
Associated Tasks: Puffing up to large size, puffing up to huge size, puffing up to incredibly huge size, knocking people down, blowing the windows out of small buildings.

Tools: Body

Cliché (Value): **Samurai Code (3)**  
Associated Tasks: Being honorable, respecting others, protecting the weak, being fearless against certain death.

Tools: Brain

Cliché (Value): **Sushi Chef (2)**  
Associated Tasks: Making all variety of sushi and sashimi, cutting up small things with a very sharp knife without cutting yourself.

Tools: Knives, Raw Fish, Seaweed

Cliché (Value): **Origami (1)**  
Associated Tasks: Folding little bits of paper into useful shapes, folding little bits of paper into useless shapes, turning a napkin into a walrus.

Tools: Paper

Matsuo was bitten by a radioactive puffer fish in his native Japan. Soon thereafter he discovered his amazing puffing powers and, having been raised by decent, honorable people, he vowed to use his powers to fight evil.

Unfortunately for Fugu, Japan's native superheroes were far too effective. He always showed up to crime scenes ready to fight the forces of evil only to find that the Seven Samurai or Divine Wind had already taken care of it. A year ago he decided to leave Japan for the thankfully crime-ridden shores of the U.S. But he found a similar problem in New York with Captain Metropolis and the Statue of Liberty having defeated the evil doers while he was still trying to find his way around the Manhattan subway system.

In frustration, he turned to the U.N. who added him to Strikeforce: Topeka. Since moving to Kansas, Matsuo has found himself holding desperately onto his Japanese heritage, even going so far as to take up Origami, which he frankly isn't too great at thanks to his puffy fingers.

Character:	<b>The Cobbler</b>
Secret Identity:	Doctor Marten Birkenstock
Description:	Born of a wealthy German family, he is a frustrated inventor who can never seem to sell any of his inventions. He's venting his frustration by fighting crime using his "Incredishoes" that are clownishly large but should be taken (somewhat) seriously.
Cliché (Value):	<b>Incredishoes (4)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Having all manner of gadgets pop out of his shoes at any given moment.
Tools:	Shoes
Cliché (Value):	<b>Mad Scientist (3)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Making crazy gadgets out of everyday items. “Rigging stuff up”, having wild, unkempt hair.
Tools:	Laboratory or Tool Kit
Cliché (Value):	<b>Remittance Man (2)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Being able to spend all your time on useless gadgets, taking the whole supergroup out to dinner, being an embarrassment the family hopes won’t come back to haunt them.
Tools:	None
Cliché (Value):	<b>Crazy Old Man (1)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Having kids stay off your lawn, having people let you in line in front of them at the grocery store, getting away with bad manners or boring stories at a dinner party.
Tools:	None

Born just after WWII, Doctor Birkenstock was determined to help Germany become an economic powerhouse by revolutionizing the shoe industry. Alas, his many inventions (grapple-toe boots and the “rocket flat” among them) never caught on. When he pleaded with his parents to allow him to go to America to study the jogging craze of the 1970’s, they sent him with their blessing and insistence that he not return any time soon.

Since then he’s had one commercial failure after another. But the check he gets each month from his parents ensures that he can continue working on his crazy shoe inventions rather than get a “real job”. He has taken up superheroism on the side as a way to test the various inventions that he’s built into his clownishly large “Incredishoes”.

Character:	<b>Rapunzel</b>
Secret Identity:	Vivienne Caumont
Description:	Her hair grows really fast, at will. Whether she's whipping you with it or tying you up with it, well, it's all pretty kinky.
Cliché (Value):	<b>Hair Powers (4)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Growing hair very fast, using her hair as a whip, using her hair for binding things or people, using her hair as a rope.
Tools:	Head
Cliché (Value):	<b>Hottie (3)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Making men wish they were with you, making women wish they were you, scoring free drinks, breaking hearts.
Tools:	Tight Clothing, Makeup
Cliché (Value):	<b>Hairdresser (2)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Cutting hair, styling hair, doing perms, coloring, getting rid of split ends.
Tools:	Scissors, Razor, Clippers, Dyes
Cliché (Value):	<b>Condescension (1)</b>
Associated Tasks:	Making people feel small, dismissing those less important than you (almost everybody), being better than everyone else.
Tools:	Attitude

Born with her amazing powers of hair growth and a simply dazzling set of locks regardless, Vivienne has always known she was special. Her parents told her so from the time she was a little girl and her amazing good looks took her around the world as a model in her late teens. It was during this time that she learned her way around a pair of scissors as a means of making herself look FABULOUS.

As she grew into adulthood, simply trading on her good looks began to bore her. She wanted to be BETTER than everyone else, not just better looking. So she took to using her lengthy locks as a way to get her foot in the door of the whole superheroine gig. The “big league” teams (particularly the all-male ones) were quick to adopt her. But they soon found that she was rather unskilled at fighting crime and mostly just showed up to have her picture taken at the end of the super battles. She was soon booted from each team she joined.

For the first time in her life, Vivienne is having to try hard at something. She has pursued her position with Strikeforce: Topeka with great dedication in the hopes that she can win her way back onto one of the “real” superteams.

**There are no Ewoks  
Risus/There is in Try  
Imagine there is no Skywalker**

## **A Hybrid system for games inspired by The Clone Wars Animated Series**

**Blame S. John Ross and Steve Darlington, not me.**

This game (regardless of what I ultimately decide to call it) is really just Risus with two variations inspired by Steve Darlington's There is no Try and his nascent Firefly game. Both are to be found in their larval forms on the RPG.net message boards. Other significant influences include the other posters on the board and the Risustalk list.

*Semi-important Note: You will probably want dice in two colors for this...*

**“There’s no mystical energy field that controls my destiny.”**

Actually, there is. Caveat: My intention with this game is that the PCs all play Jedi. A game where they don’t and/or set in another time period could be done, but that is not the goal of this game.

So get your Clonetrooper squad together, strap on your saber, and save the Republic (you fascist puppets you)!

**“There’s no wrong way to play.”**

In addition to the rules described below the following Advanced Options will be used:

- Hooks and Tales
- Pumping Clichés
- Lucky Shots (Force Points) and Questing Dice\*
- Sidekicks and Shield-mates (and Clonetroopers and Jedi Starfighters)\*
- Eye of the Tiger\*
- Boxcars and Breakthroughs\*

Risus/TINT can be played with the free Risus rules with no problems whatsoever. However, those options marked with an \* can be found in the excellent Risus Companion.

One additional optional rule: I generally max out Clichés at 5 dice. This allows me a floating bonus die for things like temporary ship modifications, a Jedi with two lightsabers or a saber and blaster, or even cybernetics.

As a general rule of thumb Force Cliché ratings of 1 or 2 indicate a Padawan. 3 or 4 are Knights, and a 5 indicates a Master. Yoda the Ascetic in Episode V [6] being an exception to the rule.

## Tinted Risus

As I said, I assume every character is a Jedi. So a Jedi Cliché would be redundant. Every character must buy the Force as a Double-Pump Cliché. This Cliché works like the Force trait in TINT or the Matrix trait in TINS. Additionally, this is the only Cliché that can be purchased as a Double-Pump.

You roll it along with whatever other Cliché might be appropriate (as TINT's Force, but only add the sixes (as Risus' preexisting rules for teamwork).

I would say that *most* Clichés other than Force do not include or assume Force skills as part of their description or Tools of the Trade. However, one could take a Cliché like "Lightsaber Master" or "Mystic Healer." That having been said I imagine at least one of each character's clichés will include the word "Jedi."

For the most part, all a character's Force skills will be decided by rolling the Force Cliché by itself. Unless they have a Cliché that implies specialization in a field.

Lucky Shots are the Force Points of other Star Wars games. The GM is encouraged to give them out as rewards for good RP and as a supplement to Risus' usual method of advancement.

## "Quicker, Easier."

The Force is about the conflict between Light and Dark. In a word: Duality. Now, for the most part I think that this conflict is better handled through storytelling and role-playing, but once in a while you want a little crunch. So, with that in mind I present these *Optional Rules*.

This is what I call the Morality Path (easily convertible to any genre by substituting the Words Dark and Light for whatever might be more appropriate).

Dark Side	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Light Side
	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	

Characters start at 5. When a character uses the Dark Side of The Force, they move along the path towards the Dark Side. Moving towards the Light Side is harder. When the Light Side is used and/or a particularly self-sacrificing action is taken, a Redemption Point is earned (I know. If the character never fell in the first place why are they still called Redemption Points? Because the saga is about Redemption.)

Accumulate Redemption Points equal to your current Dark Side or your current Light Side rating (which ever is *higher*), and move up the ladder back towards the Light. This helps emphasize the narrative fun of coming back from the brink, but keeps the truly enlightened souls to a minimum. In theory. Oh, and the whole fading away thing? Minimum Light Side of 7 or 8 I think is a reasonable assumption.

What constitutes a Dark Side action and a Light Side action is largely a subject for debate in your particular gaming group.

Now, when the Force Cliché is Double-Pumped if the action is Light Side add the current Light Side rating to the total roll (not as additional dice! By the Force, no!) If the action is Dark Side, add the current Dark Side rating. Remember, that increasing that Dark Side rating for future use is as simple as using it now!

The highest Light Side rating is 10, and Dark Side 9 for a number of reasons.

- The Masters are no less tempted, but when they do fall it isn't the temptation of the power, but something else...
- Light Siders come out ahead in the long run.
- From what I've read and seen, the Sith tempt the apprentices and the weaker Force-users. They don't try to convert the preacher, but the congregation (then the choir, *then* the preacher assuming that the Preacher hasn't been the Sith Lord all along).

### **“Begun these Clone Wars have.”**

As you might imagine from the fact that I used a system for comedy RP as the spine and heart of this system, I don't believe in Sacred Cows (well beyond their making good burgers). You would imagine correctly. As two of the possible titles above might suggest I encourage you to spell Canon with an extra n and fire it. Please use the cartoon, Darkhorse's Tales and Infinities titles, and KotoR as your primary inspirations. Ignore Episode I and any references to mido-chlori-WTFs that might have ended up in Episode III (may the Force be with us always \*sneeze\* or at least until the medication kicks in).

What follows are a few story ideas. I like the suggestion of TINS and TINT that games based on movies be run in a similar fashion. Run one-shot “movies” or mini-campaigns (“trilogies”). However, as long as the players are ok with the fact they won't be accumulating experience points or credits go ahead and run a long campaign (a serial). Be a great way to kill a summer, kids! Here are Episode II, the Clone Wars, and The Original Trilogy re-mixed.

“Annie? Who the hell is Annie? Is Daddy Warbucks here, too?” The first thing you must remember, is that there is no Episode I. Imagine the events of Episode II without Anakin Skywalker or The Prophecy. Rewrite Star Wars history to your hearts content. Ignore all that nonsense about their being only two Sith.

“Only in your mind, my very young apprentices.” The PCs are a group of padawans on the cusp of knighthood. Assigned to General Kenobi, they replace Anakin in a number of ways throughout the same events pictured in the *Clone Wars Animated Series*. The players may be

placed in command of a Clone squad of their very own. Assuming they aren't recruited by Count Dooku (that would change the rest of my episodes considerably).

"Meet the new hope, same as the old hope..." Assuming that one of the players wooed and ultimately impregnated (or was impregnated by) a hot young senator, let eighteen years pass before our tale continues. For the Force only knows what reason, Palpatine still drags his ass in dissolving the Senate. The potential younglings of our Jedi and that senator have been smuggled away and hidden from the Emperor for all those years. In the ominous shadow of the Death Star a young senator from Alderaan tracks down General Kenobi and his "Round Table." The Round Table is of course the PCs from the last paragraph, all grown up and on the run. Now they are towing along a pair of eighteen year olds who are strong in the Force, but too old to begin the training. Save the galaxy and protect the senator's daughter from the roaming hands of a lecherous smuggler. Good luck with that.

"He went with the smuggler; he *was* pretty good in a fight." After General Kenobi's death at the hands of Darth Tyranus and the PCs' valiant destruction of the Death Star the Rebellion is officially underway. We catch up with the Rebel Alliance's greatest Generals (and the last of the Jedi) on Hoth. Han and Luke took off with their reward before the Battle of Yavin (hey, that mission was suicide!) so it is up to the PCs to keep themselves out of cold. Oh yeah. The Princess wants them to go someplace called Bespin to negotiate with a Lando Calrissian for much needed Tibanna gas. Darth Tyranus (now a Grand Moff with the death of his rival Tarkin) and deadly bounty hunters are hot on their trail, *striking back* at them at every turn.

"Return of the Jedi Order" might be a better title now. Yoda calls the PCs to Dagobah to pick him up. "Come the time has." Is all he'll say. Keep the little green master out of trouble while you help the rebels blow the second Death Star to smithereens and the Emperor along with it. Will the PCs found a new Jedi Academy on Kashyyyk? Will one of them marry a young senator or Alderaanian noble? Oh yeah, just to be extra specific here, "There are no Ewoks." No Endor; Death Star II is constructed over Kashyyyk.

And there you have it. The Star Wars saga as it stands as of this writing.

### **"You will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy."**

Here are a few sample characters to get us started. This is Obi-Wan just as Episode II ends and the Clone Wars begin. It's worth mentioning that I have taken Obi-Wan's behavior in the bars of Coruscant and Tatooine, plus his apparent street-level connection in the character Dex as an indicator of a shady past, or at the very least unorthodox methodology (must be Qui-Gonn's unfortunate influence). This Obi-Wan has perhaps been called upon to infiltrate criminal organizations to bring the bad guys to justice.

Obi-Wan Kenobi, Jedi Knight and General of the Republic.

*Force [4]*

*Streetwise Vagabond* (4) Connections, knowing your way around seedy dives, well intentioned grifting

*Reluctant Fighter Pilot* (2) Avoiding straight up dogfights, getting from here to there as necessary

*General? Me? (3)* Leading Clonetroopers, asking twice for surrender, cutting down droids like a lawn mower cuts grass

Dark/Light: 6/4

Shield-Mates: ARC Trooper Squad (6) or 4 ARC Troopers (3 each)

Hook: might owe a favor or two to shady underworld types, almost certainly has a death mark on his head.

Tools of the Trade: Jedi Starfighter, Lightsaber, Communicator, dapper robes.

Druge... What the Force is that thing anyway?

*Amorphous Tentacled Horror* [4] they blew its armor off and it... squooged over Obi-Wan. What would you call it?

*Gadget wielding bounty hunter* (4) Big old Mandalorian suit of tricked out armor...

*Swoop-riding Anti-tank Officer* (3) Taking on huge artillery with what... a force-lance?

*On Dooku's Payroll* (2) Always being able to call on a Sith lord for back up? How cool is that?

Dark/Light: 8/2 (What the hell, go ahead and use this with the Tentacled Horror Cliché.)

Shield-Mates: In the cartoon it looked like he had a legion of black IG-88's at his command, sooo... IG-87 Elite Droid Squad(s) (6)

Tools of the Trade: Swoop, force-lance, heavy blaster pistols (note I made the armor and its accompanying gadgetry part of a Cliché.)

Darth Sidious, Who could that phantom menace be? Wait, that profile!

*Force [6]* Some consider it unnatural, but you can not imagine the power...

*Ambitious Senator* (5) Making the Palpatine name feared throughout the galaxy...Do'h!

*Sith Adept Extraordinaire* (5) Corrupting the youth, turning the noble, being generally cruel and nasty. Hates puppies probably.

*Unctuous Bastard* (5) Yoda and the council were taken in by this guy?!

Dark/Light: 10/0 (He ain't afraid to break all the rules!)

Shield-Mates: Sith Cultists all over the Galaxy (6)

Tools of the Trade: The Grand Army of The Republic, The Senate, Lightsaber, The Separatists

### **“Two snub fighters against a Star Destroyer?”**

How does one handle two unequal clichés with equal dice? For example, an ARC Trooper (3) gets in a fight with a Clonetrooper (3) over who cut who in the mess line. I would assign each a difficulty based on the maneuver they chose to attempt. Who ever beat that difficulty by the greater amount would win the contest. The same would be applicable for an ARC Trooper (2) and a Clonetrooper (3). The ARC Trooper will probably face a TN 10 for the same task the Clonetrooper will have to beat 15.

In fact (warning: boring rules theory follows) I think that rolling opposed clichés versus the difficulty of a maneuver is a great way to add a bit of robustness to the flexibility of the system.

# Gateway Falls

By Ben Reyes © 2005

Some say Primates (or First Ones, High Ones, etc.) are a myth. Others are true believers. The legends passed down by the Ocean Folk say that while animal kind was yet savage, Primates came full circle with their penchant for creating things and changing their environment. In order to design a device by which the dense, hot shroud of Venus could be instantly siphoned off to the sparse, cold Martian vale, they had to produce an artificial mind smarter than their own. Afterward, Primate and Progeny united and uplifted to some incorporeal plane of consciousness, passing the torch of sentience to the other Earthlings as a parting gift or inheritance, leaving no apparent trace of themselves behind. No trace except for three habitable planets where once there was one, each connected by six Gateway Falls. Beasts call the three planets the Triune World or Triunuum, composed of The Red World, The Blue World, and The Yellow World (which Cold Blooded Folk arguably call The Green World).

The six Gateway Falls are set upon the North and South Poles of the three planets. The ocean tides flow strong toward the magnetic poles of each world, leading to a vast mist-shrouded vortex. Ships drift into the mist at a quick pace and fall toward a gravity field just like a waterfall, and exit at the opposite pole of the next, closest world over. From there, steady winds take the ships to port. The ‘closest world over’ changes with the seasons and passage of years. With these changes in tides and winds the Earth has taken a more primordial form, dominated by treacherous seas and tropical islands prone to sink or rise often with the forces of erosion and volcanism. A few backward tribes of land dwellers live there but the Blue World (Earth) is primarily home to the Sea and Bug Folk and those who make their living at sea (be they native to Red or Yellow Worlds). Red World (Mars) bears the likeness of an Ice Age Earth, given to vast glacial wastelands, dotted by well-forested, ruddy tundra along the equator. This is the cherished home of many Woodland Folk. Yellow World (Venus) is a dichotomy of desert mesas swept by blistering, rending winds overlooking lowland valleys of vast steamy jungles enshrouded with saffron mists. Here is the home of the predatory Cold Blooded and Avian Folk, a fact for which the people two worlds away are grateful.

The journey across worlds is an uncommon venture only an experienced crew should attempt. Most ships are torn apart or lost forever. Ships captained by adherents to the Monasteries of Obedience, initiates to the Secrets of the Shipwrights whose sworn allegiance is to the High Navy, mysteriously never succumb to the danger. The secret is this: By studying a master-crafted Orrery, treasured by the Illuminated skipper or a Navigator assigned by the Brethren, ships can be guided beyond the Gateway Falls, keeping track of planetary movements and the seasonal ebbs and flows of the currents. Furthermore, the Orrery is gravitationally entwined with the motion of the planets and while under the cloak of a vortex's mist, the ship can rise from the water and fly! Indeed, under the cover of darkness, when dire need arises, such ships can travel aloft amidst the clouds. Knowledge of science is not an easy thing to come by however.

Less often with the passage of time, illusory shadows of what believers claim are Primate consciousnesses take form within the Monasteries of Obedience, to instruct esoteric Beasts in the “Humane Ethic” and the “Summoning of the Swarm”—“Humane” is assumed by most to be the name of the Primate Author or an order of Primate. These reverential creatures, in turn, instruct champion knights and warrior priests in the skills needed to enlighten and protect the populace. The Clerics dispense the knowledge of science in restricted portion out of The Holy Schematics, which to most Beasts is an unintelligible tome of cryptic iconography. Therein The Rule of Thumb is encoded in its unabridged form. Some claim the elemental formulae for the essence of life lie within its pages, as are the Secrets of the Shipwrights. Like the medieval clergy, the Clerics are fearful hoarders of this knowledge, maintaining a code of laws enforced by Inquisitors acting under a dogmatic policy of arrested development, keeping the denizens of the Triune Worlds locked in a Medieval Age.

## The Rule of Thumb

This is The Rule of Thumb in its simplest form. Its bears a deeper meaning which only ~~the Eldest Illuminated~~ Clerics can understand as a perfect symmetry of science and imb it a plethora of metaphoric meanings applying to every asset of

/ Beasts That Grasp Shall Wield,

**Only Beasts That Rear Shall Stride,  
Only Beasts That Hunt Shall Reason,  
Only Beasts That Hearken Shall Summon.**

The Canine, Feline, Ursine, Musteline, Procyon and Rodent are the common denizen for they are well suited to grasp, rear, hunt, and hearken. The savage masses and brutal strength of Insects and Aquatic creatures en masse comprise the Swarm, with the exception of the Cetaceans, whose ways are strange to the land folk. The Pachyderm, Bovine, Equine and Porcine Folk, though dimwitted, are masters at invoking the Swarm to their defense. Those not inclined by nature to heed the Humane Ethic are called the Ornery Ones. Only by harkening the Voice of the Primates as taught in the Monasteries of Obedience can one be empowered to summon the Swarm to obey their will. Eager also for new adherents are The Dark Summoners who would oppose them, bearing ambitions of tyrannical domination of the Triune Worlds.

## **Recent Events**

Recently, prospecting colonist families, from the Blue and Red Worlds attempted to settle the mineral rich cliffs of Yellow World. They were savagely ravaged without warning by a Reptile army enforced by back-bred Saurian behemoths. Unexpected Avian Raiders led by a Dark Summoner Master, a Crow named Carnes, thereafter squelched a retaliatory force of High Navy ships, thus disseminating the Secrets of the Shipwrights. This gave rise to the Viking Drakkars and Pirate Hordes that infest the Blue World's oceans and skies!

War now looms over Triunum and its cornerstone, The Red World's Gateway City. The Gateway City was founded as the Red World's first colony. Now it is a refuge and guard post. On an ancient wooded island formed from an immense volcanic rim, it stands as doorway through which all ships must pass beyond the Gateway Falls at its center.

## **The Red World**

Gateway Island is not the seat of civilization, merely the threshold. Several Feudal Kingdoms dot the temperate belt of the ruddy planet. There are no oceans, but there are a great many lakes and rivers, some flowing below the planet's surface (indeed Bat and Mole Kingdoms are rumored to exist). Typically Dukes rule realms as dictated by the King, that King having been appointed by the Clerics. These are the current, five Kings in order of power: The Lion Red Mane VI, the Wolf Alpha Primus X, the Bear Reverend Mother Ursirus II, the Wolverine Queen Rose I, the Badger Procious Maximus I, and the Tiger Malcori the Lesser.

A common practice among the realms is the partitioning of the citizenry into zones of wealth. The poor remain among the poor and the rich with the rich. Only when a citizen is found straying beyond this boundary or attempts to cross the territory of the other, does that creature become prey. However, wealthy citizens can acquire a valuable Writ of Protection and perhaps an armed escort from the Duke or King. Criminals who take prey among their own kind and are subdued by the authorities are branded with The Mark of Prey, making them fair game to all creatures. Fortunately, Red World is rich with edible Swarm Kind and other dimwit creatures.

## The Blue World

The tranquil oceans of Old Blue are no more. Chaos is the order of the day. Pirate, Viking and Navy ships clash over world domination, especially control over the Gateways. When the positions of the planets change it is truly a horrific event as forces are torn between attempting to take the next world or falling back to protect their own! The islands are also places of war. Warlords have taken to conscripting natives of weaker civilizations. However several greater island kingdoms have declared their land neutral zones where ships can be repaired and crews restored to health. Storms, volcanoes and tsunamis are also a common threat.

Below the mayhem, the Sea Folk—Whales, Dolphins, Seals, Octopi, etc.—try to steer clear. Often, a member of a Pod is caught in the crossfire, or worse, killed for food. Also, some Sea Folk Clans are Revered Guardians of victimized Islands. In either case, few ships survive the infamous Cetacean Vendetta. The unyieldingly vengeful nature of the Sea Folk occasionally has divided them. The dissolution of the Pod or the Herd will be the undoing of their kind. What the Sea Folk need is a central united government, which is a concept altogether alien to them.

At any given time the gateway to the north is lit by the beautifully Aurora Borealis or by fierce lightning storms. To the south, the gate is deep within a vast network of dangerous, mysterious caves that few navigators know the way through. Bat Folk and other strange beings are rumored to be cloistering there in great numbers.

## The Yellow World, or ...

Like dragons resting upon horded treasure, the Avian Lords roost upon bejeweled and gilded cliffs. Hawks, Eagles, Vultures, and other such raptors claim the High Aviary Kingdoms. Like the Dukes of Red World, minor warlords are granted the Low Volary Domains. Unlike Red World, there is no refuge for woodland folk. Only the mightiest of Land Folk dare go there. To the north, their vortex gate becomes roaring rapids cutting through a maze of canyons filled with jagged stones. No ship has a chance to survive the trip without a map or guide.

## ...The Green World

Even the fearless Birds of Prey are apprehensive over recent developments in the jungles below. The roar and stomp of mighty creatures are heard. The barbaric Cold Blood raiders have amassed back-bred monsters to serve as mounts and siege works. What sort of power they obey is not clear. They are all of like mind and goal, perhaps needing no leader or governance, as they all agree to one goal, domination of the Triunuum and the consumption of things. Their southern gate is surrounded by gator-infested swamplands and winding, shallow rivers lined with broken ships—timber and bone slowly being digested by the twisted overgrowth.

## Red World Fortress

Red World Fortress, or just “The Fortress”, is the seat of the combined military strength of all the Red World Kingdoms and the Monastic Order. Here at Red World’s South Pole, the Shipwrights build fighting craft and forge Orrery under a dark shroud of secrecy. Little is known about the Fortress. The long canal that stretches over a vast wasteland leads to the Southern Gateway, which is lined with towering walls brimming with canons. One cannot even see the Fortress beyond the walls. Only a lock, like the

one at Gateway Island but ran by a small contingent of silent conclave of monks, serve travelers and bid passage to the Red World beyond.

## Gateway Island

Gateway Island is at the exact Northern Pole of the Red World. The warm air coming from the vortex keeps the isle and the surrounding region warm despite the rest of the hemisphere's icy clime. The more temperate latitudes are reached via icebreaker ships or the Wind Riders, ships set upon great skates—a lucrative operation ran by very clever Seal and Penguin entrepreneurs. The Gateway City was carved out of the ruddy Martian stone and so is often called Redwall. It was the workstation of the Primates when the Gateway Falls was activated. How the work was done is a mystery as there are no ancient machines, nor crafts, nor tools anywhere. The only contrivance is a steam driven Lock through which vessels come and go or even dry-dock for maintenance, suspended by hooks and cables. The city is actually built upon a web of stone and timber bridgeworks spanning the archways in which the Lock's two enormous doors are set. The Lock keeps the flow of the Redwall River in check; otherwise it becomes a violent torrent that may threaten the foundations of the Lock and thus the city itself.

### Map Legend

- a. Fangs of Asmodeus
- b. Lighthouse Monastery
- c. Gateway, the Redwall Valley City
- d. Orchard Wood
- e. White Fields Farm & Granary
- f. Reedy Bog
- g. Deep Dark Forrest
- h. Far Fall Cliff
- i. Sunny Beach
- j. Feathered Friends Aviary
- k. Cold Blood Swamp
- l. Mother Lode Mines
- m. Gateway Battery
- n. Swirling Lake & Gateway Mist
- o. The Next World Over

*The names Redwall and Asmodeous are my tribute to one of the inspirations of this work, Brian Jacques's Redwall series. Thank you Mr. Jacques! No plagiarism is intended.*

## **Risus: The Anything Role Playing,**

is the copyright property of S. John Ross. Follow the link; the six page rules (with pictures no less!) are free to download [J](#)

**Gateway Falls** will follow the Risus RPG rules for character creation. To Design a Beast character, choose its Genus, Hearken, Trade dice, 2 thru 4 (up to 6 if experienced) for a total of 10 (more if Hooks & Tale warrant). The Beasts are meant to be just anthropomorphic enough to be playable, but this is also up to the players. Pumping these clichés is allowed and any can be chosen as Double Pump Clichés if the game master determines the characters Tale shows it to be uniquely gifted.

**Genus** is its specific animal type such as Lion, Wolf, Cobra, Hawk, etc. Doing anything that the chosen Genus could do requires a roll of the allotted dice. For example, a Tiger (4) requires 4 dice to pounce or bite.

**Hearken** is the ability to call forth the Swarm and the extent to which the beast lives according to The Humane Ethic, thus surrendering its feral and self-preserving nature as taught at the Monasteries of Obedience.

**Trade** is simply the character's current or past occupation. Other clichés or multiple trade clichés are optional but the current occupation of the character ought to be the one given the most dice.

Only beasts within their own **Weight Class** can engage in direct combat. When beasts combat opponents outside their Weight Class, it's typically an Improper Cliché (Risus, page 3). For example, if a cat and mouse fight, and the mouse wins, the cat was not defeated by mouse bites, but perhaps by running into a wall as the mouse slides into its hole, costing the cat three dice. As a guide to Weight Class, Light Beasts can be carried by a human all day (i.e., mice, anoles, sparrows), Medium Beasts for short distances

(i.e., lynxes, tortoises, eagles), Heavy Beasts can't be lifted but may be budged (i.e., lions, alligators, ostriches), and Massive Beasts can't be budged (i.e., whales, elephants, sauropods).

The Monasteries are likened to *Shaolin* Schools, where The Humane Ethic and refined fighting techniques are taught. Swarms called for Evil must be satiated, even if the Dark Summoner falls victim, while Swarms called for Good will peacefully abate when released. Most weapons are of no use against the Swarm, though fire, smoke, and less often water, may be employed. Summoners are considered Novice at 1 or 2 dice, Expert at 3 or 4 dice, and Master at 5 or 6 dice.

Summoning is not magic, though less enlightened, superstitious Beasts believe otherwise. The catalyst of Summoning may be any combination of subsonic calls or mimicry, movements like dances or gestures, or elements from nature and even concoctions and potables that allow the Summoner to emit pheromones of swarming animals. As much as the means of Summoning is not common knowledge to the Triunuum (nor are some secrets between Summoners), so should the science behind it be a mystery to the players. The Swarm can only be put to one task or attempt per Summoning.

A Summoner rolls its Hearken Cliché against the Swarm's Cliché (which is of any value the Summoner wants or what he thinks he can handle; see Teaming Up, Grunt Squad rule on page 3 of Risus) as in a battle of wills until one side wins as per typical Risus conflict. Summoning can take a few turns of dedicated concentration and the Hearken dice must be recovered with rest, as it is exhausting. If the Summoning succeeds, that is, once the Swarm is subdued by the Summoner it is considered "defeated" in game terms, but this pseudo-damage heals immediately and the Swarm is ready for action. Failing means no Swarm answers if the attempt was for Good, but if summoned for Evil, the swarm will still come but will be uncontrollable. The Swarm Cliché cannot be "Pumped" but the Hearken Cliché can.

Take note of the environment. You can't summon fish in a desert or scorpions at sea. Use common sense. Only one Swarm can exist in a venue at a time or they will become uncontrollable. Alternatively another can be called to combat the first (i.e., wasps vs. bees).

Some—not nearly all—common Invocations of the Swarm, that is, ways in which a Swarm can be manipulated are as follows:

**Blight** (Locust: whole villages can be left desolate)

**Consume** (Piranha: enemies can be devoured)

**Destroy** (Termites: structures can be felled)

**Guide** (Butterflies: the lost might find their way)

**Heal** (Maggots: cleans wounds and to nourish the infirm)

**Illuminate** (Lightening Bugs: dark places can be revealed)

**Plague** (Flies: enemies can be infested with diseases)

**Plenty** (Bees: hive wax and honey, pollination)

**The Blizzard.** This is a special summoning skill available only to Rodents—being the most disadvantaged of beasts. An army of white rodents can be called that have the Summoner's Harken dice added to their Swarm Cliché. These white creatures are will not communicate with the Summoner; in fact their sentience is questionable.

## Basic Character “Trade” Cliches

**Cleric (Illuminati, Inquisitor, Monastic)**

**Explorer (Tracker, Trailblazer, Wilderness Guide)**

**Healer (Herbalist, Alchemist, Veterinarian)**

**Merchant (Entrepreneur, Prospector, Trader)**

**Noble (Bigwig, Benefactor, Celebrity)**

**Sailor (Cannoneer, Rigger, Navigator)**

**Vagrant (Pilferer, Swindler, Tramp)**

**Warrior (Constable, Knight, Barbarian)**

## Currency & Possessions

Precious metals and rare gems are typically accepted as money. Forging arms is difficult, whether due to weight or intricacy, no matter what the intended beast's size is, thus the cost is the same regardless of scale, from mouse to elephant. It is assumed that characters begin with tools and paraphernalia pertinent to their trade, and wealth to suit. As listed below, items and services are rated from 1 to 6 dice. Using higher or lower dice

valued tools will increase or decrease the skills of the user respectively, by the difference. For example, if a Locksmith (5) uses Locksmith Tools (6), she'll get a 1D bonus.

Most characters doing well at their trade can afford items of equal value to their cliché dice. No tracking of money is needed. To bargain for a better item or service, characters can make haggling roles as a conflict with the owner, adding the difference between what they can and can't afford to the owner's dice. For example, for a Warrior (3) to buy a Musket (5) add two dice to the merchant's cliché and make conflict rolls. If the merchant loses, the item becomes affordable. The Warrior (3) acts as a Warrior (5) when using the musket. Otherwise, he can dream about it as he hones his skills to qualify to earn a better wage.

1D.... Terrible: Cheaply Made, Poorly Kept, Second-Hand Items or Terrible Services

2D.... Poor: Low Quality Crafted Items or Poor Services

3D.... Common: Typically Crafted Mediocre Items or Common Services

4D.... Good: Professionally Crafted Items or Professional Services

5D.... Excellent: Expertly Crafted Items or Compulsory Royal Services

6D.... Magnificent: Invaluably Unique Master Crafted Items or Devotedly Royal Services

## Designing Ships

Ships are built to suit the various Beast sizes. The same principles can be used on ships in combat as per characters. For example, a ship made for and by mice would have sails and cannons of Light Beast scale too and could not combat a ship made for bears and vice versa. Small ships accommodate Light Beasts, while medium ships Medium Beasts, and big ones fit Heavy Beasts. As for Massive beasts, big ships can transport them if needed (i.e., war elephants, whaling ships).

Attacking by Broadside, that is, running parallel to a target ship and blasting it a close range with every facing cannon, is a Pumped Cliché. The downside, reflected in the Pumped Cliché's Heal rule, is that all the cannons on that side must be rearmed or the entire ship turned to present the opposite battery of arms. Either action takes an amount of rounds equal to the ship's cliché dice value. Remember that these vessels are made of handcrafted timber and subject to threats of fire and termites. Ironclads are a rare pirate aberration on par with the scaly, Reptilian Viking Drakkar.

Ships have three classifications, each with three values, which, when totaled, determine the ships cliché dice. A ship over six dice value (see Currency & Possessions above) is a very expensive vessel, typically of High Navy Commission:

**Size:** Small 1D, Medium 2D, Big 3D

**Speed:** Slow 1D, Cruising 2D, Fast 3D

**Design:** Trader: 1D, Scout 2D, Warship 3D

For example, a ship might be “HNS Simba” a Lion Built, Big, Cruising Scout (7). The type of ship is left up to the designer. The Simba might be a Carrack, a Frigate or a Galleon. There are too many types, from too many cultures to list, and usually the names are a factor of design more than a comparison of attributes (four masts, low draft, oars, square sailed, etc.).

## The Orrery

The Orrery is fastened to the inside of the ship, typically in the map room, by means of an intricate masterwork of ornate gold mountings. The four crystal orbs (typically Ruby, Sapphire, Emerald and Topaz) composing it are filled with fluctuating fluids in order to reveal the current tidal conditions of the Triune Worlds and even the Sun. The mock orbit of Red World spans about six feet. The gyroscopic sockets and axes upon which they hang are marked with encrypted alphanumeric codes, which only the Illuminated Captain or Navigator can read. When the array is adjusted, gravity from the current world is focused through its crystal duplicate like a lens and emitted back causing a wave interference effect, nullifying gravitation, and allowing the ship to be carried aloft by updrafts. It is not yet known how the Dark Summoners have unlocked the Orrery’s secrets. Might they have found another way to bring ships to flight?

Calculating and tracking which world is accessible through what polar vortex when, is too tedious a task. Instead, every season there is a 50% chance (roll a die, flip a coin, arbitrarily decide... whatever) the alignment of worlds takes either of two forms. Reading left to right as north to south, the configurations are: 1) **B R Y B** or 2) **B Y R B**.

For instance, in configuration 1, the Blue World's South Pole links to the Red World's North Pole and the Yellow World's North to the Red's South.

## Play By Web or Email

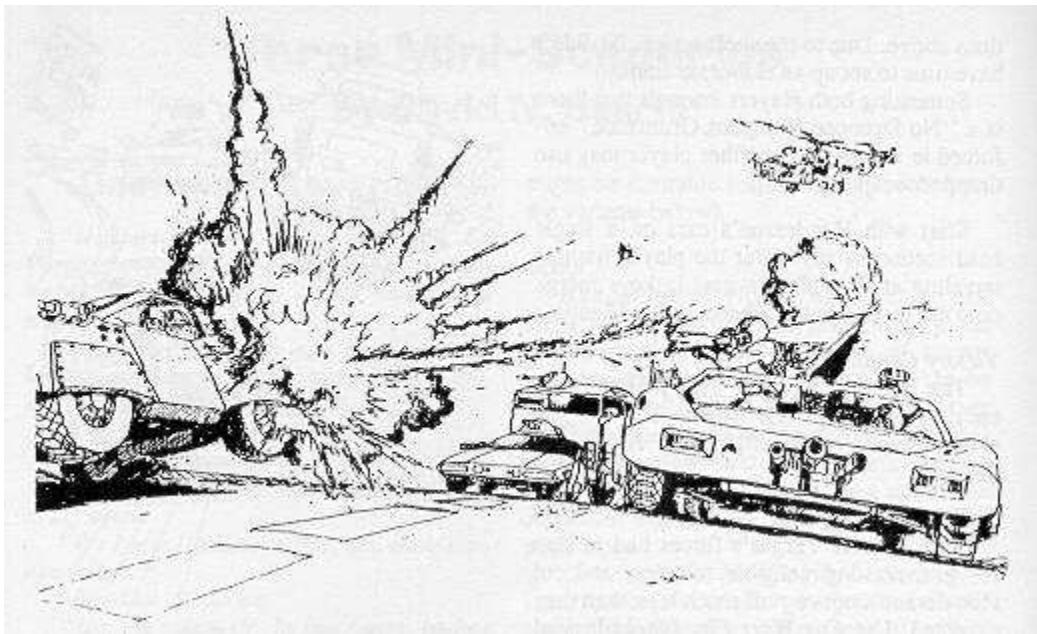
If you're interested in online gaming visit the **Gateway Falls** board at [PlayByWeb](#) or email me at [sir\\_bruen@yahoo.com](mailto:sir_bruen@yahoo.com)

# HARD ROADS

A Risus Adaptation of *Car Wars* by Hank Harwell  
VERSION 2.0 5/14/05

**Introduction:** In 1981, a small Texas game store released a game using a Post-apocalyptic SciFi setting to simulate combat between vehicles. The game quickly took off, and on the strength of *Car Wars* and many other releases, Steve Jackson Games is now one of the largest game companies in the United States.

Throughout the years, *Car Wars* has developed a loyal following and many regional tournaments all over the United States. Not long after its introduction, some players would string together scenarios, forming a very simple, extremely rules-lite role-playing game.



Capitalizing on these variants, SJG released *Autoduel* as one of the first worldbooks for its revolutionary new rpg, GURPS.

In the early 1990's, a former writer for SJG, S. John Ross, released a rules-lite rpg that is flexible enough to be played in any genre, Risus. Risus, too has developed a loyal fan base of folks who have adapted many genres to play.

Risus uses clichés to describe player characters. These clichés describe a variety of skills, motivations, experience levels and many other themes.

It is long past time for these two great systems to be combined into the document you now see before you: *Hard Roads*.

**Inspirations:** The most obvious inspirations for *Car Wars* are the *Mad Max* movies (*Mad Max*, *The Road Warrior*, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*). The

*Mad Max* films are loaded with Risus-worthy clichés. Look at the list of sample clichés below and see how many you can identify as characters from any of the *Mad Max* films.

In addition, Roger Corman's film *Race 2000*, and Roger Zelazny's story *Damnation Alley* contribute also to the themes.

### Sample PC Clichés:

Cliche	What It's Good For
<i>Burly Trucker</i>	Wearing sweat-stained t-shirts and “gimme” caps, driving big rigs, talking on the CB, living on little sleep and caffeine, driving in convoys
<i>Cocky Arena Duellist</i>	Playing to the crowd, wearing flashy colors, shooting cars, driving cars, taking chances
<i>Cold-hearted Mercenary</i>	Selling combat skills to highest bidder, knowing about weapons, using weapons
<i>Crackerjack Mechanic</i>	Tinkering with engines, fixing engines, improving engines
<i>Geeky Computer Hacker</i>	Wearing glasses, never having a date, breaking into computer networks, building computer equipment
<i>Law Enforcement Officer</i>	Arresting people, giving people tickets, chasing people, shooting people
<i>Merciless Bounty Hunter</i>	Hunting criminals, capturing criminals, shooting criminals
<i>Miracle-working Medic</i>	Saving lives, administering first aid, giving drugs
<i>Outlaw Biker</i>	Wearing leather, riding motorcycle, terrorizing women and children, hijacking lone vehicles
<i>Punk Anarchist</i>	Wearing orange hair, having piercings, advocating the overthrow of the government, planting bombs
<i>Repo Man</i>	Breaking into vehicles, driving vehicles, getting shot at
<i>Road Duellist</i>	Driving cars, shooting cars on highway, taking license plates
<i>Scavenger</i>	Looking for wrecks, picking over wrecks, salvaging items from wrecks, selling salvage
<i>Trustworthy Courier</i>	Delivering packages, taking tips
<i>Vehicle Gunner</i>	Riding “shotgun”, shooting other cars

**Vehicles:** The real stars of *Car Wars* are, well, the cars. In *Car Wars*, vehicles are even more highly detailed than the drivers! In Risus, players purchase vehicles as per "Sidekicks and Shieldmates" rules from the *Risus Companion*. The GM may rule that certain vehicles must be purchased at "double-pump" values. In other words, the cost will be *two* dice for a four-dice vehicle, but at least one cliché must be double-pumped. All equipment and weapons must be detailed in the character, er, vehicle description. Weapons will be considered "tools of the trade" for any combat-oriented clichés. If the item is not listed on

the description, it cannot be used.

### Sample Vehicle Clichés

<b><i>Cliche</i></b>	<b><i>What It's Good For</i></b>
<i>Lightly-armed Subcompact</i>	Driving fast, carrying courier packages
<i>Machine-gun-equipped Compact</i>	"Hit and run" fighting, Drive-by shooting
<i>Rocket-Launching Mid-Sized</i>	Arena Autoduellng
<i>Marauding Big Rig Truck</i>	Carrying heavy loads cross country, running roadblocks
<i>Assault Van</i>	Transporting SWAT Team members, carrying sophisticated equipment
<i>Heavy Police Cruiser</i>	Car chasing, carrying "perps"

**Vehicular Combat:** The mechaning for this uses the Teaming Up rules from page 3 of the standard ruleset with the following variations: PC's and their vehicles are considered a "Team". The Vehicle is the Team Leader and the PC will add his "sixes" to dice rolls where appropriate. In a combat, only the vehicle takes "damage," i.e., loses dice upon losing a combat round. There is no "noble sacrifice and vengeace" rule in effect. When the vehicle is reduced to zero, the team is Disbanded, and the PC takes the one-die loss to his driving (or autoduellng) cliché.



Where more than one vehicle wants to form a team, then standard Teaming Up rules apply; only the vehicles form teams (not vehicles plus their drivers), and when the team loses a combat round, the "noble sacrifice and vengeance" rules apply. When the Lead Vehicle is reduced to zero, then the team disbands and all remaining vehicles lose one die of "damage."

**Additional Notes:** There are some elements of cyberpunk in Car Wars. However, these will be minimal. The vast World Wide Web was severely compromised in the collapse of society. Some of the major metropolitan areas still maintain extensive computer networks, but these will be minimal.

# **HARD ROADS**

## **Character Sheet**

Player Name \_\_\_\_\_

Character Name \_\_\_\_\_

Cliches (Dice)

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Character Sketch

Description

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Lucky Shots:

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Tools/Equipment

Tale

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Vehicle

Cliches (Dice)

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Tools/Equipment/Arms

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Vehicle Sketch

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**Disclaimer:** The material presented here is an adaptation of the Car Wars/GURPS Autoduel (<http://www.sjgames.com/carwars/>, <http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/Autoduel/>) system from Steve Jackson Games (<http://www.sjgames.com/>) for Risus: The Anything RPG S. John Ross (<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>). This material is not official and is not endorsed by Steve Jackson Games nor by S. John Ross/Cumberland Games and Diversions (<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/cumberland.htm>).

# Mystic High School

## A Risus Campaign Setting

Created by [Hollis McCray](#)

- I. [Introduction](#)
  - II. [Character Creation](#)
  - III. [Setting](#)
  - IV. [Characters](#)
- 

### Introduction

Premise: Sometime about the turn of the Millennium, magic returned to the world. The first sign of this was the suddenly frighteningly large number of supernatural creatures crawling out of the woodwork and generally making a nuisance of themselves—dragons that breathe fire and eat people, trolls taking up post on highway overpasses and demanding tolls, etc. People quickly realized that in most cases, the creature could either be bargained with or easily disposed of. (Although we're not going to discuss Sheboygan. Ever.)

The less obvious sign of this was the slowly increasing number of teenagers demonstrating 'magic powers.' While the general public ignored this as tabloid sensationalism, when a high school student summoned up a fire elemental at a school assembly (and nearly barbecued most of the PTA), they finally decided that 'something had to be done about those dangerous kids.'

What 'something' turned out to be was creating schools specifically to train teenagers with magic powers to use their powers in a controlled manner. Not to mention instilling some discipline in the little brats—uhh, young pupils.

[Back To Top](#)

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### Characters:

Characters for Mystic High should all be students at the school. They can have at most three dice in mage cliches, which should be specified. Option one, option two, and option three are all in force. Option four is in force in a modified fashion. While no character may start out with a cliche that uses funky dice, they can upgrade to bigger dice later as per the funky dice rules.

Sample character:

Nikki Watkins

Description: Sixteen-year old blonde girl in a wheelchair. Perpetual scowl on her face. Takes everything said to her as if it was a direct attack. Hates being treated like a 'cripple.' Uses air magic to get around, when she can. Plays guitar and sings. Gets really annoyed if people treat her like she's different.

Cliches: Air Mage [3], Rock musician(3), Card sharp (2)

Hook: Paraplegic (paralyzed from the waist down). Needs a wheelchair or her air magic to get around.

Nikki already has a hook. If I was going to write up a tale for her, I'd put the extra die into card sharp.

Sample Mage Cliches

- Elemental Mage-Air/Earth/Fire/Water
- Shadow Mage-Manipulating the shadows and darkness
- Healer
- Alchemist-Making magical potions
- Artificer-Making magical devices
- Transmuter-Changing things into other things
- Enchanter-Setting enchantments on things

[Back To Top](#)

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### The school:

General:

Mystic High is located somewhere in New England in a former Catholic boarding school, which was shut down due to lack of funds. (Student rumors hold to something darker, however.) There are steam tunnels under most of the older buildings. The school has been heavily renovated, and covered walkways are now in place between most of the buildings.

The Main Hall

The main hall is where most of the classrooms and offices are located. It's the oldest building on campus. There's a clock tower with a clock you have to be dead AND deaf not to notice. Given the fact that the students often stage magical battles in the halls, it's usually undergoing repairs to some degree.

The Dorms

Students who are too far from home to commute or don't have the money to live in town live here. There are separate dorms for boys and girls, located on opposite sides of campus. Not that this will stop the students, but it should slow them down a bit.

The Garage

This is where the school's vehicles are kept. Students are allowed to store vehicles here as well, provided they have parental permission and get their parents to sign a waiver. Since this is the newest building on campus, the steam tunnels don't extend here.

The Chapel

The chapel currently stands in disuse, although the Catholic students on campus are petitioning to have it refurbished. Strange noises and lights come from the chapel every now and again, so most of the students think it's haunted.

The Gym

Another building that is new construction. Two large gyms, plus an outdoor running track and football stadium and baseball field. The school does have sports teams, even if no other school will compete with them due to fears of magical cheating. Another popular place for magical battles, and the stadium ensures that anyone watching will have somewhere to sit.

[Back To Top](#)

## Characters for Mystic High

Here you will find various characters I and other people have created for Mystic High. The information for each character is limited to what the creator sends to me. If you would like to submit a character, mail me at [strangething@yahoo.com](mailto:strangething@yahoo.com). Please try not to make character descriptions too long, half a page is enough.

- [Students](#)
- [Faculty and Staff](#)

### Student Records

- [Adrienne Woods](#)-a dryad with a yearning to be human.
- [Freddy Nicks](#)-punk kid who proves that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing.
- [Rosie Rubens](#)-shy egg-head who throws a mean potion.
- [Tommy Pickering](#)-slick weasel who can make your luck change for the better or the worse.
- [David Winston \(D. W.\) Storm](#)-A lightning mage with a bad temper.

#### Adrienne Woods

Description: Fifteen year old girl with a dusky complexion, dark brown hair, and a body that's guaranteed to be a heartbreaker. Usually found hanging around under one of the trees on campus, not quite fitting in. Commits frequent social errors.

##### Cliches:

Wood Spirit [3]--She has exceptional control over plants and woods creatures. She can meld into trees, see anything any tree in a forest sees, talk to animals, etc. In a combat sense, she can turn parts of her body into wood, throw wooden spikes, extend her limbs, things like that.

Awkward Beauty (3)--While socially inept, she is \*extremely\* beautiful.

Poet (2)--She has a talent for verse.

Biker (1)--She's learning to ride a motorcycle.

Hook: Adrienne is not really human, but is instead a woods spirit pretending to be one of the students.

Adrienne (not her real name) is a dryad, a woods spirit from the woods surrounding the school. When the school was reopened after standing vacant so long, she became curious and decided to investigate. She found that the students were much more interesting than the previous inhabitants of the buildings. Forging some records, and stealing what she needed from a nearby town, she enrolled at the school as a student. Unfortunately, being a dryad means that she doesn't really know how to act human constantly, and she often says or does things that the other students find weird. How long she can keep up the deception before someone becomes suspicious and finds out her secret is unknown. Perhaps the administration already knows and is covering for her.

#### Freddy Nicks

Punk Kid (4), Magic Resistant (3), Lightning Mage (2),Forbidden Knowledge (2)

Hook: Freddy's ass is on the line. The next time he gets caught breaking the school rules, he's out on his ear.

Tale: Freddy is the worst scholar at MHS. He's a bully, a sneak, and general all-round bad egg, who stays enrolled by bribing term papers out of junior teachers and beating milk money out off freshmen. Freddy's had his nose in several of the Restricted Access textbooks under the librarian's counter; nobody knows what it is that he saw inside those pages, but he hasn't been able to wipe that smirk off his face since.

#### Submitted by Dylan Craig

#### Rosie Rubens

Alchemy (4), Egg-head (5), School Newspaper Editor (2)

Hook: Wears home-made magical contact lenses which (among other things) allow her to read much faster and gauge temperature visually, but which tend to fall out if she is jostled, leaving her totally blind.

Tale: Rosie is a hard-working scholarship student whose idea of a riveting Friday night involves a pile of Scientific Americans and a tub of Lemon Ripple. Definite makeover territory. There's currently something of an unkind conspiracy to have a date with her as the booby prize of the Football Fundraiser Raffle afoot, engineered by some of the more popular scholars.

#### Submitted by Dylan Craig

#### Tommy Pickering

**DESCRIPTION:** Fifteen year old boy with a pair of mirrored sunglasses and a perpetual smirk. Usually found hanging around the edges of conversations, trying to look as though he's not eavesdropping, offering to provide (for a price) solutions to any questions or problems that he overhears. Gets very offended if he's accused of butting in to someone else's business.

##### CLICHES:

Luck mage [3] -- He can arrange creative coincidences, cause himself good luck, or cause bad luck for others. But whenever he rolls the same result on all of his dice, something goes BADLY wrong.

Weasel (3) -- Con man, deal maker, and all-around sleazy guy.

Musician (2) -- He started playing the recorder in grade school, and developed a reluctant love for the instrument. He will not admit to this, not even if threatened with torture.

##### HOOK:

Greedy little weasel boy. Can't resist an opportunity to make a con or a profit.

If I added a tale for Tommy, I'd probably add something like "Sneaky". And if I were playing him, I'd be basing him my memories of a long-forgotten sitcom called "It's Your Move", which no one but me remembers.

#### Submitted by John Crimmins

#### David Winston (D. W.) Storm

Description: Fourteen years old, long dark hair and brown eyes with thick glasses, a year young for his grade, small for his age, and skinny on top of that, but hot tempered, surprisingly strong for his size and in excellent condition. Rides a bicycle everywhere, and gets there as fast as a car (at least in town); also an excellent swimmer despite having too little body fat to float. Reads anything, five times as fast as an average kid, and remembers most of it.

##### Clichés:

Berserk Lightning Mage [3], Closet Athlete (3), Eclectic Speed Reader (3)

Hook: Can be teased into berserk rage in a matter of minutes by any Bully or other cliché that includes taunting ability; when berserk, always double-pumps Mage cliché (+2 dice after the doubling) and attacks without warning, but is -2 dice on defense beyond the loss of die from pumping (i.e. gets one good shot and then he's toast).

Tale: Parents pulled him out of a school he liked after first grade, and put him in a church school so small he was the entire second grade. Bigger kids in higher grades (and one bigger first grader) in the same classroom teased him mercilessly because he was small, tormented him for being a good student, beat him up every time he took physical action -- until one day, in sixth grade, his pent-up rage was so great that he lashed out with magic he didn't know he had and put the head bully in the hospital with major burns. Between then and the opening of Mystic High when he was a sophomore, he attended eight schools, only one of which had a working power grid when he left. Hasn't killed anyone -- yet -- but not for lack of trying. At the last school, however, he set a dangerous precedent by starting a fight \_before\_ he was too angry to see straight, and seriously injured a much bigger boy before the rest of the gang kicked his face in.

Submitted by Donald Qualls

[Back To Top](#)

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### (Losing Your) Faculty and Staff Personnel Files

- [Principal Elaine Masterson](#)-Iron-willed principal descended from Valkyries.
- [Mrs. Watkins](#)-Terrorizing Librarian with a hidden shame.

Principal Elaine Masterson Description: A grey-haired woman in her forties or early fifties. Dresses very professionally, in a pants-suit. Takes no shit from anybody.

Cliches:

Reborn Valkyrie Battle-Mage [3], Iron-Willed Principal (4), Jazz Fanatic (3)

Elaine Masterson is the principal at Mystic High. She transferred here at the request of the Department of Magic (the federal agency responsible for administering Mystic High). Before this, she spent twenty years as the principal of the toughest high school in New York City. She has no magic powers, but she's a tough old battle axe. Don't cross her.

Unknown to her, Principal Masterson is the reincarnation of a Valkyrie battle-mage. Since magic returned to the world, she sometimes thinks like a Valkyrie, especially when she's mad. And when danger threatens the students, she turns into the Valkyrie, mind *and* body. Elaine doesn't remember what happens when the Valkyrie takes over, and doesn't have conscious access to her powers.

Ms. Watkins

Description: You know those old busybody librarians that rule the library as if it was their own domain to terrorize? The ones that insist on everybody being deathly quiet? The ones that treat late books as if they were a deadly sin? Didn't you ever wonder where they come from? All Ms. Watkins lacks is the grey hair. Give her twenty years.

Cliches:

Terrorizing Librarian (4), Fire-Mage [2], Romance Novelist (4), Bicyclist (2).

Hook: Ms. Watkins has a secret career as a romance novelist. While it's not nearly enough to pay her bills, she dearly loves to write and would be mortally embarrassed if someone found out.

Tale: Ms. Watkins went to college with no idea what to major in, thinking that she would 'figure it out as she went along.' Being rather mousy in appearance, and having the social graces of a road kill squirrel, she found college rather dull. Eventually, she majored in Library Science simply because it would let her spend all her time with books. Then she discovered that she had a talent for writing romances. She was doing very well, until a rival author used water magic to soak her at a book signing. Enraged, she instinctively responded with her fire-magic, putting the woman in the hospital. While the charges were dropped, she still regards this as the most embarrassing moment of her life. She tries to hide her magic powers, although she has used them to give hot-foots to students she feels behave inappropriately in the library. She can mostly be seen in the library, or terrorizing the campus grounds on her ladies' bicycle.

[Back To Top](#)

## **NORMAL**

They say we require protection.  
They say that all the supervillians are gone.  
They say the world is a better place.  
We say they are wrong.

*Normal* is a setting for Risus that asks the question, “Who would fight the superheroes if all the supervillians were gone? *Normal* dares to say, “The world needs Evil!” The PCs are brave but otherwise ordinary citizens who take up the dark mantles of evil left behind by the vanquished supervillians. It’s like *Mystery Men* in a negative universe. The PCs aren’t just second string, C and lower grade villains, they are ordinary people with extraordinary dreams.

Accountant With Dreams Of World Conquest  
Fantasy War Gamer & “Lord of Chaos”  
Ruthless Personal Injury Attorney  
Bus Driving Drive-By Killer  
Cruel Elementary School Gym Teacher  
Bell Tower Architecture Admiring Gun Nut  
IRS Agent  
Pyromaniac Fireman  
Overworked Police Officer (no supervillians means more ordinary criminals)  
Unemployed Goon  
Secret Lair Interior Designer  
Super Crime Beat Reporter  
Dentist  
Used Car Salesperson  
Unemployed Contractor Who Used To Rebuild After The Supers  
Post Office Employee  
Once Trusted Cub Reporter Who Knows Dozens Of Secret Identities

You get the idea.

The antagonists are Superheroes and the GM is encouraged to use any and all appropriate optional rules (Funky Dice) for example. All Superheroes have Hooks and preferably Tales.

PCs get only Hooks and Tales. That’s it. Team and Inappropriate Cliché rules will be very important if the PCs are to be successful in making the world safe for Evil again.

Send questions, comments, and criticisms to [s1shirley@gmail.com](mailto:s1shirley@gmail.com)

## **Perdition Alley**

### **Apocrypha**

*"I'll put pennies on your eyes." -Stephen*

We're dead. We know that. Well, we suspect as much. We don't know how it happened. Maybe it was part of The Rapture, or maybe this is Purgatory. All that seems important is surviving and escaping.

We've dubbed the sprawling town Perdition Alley. It looks like the suburbs of Las Vegas as seen through the lenses of Sergio Leone with all the sin of the strip. It's in the middle of a vast red sand desert where temperature exceeds 100 during the day and drops to freezing at night.

Don't even think about trying to escape the city. When people try the desert sometimes we here howls or screams, but most times we just find their bones at the edge of town the next day. Those who try the highway just end up back here. All the roads lead back here.

I said we think we're dead; some of us can remember a different life. Details like names, faces, and occupations stand out. Everything else is blurred, indistinct. You might remember your name, your wife's name (but not her face), that you were the mayor... but, you can't remember the names of your kids (just their faces), the name of the town, or even so much as a street name. I know a street preacher who says you remember what you have to.

Once you're here it doesn't take long to realize you can do things you never could before. Great things, terrible things. If we are in Purgatory, then our sins are real here; they give us power. It's like that movie? You know the one; it had the guy from the movie about time travel in a phone booth? Guns, lots of guns... And killer robots... Computers? Well, I remember a lot of black. And green. It's like that. Sometimes somebody will use that power more like a wizard of old, but lately it's always "bullet time." Whatever that means...

A few people want to escape. If it is Purgatory, then we ought to try to better ourselves. Most just keep trying to make a living. The grocery stores and restaurants are all automated; occasionally the local paper prints a classified ad looking for a janitor or hostess. No one knows who places the ad, or who restocks the paper's supplies for that matter.

The rest is just maintenance and repair. No one knows where the tools and supplies come from; we just know they're there when we need them.

So there are the Penitents, the Lifers, and then there are the Sinners and Saints. The Sinners are easy to find. They're the ones who have given up and embraced the power of their sin. Most times they burn themselves out, literally. But some of them linger on. Dangerous people those with a lot of power and nothing to lose.

The Saints are harder to spot. They keep a low profile, and watch out for the Penitents. Somehow they've managed to purge themselves of the sin that brought them here and draw strength from their virtues.

Well, that's the basics, kids. You want to leave, you become a Penitent and try to become a Saint, you want to stay or just get by, you become a Lifer like everybody else. I don't recommend the other alternatives.

## **Lost Souls**

*"It's better to burn out, then to fade away!" –The Kurgan*

Every PC must devote at least 1 die of 4 to Vice.

Every PC must devote the balance of those 4 to Virtue.

The remaining 6 dice may be assigned to Clichés as normal.

Hooks & Tales work as normal.

## **Commandments**

*"Phones gonna ring, it's gonna be him, he's gonna make it alright..." –Gabriel*

Vice is the magic Cliché of Perdition Alley.

Roll all sixes on a Vice roll, your Vice increases by 1, your Virtue decreases by 1.  
Roll all ones on a Vice roll, your Vice *decreases* by 1, your Virtue *increases* by 1.  
Succeed at a Vice roll, increase your Vice by 1.

Thusly, if you roll all sixes *and* succeed your Virtue drops 1, and your Vice rises 2!

If your Vice ever drops to zero, congratulations! You've escaped Perdition Alley...

Or,

If you have a Virtue of 6 at the time, you may choose to stay in Perdition Alley to guide other Lost Souls. Your Virtue is halved, becomes a Double-Pump Cliché, and henceforth functions as a Magic Cliché just as Vice did.

Virtue is the “lifeforce” or “soul” Cliché of Perdition Alley.

If it drops to zero, the PC becomes an NPC; or vanishes in a puff of brimstone...

If it rises to 6, you may reduce it to reduce your Vice. This may never reduce either below 1.

If you've become a Guide, and your Virtue falls to zero for *any reason* you can no longer maintain your grip on Perdition Alley and you Ascend. Don't worry, *you're* going to a better place.

## **Ascension**

*"It's over; you have no power over me!" –Daniel*

The standard rules for advancement do not apply to Virtue or Vice.  
They do apply to the other Clichés.

GMs may award PCs by increasing their Virtue and decreasing their Vice. This is the only way in which Vice may be reduced to zero. It is the only way Virtue may rise at all.

## **Leviathan & Legion**

What follows is Perdition Alley's bestiary and some notes towards running stories there. It is recommended that the player read no further...

## **The Rogues' Gallery (Legion)**

Some of the antagonists that follow have no Virtue listed. This is for one of two reasons. They may have never been human, are even perhaps natives. Or they have lingered on after succumbing to their Vice and sin. No one is sure why this happens, or who it will happen to. Most of the time once one's Virtue is exhausted they're gone.

One example of a Saint is also provided.

### The Black Widow

The Black Widow is an exceptional sinner that approaches The Triggerman or Showman in power.

Vice (4), Refined Cannibal (3), Transsexual Serial Killer (3), Charismatic Mentor of a gang of blood thirsty street urchins (3), Upstanding Citizen (1), Virtue (1)

GMs Option: The GM may rule that The Widow is one of those exceptional few who linger after completely exhausting their Virtue. Personally, I don't think a higher Vice is out of line either.

### Cold Ethyl

Cold Ethyl runs one of the most successful brothels in town. Her zombie bouncers are notorious amongst the sorts of people who frequently get thrown out of such establishments. Nearly as notorious as her business' ability to cater to *any* taste.

Vice (4), Undead Prostitute (3), Legitimate Businesswoman (3), Necromancer [2]

GM Note: Ethyl found a way to beat the system by "dieing" again. Her unique abilities with the dead intrigues The Showman and frightens The Asylum. It is only a matter of time before there is a confrontation.

### Danny Boy

*"It doesn't have to be this way. You can change; I can help you."*

Danny is a Saint. He long ago overcame the sins of his past but he lingers on in the hope that he can help others. He has had a number of run ins with The Showman, and as gifted as he is he always runs...

Virtue [4], Good-hearted Teenager (4), Street Tough (3), Friend of the Penitents (3)

### The Director of The Asylum

No one but The Triggerman has ever gotten an appointment to see The Director. There are those few patients who the staff deem ready to be reintegrated back into Perdition Alley society who never quite fit in... Their ravings about tentacles and chitin put people on edge.

Monstrous Soul Eating Doppelganger (?), Kindly Psychiatrist (?), Tentacles! (?), Giant Cockroach or Brain-like Grub (?)

GM Note: Is The Director a man shaped demon like The Triggerman? Is alien in appearance and motivations? Is it responsible for *all* this? I leave this to the GM. The Clichés above are only suggestions and the GM should adjust the numbers according to their vision.

#### Employees of The Asylum

*"Got your thumbprint always with me, got your barcode memorized."*

There is some nominal resemblance to a state run mental health institute, but a second look reveals how tenuous this resemblance is.

Interns: Cruel and Brutish Intern (3)

Nurses: Inhumanly Efficient and Callous RN (3)

Doctors: Cold and Apathetic Mental Health Professional (4)

GM Note: No Virtue, no Vice. I leave it up to the GM what sort of things go on within the secretive walls of The Asylum that lead to such improbabilities.

#### The Monster Dogs

*(A long mournful howl of the desert, joined by one, then another, and another...)*

No one has ever faced them and lived, no one. Most suspect that they've been here as long as The Showman. They don't enter the city, so the only evidence we have of their existence is the gnawed bones of their victims at the edge of town. Just stay in the Alley, ok?

Alpha: Vice (4), Lycanthrope (3), Black Hound (3), Citizen of the Alley (1)

Typical pack member: Vice (3), Lycanthrope (2), Black Hound (2)

GM Secret: They do come in to the city; they *live* there. They may be natives of this strange realm.

#### Typical Penitent

*"Oh Lord, we beseech the..."*

These lost souls genuinely are seeking salvation and are trying desperately to get by in an honest and upright fashion in a world they perceive as right next door to Hell.

Vice (1), “Appropriately penitent Cliché” (1 to 3), Virtue (3)

### Perdition Alley Police Department

Every town has its law, even this one. They are corrupt and only marginally better than the Sinners they protect the populace from, but they beat chaos. As with any police force, there are exceptions to the rule and more extreme examples of the rule, so this is a “typical” officer.

Vice (2), Corrupt Beat Cop (1 to 3), Virtue (2)

### The Showman

*“What’s the matter little boy, you afraid?”*

The Showman is the closest thing we have to a mayor around here. Though, *that* title is more of an honorarium. Penitents use tales of his predations to scare newcomers like you. The Showman is no boogieman though, he is all too real. I think he has always been here and I suspect he always will be, like an angel in heaven or a devil in hell.

Vice (6), Twisted Carnie (4), Fiendish Ringmaster (4), \_\_?\_\_ (4)

### Typical Sinner

*“You’re one of our own.”*

Gangers, flesh peddlers, and worse...

Vice (3), “Appropriately sinful Cliché” (1 to 3), Virtue (1)

### Sister Sara

*“Whatever happened to me?”*

There is a street preacher on every corner. Or else some days it feels like it. Sometimes they are Penitents truly trying to help their fellow lost souls, on rare occasion you’ll find a Saint preaching one gospel or another, but most of these folks are like Sister Sara.

Vice (3), Debauched Nun (4), Streetwise Info Merchant (3), Prostitute (2), Street Preacher (1), Virtue (1)

### The Triggerman

*“Ain’t got a name, ain’t got a face, no fingerprints, or DNA.”*

The Triggerman is a literally faceless demon who walks as a man. If The Asylum decides it wants you they will send it after you. It will catch you. If you’re lucky, it’ll kill you.

Vice (5), Man in Black (4), Gunslinger (4), Unerring and Inhuman Tracker of Souls (4)

### **The Asylum (Leviathan)**

*“Can’t sleep clowns will eat me, Can’t sleep clowns will eat me, Can’t sleep clowns will eat me...”*

The Asylum is an enigma. They aren’t trying to escape, nor are they reveling in their sin. The asylum seems to be dedicated to keeping people here. Several places are rumored to be their base of operation, but no one knows for sure. In fact, the only definitely known employee is The Triggerman.

People captured by The Asylum come back changed. They no longer display any of the power associated with Vice or Virtue, yet they remain. They do display a fierce devotion to the cause of the Lifers though, and it is through them that any details of The Asylum are known at all.

The Asylum, where ever it is, is antiseptically clean and uniformly white or pastel. It is full of people in latex gloves, surgical masks, white coats, and soothing voices. Their seems to be a hierachal structure with “Interns” at the bottom, “Nurses” in the middle, and “Doctors” and “The Director” at the top. Any one else is a “patient.”

On occasion one hears rumors about Interns accompanying The Triggerman on Recovery/Rescue Missions. Whether or not there is any truth to these rumors remains to be seen.

# Pulp Adventures in a Hard Solar System

By Stefan Livingstone Shirley

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## Pulp Adventures in a Hard Solar System

The idea is this; Pulp and Noir are set in the real world; this is set in an at least semi-realistic sci-fi world. Near future; interplanetary travel not interstellar travel (yet, I plan on getting there); "slug" throwers, not laser pistols; no terraforming (yet)...

Technology I think is appropriate includes: clones, gene therapy and splicing, cyberspace, and any cutting edge technology available now taken up a few notches. No "cold sleep" though. Not quite as as high a tech level as Transmetropolitan, but pretty close to that of Blade Runner.

While I don't generally read or watch them, multi-generational epics have always intrigued me from an RP standpoint. Whether or not I ever run this game long enough for such things remains to be seen. However, the setting does include a history and a future. The past includes Atlantis and Lovecraft Country, while the future holds jump gates and first alien contacts. This is [Risus](#), so I'll paint in broad enough strokes that it can be played for laughs or cutting satire, or even gasp played as serious as Roy Batty.

### Antagonists (or Protagonists, depends on your point of view.)

**The Corporation(s):** They own everything you know? They manufacture all the props and "Tools of the Trade." They are the banks and the resort hotels. They are the new feudal lords of a solar system in decline.

**The Terran Federal Government (TFG):** After China made it into space and US policies of nuclear blackmail coerced the UN into line. ..Well, things changed; martial law got the "home of the brave" through a couple of elections while US money and Chinese manpower put the first colonies on the Moon and Mars. The EEC community opened space to the average Joe, though. The colony ships Rutan and Branson headed out to Jupiter and firmly established themselves as a new power within only a few decades.

**Obligatory Psychic Conspiracy:** At the upper levels of the FTG and a handful of Corporations there exists the beginning of a web of intrigue that stretches beyond the Asteroid Belt. Its limits are unknown, and its existence is a ruthlessly maintained secret. ..Be sure to know where your foil beanie is...

**The Lunar Revolutionary Front/League/Coalition/Alliance/Confederacy/et. al.:** Eventually all those colonies on all those moons got tired of the imperialist charlatans and "Yankee Traders" of the TFG and The Corporations. The TFG wasted no time in stomping on the embers of revolt though. When nukes were fired at Io, the Jupiter colonies joined the fray. In the end the superior resources of the TFG won the day though. Now the revolution is in pieces; scattered and distrustful.

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**Edgers & Belters & Plutos, Oh My!**: In the Asteroid Belt, on the moons of Uranus and Neptune, and even as far away as Pluto there are those who refuse to acknowledge the existence or power of the TFG. These are homesteaders, spacefareing Bedouins, and bandits. In some cases "Green Ships" eke out an existence moving from port to port throughout the solar system selling genetically engineered exotic fruits and vegetables. Ever seen a tomato grown in zero gravity?

**Crazed Cultists**: In bygone eons dark gods from before time ruled the infant universe. As worlds like Earth were born their power waned, but their memory remained. Today there are mortals touched by these beings. Foul cults worship and sacrifice to their forbidden masters in an effort to return the primordial gods to power. Ia! Ia!

And what of the rumors of some dread intelligence under the surface of Pluto? Who or what is Yuggoth?

I leave the actual Eldritch Horrors honored by the Crazed Cultists to the twisted minds of the GMs. Given the interplanetary nature of this game, some possibilities should become immediately apparent to a Call of Cthulhu RPG fan.

## Rules

Go to the official site and download [Risus](#) now. We'll be here when you get back.

Ok. I love [Risus](#). I love vanilla ice cream. I love vanilla ice cream with Oreo crumbs even more. [Risus](#) with Advanced Options is like that. It is the difference between your favorite ice cream, and your favorite ice cream *with your favorite topping mixed right in!*

I recommend purchasing your [Risus](#) Companion today. Personally, I would use Lucky Shots & Questing Dice, Sidekicks and Shield-Mates, and Boxcars & Breakthroughs. I'm less sure of Eye of the Tiger, but I think it would likely fit in fine, too.

I have a couple of House Rules that I need to explain here. First and simplest is that I will use the Sidekick and Shield-Mates rules for the PCs' ship as well. Whoever contributes the most dice becomes the ships owner and/or captain, but all the "ship" dice go into a pool that the GM will use to create the ship in a manner similar to an NPC. Let's face it The Enterprise, The Millenium Falcon, The Serenity... They were all characters in their own ways. Of course, a ship with an AI might be a PC itself!

Next is a minor Rescaling and what I call "The Funkiest Die." The Rescaling is as follows: 4 a cinch, 8 a challenge for a pro, 15 a heroic challenge, 20 a challenge for a master, etc.

## The Funkiest Die

# Pulp Adventures in a Hard Solar System

By Stefan Livingstone Shirley

The much maligned and presumably lonely d4... I incorporated the d4 to provide a scale of NPC below the PCs without using single d6s consistently. The d4 represents the average mook or citizen, while the d6 and above represent the heroic PCs and truly nasty villains that fate dictates they oppose.

## All those other Funky Dice

Pulp Adventures in a Hard Solar System uses the d4, d6, d8, d10, and d12. Such GM nightmares as the d20 and d30 are not used. Honest. Tentacles? Tentacled Horror [5d20]? I don't know what you are talking about. Perhaps we need to increase your dosage.

## Double-Pumping on the first d8... wait, no...

Double-Pumping works almost as normal, except that Double-Pump Clichés start using the d8 instead of the d6.

## Which brings us to Character Generation

Players can not purchase Funky Dice at Character Generation, except where noted above. The die pool still consists of 10 dice as normal (plus any bonus dice for Hooks & Tales). I recommend requiring Hooks & Tales bonus dice be spent on Double- Pumps, Lucky Shots, Questing Dice, Ships, Sidekicks, or Shield-Mates.

There are a couple of different ways to spread the 10 dice around that I recommend. 3,3,2,2 or 4,2,2,2. If you are not playing this specifically for laughs, I don't recommend the use of the "Classic Countdown" of 4,3,2,1. That Cliché (1) is apt to be more of a curse in a serious game than a help. However, if I was running the game for laughs I would *require* a cliché of (1)!

Alternatively, you might make that 1 die Cliché something like this:

### **Captain Rip "Cord" MacCordian:**

Capt. Cord has put a lot of work in to his reputation as a horrible morning person. He has carefully cultivated this reputation for many years to no avail.

**Tramp Bulk Freighter Captain (4), Womanizing Gambler (3), Gunslinger (2), Cranky Morning Person (1)**

The Cliché with only one die does not necessarily have to be a "positive" trait that they suck at, but a "negative" trait they suck at. Capt. Cord is actually a pretty friendly and chipper person in the morning, but he tries to give the impression that he isn't.

And yes, [d8] and (2d6) cost the same for PCs *at character generation*.

## **Speaking of Clichés...**

<http://www.guyhoyle.net/risus/PulpCliches.htm>

# Pulp Adventures in a Hard Solar System

By Stefan Livingstone Shirley

My philosophy is, “if it ain’t broke don’t fix it.” Guy Hoyle’s list of Pulp Clichés works just fine for this setting with very little alteration. Different GMs will want to exclude certain Clichés, and some might only be appropriate if you decide Mars and/or Venus have native life. If that’s your thing go for it! In particular I recommend the Weird Stories, Villains, Crime Does Not Pay, Western, and (most of the) General Clichés.

Version 2.1: I’ve added a modified list of these pulpy clichés as an appendix.

<http://www.guyhoyle.net/risus/>

Check out the rest of the site, too!

The only thing I need to add is the specific clichés that require Double-Pumps.

**Telepath** (communicating with only your mind, mind reading, being slightly touched)

**Telekinetic** (impersonating a poltergeist, choking people, possibly starting fires)

**Medium** (seeing things that aren’t there, talking to dead relatives, wearing black)

**Cult Sorcerer/Priest/Poobah** (violating natural law like a frat boy crashing a HS prom, insane cackling, summoning powers that ought not be summoned)

My vision of psychic activity in general is inspired very much by Babylon 5 and Firefly.

If you are stumped for clichés checkout the other fan sites on the list at the official [Risus](#) site. Also get the damn Companion already! It will only add to your enjoyment of the game.

## GM Section

**Funky Dice:** Important GM characters/challenges/etc. are built with 60- 72 points. Dice available are d4, d6, d8, d10, and d12 *only* (and handfuls of d20s for those things that cultists tend to call up without a plan for putting down). Characters with d4s represent the average citizen, while heroes (like the PCs) are d6s. In general, a single cliché of 1 to 5 dice represents unnamed NPCs. Sometimes a named civilian might be required who won’t compete with or outshine the PCs. In these cases the GM is encouraged to build such characters with 10-12 d4s.

Funky Rules of Thumb:

- 1) PCs do not receive Funky Dice at Character Generation (except as previously noted).
- 2) NPCs will not generally have more than one Funky cliché.
- 3) It might be helpful to think of it like this:

Citizen or Mook                   d4

Hero or Named Thug               d6

Psychics and Masterminds       d8

Genetic Monstrosity              d10

Eldritch Horror                   d12

The d8 or d10 might be just the thing for that Archvillian at the end of a story, too.

## Appendix I

# Pulp Adventures in a Hard Solar System

By Stefan Livingstone Shirley

**Boxcars & Breakthroughs:** When I posted a question to the [Risustalk](#) mailing list about this combination of Advanced Options, they were all nice enough to ignore me. I suspected that meant I had probably not read the Companion closely enough. Sure enough, when I went back to review it my answer was waiting for me. Sorry guys.

Due to the Rescaling explained previously, I believe it will be necessary to change a “Boxcar” to a 4 (instead of a 6). The Boxcar & Breakthroughs rule remains unchanged. (These rules appear in full in the Risus Companion. In short if all of your dice come up “Boxcars” then you have experienced a “Breakthrough” and may role again, adding the result.)

Alternatively, the GM might rule that a boxcar is whatever a die’s highest value is (4, 6, 8, 10, 12) or It’s still 6 and d4 norms are out in the cold.

**[Ships,] Sidekicks, and Shield-Mates:** Each player who is a crew (party) member on a ship may spend dice on said Ship. Each player can buy a separate cliché for the ship. Lucky Shots may also be bought for this ship using the player’s dice bought (rather than the dice spent).

Example: The first player splurges on the parties ship and spends 1 regular die, and both bonus dice on the ship (at three dice spent in total he looks like a shoe in for ship’s owner and captain):

Tramp Freighter Full of Surprises (3), Quirky AI (3), Heavy Duty Shields 5\*, Lucky Shots 3, Concealed Compartments (1).

The player spent 3 of their dice to buy 9 dice for the ship.

The second character is playing the crew mechanic, but only drops 1 for:  
Highly Modified Engine that only I and God can keep running [1], Redundant Backup systems 5.\*

The player spent 1 of their dice to buy 3 dice for the ship.

And so on, but as of now we have: Tramp Freighter Full of Surprises (3), Quirky AI (3), Concealed Compartments (1), Highly Modified Engine that only I and God can keep running [1], Redundant Backup systems 5\*, Heavy Duty Shields 5\* Lucky Shots 3.

\*Represented by Questing Dice. In the case of the shields, these may only be used in asteroid fields and ship-to-ship combats. The "Backup Systems" are only for emergency engine repairs, usually on the move.

Sidekicks & Shield-mates is from the Risus Companion. Briefly, a player may exchange dice of their own to create an allied NPC (or in this case, a ship). This exchange is on a 1 to 3 ratio.

## Sample characters and ships:

- Loyal TFG Citizen (3d4)
- Inhuman(e) Space Pirate Captain (3d8)
- TFG Interceptor Craft (1d10)
- Super Soldier run amok (3d10)

# Pulp Adventures in a Hard Solar System

By Stefan Livingstone Shirley

- Fenster S. Pigeon, "The Fence": Fence( 4d4), Stool Pigeon(3d4), Rumormonger (2d4), Upstanding Citizen (1d4). ..Two 3d Thugs, or one 6d gang; depends on season and situation.
- Elder God Called Up By Mad Cultist [5d20], Innocent Catholic School Girl (d4)<sup>1</sup>

## Appendix II

**Noir-ish Sci-Fi Influences<sup>2</sup>:** Movies & TV: Red Dwarf, Cowboy Bebop, Outland, Blade Runner, Slipstream, Firefly, maybe the Aliens movies, Akira, Patlabor, Appleseed... Novels (or short stories) by Alexander Jablakov, Philip K. Dick, H.P. Lovecraft...

I obviously recommend The Risus Companion, but it isn't strictly necessary. The rules from it that are used are simple enough to require little explanation. I use for reference and inspiration d20 Modem and d20 Future as well. Most d20 products are readily available and all those classes are easily adapted to clichés. Other sci-fi games with a greater or lesser amount of influence include Star Wars (WEG), Red Dwarf (Deep 7), Blue Planet (Biohazard), Cyberpunk 2020 (R. Talosorian), Star Trek (FASA), Star Frontiers (TSR), Kromosome (TSR), and probably a couple I just can't remember.



Brought to you by: I.O.R. Member #176.

## Appendix the Third: Oh, that is so cliché!

What follows is a modified list stolen shamelessly from Guy Hoyle with only minor changes and additions.

<sup>1</sup> Hey, those Cultists are a twisted lot; what do want?

<sup>2</sup> I trust I don't have to list actual Noir and detective fiction on this list. I mean, I've used the terms Noir and Pulp enough, no?

# Pulp Adventures in a Hard Solar System

By Stefan Livingstone Shirley

Hacker: Virtual breaking and entering, changing grades, violating FCC regs, money laundering, war chalking

Stage Magician: sleight of hand, misdirection, the hand is quicker than the eye, sawing people in half without hurting them, make dramatic gestures, wear tuxedo and top hat, pull rabbit out of hat

Gold-digger: trade money for love, seduce the rich and elderly, disguise true nature, fall in love for real with hero.

Jaded millionaire playboy/girl: throws around lots of cash, seen it all, drink gallons of champagne, expect to be waited on

Circus Performer: walk tightrope, get shot out of cannon, swing from trapeze

Shell-shocked Veteran of The Colonial Wars: Terrified by loud noises, use rifles and bayonettes, reminisce about the war, nightmares

Movie Star: look glamorous, idolized by millions, sign autograph, memorize lines/blocking, party into the wee small hours, seduce

Stunt Man: survive a great fall, throw fake punch, escape from crashing vehicle, slide along a bar, look kinda like a movie star

Nosy Reporter: sniff out a scoop, drink like fish, smoke like chimney, bang out a story, protect sources, transcribe conversation

Aviator/Aviatrix: fly anything, tinker with engine, storm barns, make an emergency landing

Concert Pianist: Virtuoso Performance, nimble fingers, impeccable evening wear

Professional Athlete: run, swim, jump, throw, wrestle, be a good sport

Daredevil: Escape from crashing vehicle, drive or fly any vehicle, survive a great fall, leap across crevice, hang onto fedora

Lawman: Arrest criminals, interrogate criminals, drink gallons of bad coffee, smoke like a chimney, find donut shop

Linguist: Know obscure languages, translate ancient inscriptions, pronounce the unpronounceable

Stowaway or Hobo: hop tramp freighter, sing mournful songs, panhandle, do odd jobs, war chalking, drink anything alcoholic

Physician: Diagnose illness, make house call, treat disease, stitch up wound, prescribe remedy

# Pulp Adventures in a Hard Solar System

By Stefan Livingstone Shirley

Psychiatrist: Ask pointless or infuriating questions, analyze neurosis, make everything relate to sex

TFG Soldier: clean rifle, fire rifle, know about tactics and strategy, sleep whenever you can, stay awake during guard duty, gloat at Colonials

Clergyman: long-winded, preachy, forgive sinners, sermonize

University student: Booze it up, chase the opposite sex, cram for test

World-weary gunslinger: never refuse a challenge, shoot from the hip, never settle down, drink plenty o' redeye, ride the range, Colonial sympathies

Saloon Girl: Have a heart of gold, "Buy a lady a drink, cowboy?", dance with ruffians, unspecified services, fall in love with handsome stranger

School Marm: Teach local kids and illiterate adults, hide true good looks, be prim and proper

Colonial: Protect lunar assets, hate Earth and all her rules, have beautiful daughter who's in love with someone you hate

Hard-Boiled Private Detective: broke all the time, never give up on a case, drink gallons of bad coffee, incorruptible, doggedly pursue clues

Criminal: Pistol-whip victims, brutalize victims, take it on the lam, never squeal, plan heist, steal things

Reformed Gangster: Old contacts, streetwise, keep nose clean, frequently suspected by police, not trusted by other crooks

Gun Moll: Heavy makeup, sexy in a cheap and tawdry way, cynical

Gangster: Dark suit with black shirt & white tie, execute squealers, carry out the orders of Mr. Big

G-Man: Agent of TFG law enforcement, smoke like a chimney, snappy black suit, trenchcoat

Colonial Police Detective: Interrogate suspect, deduce, flash badge, drink gallons of stale coffee, resent G-men trampling your "juris-my-diction"

Lawyer: Make deal, interrogate, know the law, twist the law, find loophole, "Objection!"

Informant: Know dangerous secrets, trade information for money

Fence: Receive hot property, make deals with crooks

# Pulp Adventures in a Hard Solar System

By Stefan Livingstone Shirley

Gadgeteer<sup>1</sup>: fix almost anything but it looks weird, invent half-baked contraptions, put together intricate gadgets out of common objects, stammer and sweat around women

Rocket Pilot: Count backwards, look good in uniform, make command decisions, snappy commands, seek out new worlds, carry out mission

Ship's Engineer: Fix engines, complain about engines, hide still, know every nut and bolt in ship

Absent-minded professor<sup>1</sup>: forget head if it wasn't attached, invent miraculous but troublesome device or substance, leave isolation chamber doors ajar, accidentally shrink the kids

Ghost Chaser: Know all about ghosts, set up cameras to catch ghosts on film, disprove fake ghosts, get rid of real ghosts

Occult Scholar: Know weird phenomena, remember strange names, find ancient incantation

Bookshop owner: Obtain obscure titles, dust shelves, know where any book in the shop is, know what's in all the books

Antiquarian: Quote from obscure authors, know obscure facts, cite reference

Librarian: Sort books, find newspaper articles, shh!, find obscure information, repair books

Anthropologist: Know aboriginal folktales, know tribal customs, eat disgusting things, speak obscure languages

Masked Crusaders<sup>1</sup>: Solving unusual crimes or unraveling bizarre mysteries, Masked Crusaders are the predecessors of the superhero. Though usually possessed of great strength and cunning, they may also have a strange, signature power (like the ability to cloud men's minds or immunity to pain) or a special gadget (anaesthetic dart gun, smoke grenades).

Masked Adventurer: wear strange costume, foil dastardly crime, track criminal to lair, duke it out, escape from certain death, protect secret identity, drive flashy vehicle, send clueless assistants on senseless tasks, rescue clueless assistants

Clueless Assistant: Perform senseless tasks for masked adventurer, wonder about senseless tasks, blunder into traps

Ronin: Struggle with conscious, quote the Buddha, kick ass single handedly and armed with antiques, hunt and be hunted by servants of Oriental Masterminds

And of course, the ever popular “ ‘blank’ Sidekick.”

**Smile, smile, and be a villain...**

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<sup>1</sup> Optionally Double-Pump.

# Pulp Adventures in a Hard Solar System

By Stefan Livingstone Shirley

Bloodthirsty Fiend: wield axe/knife/noose, surprise victim, hide from pursuers, insanely strong, break into locked rooms

Sinister Warlord: conquer the solar system, devise fiendish tortures, utilize exotic devices, create elaborate plots, explain plan to enemy before you kill him, hire henchman without explaining what happened to the dozens of other henchmen you hired, secret escape route, destroy secret base

Oriental Mystic<sup>1</sup>: Hypnotize do-gooders, be inscrutable, create illusion, quote Confucius and Lao Tsu, order around local Yakuza or Triad gangs

Snivelling Toady: Cringe and kowtow before the Master, fulfill his bidding to the letter, apprehend hero's girlfriend, menace droolingly, inadvertently give away the Master's plans, bungle job

Thug, Zombie, Mook, Villainous Red Shirt, Frankenstein's Monster, Experiment Gone Horribly Wrong, Rogue Cyborg, Death Dealing Robot Assassin, Ganger, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Once again, possibly a Double-Pump.

## Summoner

The Summoner Cliché is paid for as a Double-Pump, but it is not a Double-Pump. “Summoner (1)” costs 2 points.

## Tools

Suggestions? I’m thinking athames, rods, staffs, and wands, things that don’t require preparation. Things that aren’t expendable, but are still portable. Ritual garb?

## Procedure for Summoning

### The Preparation Roll

This roll is un-pumped and acts to aid The Summoning Roll. Sixes are added to the next roll.

### The Summoning Roll

This roll must be pumped in order to pay for the summoned creature. 1d buys 3d as per Sidekicks and Shield-mates. One of these three dice can be used to buy Questing or Lucky Dice for the critter.

### The Control Roll

On rounds subsequent to the summoning an un-pumped roll is made versus the summoned creature before the creature takes any action. If the Summoner loses he loses, he loses one die and the GM consults the table below for the summoned creature:

1 to 10	Takes no action.
11 to 15	Takes action against the summoner or their allies. (possibly resulting in another lost die!)
16 to 20	Total loss of control, no further control rolls! Probably attacking summoner as above.
21 to 30	As above, plus no further dismissal rolls!
31 +	As above, but conflict with summoner is reversed!

### The Dismissal Roll

Instead of a Control Roll a Summoner may choose to dismiss his summoned creature back to whatever nether realm birthed it. The Preparation Roll will aid this roll, but if the summoner loses follow the same procedure as for The Control Roll.

### The Binding Roll

If the summoner doesn’t have specific task, but wishes to imprison a summoned creature, a Binding Roll is made after a Control Roll. The Binding Roll is versus the summoned creature and once again the control failure table should be consulted.

Difficulties and Modifiers

	Summoning	Control	Dismissal	Binding
Base summoning difficulty	15*	n/a	n/a	n/a
Permanent circle	-5	+1d	+1d	-1d
Temporary precious circle	-5	+1d	+1d	-1d
Summoned creatures name	-5	+2d	+2d	-2d
Appropriate sacrifice(s)	-5	+1d	+1d	-1d
Lucky Dice	+5	n/a	n/a	n/a
Questing Dice	+10	n/a	n/a	n/a

Lucky Dice increase the difficulty less than Questing Dice because they can be used against the Summoner during Control, Dismissal, and Binding Rolls.

Only one circle (permanent or temporary precious) is used for Summoning, Control, and Dismissal. The Summoner may not leave that circle without losing its benefit. Once a circle is broken the benefit may not be regained for the duration of the given summoning.

A second circle is used for Binding, but again only one or the other type may be used.

The penalty dice under Binding apply to the summoned creature.

Bonuses and penalties may reduce the difficulty below 5; dice totals may not be reduced below 1d.

\*Depending on the tone of the game, this number could be higher, but probably not lower.

Example Character

Lieutenant Augustus Hadley, AKA Wilbur B. Skite

New Englander Summoner (3), Reluctant Confederate Officer (2), Grifter Masquerading as a Southern Gentleman Gambler (2)

Questing Dice (avoiding vengeful pursuers) [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Sidekick: Sgt. Tom Salt; soldier, secretary, *Yankee Spy?!* (3)

Hook: On the run from the real gentleman, his family, his neighbors, their families, and the gentleman's daughter who still hasn't quite figured out what is going on...

Tale: Lt. Hadley (whose real name is Wilbur B. Skite) never wanted to be an officer, let alone actually be involved in this dreadful war. However, he was able to convince some officers that he was part of their unit to escape pursuit, but now he can't quite figure a way out of this new mess. The gentleman and his friends and family won't dare move against him in the military for fear of the publicity it might attract, but poor "August" is stuck in a situation where he has to keep writing "his darling belle" and keeping up

appearances or he'll be hung as a spy. The alternative... Well at least his secretive secretary has expressed no desire to send him to battle or hang him from a magnolia tree!

Wilbur's summoned creatures are of three types: homing pigeons (usually eaten, but never very filling), sea devils (at least that's what Wilbur calls them), and spectral headless horsemen (usually used as a distraction). He learned his arcane art an upstart college in Massachusetts...

Wilbur has not yet caught on that Sgt. Salt is actually more of an ally than he realizes...  
(forgive me; I've been reading a lot of Twain this semester.)

### Notes

I'll probably use these rules for cultists calling up Cthulhu and the like as well.  
Substitute "Crazed Cultist Sorcerer (x)" for "Summoner (x)."

What other limits can we put on summoners? Specific animal or elemental types? Could the ability to summon different types of critters qualify as a "tool?" This will of course vary considerably from setting to setting.

How do people become summoners? I'm thinking there are schools for this sort of thing, or it's esoteric knowledge, or rarely inborn gifts.

## Summoner

A Summoner (actual Cliché may vary) uses elaborate rituals to call forth creatures from other dimensions to assist him and his compatriots. This Cliché can be bought as a Double-Pump, but doesn't need to be.

### Tools of the Trade

Proper tools are extremely important to the Summoner. Specific rituals for different types of creatures are required. Depending on the setting specific circles and wards may be required as well. Then there are sacrifices and offerings, what material all this stuff is made from, possible priceless ancient grimoires, and all the ritual paraphernalia. I'm thinking of incense, athames, rods, staffs, and wands, and ritual garb. The utility and power of the Summoner will depend on how strict and specific a GM wants to be.

### Procedure for Summoning

#### The Preparation Roll

This roll acts to aid The Summoning Roll. Sixes are added to the next roll much like the "Teaming Up" rules. Note that this will not always be possible, and the GM decides when it is both appropriate and possible.

#### The Summoning Roll (Now also the Binding, Control, and Dismissal Roll!)

The Summoner decides what kind of creature (or creatures) they want to summon. If the GM approves it the creature is built with the "Sidekicks and Shield-Mates" rules (1:3) and a number of dice equal to the Summoner's Cliché (if the Summoning Roll is pumped then the number of dice equals the pumped total). All of these dice need not be spent.

The Summoning Roll is a Risus Combat. If the Summoner wins, the creature performs as intended. If the creature wins... Fear the merciless GM. Attempts can be made by the Summoner to gain control of their summoned creature or dismiss it, but these rolls will be at the Cliché total after the pump.

I can see attempts to banish a demon prone to gambling using an "Inappropriate Cliché."

Summoners often form teams to summon powerful creatures, but only the Team Leader's dice count towards the creatures construction. In this case a team member might not even be able to summon, but still have an appropriate Cliché. "Mad Cultist Sorcerer" and "Fanatical Cultists" forming a Team to summon their "Blasphemous God."

### Bonus Dice

A generous GM may award bonus dice for having exceptional Tools (+1d) to work with or the Creature's True Name (+2d). Not that this is a two way street, too. Summoners do not want the creatures they summon to discover their own true name!

### Example Character

Lieutenant Augustus Hadley, AKA Wilbur B. Skite

New Englander Summoner (4), Reluctant Confederate Officer (3), Grifter Masquerading as a Southern Gentleman Gambler (3)

Questing Dice (avoiding vengeful pursuers) [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Sidekick: Sgt. Tom Salt; soldier, secretary, *Yankee Spy?*! (3)

Hook: On the run from the real gentleman, his family, his neighbors, their families, and the gentleman's daughter who still hasn't quite figured out what is going on...

Tale: Lt. Hadley (whose real name is Wilbur B. Skite) never wanted to be an officer, let alone actually be involved in this dreadful war. However, he was able to convince some officers that he was part of their unit to escape pursuit, but now he can't quite figure a way out of this new mess. The gentleman and his friends and family won't dare move against him in the military for fear of the publicity it might attract, but poor "August" is stuck in a situation where he has to keep writing "his darling belle" and keeping up appearances or he'll be hung as a spy. The alternative... Well at least his secretive secretary has expressed no desire to send him to battle or hang him from a magnolia tree!

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Wilbur has not yet caught on that Sgt. Salt is actually more of an ally than he realizes...

(forgive me; I've been reading a lot of Twain this semester. Augustus has been adjusted for this new iteration.)

The Wayback Machine - <http://web.archive.org/web/20051107223102/http://www.eyeballkid.co.za:80/ironsides.html>

# RISUS: Ironsides

Written by [Dylan Craig](#). This document may be downloaded and reproduced for non-commercial use only.

<a href="#">Dice Rolling and Mishaps</a>	<a href="#">Life Points</a>	<a href="#">Armour</a>
<a href="#">Using Several Callings at Once</a>	<a href="#">Life Points in Combat</a>	<a href="#">Healing and Recovery</a>
<a href="#">Non-Cooperative Teams</a>	<a href="#">Wound Dice</a>	<a href="#">The Effects of Old Age</a>
<a href="#">Bonus Dice</a>	<a href="#">Shock Dice</a>	<a href="#">Religion, Sorcery and Witchcraft</a>
<a href="#">Aimed Attacks</a>	<a href="#">Missile Weapons</a>	<a href="#">Designer's Notes</a>

## 1. Introduction

The 17th Century was an era rife with opportunities for heroes, villains, adventurers, idealists, and vagabonds alike. It was the time of dour Scots witch-hunters, gallant French Musketeers and fearsome Spanish Conquistadores; of the Great Plague, the Thirty Years' War, and the Salem Witch Trials; and of the formulation of the scientific theories of Kepler, Newton and Boyle. The rules that follow are intended as an aid for running a campaign set in any of the multitudinous facets of the 17th Century.

The basic rules are those of the excellent RISUS system (written by [S. John Ross](#) and available on his website, [The Blue Room](#)). It is recommended that all optional rules (as specified in version 1.4 of the system) regarding double-pumps, multiple dice types, etc., are used. In addition, the following new rules apply.

### Definitions:

- *Calling* is used as a substitute for *Cliche*, in keeping with the atmosphere of the setting.
- Callings should be chosen such that they end in nouns; hence, a character may have Callings as a *Blacksmith* (3), a *Loudmouthed Drunkard* (5), and a *Fervent Royalist* (2).
- The Calling which is being used to provide the dice in any round of contestation (i.e., opposed roll), is called the *Active Calling*. This is thus the score which drops by one die when a character loses an opposed roll.

## 2. Dice Rolling and Mishaps

When rolling dice to generate a total, any roll showing only 1's and 2's can be considered to indicate that a Mishap has occurred. The results of a Mishap are usually twice as bad as a simple failure; in a swordfight, for instance, a fighter will not only lose a dice from his Active Calling, but might also lose his or her weapon or shield, or trip over a protruding stone on the ground. The exact nature of the results is up to the GM; it is suggested that these results are the kind of thing that quick thinking and a good dice roll can instantly correct: in other words, inconvenient rather than catastrophic. If the total generated by the roll is still sufficient for success, then the attempt is successful, but has some unpleasant side effect or consequence.

To prevent characters with level 1 Callings from embarrassing themselves every three attempts, any roll of a single dice is only considered to indicate a Mishap if it comes up showing a 1.

## 3. Using Several Callings at Once

If a character has two Callings that might be considered appropriate to the situation – say, both *Bare-Knuckle Pugilist* and *Village Constable* in a tavern brawl – the lower Calling may be used to provide a single bonus die to the higher. The down side of this tactic is that, should the new total be beaten in a contested roll, both Callings drop by one die. Similarly, if the higher Calling is pumped to increase the overall total, both drop in level as a result.

Multiple Callings may be judged appropriate, with each extra Calling providing a bonus dice and submitting the the rules above; however, double- and single-pump Callings cannot be combined.

*Example: Werner, the notorious Brigand of Bell's Road, is in combat with three dragoons. The GM rules that both his Highwayman (3) and Swordsman (2) Callings are appropriate to the combat, and so Werner may elect to use his Swordsman Calling to boost his Highwayman Calling by one dice, to Highwayman (4). Every time he loses a round, however, both scores drop by one level. If either is reduced to zero, he is out of the fight. If Werner were to pump his newly increased Highwayman (4) to Highwayman (5), in the round that follows his Callings would drop to 2 and 1 respectively.*

## 4. Non-Cooperative Teams

The basic RISUS rules assume that teams of combatants are coordinating their attacks, with some providing distraction while one rushes in to land a single blow. This situation may not apply if the attackers are rushing forwards in a mob, each intent on inflicting damage. In this case, each attacker

rolls separately, but with a bonus of one dice to each of their rolls. Their target rolls only once. Each attacker roll is compared against the target's single roll as if the two were in single combat, and the damage results applied normally in each case. No 'Vengeance Bonus' is given. It can be seen that in this type of brawl, superior numbers can often overwhelm a foe instantly; but, if the attackers are inferior in skill, they take much more risk of multiple casualties than if they were coordinating their attacks.

*Example: During the combat with Werner, the three dragoons each have a total of 3 dice in their attack. They could attack co-operatively, with a total skill of 5 (3 basic, +2 for having three members in the team), gaining the Vengeance Bonus if Werner somehow manages to land a blow on them, but they will only be able to wound Werner once per round. Or, they could try and mob him, each rolling on only 4 dice (3 basic, +1 for mob attack), foregoing the Vengeance Bonus but gaining the ability to wound him up to three times in a round, possibly taking him out of the fight immediately if they all manage to roll higher than he does.*

## 5. Bonus Dice

As outlined in the basic RISUS rules, exceedingly effective or well-crafted items may add to the user's effective skills when used. This should not be confused with *Wound Dice* or *Shock Dice*, which are detailed below. Bonus Dice are only granted in the case of items which make it easier to do whatever they are used for; a finely made rapier, for instance, constructed from exceptional materials and with a grip specially crafted for a particular hand, might give a Bonus Die to its user when it is used for swordplay. Note that this is a quantity which sets *this* rapier apart from *other* rapiers, not swords in general or all of weaponkind. Items with Bonus Dice, therefore, should be rare and carefully dispensed.

Temporary Bonus Dice may also be assigned by the GM for particularly effective strategies or to reflect a situation which is biased in favour of one contestant. These dice do not persist or convey any long-term benefit once the situation which prompted them is no longer in effect.

*Example: Guard Captain de Luche is fighting a mysterious band of assailants for possession of his castle. He is wielding a spear and retreating up a spiral staircase as he does so; the GM assigns a Bonus Dice to his efforts as a result of his ownership of higher ground and a weapon with a longer reach than his antagonists' swords. The Bonus Dice is added to his Old Soldier Calling of 4, which gives him a temporary Calling level of 5. Should the situation change (because he reaches a landing, for instance), he loses the Bonus Dice; if this reduces his Calling to 0, he is out of the fight.*

## 6. Aimed Attacks

A character may decide to aim for a particular part of his or her adversary in melee combat for a variety of reasons. The foe may be wearing partial armour which the character wishes to circumvent; the character may wish to disarm the foe by striking at their weapon; or, the character may wish to scar the foe's insolent face to goad them into a rage.

The extra effort and attention required for such assaults leave the character open to retaliation, however. The character making the aimed attack must temporarily drop the calling he or she is using by a number of dice to make the attack. These dice are not 'lost' - they re-appear as soon as the character switches back to a more conventional mode of attack.

Attacks aimed at the torso, limbs, or a one-handed weapon require the attacker to operate with a one die penalty; those aimed at the head, chinks in armour, groin (for the tavern brawlers out there), or a two-handed weapon, require two dice to be set aside.

The effects of successful aimed attacks should be adjudicated by the GM. They will cause the foe to lose a level from their active Calling as usual; in addition, they may cause extra Life Point loss, grant a Bonus Die for the next round, flick the foe's weapon out of his or her hand, provoke appreciative applause from onlookers, or whatever the GM deems appropriate. It is important to note that the attack was, after all, a success; the benefits of the strategem should be worthwhile.

## 7. Life Points

In order to handle the effects of illnesses, will-sapping environmental effects, and wounds delivered outside of melee combat, a system of Life Points is used. Each character is assumed to begin with 12 Life Points, which represent the reserves of strength and endurance available to the average adult. Each strongly physical Calling of *at least 3 dice* in level allows the player to increase the character's LP total by 1d6 during character creation. Should these Callings increase during play (through experience), the LP total rises by 1 point (not 1 dice) per level or dice type gained. At the GM and player's discretion, certain debilitating Hooks or Callings may also reduce the LP total by 1d6.

*Example: Herr Gurney Hollenbeck is a scholar and a gentleman whose Callings are Silver-Tongued Courtier (4), Bookworm [2], and Astronomer (2). His Life Point total is the basic 12 points. His brother Siegfried, however, has Callings which reflect his more hands-on approach: Tavern Brawler (3), Musketeer (3), Unstoppable (3), and Athlete (1). He starts the game with a basic LP total of (12 + 3d6): between 15 and 30 Life Points, depending on how the dice come up. He receives no LP benefit from his Athlete Calling because of its low level.*

## 8. Life Points in Combat

Standard combat is handled exactly as portrayed in the basic RISUS rules. However, in addition, characters who lose a round of combat may also lose Life Points, to indicate (firstly) that they have received a physical wound, and (secondly) that they may well drop from their injuries before their will and ability to fight (i.e., number of dice they roll with) is gone. Characters lose a dice roll of Life Points for every *full* 6 points by which their enemy's attack roll exceeded their own. The type of dice rolled is the same as the dice rolled by the opponent for his or her (or its!) attack.

When a character's Life Point total drops *below* 6, he or she is judged to be Seriously Wounded and must halve, rounding up, the number of dice rolled for any physical task. This penalty remains until his or her LP total rises to at least 6. At the GM's discretion, and in the case where the damage was inflicted in a single blow doing more than 6 points of damage, a Seriously Wounded character may lose an extra Life Point per round of strenuous activity until their wounds are bandaged.

When a character's Life Point total drops to 0, he or she swoons from shock and exhaustion and falls insensate. Any further injuries or blood loss which cause the character to drop to -6 Life Points or below will be fatal.

*Example: The ill-fated Holm Durrant is collaring a cutpurse when the ungrateful wretch slides a needle-tipped stiletto between his ribs. The cutpurse's attack roll was a 14; Holm rolled a mere 6. Holm's Calling drops by one die as usual, but he also loses 1d6 Life Points because the ruffian exceeded his roll by 8. Holm's LP total is a healthy 17, so he is not yet Seriously Wounded and can continue fighting without having to halve his Calling levels.*

## 9. Wound Dice

Particularly deadly weapons (such as envenomed poniards, razor-sharp scimitars, and firearms) may gain 1-2 *Wound Dice*. These dice are added to any damage dice assigned as the result of a successful combat round. Aimed attacks made at the head or bowels may also gain a Wound Dice.

*Example: Holm's reaction to the wickedness perpetrated on him by the footpad in the example above is to draw 'Quietus' - a two-foot, lead-weighted baton with hobnails driven into the shaft - from his belt. This weapon has previously been judged by the GM to be worthy of an extra Wound Dice. Every time Holm lands a blow on the thug (i.e., wins a combat round by any margin), his attack will cause an extra die of damage.*

## 10. Shock Dice

Weapons which are particularly devastating in terms of impact may have 1-2 *Shock Dice*. Examples of such weapons are firearms, polearms, weapons used from the back of a charging horse, and weapons of great mass or bulk (such as double-bladed axes). Each Shock Dice causes the loser of a contested roll to lose an extra level from the Calling they employed to make their attack roll.

*Example: Lady Caroline is surprised by an shadowy figure at her window one night. Wasting no time, she snatches an ornamental half-pike from her chamber wall and engages the intruder in desperate combat. The Assassin (for he is such) is using his Knifeman Calling of 4 dice in his attack; Lady Caroline is resisting with her Feisty Old Battleaxe Calling of 3 dice. The half-pike gains a Shock Dice as a result of its size and weight; hence, if Lady Caroline manages to land even a glancing blow, she will cause the Assassin to lose 2 levels, not the usual 1, from his Knifeman Calling.*

## 11. Missile Weapons

Ranged combat is rarely conducted as a standard opposed contest. That is to say, combatants do not attempt to wear their opponent down until he or she is at their mercy - instead, missile attacks are applied as once-offs and have their effect on the target's Life Points, instead of their Callings like a melee attack.

The single exception to this rule is when a character who is engaged in melee combat or some other contested task when he or she is shot by a third party outside the contest. In this case, the number of Shock Dice applied to the weapon's damage are subtracted from the active Calling.

The Target Number to hit a human-sized target is equal to the number of yards (or meters, or paces) between the firer and the target. This TN is then modified as follows:

Weapon is a long or shoulder arm (musket, crossbow, longbow)	TN is divided by 2
Weapon is a firearm with a rifled barrel	"
Weapon is being fired using a rest, aiming stick or brace	"
Firer spends an entire Combat Round aiming at the target	"
Target is twice the size of a human (e.g., a horse) - for each doubling in size thereafter	"
Target is half the size of a human (e.g., a dog)	TN is doubled

These modifiers are cumulative, but in an additive sense; in other words, if three conditions for dividing the TN by 2 apply, the TN is divided by 6, not 8.

Once the target is hit, the weapon's Wound Dice are applied as damage, with the usual bonus die for each full six points by which the TN was exceeded.

*Example: Lady Caroline's steward enters her chamber armed with a blunderbuss. This fearsome weapon gets 1 Bonus Die, 1 Wound Die, and 1 Shock Die. The Assassin is six paces from the Steward, and still engaged in combat with the Lady. The Steward fires immediately; his TN is 6, and he rolls (with the Bonus Die), a total of 19. He thus inflicts 3d6 damage on the Assassin (1 basic, +2 for beating the TN by 13), and the Assassin's Knifeman Calling drops by 1 level from the shock.*

## 12. Armour

Armour is divided into two categories:

Soft armour - such as a padded leather jerkin - serves mostly to cushion the user against blunt impacts, knife slashes, and the like. The effects of this armour are simple to model; characters wearing such materials may subtract 1-2 points from any Life Point loss sustained in combat or as the result of missile attacks, depending on the thickness of the armour and whether any reinforcements such as studs or plates have been sewn into it.

Hard armour, on the other hand, almost always consists of metal plate - breastplates, lobster-tail helmets, segmented gauntlets, and so on. This armour works differently to Soft armour in that it doesn't subtract from Life Point damage - instead, it contributes to a buffer of dice that are lost *instead of* Life Points and levels from the Active Calling when a combat round is lost. In other words, the loser erases *Armour levels*, rather than levels of the Calling he or she is using to fight.

The number of Armour levels a character has is equal to the number of items of hard armour he or she is wearing, as follows: helmet, breastplate or mail shirt, gauntlets, greaves, and shield. Hence, it can be seen that the highest Armour level a character can possess is 5. Although Armour level may rise and fall, its Initial value should always be noted; this value is used to calculate the protection offered against missile attacks. One Armour level is also lost for every die of Life Point damage the blow would have caused. Impacts from weapons with Shock Dice lower the Armour level by as many levels as the wearer would have lost from his or her Active Calling had they been unarmoured. Should the wearer not have enough Armour points to soak all the effects of a blow, what points he or she has are first used to negate Life Point loss, and then to negate the loss of levels from the Active Calling.

The loss of Armour levels does not represent a physical deterioration in the armour; rather, it is interpreted as general battering which contributes to the exhaustion and fatigue of the wearer. When enough damage of this sort has been done, the wearer is slowed up and concussed enough that the attackers can begin to place their blows on unarmoured areas with greater ease, or that subsequent impacts on the armour are painful enough to make the armour itself redundant.

This being said, every time a character's Armour is reduced to zero, one piece of armour has been destroyed or caved in, and must be discarded, leading to a 1-point reduction in the character's Initial Armour level until it is replaced. Armour levels regenerate at the same rate as lost Calling levels - one point every half hour. This can be interpreted as the period it takes to readjust straps, buckles, etc., hammer out dents, and massage bruised body parts back to functionality. The number of points regained per half-hour is increased by 1 for every assistant the wearer has in this respect.

Against missile weapons, Hard armour works differently than it does in melee combat. When an armoured character is struck by a projectile, a d6 should be rolled; if this roll is greater than the character's Armour level, the attack has struck an unprotected part of the body and the armour has no effect. If this is not the case, and a part of the body protected by armour plate is struck, Life Point damage is rolled normally, but the total is *halved*.

*Example: Thatcher is battling for his life against a highland warrior armed with a fearsome two-handed sword. The highlander beats Thatcher's defence by six points; in addition, her engraved claymore gains a Wound Die and a Shock Die. Thatcher is wearing a helmet, breastplate, and gauntlets, giving him an Armour level of 3. The fearsome impact of the claymore would have caused him to lose 2 dice from his Active Calling (1 basic, +1 for the Shock Die) as well as 2d6 Life Points (1 for the 6-point margin of success, +1 for the Wound Die) if he was unarmoured; as is, his Armour level of 3 soaks up the Life Point loss and one of the lost Calling levels, leaving him battered and reeling but still on his feet. He will gain no further benefit from his armour until he has a chance to regain his wits.*

### 13. Healing and Recovery

The time unit for the recovery of Calling levels lost as the result of contestation is the hour.

Lost levels recover quickest when a character is resting, or otherwise undistracted. If the character is not resting, but travelling or engaged in some other mild exertion, the recovery time is one hour for every die regained. Any strenuous exertion during this time - such as combat, or another contestation using that Calling - negates any recovery which would have taken place at the end of that hour. If the character is resting, the effectiveness of the healing process is doubled; two dice return every hour.

If a character has lost levels in multiple Callings, these levels return simultaneously; the character doesn't have to wait for one to return to its initial level before another begins to recover. Lost Life Points are recovered at the rate of one per day of rest, or one point per two days of mild exertion, with the same provisos as above. The full-time attention of an assistant - be it a nurse, counsellor, or drinking partner - doubles the rate of recovery. Each assistant can affect only one Calling at a time.

Characters who have been reduced to 0 in a Calling have an additional hurdle ahead of them; their confidence has been shaken, and they will take longer to recover. Their healing time is doubled for each Calling that has been reduced to 0, and they must rest for 1d6 extra hours before the healing process begins. Similar rules apply to characters whose Life Points have been reduced to less than 6; their healing time is doubled.

These rules are biased towards Callings whose use is instant in nature, such as fighting skills or academic debate. More intricate Callings, whose resolutions are measured in days or weeks - such as the *Strategist*, *Composer*, or *Sculptor* Callings - use these time frames, rather than hours, as their time units for recovery. At the GM's discretion, the rest and exertion conditions might be reversed for certain Callings to reflect situations where getting out and keeping busy is better than sulking indoors.

*Example: Freida is a Poet (4) and Object of Adoration (3) whose prestige and self-esteem have suffered as the result of being outmanoeuvred by a sloe-eyed Iberian hussy - first, professionally, and then in the bed of her lover. The resulting contestations, which have taken place at the rate of one round a day for the last week, have left both of these Callings at zero. The time unit for recovery is the same as the time unit for the contestation: days.*

*Freida will thus take 1d6 days to begin recovery of her lost Callings, and will then begin to regain them at the rate of 1 level every day if she stays cooped up in her inn room, pacing and hurling crockery. If her initial roll was 4, she will be her usual self again once 8 days have passed. If she decides to get out of town for a week instead, and rents a cottage on the coast, the time it takes per recovered die will be halved; in other words, she will be penning vitriolic sonnets again in four days, and making village lads trip over*

*their rods by the afternoon of the third day. If her friend and confidante Svensen is around to keep her company and lug her writing desk around, this time will be halved again, but he can only concentrate on getting one of her Callings back to its initial level at a time.*

*Svensen, as it happens, is recovering from being beaten senseless by his Patron after presenting him with an unflattering portrait. The calling he used as the basis for his defence in this confrontation, Streetwise Gutter Artist (5), would have recovered at the rate of four dice an hour while staying at the cottage under Frieda's care - 2 dice every hour for resting, doubled for the presence of an assistant. As soon as his Life Points are all back, Svensen will be well enough to settle the score with his Patron.*

## 14. The Effects of Old Age

Whether through character concept or the progress of campaign time, it may become important to be able to exactly determine the effects of advancing age on a character's health, Callings, and performance in various fields. In *Ironsides*, Age is treated exactly like a Calling; in other words, it has a level, and can be expressed as a variety of different conditions, all with the same effects, such as *Wheezing* (4), *Spry* (3), *Middle-aged* (2), *Doddering* (3), and so on. This Calling should be recorded separately on the character record sheet, so that it is not confused with regular Callings.

The number of dice in a character's *Age* Calling is subtracted from all a character's existing Callings; when the character has as many Age levels as they have levels in their highest Calling, they succumb to old age and die. Each Age level gained also causes the loss of 1d6 Life Points; if this loss causes a character's Life Points to drop below 6 or even to 0, the normal penalties and rules are applied. At the GM's discretion, Age may also be used as an actual Calling or even a booster, to represent the experience and wisdom of characters who have 'seen it all'.

*Age* level is calculated as follows:

- For every 5 full years of life after age 30, a character has a cumulative 1 in 6 chance of picking up their first *Age* level.
- Once they have gained this level, they will get another level every 1d6 years.

Hence, it can be seen that old age will claim characters at ages anywhere from 40 to 96; in addition, the system allows for increased life expectancy among the active and skilled.

*Example: After many years on the road, Werner has reached the age of 35, and has his first 1 in 6 chance of accumulating his first *Age* level. Fortune smiles on him, however; he rolls a 4, and is thus unaffected. Five years later, now aged 40, he rolls again, this time with a 2 in 6 chance; again, he succeeds. At age 45, he rolls under the cumulative chance (now at 3 in 6); he gains his first *Age* level, and records it as Stiff Joints (1). All Werner's Callings now lose 1 level; his Highwayman Calling, for instance, is recorded as (5/4), to reflect that while its initial level is 5, he can only roll 4 dice for it. Werner then gains another *Age* level each 1d6 years. The GM rolls the dice to see when the next few *Age* levels will appear, and rolls 2, 2, 5, 3. Werner will gain another level at ages 47, 49, 54, and 57. At 57, he will have 5 *Age* levels, as many as his highest Calling, and will pass away at some time during that year.*

## 15. Religion, Sorcery and Witchcraft

The use of these rules is optional, and only appropriate to campaigns whose themes include the supernatural. Please read the [disclaimer](#) at the foot of this document if the material below offends your moral or religious beliefs.

<a href="#">Types of Faith</a>	<a href="#">Creating Effects</a>	<a href="#">Effect Modifiers</a>	<a href="#">Trappings</a>	<a href="#">Ingredients</a>
<a href="#">Recovering Faith</a>	<a href="#">Conflicting Effects</a>	<a href="#">Spiritual Combat</a>	<a href="#">Agents</a>	<a href="#">Sorcerous Mishaps</a>

The mechanics for supernatural actions in *Ironsides* are the same for each of the three branches of belief, and operate using a single Calling - *Faith*. Faith may be developed as a single- or double-pump skill, but characters possessing Faith must choose one of three things to have faith in: *Religion*, *Sorcery*, or *Witchcraft*. Anyone may have these Callings, given an appropriate character background, but they may only have one Faith at a time. The single exception to this case comes in the case of characters with the *Sorcery* Calling, who are known as Sorcerors.

Sorcerors *may* also have either of the other types of *Faith*, as long as this Calling is developed to the same level as their *Sorcery* and remains at the same level throughout the character's life. Sorcerors who also have *Religion* are so-called 'white wizards' like Roger Bacon, who regard their mastery of magical spirits as a gift from the Almighty. Sorcerors who also practice *Witchcraft* are so-called 'black magicians', who have sold their souls to Satan but who hold more powers over the denizens of Hell than the average Witch does. This exception applies only to Sorcerors, and is an optional, and fairly expensive option for them to take - the additional *Faith* must be purchased using the player's pool of character creation dice as if it was a separate Calling.

In this setting, the overwhelming majority of supernatural powers affect living creatures in some way, and are usually subtle in appearance. While a Warlock may summon a ball of infernal hellfire into his hand and hurl it at an enemy, most supernatural effects are only noticeable through their effects on the target. Good examples are the blessings and curses used by Priests and Witches.

All supernatural activities and constructs are called **Effects**. Effects are treated similarly to Callings in that they are expressed as a number of dice. These Effects are added to the profile of the character, area, or being they are cast upon. Examples of stand-alone Effects are: *Pious Resolve* (1), *Fertility* (3), *Ghostly Tutor* (2), *Chill Wind* (2), *Bad Luck* (5), and so on. Effects can also be used to modify Callings; a Sorcerer might enchant an underling so that her *Bodyguard* (4) Calling increases to *Bodyguard* (7), for instance.

Priests (characters with *Religion*) achieve their Effects by beseeching the Almighty for aid, or by invoking the power of Saints or angelic beings. Their Effects are biased towards beneficial results; Priests wishing to harm, injure, or debilitate their foes may still do so, but at a two dice penalty to the Effect Total (see below). For example, a Priest wishing to use Divine Power to aid a companion in sneaking past some guardsmen, would suffer this penalty if he or she attempted to cloud the guardsmen's vision, but not if he or she was trying to increase the companion's Active Calling.

Witches or Warlocks (characters with *Witchcraft*) achieve their effects by use of powers granted to them by Satan. No prayers or invocations are required. The Effects generated by witchcraft are biased towards destructive and evil results; witches may still create benevolent Effects, but at a two dice penalty to their Effect Total. A common tactic among witches to circumvent this restriction is to create Effects which appear to have a benevolent result, but are in fact destructive in some subtle way. A Love potion may inspire great love in the drinker but also change their personality from sunny to unkind and cruel; a fertility spell may make the recipient incredibly fecund, but make all the babes born resemble anyone but the father. Witches alone may create Potions; these are handled exactly like normal Effects, with another set of Duration modifiers for the length of time the witch requires the Potion to be potent and drinkable.

Sorcerers (characters with *Sorcery*) achieve their miraculous effects by commanding magical spirits to do their bidding. These spirits typically manifest as 'invisible hands' when a physical Effect is created. Sorcerers are under no restriction in terms of the 'goodness' or 'evilness' of their Effects because they do not receive their powers from any higher being. Instead, Sorcerers use the guidelines and techniques laid down by wizards and necromancers of ancient times, from the days of Solomon onwards, to force spirits to do their bidding. They run the risk, should their invocations fail, of being attacked by the spirits; this event is covered in [Sorcerous Mishaps](#), below.

All supernatural Calling use is based on the caster deciding how many dice he or she wishes to **use up** (in other words, temporarily discard) from his or her pool of Faith, modifying this number based on the desired area of effect, duration, and local circumstances, and then applying the resulting number to the target(s) of the Effect as a Calling. This number - *Faith* plus all modifiers - is called the *Effect Total*. The creation of effects is not an instantaneous process; it may take anywhere from a minute to several days. This should be decided by the GM and the player in advance.

Modifiers due to *Area of Effect* and *Duration* are as follows:

Number of Targets to be Affected	Mod	Desired Duration of Effect
One person	0	A few hours
A handful of people	-1	A day and a night
Up to 50 people	-2	A week and a day
Up to 100 people	-3	A lunar month
Everyone in a town (1 000 people)	-4	Six lunar months
Everyone in a small city (10 000 people)	-5	A year and a day
Everyone in a large city (100 000 people)	-6	A generation (25 years)
Everyone in a district (1 mil. people)	-7	A lifetime (2-3 generations)

Certain modifiers also apply to each of the three branches of supernatural characters; these are known as *Trappings*. Trappings represent Ingredients (see [below](#)), ritual invocations, the presence of assistants, and other factors which boost the character's Faith. Each condition that applies to the caster adds 1 to the Effect Total. These modifiers are as follows:

Religion	Sorcery	Witchcraft
Chanted psalms and prayers	Mystical invocations in ancient tongues	Dire and blasphemous utterances
A congregation of worshippers	An apprentice or homunculus	A coven of witches or warlocks
Relics, holy water blessed by a Bishop	Esoteric alchemical compounds	Evil herbs and human body parts
Consecrated and holy ground	A summoning circle	Blasted heaths and other evil places

It can thus be seen that Trappings can add up to 4 dice to the Effect Total.

One final modifier is applied to the Effect Total: any Effect which is attempting to modify a target's existing Callings rather than create a new one must lose 1 dice from the Effect Total before it is calculated.

Once the Effect Total is generated, that number of dice is rolled to determine whether the Effect is successfully invoked (and if so, then applied to the target(s) of the Effect as a Calling). No Target Number is calculated; instead, any dice showing 1's are removed from the Effect Total, leading to a reduced result. If a Mishap is indicated on the roll, the Effect fails entirely. All ingredients used are still consumed and dice allocated from the caster's Faith Calling are still gone and must be recovered normally. If the caster is a Sorcerer, a Mishap indicates that he or she is attacked by the spirit commanded; this is detailed in [Spiritual Combat](#), below.

The **ingredients** mentioned above come in two forms; consumable and non-consumable. Consumable ingredients are scattered, burned, or otherwise used up in the creation of the Effect, and are measured in terms of 'uses', where a bottle of holy water might have five 'uses' of holy water within. Non-consumable ingredients are used as 'props' for the rituals associated with the caster's Faith. Each such item is assumed to have the same effect as a single 'use' of a consumable ingredient; the advantage, of course, being that it is not used up during the creation of the Effect and may be used for an indefinite number of Effects. A character who wishes to gain the bonus indicated under Trappings, above, for having all the right ingredients, must have as many ingredients as the combined negative modifiers to the Effect Total as specified above.

*Example: A witch's spell cast on 50 people, lasting a week and a day, which has an unadulteratedly beneficial effect and is intended to modify their existing Callings rather than create new ones, would be under a total negative modifier of -7. If the witch has three enchanted stones which count as non-consumable ingredients, she must still find four 'uses' of consumable ingredients - baby fat, hemlock, powdered mandrake, bat's blood, or whatever - to gain the Ingredients bonus.*

Ingredients are fairly difficult and time-consuming to come by. Any character with the appropriate *Faith* can manufacture, prepare, or otherwise acquire 1 consumable ingredient per week. If the character has a profession of calling that keeps him or her too busy to spend all week working on ingredients, and they have no assistant or apprentice to do the work for them, they will have to hire intermediaries to do some of the searching on their

behalf, and purchase some materials rather than make them up. These efforts cost the character 1d6 shillings per ingredient 'use'. The intermediaries need not have the *Faith Calling*; in fact, they usually do not even know what the relevance of the items they search for is, although some ingredients - notably, the ones used for witchcraft - are unconcealably gruesome and will alert all but the most calloused or naive scroungers as to the their patron's motivations. The pool of suitably skilled intermediaries is also a small one; a character cannot simply pay 6d6 shillings to have 6 ingredient uses brought to him or her at the end of the week. Instead, every additional ingredient sought for in a week *doubles* the cost to the character, as he or she is forced to pay transport costs, incentive and danger pay, and grease the palms of officials or coachmen. A Priest who needed six ingredients in a week, therefore, would have to pay a total of 32d6 shillings. Of course, if he or she had the time or access to suitable acolytes, anyone with the *Religion* Faith could manufacture one of these ingredients in a week.

Often, a character will encounter potent ingredients which yield a large number of effective 'uses', even though they are used up in the creation of a single Effect. A drop of martyr's blood, for instance, can only be used once, but might be judged to be as effective as a full vial (five uses) of holy water. Specialised ingredients of this type can rarely be constructed; instead, they must be discovered in the course of the character's adventures. If rules for their creation are required, it is suggested that 1d6 weeks be added to the time taken to find them, and a further 1d6 to the transit time required for them to arrive or be prepared, incurring extra costs as the GM deems appropriate.

Non-consumable items can only be created or prepared by the most skilled practitioners of each Faith (those with a dice type of d8's or higher); even these skilled individuals will require 6d6 weeks per item. These items often have 1-2 Bonus Dice to reflect their potency; only one such Bonus can be added to the Effect Total at a time, although the other bonus items may still be counted as ingredients.

As mentioned briefly above, Faith does not follow the usual rules for recovery. Instead, the scale below is used:

<i>Faith</i> is recovering from...	Time taken
0 to 1	1 lunar month
1 to 2	One week
2 to 3	One full day
3 to 4	Twelve hours
4 to 5	Six hours
5 to 6	One hour

The process of recovering *Faith* runs smoothest when the character is spending their time in rest, meditation, and study. If he or she uses her *Faith* while recovering from earlier spiritual exertions, any benefit he or she would have gained from that particular period of rest is lost, and he or she must begin it afresh.

Several instances may arise where Effects are **opposed against one another**, such as in the case where a Sorcerer or Priest attempts to remove a curse laid by another Sorcerer or a Witch. If the characters in question are facing one another head-on, in a contest of wills, the situation is handled as [Spiritual Combat](#), which is detailed below. If one character is simply trying to undo the work of another as in the example above, the process is much simpler. All Faiths may remove dice from an Effect created by another Faith simply by contributing Effect Dice towards such an endeavour. If the population of a tiny hamlet have been cursed with *Ill health* (2), anyone trying to undo this Effect simply has to match the final Effect Total of the enchantment they are trying to dispel - in this case, 2 - with an Effect of their own. If they only manage to come up with a single Effect die, the strength of the curse drops to *Ill health* (1), and so on. The counter-Effect should match the original effect in terms of duration and area of effect; if this does not happen, the relief will either be temporary, or limited to only some people within the targeted individuals.

Any character attempting to dispel an effect created by another character of the same Faith finds this process easier than others would; they get a Bonus Die towards their efforts.

Followers of the Christian religion, the dominant faith of the time, gain several bonuses as the result of their faith's strong physical presence across the land. For one thing, Christian holy sites - churches, cathedrals, sites of pilgrimage, and so on - 'lend' anyone inside them the same number of *Religion* dice that a priest would gain from the Trappings of such a site, and these dice may be used to resist or dispel any Effects a character is currently suffering from.

*Example: Consider an individual who is Marked for Death (3) at the hands of invisible, flesh-rending ghouls as the result of a sorcerer's curse. If this unfortunate soul finds his way onto holy ground, he has a 'borrowed' *Faith* 1 with which to try and resist the effects of the curse - although, with only a single die, all he would be able to do would be to decrease the severity of the curse by one die for a few hours. If he could find his way to Westminster cathedral, with a service in progress, his 'borrowed' *Religion* would be at level 4 - sufficient to completely negate the curse for a few hours or lessen it to 1 die for a day and a night, and so on. With such a powerful curse, though, to be safe he would have to find a Priest in the Cathedral willing to bless him and remove the curse entirely.*

Sites of unholy power also exist, of course, though they are not as easy to find as village chapels. However, because of the evil aspect of the power found circulating there, they convey no benefit to non-witches entering them.

Characters who already have *Faith*, but of a different type to the site they are in, take a penalty to their *Faith* equal to half the site's Trappings value, rounded down. Hence, it is harder to invoke a benediction in a witches' grotto than it is to perform the same site on a village common.

**Spiritual Combat** is the term used to describe all supernatural contests, whether between characters of rival faiths, exorcists and possessing spirits, or when supernatural energies themselves are used as a weapon.

Spiritual combat is handled using the standard RISUS rules for contested Callings; the loser of each round of opposition loses a die from his or her *Faith*, and is defeated when this score reaches 0. Combat of this sort is modified by the Trappings of the area; hence, it is tougher to tackle a sorcerer

in his lab, a priest in her church, or a warlock in his lair than it would be elsewhere. The exact form of this confrontation, and the results of defeat, are up to the GM and players; it may be a simple and invisible contest of wills with the loser falling unconscious, or it could be a whirling melee of ghostly shapes striking at each other in the air between the combatants, with the loser dragged off to Hell. A character who is involved in a spiritual combat may not create any Effects; the sum of their concentration is being used up in the struggle for their survival.

Characters who are attacked physically may not use Effects to defend themselves - as mentioned above, Effects take too long to create. However, raw supernatural energy may be used if the character wishes, or is forced, to participate in a physical fight. The characters may summon their powers in visible or invisible form; streams of black flames, ghostly djinn sweeping massive scimitars through the air, and bolts of holy brilliance are all possibilities for visible Effects. This strategy is resolved by using the Inappropriate Cliches in Combat rules as presented in RISUS, opposing the character's *Faith* (as an inappropriate Calling) against the Active Callings of his or her opponents. Every round of combat thus engaged in drains the character's *Faith* by one level.

**Agents** are independent spiritual entities summoned by characters with *Faith* to do their bidding. Although this is largely the province of Sorcerors, other characters may also achieve this effect. Priests may summon angelic beings such as cherubim or seraphim, or even angels themselves; witches may summon imps, gremlins, or even demons. Agents are basically a collection of Effect dice which act as the being's sole Calling. The murderous spirits summoned to pursue and kill the fleeing unfortunate in the example above would thus use the Effect total that summoned them - 3 - as the basis for all the rolls they may need to make in the pursuit of their task. Any alteration of this Effect total affects them too. The creation of an Agent is more taxing than a simple curse, requiring the loss of an Effect Die, but has several advantages. The agents will pursue their target(s) for as long as is necessary to complete the general guidelines specified during their summoning, and have enough initiative to be able to act on their own without needing to be constantly supervised by the summoner. A single agent can also be used to affect many individuals without having to broaden the definition of the effect to specifically include them when it is cast.

*Example: Father Laslo summons a tiny Cherub to earth to watch over a family in his parish who are afflicted by bad luck and illness. His Effect Total is 6. His player decides to opt for a two-dice cherub who will be able to stay with the family for six lunar months. During this time, the cherub will be able to act independently, applying its two dice to curing the baby's whooping cough and the cow's dry udders alike, as well as undoing the spiteful magics of the malevolent goblin that lives nearby. It can, of course, be harmed or even destroyed during the course of its duties, but until it is, it will use its powers in any way possible to fulfil the objectives of the one who summoned it.*

Sorcerors, due to their facility with summoned beings, are able to create a special type of agent called a *homunculus*. This tiny, dwarfish creature may function as if it had the Sorcery Calling in terms of assisting the sorcerer with his magical tasks and creating Ingredients. A sorceror may only have one homunculus at a time; in addition, the intricate techniques associated with the creation process mean that the caster must subtract two dice, rather than one, from the Effect total of the summoning.

**Sorcerous Calamities** result when a sorceror rolls a Mishap during the casting process. In this case, he or she is immediately attacked by the angry spirit. The spirit has a *Might* equal to all the negative modifiers for Area of Effect and Duration of the desired Effect, plus one; hence, a spirit that was being summoned to affect 100 people for a day and a night would have a total Might of 5. The sorceror must engage the spirit in Spiritual Combat; using their initial Faith level as their pool of dice. Defeated spirits are banished back to the spirit world; victorious spirits will inflict their will on the defeated character in one of six ways before vanishing:

1d6 Roll	Results
1	The spirit causes the character to age 3d6 years
2	The spirit possesses the character for the intended duration of the effect
3	The intended Effect is applied to the sorceror; if this effect was intended to be beneficial, this is done in some way which causes distress or discomfort.
4	The sorceror is spirited away to some far-off or unimaginable location
5	The sorceror loses 1 level from half his or her Callings, chosen randomly
6	The spirit kills the sorceror, and his or her soul is forfeit

This table may also be used to determine (in the case of Priests) the effects of failed exorcisms or (in the case of Witches) the result of displeasing their demonic lords.

## 16. Designer's Notes

The rules laid out above were designed for use in my **Malleus Maleficarum** campaign, an as-yet-uncompleted project in which the players take the roles of a band of witchfinders in an AW setting analogous to England in 1648 - *X Files* meets *Restoration*, if you will. My work on this setting is not yet complete, but I will post a link to it on my [Site News](#) Page (which has an Update Notification feature) when it is. Meantime, several links on the history of this era are available through the Links Page hyperlink below.

I first encountered RISUS by clicking on the 'Try a Random Link' hyperlinks at [RPGNET](#) - it had been a long night's websurfing, and I was at that stage where you start following unusual, fuzzy-headed, trails that grin incriminatingly at you from your History bar the next day. I was immediately impressed by the simple and elegant concept behind the rules; I'd been fiddling with a d6-based, character-concept-driven system for a while, but after getting under the hood with RISUS, I felt like I could file my notes and stop the search - this was what I'd been trying to work out, although from another angle.

I fiddled around with some Bronze Age settings for a RISUS campaign for a while, and considered the pros and cons of a Conan game using RISUS (*Cliches: Reaver (6), Slayer (6), Thief (6)*, etc.), but the dog finally barked when I picked up a book on the English Civil War at a pay-per-weight bookstore.

The rules I'm most proud of are the [Religion, Sorcery and Witchcraft](#) rules. These came to me in a flash of inspiration while I was waiting in an airport lounge in Cape Town. I was very impressed with the ease with which RISUS can accomodate the inclusion of entire paradigms not detailed in the basic rules. For a roleplayer like myself, who is constantly searching for ways to tinker up and customise the settings I use, this was a great relief.

My thanks go to Rene Vernon, for identifying some inconsistencies in the original document, and to Charles I, for making it all happen.

'Ironsides', for those who are unfamiliar with the term, was the nickname given to the heavily armoured troopers of the New Model Army during the English Civil War.

[Back to the Modules page](#)

[Back to the Links page](#)

## Disclaimer

The rules for witchcraft, faith, etc., as specified above, are not meant to reflect in any way on the contemporary Christian or Wiccan faiths. I'm aware that the historical view of witchcraft as 'devil worship' is incorrect, and I'm more than aware of the evil nature of the witch-burning phenomenon as it occurred in actual history. I also believe that the factors at the root of this practice were human hatred and hysteria, not any characteristic intrinsic to the faith the witch-hunters professed to follow.

If you're a rabid pursuer of this debate (and I know you're out there, I've seen your web pages), please be advised that I do not wish to enter into any debate concerning the historical or moral accuracy of the material on this page. So, chill out. That's an order.

[Back the the Religion, Sorcery and Witchcraft section](#)

# Risus™ Royale v 0.7

[Risus](#)© 1993-2001 S. John Ross

A solitaire card game loosely based on Risus, the Anything RPG



## Scenario

The Kingdom of Kardz is a mess. Rogue Clerics, Thieves, Fighters, and Wizards control the 16 castles, keeps, townships, and cities that make up the Kingdom. King Kozmo has finally had enough. He has contracted you, an adventurer with skills in many disciplines, to clean up the Kingdom. It's been determined that the opponents listed in your contract are the ringleaders in all this chaos. If you defeat them, the others will give up and return control of the Kingdom to King Kozmo. He is counting on you to establish order and restore the Kingdom of Kardz back to the way it was in the Goode Olde Days. Good luck!

## Rules

1. **# Players:** Risus Royale is a solitaire game. It might work for 2 players with different goals competing on the same map. I dunno.
2. **Equipment:** Standard deck of 52 cards, 4 or more standard d6 dice (12 dice, 6 in each of two colors, is better), and a pawn or coin to use as a marker.
3. **Tip:** If you ROLEPLAY this game, it's more fun. Even if you're sitting there alone in the dark in your underpants. Really.
4. Remove the deuces from the deck and shuffle them, then turn two face-up. These indicate your goal, as shown in the 'Goals' chart below. Put the deuces aside face-up to start your discard pile.
5. For your player character, make up a cool name (like 'Errol Flynn') and assign 10 pts. total to each of 4 attributes (in Risus, these are called 'clichés'): Wizardry (Spades), Fighting (Clubs), Thievery (Diamonds), and Cleric-Type-Stuff (Hearts). (A 4-3-2-1 distribution works pretty well. If you want an easier game, start with 12 points instead of 10.) You must assign at least 1 pt. to each of these 4 clichés, and no cliché may be assigned more than 4 points to start. (**Tip:** Keep your goal in mind when you assign cliché points!) If you want some extra kick, incorporate the optional Risus rules for Pumping Dice and/or Double Pumps. These options are explained in the Risus rulebook on S. John Ross's [Risus](#) web site.

**Handy Tip:** Try *Risus Royale* with [The Linear Dice System](#). You'll be glad you did!

6. Remove the 12 face cards and 4 aces from the deck. Shuffle these together and place in a separate pile. Then shuffle the remainder of the deck. Deal the top 16 cards from the deck face-down into a 4x4 grid. Then deal the 16 cards from the faces/aces pile face-down on top of these. Finally, deal the remaining cards face-down on top. You will end up with 16 piles of 3 cards each, face-down in a 4x4 grid. Each pile will consist of a numbered card on the bottom, a face card or ace in the middle, and a numbered card on top. These piles form a 'map' of the Kingdom.
7. Begin by placing your player marker on any pile on the edge of the map. Each turn, you will move your marker from the pile you're on to an adjacent pile horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.
8. Flip the top card of the pile you're on face up. This is your opponent's 'guard creature'. Creatures have strengths in 2 different clichés depending on their pips, as described below. You must first defeat the guard creature before you can battle your opponent.
9. You battle a creature or opponent by pitting your strength against theirs in one of the clichés you hold in common. For example, the Nine of Diamonds *Sneaky Nasty Yeti* creature has a strength of 5 Diamonds (Sneaky) and 4 Clubs (Nasty). If you assigned 2 to your Thief (Diamonds) cliché, you have a strength of 2 in Diamonds. If you choose to battle the Yeti in Diamonds, you would roll 2 d6, and it would roll 5 d6. However, if you decide to battle it in Clubs instead, and you have a strength of 3 in Clubs, you would roll 3 d6 and it would roll 4 d6. (All things considered, it seems this might be the more prudent choice...)
10. If you wish to use a 'Plus' or 'Minus' treasure item (or both) to aid you in your battle, you must declare which one(s) you intend to use before fighting. (More on this in the 'Treasures' section below.)
11. Roll your cliché dice, and the creature's. Compare the total of your roll against the creature's roll. Whichever roll is higher wins the round. (You lose ties.) The loser loses 1 die in that cliché for the remainder of the battle. When either you or the creature is reduced to 0 dice in the currently contested cliché, they lose the battle.
12. You may change which cliché you are fighting with between each round of the battle if you wish. You each then roll the number of dice you have (or have left) in that cliché. (Remember, any treasure items you declared are only good for the cliché indicated by their suit.)
13. If you are defeated by a guard creature, you must immediately retreat to an adjacent occupied space. The guard creature remains face-up, 'on guard' for your return. Your wounds and the creature's wounds are all immediately healed.
14. If you are defeated and were using any treasure items in the battle, you must discard those items.
15. If you defeat a guard creature, it is removed to the discard pile, and you turn the opponent card that was beneath it face-up. Any wounds you sustained while fighting the guard creature DO NOT HEAL for the ensuing battle with your opponent. All wounds heal only when you leave a map space.
16. If defeating the revealed opponent isn't necessary to achieving your goal (and you aren't interested in defeating him just to get his treasure – see below), you may try to escape before the fight starts. To escape, make a single roll of your cliché against his. If you win, you escape to an

adjacent space of your choice. If not, you must fight your opponent. (**Note:** Escape only works against an opponent – you cannot try to escape a creature.)

17. An opponent has cliché strength only in his own suit, as described below, so you must battle him using that cliché. Otherwise, battle is the same as with a guard creature.
18. Put defeated opponents who are relevant to your goal into a separate ‘victory’ area. Put other defeated opponents onto the discard pile.
19. When you defeat an opponent, turn up the remaining card in the pile. This is the ‘treasure’ you win, as shown in the chart below. Keep treasures in your treasure pile. Treasure has properties that can aid you in future battles.
20. Once you've taken a treasure, that space is 'cleared'. You may no longer move onto a space once it has been cleared. If you ‘paint yourself into a corner’, you lose. That is, if you are required to leave a space because you have been defeated, or if you clear a space and there is no occupied adjacent space to move to, you lose. Likewise, if you isolate a space by clearing all others around it, and that space contains an opponent who you must defeat to reach your goal, you lose. So if you do somehow manage to isolate a space, you might as well turn up the cards there right away to see if you've lost.
21. Achieve your goal and you win!

## Goals

1st Deuce/2nd Deuce	2S	2C	2D	2H
2S	*	1	2	3
2C	4	*	5	6
2D	7	8	*	9
2H	10	11	12	*

1. Defeat all Wizards
2. Defeat all Fighters
3. Defeat all Thieves
4. Defeat all Clerics
5. Defeat any one of the above stated types
6. Defeat all Halflings
7. Defeat all Dwarves
8. Defeat all Elves
9. Defeat all Humans
10. Defeat any one of the above stated races
11. Defeat all Opponents in any row, column, or diagonal, or in all 4 corners
12. Achieve any one of the above stated goals (if you want to play an easier game, as when just learning to play, simply pick this goal)

## Creatures

Each numbered card has two groups of pips. The group with the largest number of pips determines a creature’s strength in its base cliché, which is the suit of the card. The group with the lesser number of pips determines its strength in its secondary cliché, which is different for each suit: For Spades, it’s Hearts, for Clubs it’s Diamonds, and vice-versa (i.e., for Diamonds it’s Clubs, and for Hearts it’s Spades). For example, the 3 of Hearts is a *Mystical Magical Skeleton*, with a cliché of 2 in Hearts (Mystical) and 1 in Spades (Magical), while the 8 of Clubs is a *Nasty Sneaky Troll*, with a cliché of 5 in Clubs (Nasty) and 3 in Diamonds (Sneaky).

No.	Spades	Clubs	Diamonds*	Hearts
	Magical	Nasty	Sneaky	Mystical
3	Imp (2S/1H)	Boar (2C/1D)	Giant Rat (2D/1C)	Skeleton (2H/1S)
4	Unicorn (2S/2H)	Knight (2C/2D)	Giant Spider (2D/2C)	Mummy (2H/2S)
5	Centaur (3S/2H)	Lion (3C/2D)	Pack of Wolves (3D/2C)	Ghost (3H/2S)
6	Manticore (4S/2H)	Pirates (4C/2D)	Giant Snake (4D/2C)	Zombies (4H/2S)
7	Griffon (5S/2H)	Bear (5C/2D)	Giant Lizard (5D/2C)	Werewolf (5H/2S)
8	Genie (5S/3H)	Troll (5C/3D)	Band of Thieves (5D/3C)	Ghoul (5H/3S)
9	Jabberwock (5S/4H)	Ogre (5C/4D)	Yeti/Bigfoot (5D/4C)	Vampire (5H/4S)
10	Dragon (5S/5H)	Giant (5C/5D)	Giant Wurm (5D/5C)	Demon (5H/5S)

\*Pip grouping is impossible to see in Diamonds, but the chart breaks it out for you.

## Opponents

For Opponents, each suit represents a single cliché: Spades are Wizards, Clubs are Fighters, Diamonds are Thieves, and Hearts are Clerics. Each face card or ace represents a different character class (or race): Aces are Halflings, Jacks are Dwarves, Queens are Elves (huh!), and Kings are Humans. Each race has different clichés they are strongest in, according to the chart below. While creatures each have two clichés (see ‘Creatures’, above), each Opponent is only skilled in a single cliché. For example, the Ace of Diamonds is *Frito Pockpocket*, a Halfling Thief (3), while the King of Spades is *Ian McKellan*, a Human Wizard (4).

Abilities		A	J	Q	K
		Halfling	Dwarf	Elf	Human
Spades	Wizard	Frato Poofwand (1)	Snotty (2)	Mauritius (3)	Ian McKellan (4)
Clubs	Fighter	Freto Stinkfoot (2)	Feisty (4)	Belarus (1)	John Wayne (3)
Diamonds	Thief	Frito Pockpocket (3)	Squinty (1)	Glorioso (4)	David Niven (2)
Hearts	Cleric	Froto Acnescarr (4)	Frumpy (3)	Andorra (2)	Bing Crosby (1)

For a harder game, simply increase the strength of each Opponent by 1 or even 2.

## Treasures

No.	Spades	Clubs	Diamonds	Hearts
3	+1/C Dagger	+1/C Club	+1/C Whip	+1/C Stole
4	-1/C Armor	-1/C Shield	-1/C Net	-1/C Censer
5	+1/O Sword	+1/O Mace	+1/O Garrote	+1/O Staff
6	-1/O Voodoo Doll	-1/O Helm	-1/O Bolo	-1/O Mitre
7	+1 Fireball	+1 Ax	+1 Bow	+1 Vestments
8	-1 Magic Aura	-1 Spear	-1 Poison	-1 Holy Water
9	X Rabbit's Foot	X Lucky Penny	X Monkey's Paw	X Holy Medallion
10	W Firebomb	W Hand Grenade	W Plastique	W Dynamite

1. To use a treasure item during a battle, you must first make an ‘ability roll’. Using the number of dice you have in that treasure’s cliché, roll at least that treasure’s number to be able to use it. (Example: You want to use the 8 of Spades ‘Magic Aura’ and you have an ability of 2 in Spades, so you roll 2 dice. You roll a 7, which is less than the 8 you needed, so you can’t use ‘Magic Aura’ in this battle.) If you don’t make the roll, you can’t use that treasure for this battle, though you can try to use other treasures. You roll when declaring a ‘Plus’ or ‘Minus’ item, or when trying to use an ‘X’ or ‘W’ item. If you fail to make an ability roll for an item, you cannot make another attempt to use that item during the same battle.
2. You may use only one ‘Plus’ and one ‘Minus’ treasure item per battle. You must declare which item(s) you are using before a battle starts, and may not switch during that battle, even if you switch clichés.
3. ‘Plus’ items add a die to your cliché for that item’s suit for the duration of the battle. ‘Minus’ items remove a die from your opponent’s cliché for that suit for the duration of the battle.
4. Creatures or Opponents who are reduced to 0 strength in the cliché you have chosen for battle are automatically defeated.
5. Items marked with an ‘O’ work only against Opponents.
6. Items marked with a ‘C’ work only against Creatures.
7. Items not marked with either an ‘O’ or a ‘C’ work against both Opponents and Creatures.
8. Items marked with an ‘X’ let you ignore the highest number rolled by an opponent during every round of a battle in that suit’s cliché. Such items are not declared, and may be used in addition to declared items. (Example, your opponent rolls a 6,6,4,3. You ignore one of the 6’s, so his roll only totals 13.)
9. Items with a ‘W’ may be used to automagically win a battle against any creature or opponent in that cliché. Such items are not declared, and may be used in addition to other items, but once used they are destroyed.
10. You may use both X and W type items in a battle, in addition to a maximum of one ‘Plus’ and one ‘Minus’ declared items..
11. If you are defeated while using any item, that item is permanently destroyed, and must be discarded.

## Variants

- **Different Treasures:** Maybe the ‘X’ spells are fun things like, say, a Magic Crystal Ball to see what opponent is in a stack before you move there (this would require an ability roll, of course.) Or you could have a Talisman of Incredible Power that lets you declare *all* your dice in one cliché for a single roll (at a Cost Too Terrible to Contemplate, of course). Make up your own nifty cool treasure chart. Just try to keep it somewhat balanced. Or not. (A +7 ‘Bazooka of Destruction’ would be dope, man!)
- **Different Creatures:** There could be a whole bunch of weird creatures out there, and they could have 3 or 4 different clichés each. Maybe you can even influence one of them to join up with you as a sidekick to help you kick some butt. And it seems to me that a Magical Mystical Unicorn Horn might make an awesome magikal weapon...

- **Different Opponents:** Opponents could be as skilled as you are, with strengths in all 4 clichés. They might negotiate instead of fighting.
- **Tool For the Lazy Gamemaster:** Your friends are due in five minutes, and you haven't worked on that new Risus adventure you promised them? Nolo problemo! Just set up the big GM screen and lay out a *Risus Royale* setup on your side. Walk 'em through. Make adjustments on the fly. Roleplay the Begeebus out of it. Maybe they won't catch on.
- **Different Adventures:** This isn't the map of a Kingdom at all, it's a Star Chart! Those aren't Wizards, Clerics, and whatnot, they're Evil Space Dudes on the Slightly Shady Side of 'The Farce', and the Creatures are Slime Beasts and Bug-Eyed Monsters. The treasures are blasters and spaceships, et. al. Or maybe you're fighting Gunslingers in the Old West. Or Black Ops in the streets of Cyber City. Hey, this could be cool! All you need are your own custom Creature, Opponent, and Treasure tables. Remember, this isn't just *Solitaire*, people, this is *Roleplaying*!



Discuss *Risus Royale* on the [Message Board](#), or click [here](#) for More Keen Game Stuff!

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*Welcome to version 2.0 of my particular brand of Risus Star Wars. The original version is available at my web site. Within the .doc file you will find links to those I "blame" as the guilty parties. I gotta get those on the web page one of these days... This is largely just cut and pasted out of my wiki so there may be some weird formatting anomalies.*

# Risus Star Wars: Clone Wars

**There are no Ewoks**

**Risus/There is no Try**

**Imagine there is no Skywalker**

**Risus Clone Wars**

*A Hybrid system for games inspired by The Clone Wars Animated Series  
Blame S. John Ross and Steve Darlington, not me.*

This game (regardless of what I ultimately decide to call it) is really just Risus with two variations inspired by Steve Darlington's There is no Try and his nascent Firefly game. Both are to be found in their larval forms on the RPG.net message boards. Other significant influences include the other posters on the board and the Risustalk list. With Version 2.0 I've gone back in time to Darrel Miller's inspired work for Prestige Cliches and Vehicle Rules. The original site is gone; if you are interested try The Wayback Machine at archive.org

Semi-important Note: You will probably want dice in two colors for this...

**“There’s no mystical energy field that controls my destiny.”**

Actually, there is. Caveat: My intention with this game is that the P.C.s all play Jedi fighting to preserve the Republic during the Clone Wars. A game where they don’t and/or set in another time period could be done, but that is not the goal of this game.

So get your Clonetrooper squad together, strap on your saber, and save the Republic (you fascist puppets you)!

**“There’s no wrong way to play.”**

In addition to the rules described below the following Advanced Options will be used:

- Hooks and Tales
- Pumping Clichés
- Lucky Shots (Force Points) and Questing Dice\*
- Sidekicks and Shield-mates (and Clonetroopers and Jedi Starfighters)\*
- Eye of the Tiger\*
- Boxcars and Breakthroughs\*

Risus/TINT can be played with the free Risus rules with no problems whatsoever. However, those options marked with an \* can be found in the excellent Risus Companion.

*One additional optional rule:* I generally max out Clichés at 5 dice. This allows me a floating bonus die for things like temporary ship modifications, a Jedi with two lightsabers or a saber and blaster, or even cybernetics. I make reference to this rule in a later section as well. If you don't use this rule you will have to adjust the later section accordingly.

As a general rule of thumb Force Cliché ratings of 1 or 2 indicate a Padawan. 3 or 4 are Knights, and a 5 indicates a Master. Yoda the Ascetic [6] in Episode V & VI being an exception to the rule.

### Tinted Risus

As I said, I assume every player character is a Jedi. So a Jedi Cliché would be redundant. Every character must buy the Force as a Double-pump Cliché. This Cliché works like the Force trait in TINT or the Matrix trait in TINS. Additionally, this is the *only* Cliché that can be purchased as a Double-pump by *players*.

You roll it along with whatever other Cliché might be appropriate (as TINT's Force, but only add the sixes (as Risus' preexisting rules for teamwork). If there isn't an appropriate Cliché then the GM may rule that the Force Cliché may be rolled by itself.

I would say that most Clichés other than Force do not include or assume Force skills as part of their description or Tools of the Trade. However, one could take a Cliché like "Lightsaber Master" or "Mystic Healer." That having been said I imagine at least one of each character's clichés will include the word "Jedi."

For the most part, all a character's Force skills will be decided by rolling the Force Cliché. Unless they have a Cliché that implies specialization in a field.

Lucky Shots are the Force Points of other Star Wars games. The G.M. is encouraged to give them out as rewards for good RP and as a supplement to Risus' usual method of advancement. They do not work any different from the standard however.

The following list of Clichés includes several that may not be appropriate to Jedi P.C.s and is by no means exhaustive. It is intended to jump start the imaginations of both the players *and* the G.M.

#### **"There's too much of his father in him, Owen."**

*Or, The Obligatory List of Clichés.*

No Risus setting is really complete without a healthy list of Clichés "The Anatomy of a Cliché" is encouraged if not required reading. This alone is worth the purchase of the

Risus Companion, but don't take my word for it go [LINK HERE], and read it for yourself.

Remember Jedi and Sith are not *usually* a Clichés, but titles or descriptors. Jedi and other force users must take the [Force] Cliché. An exception might be...

Sith Alchemist (all manner of things likely to horrible to mention here, but not limited to illusion, mutation, toxicology, and the crafting of Sith swords)

Two elements integral to the Star Wars milieu are Aliens and Droids. Easily handled without devoting a Cliché to *just* your species or frame and manufacturer.

“Alien Species...”(good for the sorts of things members of that species are famous for)  
Wookie Technician or Soldier

Twi’lek Scout or Gambler

“...Droid...” (Droids can not have the [Force] Cliché.)

Astromech Droid Pilot or Techician

Protocol Droid Smuggler or Linguist

The following list is by no means exhaustive and lacks color. *Always* liven things up with descriptors of some such, or combine Clichés by verbing one or more. For example, “Wizened old smugglin’ & gamblin’ scout with absolutely no luck with the ladies (3).”

*Smuggler* (hiding almost anything, getting into trouble, connections, skullduggery, shooting first)

*Gambler* (losing starships, winning mining colonies, wooing the preferred sex and species, looking good at all times)

*Technician* (fixing, building, and on occasion breaking)

*Vagabond* (connections, knowing scattered and seemingly unrelated things about little known parts of the galaxy)

*General* (an apparently largely ceremonial honorific)

*Pilot* (flying, dodging, shooting, getting into trouble, defying orders)

*Duelist* (mastery of some melee weapon or another, looking in control, steady nerves)

*Healer* (as opposed to medic, not necessarily force-sensitive “holistic” mender of ills)

*Seer* (seeing the future either for fun and profit or at the direction of the Force, rarely both)

*Gunner* (being cocky, blasting the Force out of most anything with big guns)

*Swashbuckler* (looking good, not quite as good as the Duelist, Smuggler, Pirate, or Gambler)

*Republic Loyalist* (faith in the political system and old order, often blind devotion to Palpatine)

*Separatist Sympathizer* (lack of faith in the political system and desire for a new order, often clueless)

*Noble* (political aspirations, uncanny marksmanship, looking phenomenal, charismatic)

*Scout* (not being lost, finding places, people, and on occasion things, surviving under harsh conditions)

*Soldier* (shooting, brawling, marching, eating anything, surviving inspections)

*Fringer* (scrounging, surviving, avoiding legal entanglement, squatting on other peoples property)

*Martial Artist* (who needs a weapon when the Force provided you with X number of appendages, eerie and often inappropriate calm, improvised weaponry)

*Bounty Hunter* (finding, intimidating, capturing, transporting, etc. people, often licensed to kill, getting paid for behavior that normally gets one arrested)

*Linguist* (speaking and/or understanding the languages of ridiculous numbers of species)

*Apprentice* (learning, impatience, disbelief in ones own abilities)

*Master* (teaching, patience, belief in the abilities of their apprentices)

### **“Quicker, Easier.”**

The Force is about the conflict between Light and Dark. In a word: Duality. Now, for the most part I think that this conflict is better handled through storytelling and role-playing, but once in a while you want a little crunch. So, with that in mind I present these Optional Rules.

This is what I call the Morality Path (easily convertible to any genre by substituting the Words Dark and Light for whatever might be more appropriate).

Dark Side 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Light Side 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0

Characters start at 5. When a character uses the Dark Side of The Force, they move along the path towards the Dark Side. Moving towards the Light Side is harder. When the Light Side is used and/or a particularly self-sacrificing action is taken, a Redemption Point is earned (I know. If the character never fell in the first place why are they still called Redemption Points? Because the saga is about Redemption.)

Accumulate Redemption Points equal to your current Dark Side or your current Light Side rating (which ever is higher), and move up the ladder back towards the Light. This helps emphasize the narrative fun of coming back from the brink, but keeps the truly enlightened souls to a minimum. In theory. Oh, and the whole fading away thing? Minimum Light Side of 7 or 8 I think is a reasonable assumption.

What constitutes a Dark Side action and a Light Side action is largely a subject for debate in your particular gaming group.

Now, when the Force Cliché is Double-pumped (or when any Cliché is Pumped) if the action is Light Side add the current Light Side rating to the total roll (not as additional dice! By the Force, no!) If the action is Dark Side, add the current Dark Side rating. Remember, that increasing that Dark Side rating for future use is as simple as using it now!

The highest Light Side rating is 10, and Dark Side 9 for a number of reasons.

- The Masters are no less tempted, but when they do fall it isn't the temptation of the power, but something else...
- Light Siders come out ahead in the long run.
- From what I've read and seen, the Sith tempt the apprentices and the weaker Force-users. They don't try to convert the preacher, but the congregation (then the choir, then the preacher assuming that the Preacher hasn't been the Sith Lord all along).

**"Begun these Clone Wars have."**

As you might imagine from the fact that I used a system for comedy RP as the spine and heart of this system, I don't believe in Sacred Cows (beyond their making good burgers). You would imagine correctly. As two of the possible titles above might suggest I encourage you to spell Canon with an extra n and fire it. Please use Episodes IV & V, the cartoon, Darkhorse's Tales and Infinities titles, and Knights of the Old Republic as your primary inspirations. Ignore Episode I and any references to mido-chlori-W.T.F.s that might have ended up in Episode III (may the Force be with us always \*sneeze\* or at least until the medication kicks in).

What follows are a few story ideas. I like the suggestion of TINS and TINT that games based on movies be run in a similar fashion. Run one-shot "movies" or mini-campaigns ("trilogies"). However, as long as the players are ok with the fact they won't be accumulating experience points or credits go ahead and run a long campaign (a serial). Be a great way to kill a summer, kids! Here are Episodes II & III, the Clone Wars, and The Original Trilogy re-mixed.

"Annie? Who the hell is Annie? Is Daddy Warbucks here, too?" The first thing you must remember, is that there is no Episode I. Imagine the events of Episode II without Anakin Skywalker or The Prophecy. Rewrite Star Wars history to your hearts content. Ignore all that nonsense about their being only two Sith.

"Only in your mind, my very young apprentices." The P.C.s are a group of padawans on the cusp of knighthood. Assigned to General Kenobi, they replace Anakin in a number of ways throughout the same events pictured in the Clone Wars Animated Series. The players may be placed in command of a Clone squad of their very own. Assuming they aren't recruited by Count Dooku (that would change the rest of my episodes considerably). Imagine a split in the Separatist Movement between Liberty-minded Jedi who see through Dooku's charade and the Sith.

"Episode III: Fall of the Jedi Order and the Rise of the Empire" The Republic seems to have the Separatists on the ropes, but the Jedi are painfully aware of how thinly their numbers are spread. A grievous new Trade Federation general is cutting a swath through the Jedi ranks, and what is the mysterious Order 66? One of the P.C.s may become Sidious' new apprentice, a Dark Lord of the Sith, and lead the New Galactic Order's Stormtroopers in the quest to extinguish the Jedi once and for all. The "Revenge of the Sith" is at hand.

“Meet the new hope, same as the old hope...” Assuming that one of the players wooed and ultimately impregnated (or was impregnated by) a hot young senator, let eighteen years pass before our tale continues. For the Force only knows what reason, Palpatine still drags his ass in dissolving the Senate. The potential younglings of our Jedi and that senator have been smuggled away and hidden from the Emperor for all those years. In the ominous shadow of the Death Star a young senator from Alderaan tracks down General Kenobi and his “Round Table.” The Round Table is of course the P.C.s from the last paragraph, all grown up and on the run. Now they are towing along a pair of eighteen year olds who are strong in the Force, but too old to begin the training. Save the galaxy and protect the senator’s daughter from the roaming hands of a lecherous smuggler. Good luck with that.

“He went with the smuggler; he was pretty good in a fight.” After General Kenobi’s death at the hands of Darth Tyranus and the P.C.s’ valiant destruction of the Death Star the Rebellion is officially underway. We catch up with the Rebel Alliance’s greatest Generals (and the last of the Jedi) on Hoth. Han and Luke took off with their reward before the Battle of Yavin (hey, that mission was suicide!) so it is up to the P.C.s to keep themselves out of cold. Oh yeah. The Princess wants them to go someplace called Bespin to negotiate with a Lando Calrissian for much needed Tibanna gas. Darth Tyranus (now a Grand Moff with the death of his rival Tarkin) and deadly bounty hunters are hot on their trail, striking back at them at every turn. And an old enemy in familiar armor with a grudge returns to haunt our heroes...

“Return of the Jedi Order” might be a better title now. Yoda calls the P.C.s to Dagobah to pick him up. “Come the time has.” Is all he’ll say. Keep the little green master out of trouble while you help the rebels blow the second Death Star to smithereens and the Emperor along with it. Will the P.C.s found a new Jedi Academy on Kashyyyk? Will one of them marry a young senator or Alderaanian noble? Oh yeah, just to be extra specific here, “There are no Ewoks.” No Endor; Death Star II is constructed over Kashyyyk.

### **“You will never find a more wretched hive of scum and villainy.”**

Here are a few sample characters to get us started. This is Obi Wan just as Episode II ends and the Clone Wars begin. It’s worth mentioning that I have taken Obi Wan’s behavior in the bars of Coruscant and Tatooine, plus his apparent street-level connection in the character Dex as an indicator of a shady past, or at the very least unorthodox methodology (must be Qui Gonn’s unfortunate influence). This Obi Wan has perhaps been called upon to infiltrate criminal organizations to bring the bad guys to justice.

#### **Obi Wan Kenobi, Jedi Knight and General of the Republic.**

##### *Force [4]*

*Streetwise Vagabond* (4) Connections, knowing your way around seedy dives, well intentioned grifting

*Reluctant Fighter Pilot* (2) Avoiding straight up dogfights, getting from here to there as

necessary

*General? Me? (3)* Leading Clonetroopers, asking twice for surrender, cutting down droids like a lawn mower cuts grass

Dark/Light: 6/4

Shield-mates: ARC Trooper Squad (6) or 4 ARC Troopers (3 each)

Hook: might owe a favor or two to shady underworld types, almost certainly has a death mark on his head.

Tools of the Trade: Jedi Starfighter, Lightsaber, Communicator, dapper robes.

**Druge**... What the Force is that thing anyway?

*Amorphous Tentacled Horror [4]* they blew its armor off and it... squooged over Obi Wan. What would you call it?

*Gadget wielding bounty hunter (4)* Big old Mandalorian suit of tricked out armor...

*Swoop-riding Anti-tank Officer (3)* Taking on huge artillery with what... a force-lance?

*On Dooku's Payroll (2)* Always being able to call on a Sith lord for back up? How cool is that?

Dark/Light: 8/2 (What the hell, go ahead and use this with the Tentacled Horror Cliché. Probably the result of Sith Alchemy anyway.)

Shield-mates: In the cartoon it looked like he had a legion of black IG 88s at his command, sooo... IG 87 Elite Droid Squad(s) (6)

Tools of the Trade: Swoop, force-lance, heavy blaster pistols (note I made the armor and its accompanying gadgetry part of a Cliché.)

**Darth Sidious**, Who could that phantom menace be? Wait, that profile!

*Force [6]* Some consider it unnatural, but you can not imagine the power...

*Ambitious Senator (5)* Making the Palpatine name feared throughout the galaxy...Do'h!

*Sith Adept Extraordinaire (5)* Corrupting the youth, turning the noble, being generally cruel and nasty. Hates puppies probably.

*Unctuous Bastard (5)* Yoda and the council were taken in by this guy?!

Dark/Light: 10/0 (He ain't afraid to break all the rules!)

Shield-mates: Sith Cultists all over the Galaxy (6)

Tools of the Trade: The Grand Army of The Republic, The Senate, Lightsaber, The

Separatists

**General Grievous**, Cyborg Jedi-hunter and General of the Trade Federation

*Trade Federation Super-general (5)* Leading legions of incompetent droids to victory.

*Omnidextrous Sith Trained Lightsaber Duelist (5)* Is he actually wielding one of those three sabers with his foot?

*Four-armed Cyborg Lightsaber Dervish (4)* Oook. Lightsaber trophy collecting.

*Insect-like Cotortionist (4)* climbing walls, running across ceilings on anywhere from 2 to all six limbs.

Dark/Light: 7/3

Shield-mates: Trade Federation Droid Armies (6)

Tools of the Trade: Lightsabers, Blasters, etc.

Questing Dice [] [] [] [] [] (Killing or escaping from Jedi)

**Sometimes, even a Jedi can end up in the dreaded Red Shirt.**

Sometimes the good die young. Sometimes you might be pressed for time and not feel like fleshing out a complete Jedi NPC that you know is just going to get their behind shot off by a Clonetrooper. It's ok to describe such an NPC as: Jedi Red Shirt [3]. As the GM you are *obligated* to bend and break rules for the sake of the narrative and game play. That being the case, consider this advice rather than a rule.

**"Two snub fighters against a Star Destroyer?"**

How does one handle two unequal clichés with equal dice? For example, an ARC Trooper (3) gets in a fight with a Clonetrooper (3) over who cut who in the mess line. I would assign each a difficulty based on the maneuver they chose to attempt. Who ever beat that difficulty by the greater amount would win the contest. The same would be applicable for an ARC Trooper (2) and a Clonetrooper (3). The ARC Trooper will probably face a TN 10 for the same task the Clonetrooper will have to beat 15.

In fact (warning: boring rules theory follows) I think that rolling opposed clichés versus the difficulty of a maneuver is a great way to add a bit of robustness to the flexibility of the system.

**"Strike me down and I shall become more powerful than you can possibly imagine."**

*Or, Prestige Clichés: Clichés with Class*

(Originally conceived of by Wizards of the Coast and Darrel Miller)

A Prestige Cliché is earned during play and advancement. It adds +1 Bonus Die to a

specific type of action. The Prestige Cliché is limited to 6 dice rather than 5. Yes, this means up to 7 dice (maxed out at 6, +1 bonus die).

- GM sets Prestige Cliché prerequisites.
- A Prestige Cliché is not a Double-pump Cliché, but is purchased as one (double cost.)
- A Prestige Cliché is purchased when all the prerequisites would normally advance. Instead these dice are used to purchase the initial dice of the Prestige Cliché.
- Damage to the Prestige Cliché is instead dealt to the appropriate prerequisite Clichés.
- Once a prerequisite Cliché is reduced to zero the Prestige Cliché may no longer be used for this purpose. Prestige Clichés do not take damage.
- When all a character's Clichés (except the Prestige Cliché) are reduced to zero they are still out of the conflict.
- The 5-die cap does not apply to Prestige Clichés.
- The +1 Bonus Die only applies to rolls versus the Prestige Cliché.

More so than in either of the sources for this idea, a Prestige Cliché should make a character truly unique. It isn't enough to call Obi-Wan in Episode IV a "Jedi Knight." He is "The Crazy old Wizard of the Wastes." A good example from the movies would be, the elder Anakin's "Darth Vader, Dark Lord of the Sith." The hardest part really is deciding what the bonus die applies to.

### **"You've never heard of the Millenium Falcon?"**

I had intended at one time to tinker with and expand Darrel Miller's vehicle rules, but more recent Risus meditations have lead me down a different path.

A vehicle - whether it be a pod racer or a capital ship- is still just a Cliché or set of them. Pilots of said vehicles act as the "leader" and the vehicles act as team members. That's it. That's more or less what Mr. Miller says, but it doesn't hurt repeating it.

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R i s u s

# S m i t e !

Boyd Mayberry

It is the time known as the Dark Ages. The Church has been recently established in the magical land of Brityn, but unfortunately it has many enemies. Goblins and other foul creatures have taken delight in raiding the sanctuaries and killing Church members. Worse yet, evil sorcerers have begun to summon demons from hell to wreak havoc. It is a time for the brave members of the Church to become heroes and protect the land.

This is a supplement for ***Risus: The Anything RPG*** by S. John Ross, which can be downloaded for free at <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>. It is required to play this game

## Character Creation

*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10*

Players have 10 dice to spend on their characters. Hooks and tales are allowed, but are optional. Player characters may pump, or even double-pump, their clichés if the GM feels it appropriate. Remember, the PCs in this game are members of the Church, and their clichés should reflect that. Below is a brief list of clichés that a PC might have.

### ***SAMPLE PC CLICHÉS (AND WHAT THEY'RE GOOD FOR)***

***Barbarian*** (Wielding huge weapons, bashing down doors, being from the frozen north)

***Knight*** (Slaying dragons, rescuing princesses, smiting)

***Lore Master*** (Knowing all sorts of useful information)

***Martial Artist*** (Fighting without weapons, being from the far east)

***Missionary*** (Traveling to far away places, converting pagans)

***Psalmist*** (Singing, playing music, writing poems)

***Ranger*** (Tracking, hunting, making friends with animals)

***Rogue*** (Picking locks, sneaking)

***Sailor*** (Sailing ships, navigating)

## Non-Player Characters

*Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Psalm 67:3*

There are a lot of common people in the land, but they will usually be non-player characters. NPCs are usually only built with about five dice. Below is a brief list of clichés that an NPC might have.

### SAMPLE NPC CLICHÉS (AND WHAT THEY'RE GOOD FOR)

**Blacksmith** (Making things out of metal, repairing weapons and armor)

**Carpenter** (Building things out of wood)

**Farmer** (Growing crops, tending livestock)

**Herbalist** (Making potions, selling herbs, rolling joints)

**Innkeeper** (Taking care of the inn)

**Priest** (Preaching, casting out demons)

**Shopkeeper** (Selling items, haggling)

**Weaver** (Making cloth, sewing clothes)

**Wench** (Serving drinks, flirting)

## Monsters

*He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me. Psalm 18:17*

Unfortunately, the land is filled with terrible creatures who want to destroy the Church. They can be built with as many dice as the GM sees fit. Below is a brief list of clichés that a monster might have.

### SAMPLE MONSTER CLICHÉS (AND WHAT THEY'RE GOOD FOR)

**Demon** (Being from hell, serving the Dark One)

**Dragon** (Breathing fire, flying)

**Goblin** (Raiding, shrieking, traveling in small bands)

**Hell Hawk** (Resembling a giant featherless bird, serving as a steed for sorcerers)

**Hell Hound** (Resembling a huge dog, having flaming eyes)

**Ogre** (Carrying clubs, smashing things)

**Troll** (Guarding bridges, turning to stone in the sun)

**Sorcerer** (Casting spells, summoning demons)

**Vampire** (Sucking blood, charming people)

**Werewolf** (Turning into a giant wolf, going berserk)

**Wight** (Having no mind, smelling of death)

## Celestial Beings

*Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Job 39:9*

Although there are many foes in the land, there are also several friends. Celestial beings are holy creatures who have taken physical form. They often aid good people in any way they can. Like monsters, they can be built with as many dice as the GM sees fit. Below is a brief list of clichés that a celestial being might have.

### **SAMPLE CELESTIAL BEING CLICHÉS (AND WHAT THEY'RE GOOD FOR)**

**Dragon\*** (Breathing fire, flying)

**Griffin** (Being a combination between lion and eagle, having huge nests)

**Leviathan** (Frolicking in the ocean, being wild)

**Pegasus** (Having giant wings, serving as a steed for noble warriors)

**Talking Animal** (Being larger than normal animals, standing on two legs)

**Treeman** (Looking like a tree, being stiff, guarding the forest)

**Unicorn** (Having a sharp horn, running really fast)

\* You may notice that dragons appear both on the list of monsters and on the list of celestial beings. This is because they were created as celestial beings, but many have fallen.

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## Welcome to the Flames of Risus!



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**Here you will find my whimsical ravings for...  
Risus: The Anything RPG by S. John Ross.**

### SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

In every campaign there are those items that are special and actually help the owner more than regular versions of the item, (i.e. Stormbringer vs. a regular sword). To recreate that in Risus there are at least 5 different methods that can be used.

a) Pip & Dice Add. Your Magic Sword adds +1 pip, +2 pips, +1d, +1d+, +1d+2, +2d, etc... depending on how powerful it is. (A la Star Wars and Carl Hewett)

b) Dice change. Your Magical Sword doesn't give you any bonus dice, but upgrades your d6s to d8s. Tricky if you're already using funky dice... This makes bonus equipment particularly good in the hands of already-skilled characters. (Peter Corbett)

c) Distinctive dice for the item - maybe you can represent it by using a funky die for the more powerful items - a bog-standard magical sword would just be a different-colored d6, whereas something like Stormbringer would be a d20. The GM should work out how all this interacts with dice loss in combat/pumping - it raises some interesting ideas about being disarmed... (Peter Corbett)

d) Self-Willed Magical Sword (4) - You roll your dice, it rolls its dice, and your score is the best of these. Makes bonus equipment better for the less able - good for the evil mage's sword. Again, dice loss etc. needs to be worked out. (Peter Corbett)

e) Teaming Up Magical Sword (4) - You roll your dice and the sword rolls its dice and contributes any sixes it rolls to your total. You don't always get a bonus, but when you do it's a good bonus. Should be equally useful for anyone. (Florian Edlbauer)

f) Second Chance Magical Sword - You roll your dice and if it isn't as good as you'd like, you can re-roll your dice. But, you must take the second roll regardless. (S. John Ross)

g) Doubling Sword - After you roll the dice for your attack, pick one to double. (S. John Ross)

h) Stealing Sword - You can steal one of your opponents dice and roll it with your attack. Good for normal fighters going up against funky-dice monsters. (S. John Ross)

i) Cliché Sword - This sword has its own cliché which can be used in place of your cliché in certain situations. The most obvious is sword combat. But, the sword could have any cliché reasonable, like Knowledge of Knightly Behavior. (Paul Steffko)

j) Mail of Protection (2) - This magic item doesn't use a cliché roll to take effect. Instead, the wearer can ignore the first (2) dice of damage in any combat. (Paul Steffko)

k) Limited Bonus Sword - This magic items gives bonus dice to the characters cliché(s) in certain situations. (i.e. only in the dark, only when fighting zombies, only when an elf is using it, etc...) (Paul Steffko)

l) Random Sword (2) - When you roll your attack add 2 different colored dice for the sword (like 1 blue die and 1 red die) decide which one will be subtracted from the other one. Sometimes this will give you a bonus, sometimes this won't. Say you decide you'll subtract the red die from the blue die. You roll a 6 on the blue die and a 1 on the red die, you would get a +5 to your roll. On the other hand if you had a 1 on the blue die and a 6 on the red die, you would get a -5 to your roll. (Florian Edlbauer)

m) Moon Sword - This sword adds 1 die when the moon is waxing but subtracts 1 die when the moon is waning. Other possibilities are items

### Cliché Advancement

Cliché advancement (as described in the original Risus 1.5) in a regular Risus game that is being played for laughs is just fine. But, for freaks like myself that want to play Risus in a serious manner, the Cliché advancement system is somewhat lacking. So in this light I'm suggesting the following...

"Serious" Cliché Advancement:

At the end of every adventure, the GM awards 1 advancement point to each cliché that was successfully and appropriately used. After the GM has made this award the player may decide to try and advance his cliché. The player rolls his cliché dice vs. the cliché's advancement points. If he rolls under the total advancement points for the cliché, he gains a die in that cliché. But if he doesn't roll under the advancement point total, he loses 1 of the advancement points for that cliché.

EXAMPLE: John Hart the Dark Knight has Knight (4) as a cliché and he has been riding around the country side upholding the King's Law and fighting monsters of all sorts. At the end of the current adventure the GM awards him another advancement point bringing his total up to 10. The player decides it is time to try to advance his cliché, so he roll the 4 dice in his Knight cliché. If he rolls 10 or less on the 4 dice he advances from Knight (4) to Knight (5). But if the player rolls over 10, he loses 1 advancement point and stays at Knight (4).

Of course, as with all things, there are variations.

The GM can award more points for...

- 1) Role-playing the cliché well during the adventure.
- 2) Rolling all sixes on a cliché roll.

linked to the sea, sun, storm, etc... (Florian Edlbauer)

n) Berserker Sword - This sword only works for people without armor.  
(Florian Edlbauer)

o) The Best of Sword - When you roll your attack, roll double the dice of your cliche. Choose the best dice equal to your cliche out of the whole mess. (S John Ross)

### Vehicles

In the game all vehicles (land, sea, air and space vehicles) are described by any of the following clichés that apply: Vehicle Name/Type, Defense System/Type, Weapon System/Type, and Speed System.

Example: The Centennial Hawk a small smuggler's space vessel that looks like this:

Clichés: Centennial Hawk (3); Hardened Armor Plating (3); Twin Pulse Lasers (2); and Sub-Warp Drive (2)

Centennial Hawk (3) would be used for ship's functions, Hardened Armor Plating (3), is used primarily for defense, Twin Pulse Lasers (2) is of course used to attack, and

Sub-Warp Drive (2) is used for movement and chases.

Using a vehicle is considered as teaming up, without the vengeance bonus. So, when you team, roll the character's cliché and add any sixes rolled by the vehicle's cliché.

Any damage done in combat may be taken from the vehicle instead of from a character. But, if any of the ship's clichés drops to 0, the vehicle is dead and must be repaired to move again.

### Why the Flames?

Some people have been wondering about my selection of name for this website. **The Flames of Risus**. At first I chose it because it sounded neat and I really couldn't remember any other website having a name like it. Admit it. It's short, snappy and easy to remember. But, there was something more to it and I couldn't put my finger on it. I started to search the web for something that summed up the way I felt. And at last I have found it!

*I feel again a spark of that ancient flame.*

Virgil

I don't know who the author is, but his quote has captured the way I feel about Risus. The game harkens back to my early days of roleplaying when there was only one real choice in games. But, everyone played it, tweaked it, created home-brewed rules for it and, most importantly, had fun with it!

Now here we are playing, tweaking, creating home-brewed rules and (I for one) am having a world of fun with it!!!! And, can you feel it? It's the spark of that ancient roleplaying flame.

# Risus

# LXG

## The League of Exceptional Gentlemen

Boyd Mayberry

Welcome to LXG! This is a game of high adventure and excitement in an alternative Victorian England. Characters in this game belong to an elite organization devoted to fighting crime and saving mankind.

### CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

This is a supplement for *Risus*, a very exceptional role-playing game by S. John Ross which can be downloaded for free at <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>. It is required to play this game.

### CHARACTER CREATION

Characters have 10 dice to create a character. No character can start off with more than four dice in any single cliché. Characters get extra dice for hooks and tales. Characters can also use any of the options provided in the *Risus Companion*. Funky dice are not used. Characters can also pump or even double-pump their clichés if it seems appropriate.

### SOME SAMPLE CLICHÉS (AND WHAT THEY'RE GOOD FOR)

*Aristocrat* (Wearing fancy clothes, being rich)

*Artist* (Painting, sculpting, being eccentric)

*Bounty Hunter* (Tracking fugitives, shooting people)

*Cyborg* (Having mechanical parts, possessing great strength, requiring oil)

*Detective* (Solving mysteries, looking for clues)

*Doctor* (Healing people, prescribing drugs)

*Engineer* (Operating complex machinery, fixing things)

*Extraterrestrial* (Possessing amazing technology, having special powers)

*Immortal* (Never aging, being very wise)

*Invisible Man* (Walking around unseen, not wearing any clothes)

*Mad Scientist* (Performing crazy experiments, laughing insanely, having funny hair)

*Martial Artist* (Beating people up, being from the far east)

*Merchant* (Buying, selling, haggling)

*Monster Hunter* (Carrying around a huge gun, killing werewolves and vampires)

*Psychic* (Moving things without touching them, reading peoples' minds)

*Sea Captain* (Sailing, using a compass, not getting seasick)

*Sorcerer* (Casting spells, wearing funny clothes)

*Thief* (Picking locks, stealing things)

*Vampire* (Sucking blood, charming people, casting no reflection)

*Werewolf* (Turning into a giant wolf at will, howling at the moon, hating roses)

The clichés listed are fairly basic, so feel free to add interesting adjectives. For instance, instead of simply being a “werewolf”, your character could be a “kind-hearted werewolf”.

**Sample Character: Vyssyr Wolfsbane**

*Description:* Tall and pale with long black hair and violet eyes. He usually wears a black trench coat.

**Clichés:** Charming Vampire [4], Snobby Aristocrat (2)

# The Risoid Chronicles

In the course of my thinking, I've devised a couple of "House Rules," for Risus. Here they are:

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## Extended Damage for Funky Dice

This option can only be used when Option IV: Funky Dice is in use. With this option, a combat hit on a cliche that uses funky dice doesn't cost them a die, it knocks them down a die size instead.

Example: Gravitonne, uses her Gravity Girl [4d12] to try and propel The Thing From Beyond (3d20) into orbit. Unfortunately, Gravitonne loses the round. Her Gravity Girl drops from [4d12] to [4d10].

If a character gets knocked down to d6's, they are reduced in dice as normal. All other combat rules apply. (i.e., inappropriate cliche hits knock them down 3 sizes/dice, etc.)

Example: It's just not Gravitonne's day. A little later, she's down to Gravity Girl[4d8]. The Thing from Beyond uses its Rampaging Fanboy(6) against her. She loses the round. Due to the attack with an inappropriate cliche, she goes from [4d8] to [2]. [4d8] -> [4] -> [2]

Grunt-squads may not benefit from Extended Damage.

---

## Ammo Gear.

Ammo Gear is intended to represent things such as magic wands, missile launchers, etc., items which while capable of adding to a player's roll, are ultimately disposable and have a limit of how many times they can be used. Ammo gear has more than one rating.

The first one is the item's maximum bonus. This represents the maximum amount of dice the item can add to the character's roll. It may also have a minimum bonus, representing the minimum number of dice that may be added to a roll. Alternatively, the item may just have a flat bonus, with no variance in power level.

The thing that makes Ammo Gear different from most bonus-die items is that it has a 'pool rating.' For every die added to a roll (or every time it's used, for those giving a flat bonus), one is subtracted from the item's pool rating.

This becomes a handy option for GMs looking to give away an item with short-term usefulness. Some good examples:

- A high-end missile launcher, which gives a flat bonus, but only has a limited number of shots.
- Magic wands, which can be varied in power from little explosions to big explosions.

Other rules for bonus-die items can be found on Carl Hewett's page, [The Flames of Risus](#)

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## Critical Success/Failure

Critical success: For every multiple of the TN (or your opponent's roll), you get an extra benefit. In combat, you'd do an extra die of damage. If you're bargaining over something, you get a better deal.

Critical Failure: If they roll all 1s, not only do they fail, but something extra bad happens. In combat, they'd take an extra die of damage in combat. If you're bargaining over something, you get ripped off.

Grunt-squads are unaffected by Critical Success/Failure. Over the group, it tends to even out. :)

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My space naval combat rules, "And the Sky Full of Stars..." are on a separate page [here](#).

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If you can't see the frames, [click here](#) 

The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20060301013751/http://www.geocities.com/qidoc/MythosRising.html>

## Mythos Rising

*A Post-Apocalyptic Setting for Cthulhu Risus*

(and a supplement for Risus: the Anything RPG, by S. John Ross)

The main Risus site is here: [www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm](http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm)

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[History of the Apocalypse](#) - [Possible Causes of the Invasion](#) - [New Professions](#) - [Campaign Themes](#) - [Example of Play](#) - [Links](#)

### **Recent History:**

Early in the 21st century the effects of peak oil hit the world's industrialized societies, with the price of oil, gas and eventually all commodities skyrocketing. The economy grinds to a standstill. Companies lay off workers but the stock market continues to plummet. Economic collapse is in full swing.

In the U. S., the government tries to blame the crisis on everything from OPEC, the Arab nations, and internal dissenters or terrorists working to disrupt the nation's oil supply. These explanations are accepted by some segments of the population and parroted by the news media, but many are aware of the reality: peak oil has hit, and the age of cheap oil is over.

Supermarkets start rationing food, with those able to afford it buying special cards enabling them to be first in line. Food riots erupt in the streets, and several famous supermarket chains are left in ruins, their special cards torn to pieces or burned to a crisp. Martial law is declared and the Constitution suspended. Finally, the army commandeers the remaining gas and oil, so only the military and the most essential industries (mainly farming) have access to them. Military rule is the order of the day as soldiers protect shipments of food, which is shipped as a priority to wealthy urban centers.

Churches and other community groups try to provide a progressive response to the crisis by developing independent and sustainable communities that grow their own food and use windmills, solar power, and other renewables on a local level. Part of their idea is that by proving useful to and serving neighboring areas the goodwill and cooperation they'll generate among such communities will help keep them all safe.

As gas and oil get more rare still, the military is progressively less able to keep order; biker gangs and similar groups of thugs raid and pillage independent and urbanite communities alike.

Some large gangs are able to take over small towns and rule the population through terror, their leaders becoming appropriately known as warlords. Some independents try to organize and fight back, but they face an additional obstacle: they are seen as a threat by the heavily militarized federal government, so any and all independent, armed groups are lumped together with gangs and declared domestic terrorists. Communities are required to declare loyalty to the government and turn in all weapons to be eligible for food shipments.

Fighting between the military and several independent communities breaks out, but is largely a draw as the military is progressively less able to command its own troops. Oil and gas are now so expensive and so rare that (other than the military, which tries to control it all) only the very wealthy are able to afford them. The food shortage in the U. S. becomes so severe that some people resort to cannibalism. Some gangs of cannibals form, hunting lone or defenseless people down and eating them.

As if all this weren't enough, then *They* appear. Sporadic accounts of attacks from horrific creatures that look like walking tentacles shock and terrify people. These accounts are followed by tales of other monstrous creatures, among them dog-like things with tentacles sprouting from their necks that run people down and eat them, and humanoid beings that seem to come from nowhere who grab people and then disappear. Speculation is ripe about where the creatures come from. Some believe them to come from a secret government experiment gone wrong (or even worse, gone *right*), while others suspect biowarfare from another country, an alien invasion force, magically conjured monsters from another dimension, demons from the book of Revelation, or just mass hallucinations.

As these stories become more and more commonplace, an epidemic of flu-like fever begins to spread across the country. The fever is severe, with about one sixth of those who contract it falling into a coma. Panic spreads.

A surge of hope seems to be realized when people begin awakening from their comas, but joy quickly turns to horror as the frenzied fever victims - their brains damaged or somehow *changed* - do their best to attack, kill, and eat everyone in sight. Those who survive such attacks often become infected themselves (the illness is about 66 percent contagious). Panic spreads faster than "zombie fever" does. Fear of the disease is so great that some churches and hospitals who minister to the sick are burned to the ground.

Zombie fever is the final straw, and the military (and thus, the federal government) loses control completely. Many army units simply give up and disband, while others become rogues (thieves, robbers), or serve local warlords, or try to become warlords themselves. A few decide to dedicate themselves to something higher, to serve and protect the remaining innocent and helpless. They are dubbed "Samurai" by some, and the name sticks.

Tales of more horrors roaming the countryside continue to spread, as are stories of people fighting back with everything from spells prepared from aged tomes to high-tech weaponry to psychic powers. For some unknown reason - perhaps connected to the presence of the monsters - some people are awakening to the fact that they have powerful psychic abilities. In addition to typical telepathic abilities, these sensitives are able to feel the proximity of creatures from beyond and sometimes dispel or drive them away.

Those psychics who aren't driven insane by mental contact with monsters are sometimes very much valued by the communities who are aware of their potential - both for protection against strange creatures and sometimes against their fellow humans (and occasionally, psychics will work for - or are made to work for - rogues, gangs, or warlords). The more superstitious communities, on the other hand, wonder why psychics have their abilities, and suspect them of being evil and in league with the monsters.

A few intrepid souls known as *stalkers* (who will often work with psychics, if they're not psychic themselves) band together and start going on the road, seeking out sources of evil and fighting them.

Overall, the world population now largely consists of isolated enclaves of humans trying to survive on their own. The average person doesn't know how much outside infrastructure or organization still functions outside their local area. Isolated communities try to keep in touch via radio, including short wave, and also other means like messages in bottles thrown in the sea.

## **Some Possible Sources of the Mythos Invasion:**

- Government experiments (at locations like Area 51) in search of a new source of energy opened a gateway to another universe. Can the creatures that came through be dispelled or defeated with traditional spells from Mythos texts? Special high-tech weapons? Or something as ordinary as salt or garlic? The only way to find out is to try...
- A group of rebels, who in their desperate fight against an increasingly tyrannical government looked to the spells they found in an ancient tome as a possible weapon...
- A secret government group has been investigating occult activities for years, especially those involving ancient texts. Pressed by a desperate government to find some new weapon to regain control of the country, the group decides to perform a ritual of summoning they found in the Book of True Magick...
- the stars are right. Enough said.
- they are demons from chapter 9 of the book of Revelation.

## **Some possible campaign themes:**

- try to survive in a city: forge a new independent community, live as thieves or rogues, join a samurai unit
- try to survive in the country: forge a new independent community, live as thieves or rogues, join a samurai unit
- find the source(s) of the mythos invasions in the local area, and stop them
- go on the road, finding source(s) of mythos invasions, and destroying/stopping them
- resist the remnants of the military government bent on reinstating a dictatorship
- the local area has become unsafe: monsters, zombies, gangs, etc. Go on the road to find or establish a new haven.

## New Clichés

**Stalker** (knowledge of Mythos creatures and texts, dedication to defeating and dispelling the Mythos invasion, tracking, shooting)

**Psychic** (psychically feel the proximity of Mythos creatures, "hold" or temporarily paralyze people or Mythos creatures, read minds, dispel Mythos entities). *This must be a double-pump cliché.*  
GM note: for a character to feel the proximity of or to hold a creature, have their player make a check of Psychic cliché vs. one half of the monster's cliché. To dispel, use the monster's full cliché. To read minds or hold a human, use the psychic cliché vs. whatever cliché of the target's is most appropriate, or an impaired die if none are.

**Independent, Survivalist** (wilderness survival, shooting) - the survivalist, usually with a small band of family or friends, holes up in some strategic, well-stocked location and tries to keep everyone else away by force of arms

**Independent, Progressive** (personable, good social skills, farming) - this type believes no one can be safe alone, and tries to build a sustainable community that is a repository of useful things like food, medicine, tools, books, etc. and people who have important skills or knowledge (including medicine, farming, self-defense, etc.).

**Loyalist** (shooting, fighting, following orders) - a member of a military unit that still tries to serve the federal government, or what they think their last orders were.

**Rogue** (shooting, fighting, stealing, intimidation) - a member of a military unit that has decided to survive by becoming a bandit and robbing others, preferably ones too helpless to fight back.

**Samurai** (shooting, fighting, being noble, protecting the weak) - a member of a military unit that has decided to live with their primary purpose being serving and protecting the remaining innocents who still live.

**Survivor** (shooting, fighting, survival) - a member of a military unit that has just decided to survive and abandon any pretense of military discipline or higher purpose. They generally don't rob others, and if they do take something they will usually try to offer some service in exchange.

**Warlord** (fighting, giving orders, intimidation) - a leader of a large gang-controlled area.

**Zombie** (eat people, spread disease by biting or other blood-to-blood contact) - someone who contracted Zombie fever, fell into a coma, and woke up, usually in a bloodthirsty rage. The fever affects different people differently, some act like the mindless zombies from a George Romero movie, while others can be more actively savage: think of a cross between the "infected" from *28 Days Later* and the "reavers" from the show *Firefly*. Regardless, zombies are not undead and can be killed normally.

## Example of Play

Here's the introduction for a scenario I ran at a Monday game night for the Seattle's Gamer's Assemble group:

### Leaving Las Vegas

You wake up with a start. You look around you, but nothing seems amiss - no more so than usual, anyway. The lot of you are still holed up in one of the conference rooms of the Luxor hotel in Las Vegas. Everyone else is asleep, some on hammocks, one or two on a couch, most on the floor. The makeshift barricades against the doors still seem secure.

You wonder what it is that woke you. Not that you need much of a reason to stay awake nights during these times. It's only been a couple of weeks since everything really went to hell, but it seems like a lifetime ago. Yes, oil and gas prices went through the roof, the economy fell into shambles, and the government suspended the Constitution and descended into outright dictatorship, but all that was downright comforting compared to what happened next.

A very virulent kind of influenza had spread through the country like wildfire, many of the victims falling into comas. As if that weren't bad enough, people described seeing - and sometimes being attacked by - horrific creatures the very sight of which threatened to drive them insane. The scuttlebutt around Vegas was that something finally got out of Area 51. The final straw was when the coma victims started to recover - and then proceeded to try to kill and eat everyone in sight.

With these "zombies" running loose and the military overwhelmed, people had to take the matter of survival into their own hands. You, a number of other Las Vegas locals, and a few wealthy (correction: formerly wealthy) tourists had broken into the sealed but abandoned hotel to get some resources of food and water and to find some kind of a safe haven. Your group wound up in this particular room, while other groups are holed up elsewhere in the hotel. This seemed like a good idea at first, but it's been getting increasingly difficult to scavenge food. To add to the problem, you're beginning to suspect that one of your companions is starting to come down with zombie fever, which means you've probably all been exposed. That means the majority of you are going to come down with it, which means some of you - you're not sure how many - will become zombies.

A low noise startles you out of your reverie. It sounds something like a burst of static. Then you realize what it is: someone left the short wave (the radio had been scavenged from somewhere) on, and it was picking up a broadcast! Excited, you rush over to the headphones to listen in.

Unfortunately, the message is not getting through very well, and is punctuated and occasionally obscured by bursts of static:  
"...repeat, we have a cure for zombie fever. If it is taken in \*static\* we estimate the cure rate to be as high as ninety percent. We will distribute the medicine to all who come and ask \*static\*... This message \*static\* repeat. This is Free Radio Seattle. Our community is free of zombies. We have a cure for zombie fever, repeat...\*static\*", and the message fades out.

You groan inwardly. Why did it have to be Seattle, so far away? Heck, with everything from zombies to gangs to monstrous creatures running around, just getting out of Vegas is very possibly more than any of you can manage, even working together. But if you've already been exposed to zombie fever, and with food running out, what choice do you have?

You look around at your sleeping companions, and decide against waking them up.

Come the morning, you figure they'll need their rest.

## And here's how the game went:

I hadn't GMed for about a year, so I was a little overwhelmed when *seven* players showed up! It was a blessing though, as everyone was fun to be around and seemed to really get into the game very quickly. Luckily the rules-light nature of the game helped me keep everything straight, something I couldn't have done with a more crunchy set of rules.

The game started with everyone holed up in a suite of the Luxor hotel in Las Vegas, having just heard over the short wave that a cure for zombie fever (which everyone had been exposed to) had been found in Seattle. As the characters are introduced to each other and they begin discussing what to do, they hear a banging on the door with someone demanding to be let in. In comes the Psychic Hitman (Cat's character), shouting that the zombies are coming. The PCs retreat to an adjoining room when zombies begin pounding on the door and start to break in. Frantically discussing among themselves how best to get out of the hotel, one proposal someone comes up with is to make for the inclinator (the Luxor's version of an elevator) shaft and climb down, and the other idea is to break a window and repel down the side of the building. At this point I'm quite sure the players will decide on a strategy to get out as a unified group, understanding the cardinal rule that all gamers are sure to know: if you find yourself in a horror movie, don't split up!

The group promptly splits up, with some of the PCs (I can't remember all the character names so I'm making up titles: the Psychic Doctor, Construction Guy, the Papparazzo, and Dale Braveheart) making for the inclinator while the others break a window and try to slide down to the next floor using a rope of tied-together bedsheets. Zombies come after both groups - the inclinator group manages to close the doors to the shaft before the zombies get to them, but unfortunately when they made their break for the inclinator they forgot to close the door to the room behind them. Zombies promptly enter and go after the remaining PCs (Psychic Hitman, Joe Bob the Survivalist Gun Nut, and Roger the Stunt Driving Outdoorsman Mechanic). Joe Bob is the last one left in the room and empties his shotgun at the approaching zombies, then slides down the bedsheets rope just before they get to him. While the window group repeats the procedure every couple of floors, the inclinator group eventually reaches the first floor, where the inclinator has stopped. They'd like to reach the garage and get to a car, but the nearest stairs down are across the hall. In between them and the stairs are rows of slot machines, with about half a dozen zombies mindlessly playing the slots. The group tries to sneak quietly by, but are interrupted when a wounded man staggers towards them, pleading for help, with two zombies in close pursuit.

The majority want to leave him to his fate, but Construction Guy (Jayson's character) steps forward and catches the wounded fellow just before he collapses (in doing so, he very probably saves the entire session from ending in a TPK - more on that soon!). The Doctor tries to fight one of the zombies, but takes two blows and passes out. Construction Guy valiantly picks him up too, and drags them both towards the stairs while Dale Braveheart, the Jujitsu race car driver, fights the zombies off with a mop handle.

Meanwhile, the window group reaches the ground and makes for a taxicab that looks relatively intact. Inside is a zombie taxi driver, who opens the back door of the car for them. This weirds everyone out so Psychic hitman blows the zombie cab driver away, and they proceed to hotwire the car.

As they're about to take off a huge Hound appears out of nowhere, sprouts tentacles, and licks its chops. Joe Bob fails his sanity check and runs screaming back towards the zombies. Psychic Hitman uses his psi to mentally hold the monster in place while Joe Bob recovers, then they hightail it out of there in the taxicab.

The other group makes it down the stairs, get their cars, and unblock the entrance to make their escape before the zombies get to them. They try to escape Las Vegas via I-15, but are frustrated by the abandoned vehicles and zombies blocking the way.

Meanwhile the window group is raiding a zombified police station for weapons and ammo when the Hound appears again and attacks. It grabs Psychic Hitman with tentacles and starts taking bites out of him, in spite of Joe Bob's attack with a water bottle and repeated shot gun blasts. With a last desperate attempt Psychic Hitman is able to mentally freeze the creature, and the group escapes the area in a K-9 police van apprehended by Roger. The Hound chases them down the highway as Joe Bob fires off blast after shotgun blast at it. Eventually the wounded Hound falls behind, and they meet the other group in their cars further North on the highway.

In the other group the Doctor has recovered and tended the man they rescued from the zombies. It turns out he's a sorcerer with a copy of the book Monstres and their Kynde, which describes Hounds of Tindalos and how to dispel them. It turns out the Hounds (there appear to be several of them in the area, according to the sorcerer) are trying to keep everyone in Las Vegas there so they can eat them one by one at their leisure, and so won't let anyone leave. The sorcerer tells them about a spell he can cast to dispel the Hounds, but it requires blood from everyone, and a method to get the ensorcelled blood on or into the Hounds. After everyone sacrifices enough blood (for some reason, Jayson's character sacrificed more blood than anyone else... of course, Jayson did have to leave for the night shortly before this part of the session...), the sorcerer is able to enchant the blood with a Dispel Hound of Tindalos spell. The blood is inserted into hollowpoint rounds which are distributed to several of the PCs with guns. The PCs fire up their vehicles and make a break for the desert.

At the outskirts of town the vehicles are attacked by no less than 5 of the Hounds. Joe Bob, in the car driven by Dale Braveheart, shoots one of the Hounds, which promptly fades from this universe in a most grotesque and frightening manner. So frightening that both Dale and Joe Bob fail their sanity checks. Dale floors the accelerator as Joe Bob fights him for the wheel.

Meanwhile Psychic Doctor is able to freeze one of the Hounds, but another Hound breaks into the car through the rear window and starts eating the sorcerer. Papparazzo empties a gun into it but it's unfazed. The sorcerer passes out. Another Hound crashes through the front window of Dale's car and starts eating him. He desperately tries to shake the Hound off him with fancy driving, but keeps getting bitten again and again.

Psychic Hitman is able to take out the sorcerer-eating Hound with one of the blood bullets. Psychic Doctor's hold on one Hound is beginning to break, while Dale, in a last desperate attempt to save his life (one more bite and he's unconscious), pulls off a great driving maneuver and the Hound trying to eat him flies off the car.

The PCs get a couple of more lucky breaks and are able to take out the remaining Hounds in short order, using their enchanted blood bullets.

So the evening ends with the PCs being successful - they've left Las Vegas, and are on the road to Seattle. I thought the group worked together well: the doctor helped patch everyone up and paralyze some of the enemy, and the combat characters played their roles effectively as did the psychics and the mechanic, who worked on the cars. A special congratulatory mention is due to Jayson for saving the sorcerer - without his help (i.e. the blood bullets), the final battle against the Hounds would most likely have resulted in a TPK. Papparazzo also did extremely well even without any combat skills: skill at sneaking around really came in handy! Also thanks to Jayson for bringing cool figures of a zombie horde to the game.

I also thought that overall the rules helped enhance the game: because they were light, they didn't get in the way, and helped keep the action moving fast.

As to the unanswered questions: How many of the PCs will come down with zombie fever? Will they make it to Seattle in time? Is there really a cure? That remains to be seen...

Thanks to everyone who participated for making the game so much fun! If you have any feedback on the game rules - what you found confusing, what was good/helpful - please let me know.

## **Some links for more info on Peak Oil (a very real concern):**

[www.dieoff.org](http://www.dieoff.org)

[www.survivingpeakoil.com](http://www.survivingpeakoil.com)

[www.globalpublicmedia.com](http://www.globalpublicmedia.com)

[www.oilcrisis.com](http://www.oilcrisis.com)

[www.peakoil.net](http://www.peakoil.net)

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[Cthulhu Home - Cthulhu Risus Rules](#)



The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20060824173401/http://www.edlbauer.de/ritus/rlyeh.html>



Ritus

## Ritus R'lyeh

I love Chaosium's Call of Cthulhu scenarios and campaigns, but am a bit weary of the game rules. I plan to run a few CoC session with Ritus rules. This the first draft, and has not been playtested.

[edlbauer.de](http://www.edlbauer.de)

[ [S. John's official Ritus page](#) ]

[Call of Cthulhu](#)

[E-Mail](#)

### Character keywords

I prefer to say keyword instead of cliche. These are just examples, of course. Most of them are typical character professions. The Keeper may want to limit each character to one or two professional traits.

- Policeman (spot thefts, direct traffic, arrest criminals)
- Police Detective (science of deduction, forensics, interrogate suspect)
- Pilot (fly airplane, repair airplane, know languages and countries)
- Bookshop owner (evaluate books, know unknown authors, find a book on every imaginable topic)
- Antiquarian (know about hermetic magic, know about greek battles, know about druids)
- Historian (interrogate students, tell anecdotes, ...)
- Dandy (recite poems, swing walking stick, get bored)
- Athlete (run, jump, dodge)
- Stage magician (sleight of hand, pick pockets, wear top hat, draw rabbit from hat)
- Occultist (know about UFO landings, remember weird names, ...)
- Linguist (speak french, speak dutch, speak mandarin chinese)
- Librarian (find misplaced books, find newspaper articles, dust shelves)
- Hobo (steal cheap wine, drink cheap wine, sing country songs)
- Physician (cure disease, find antidote, calm patient)
- Psychiatrist (cure mental illness, ...)
- Soldier (clean rifle, fire rifle, know about tactics and strategy)
- Clergyman (preach long sermons, forgive sinners ...)
- University student (chat up girls, learn stuff by heart, carouse)
- Millionaire (buy firearms, buy liquor, buy anything)
- Parapsychologist (tell stories about supernatural occurrences in Nepal, know a Japanese from a Korean, anthropophagic recipes)
- Circus clown (eat fire, tell jokes, fall down without taking damage)
- Criminal
- Private Investigator
- Engineer
- Journalist
- Lawyer

### Sanity Rules

Instead of a sanity stat, all characters have a sanity threshold. That is a difficulty level against which monsters and horrible occurrences roll -- not other way round. All characters start at level 30, but instead of one die they can buy five extra points of sanity threshold if they like. (The sanity threshold should probably be limited to a maximum of 40.)

When a monster rolls against a character's sanity level, points may be lost even if the monster fails. Horrible occurrences grind you down in the long run. Therefore, sanity losses are denoted as two figures separated by a slash, like 1/1D. That means that the player must deduct 1 point from sanity if the monster fails, but 1D if the monster's roll surpasses the player's current sanity level. If the player loses 5 points or more, he goes temporarily insane, i.e. succumbs to catatonia or something similar. He will pick up a lasting phobia besides.

When a character loses more than 10 per cent of his remaining sanity, he goes indefinitely insane and needs to be treated in an asylum. When the sanity level reaches 0, the character goes permanently insane, i.e. becomes an NPC.

Some examples of sanity losses:

- find a body part or corpse: 1/1
- awake in a coffin 1/2
- meet someone you know to be dead 1/1D
- see great Cthulhu 1D/5D

Generous GMs can award increases to sanity thresholds for psychoanalytical therapies, for personal successes (preventing another summoning of mighty Yog-Sothoth) and for keywords (cliques) raised to 6 (reflecting increased self esteem as per CoC rules).

### Tomes and spells

Even the minor mythos monsters have high fighting skills. A byakhee may have a keyword like "winged creature with muscles like steel" at a value of 5 dice or so. How can a fearless investigator win against these beings? He might find an ancient tome with a spell in it: How to summon and dispel a byakhee. If that character learns that spell by heart and chants it in the presence of the monster, he will get to roll a keyword like "professor of parapsychology" or "paleolinguist" against the creature. Furthermore, most mythos books give a bonus of 1 die for spellcasting -- the Necronomicon gives 2 dice bonus, even. Other players with similar skills may join the fight. And finally, if the monster had attacked the investigator physically in the first place, fighting back with a spell is considered Inappropriate and can be pumped.

### Ritus

Just in case you didn't know, Ritus is a free roleplaying game by S. John Ross. Check it out by clicking on the header of this section.

Risus is ideal if you prefer common sense to do the bookkeeping in your roleplaying campaign. But Risus goes even further. It encourages the players to add detail to the narrative. In an ordinary RPG, players will not try an action that they haven't got the skill for. In Risus, they will take yet another look at their keywords or cliches instead and come up with an original solution to the problem.

#### Call of Cthulhu

If you don't know Call of Cthulhu, this page will not hold much of interest for you, so better visit Chaosium first and buy "Masks of Nyarlathotep" or another of their fine products.

*Florian Edlbauer*

The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20060818154344/http://www.edlbauer.de:80/risus/roster.html>



Risus

## Risus Roster

Here are a few men and monsters I wrote up for Risus, the Anything RPG by S. John Ross.

[edlbauer.de](http://edlbauer.de)

[ [S. John's official Risus page](#) ]

[ [Larry Bullock's Character Generator](#) ]

[ [E-Mail](#) ]

### Takisho Fu

Fu will suit any [Travelling Light](#) game.

Gunner on board of some interstellar spaceship. He has yellow skin, as his name indicates, but no knowledge of Martial Arts. Rather, Fu studied Electronics and worked in the Star Fleet as Engineer. By mistake, Fu got involved in a battle once because accidentally he was wearing the uniform of his roommate. It turned out that he was rather good at using ship guns, and so he changed jobs, learning to fly interplanetary spaceboats and operate laser guns properly.

Fu is often the only one hanging around in the ship's only, horribly smoky smoking room. He loves his Camel cigarettes has has been known to light one in the most improbable moments of his career.

Fu is a shy guy and more than nervous when in the presence of women. He is often unable to do his work properly when a woman is nearby. (BTW, this is what prevented him from becoming TV engineer after he had finished his studies. He would turn and run when the housewife opened the door...)

Cliches:

- Gunner (4)
- Space Boat Pilot (3)
- Electronics Engineer (3)
- Cigarette Smoker (1)

Hook: Afraid of women.

### Rodney O'Flahigan

Rodney is a character I made up for the "[RSS Ramirez](#)" play-by-e-mail game.

NASA Canteen Cook

Description: Brown hair and eyes. Pale complexion. Relaxed, he looks like a bear. Under stress or on his bike, he looks like an infuriated bear whose honey has been stolen.

Rodney is of Irish descent and has kissed the Blarney stone: He will convince you the sun is blue if you aren't careful. Well, if you are, he'll tell you anyway. He owns a parrot called *Quibbler*, who talks almost as much as Rod does.

Being employed as cook in the NASA canteen, Rodney has some degree of knowledge which spices go with which food. Not much, but he managed to get the job. Rodney's favourite pastime is riding his racing bicycle. He doesn't mind racing across motorways. In fact, navigating in between cars and not getting killed is the main thrill for him.

- Parrot owner [3]
- Cook (2)
- Storyteller (2)
- Cyclist (2)

Hook: Adrenaline addict. Always gets himself into dangerous situations.

### Sabre-tooth tiger

Description: Sabre-Tooth tigers are like tigers, yet more ferocious. They will attack anything, even men, if hungry. Most of the time, though, they stalk on cattle, which may bring them to the notice of the heroes.

Habitat: The jungles of prehistoric earth and all fantasy worlds.

Tactics: Sabre-tooth tigers jump at their prey, usually from an ambush. If successful, they just tear it apart with their huge teeth. Important: The tiger needs to succeed with its *Jump at Victim* cliche before it can use its powerful *Bite*. *Hungry jungle hunter* can be used if the creature tries to hide and sneak, or for any unforeseen action.

- Jump at victim (3)
- Bite (6)
- Hungry Jungle Hunter (4)

### Raimbault

Created using Larry Bullock's [Character Generator](#)

#### Raimbault de Carcassonne, created by Florian

Description: Black-haired, slim and short. Raimbault is a Joglar and Mercenary in Occitan France (ca. 1150 AD).

Cliches: Swordsman (4), Fire Eater (3), Philosopher (2), Musician (3)

Hook: Believes no priest, ever.

**Tools:** Lyre (one of those middle-ages lyres with a handle to turn and a couple of wooden keys). An edition of Aristotle.

a 11 die character for a 10 die campaign

### Donkey / Mule

Description: Donkeys are like small horses with rough fur, typically grey or brown. Mules are sterile cross-breeds of donkeys and horses. For mules add an extra die to one of the donkey clichés given below.

Habitat: All across Europe and most fantasy worlds. Donkeys and mules can endure in most climates. They are equally popular in the Mediterranean and Scandinavia.

Tactics: They normally run away when attacked. Cornered, they will kick with their hind legs. Donkeys and mules refuse to be overworked. Less stupid than horses, they know their limits.

Hardy long distance traveler (3)  
Stubborn leg-kicking animal (3)

### Mara

Description: The Mara is a man's dream - and nightmare. She is a beautiful woman, a succubus, who visits men in their dreams and seduces them. On awakening, they feel tired and worn out. Some have even died after regular visits. Maras are nocturnal and can be banished by daylight.

Habitat: The Spirit World. Mara are summoned by shamans and sent to their enemies, e.g. player heroes who have crossed their paths in the past.

Tactics: The Mara engages the player in combat against an applicable cliché. Every night, one round of combat is fought. If the Mara manages to wear the character down to 0, he dies.

The Mara needs to get into the sleeper's room somehow, possibly through a keyhole or window. If all entrances are locked, she cannot continue her seduction that night, and the character regains one cliché point.

The Mara must exit by the same way she came in. The only way to dispel the Mara permanently is to let her in and block the way out until dawn. In that case, the character regains all lost points.

Seduction (5)  
Find a way into locked rooms (3)

### Fox

Description: Small animals with a soft (usually red) fur, for which humans hunt them. Foxes are well-known for their cleverness, stealth and exquisite senses (especially scent, but also hearing). Most are nocturnal.

Habitat: Red foxes live in the woods and only ever leave them to hunt at farms. However, foxes are clever and appreciate nearby human settlements as hunting grounds. They prefer mild climates, but can stand cold better than heat. Regional varieties like the Polar or White Fox may differ.

Tactics: Foxes jump at and kill their prey (hens are typical) with just one bite.

Sly thief of the woods (4)  
Agile omnivore (2)

### Centaur

Description: Centaurs look like cross-breeds between men and horses, but insist that they aren't. Also, Centaurs mate only within their own race.

Habitat: Ancient Greece. Some fantasy worlds. Most Centaur tribes are nomadic.

Tactics: Centaurs are typically expert with bows. They shoot and run. Some Gloranthans claim they have seen centaurs fight with a lance. In general, though, the horsemen are too cautious to enter close combat if they can avoid it.

Archer (4)  
Runner (5)

### Cat (domestic)

Description: Everyone knows what a cat looks like - a small leopard, without the dots. They come in diverse colours. They have been kept as domestic animals since Ancient Egypt.

Habitat: Everywhere, but most live in or near human settlements.

Tactics: Cats hide from bigger opponents, while the stalk upon their prey, vermin and birds.

Rat catcher (4)  
Night stalker (3)

### Risus

Just in case you didn't know, Risus is a free roleplaying game by S. John Ross. Check it out now.

Risus is ideal if you prefer common sense to do the bookkeeping in your roleplaying campaign. But Risus goes even further. It encourages the players to add detail to the narrative. In an ordinary RPG, players will not try an action that they haven't got the skill for. In Risus, they will take yet another look at their keywords or clichés instead and come up with an original solution to the problem.



The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20060822201237/http://www.edlbauer.de:80/risus/rules.html>



Risus

## Risus Rules

Risus, the Anything RPG by S. John Ross, can certainly be used for any campaign as it is. Nevertheless, everyone creates their own house rules. Even me. I don't really ever use them, but I want to contribute to the Risus mailing list, too. And I want to be able to offer something to You Visitors Out There, too.

[edlbauer.de](http://edlbauer.de)

### Armor

Armor is part of the equipment for the Warrior cliche.

Having said that, this is how I'd possibly handle it: Armor absorbs certain dice values, NOT the overall die result. Clothes (1) cancel out ones, Leather armor (2) cancels out every (single die) roll of 2. Chain mail (1,4) cancel out any opponent's rolls of one OR four, but not the 2s, 3s, 5s and 6es.

The rationale is that really strong strikes still get through. You can always hit your opponent where he isn't protected. Plus, armor won't protect you much when faced by many opponents, most of whom contribute their sixes only.

### Animal Companions

Many heroes, and even some Risus characters, have animal companions. These may be the hunter's dog, a witch's raven, the dancing bear of an entertainer. Heck, even robots and computers with artificial intelligence.

Animal (and other) Companions never have the cliches given in here, but rather become a cliché themselves when domesticated. A Risus character can thus train a cat to accompany him, which is reflected in a cliché of Cat Companion, starting at (1) as usual.

In case the player asks, the score represents not the creature's abilities, but its usefulness to the player character. The general rule is: The statistics presented on the [Risus Roster page](#) are for animals played by the GM. If a player wants to take control, he must do so by developing a cliché.

Often, it will be a good idea to make Companions a double-pump cliché as they tend to do various unforeseeable things.

*Florian Edlbauer*

[ [S. John's official Risus page](#) ]

[ Larry Bullock's [Character Generator](#) ]

[E-Mail](#)

“Go to Japan and savor new flavors”

SETTING: the player characters are junk food junkies who desire new gastronomic experiences, and instead of going to the local Asian food shop (and getting snack foods that are not so fresh), they've decided to go to Japan so they could get the food at their freshest.

#### I GETTING PREPARED

- a. Buy the plane tickets: the group can only afford tickets for 3<sup>rd</sup> class.
- b. Gathering stuff for the trip: the group only has one suitcase (or duffel bag) in their possession (a good and funny explanation is that the rest had been stolen by a cat burglar who steals only suitcases), and that suitcase has to contain the bare essentials for the trip.

#### II THE TRIP

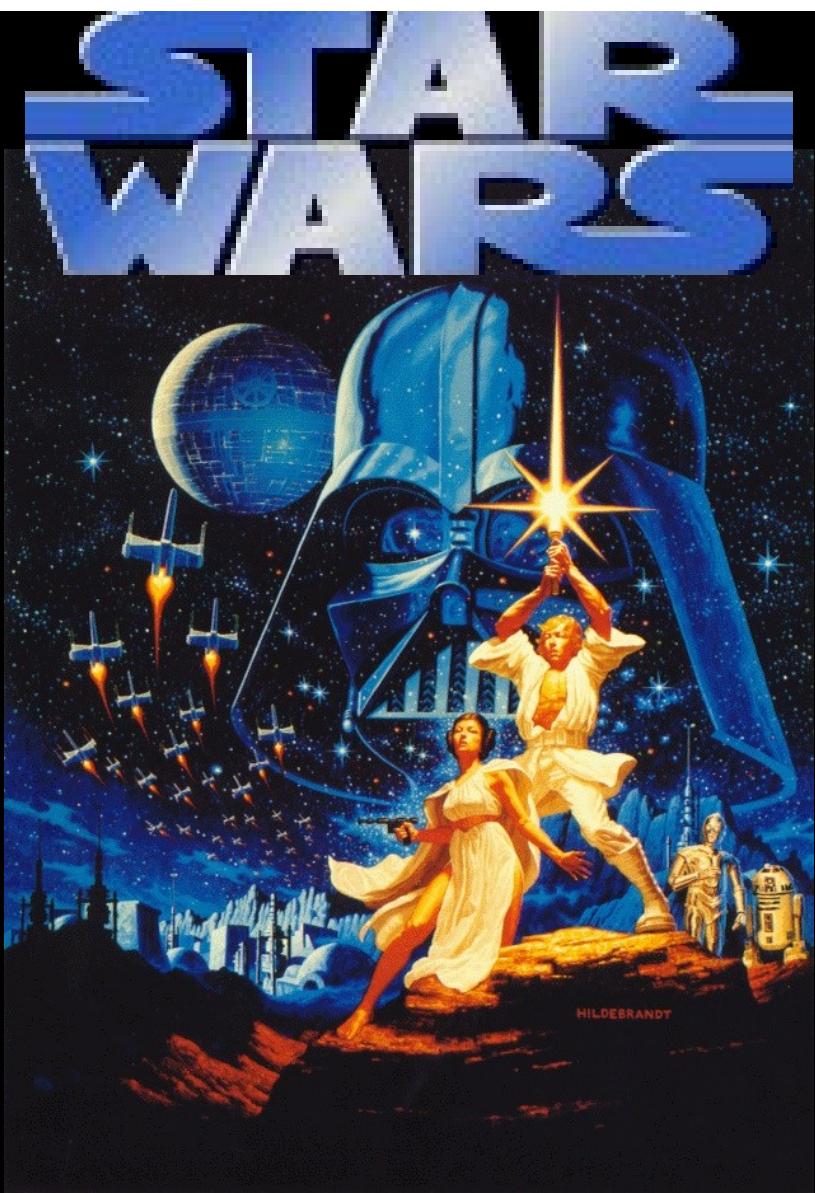
- a. Go to the airport: during the bus trip to the airport, one of the groups's vacationers (a non player character is preferable) get into a fit of anger and frustration against a weird traveling religious guru.
- b. Get into the plane: the group gets bossed around by the sarcastic stewardesses because of their “inferior” class.
- c. Fly to Japan: the plane gets hijacked by a crazy guy (with a bomb to boot) who ironically is one of the guru's friends trying to get revenge from what happened before.

#### III GETTING THE GOODS

- a. Find a convenience store: none of the vacationers can speak Japanese fluently, but they have to split up and try to find directions, for the nearest store, by asking local bystanders; later on, one of the split up groups gets a cell phone call from one of their members (a non character player) who tells he/she got arrested by local law enforcement for something he/she didn't do.
- b. Select the snacks you want to eat and buy them: after one of the bilingual policeman give them help in their search, the group finally arrived at a high tech “combini” where it only sells its products in robotic vending machines...which actually went on the fritz when the vacationers uses them.
- c. Enjoy the food: the side effects on the player characters varies to the game master's taste and whims at the moment... twice burning habanero chips, addiction to chocolate dipped pretzel stick, anything goes!

#### IV GETTING BACK HOME

- a. The plane gets attacked by giant monsters: the group gets reassured that this is a routine thing in Japan.



for

## Risus: The Anything RPG

Written by Timothy Groves

*Star Wars is owned by LucasArts and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. Risus was created by Cumberland Games. In no way do I challenge their copyrights. Please don't sue me.*

# Table of Contents

Character Creation.....	3
Time Lines.....	3
Some Suggested Cliches.....	4
The Force.....	5
Luke Skywalker.....	4
The Dark Side.....	5
Races.....	6
Droids.....	7
Gadgetry.....	7
Improving Gadgetry.....	8
Droids Redux.....	8
Gaining Gadgetry after Character Creation.....	8
Losing Gadgetry.....	9
Wealth.....	9
Sample Gadgets.....	10
Starships.....	11
Sample Ships.....	11
Character Advancement.....	12
The Advancement Roll.....	12

Star Wars for **Risus** seems a natural concept: the cinematic playstyle of Risus, and the cinematic flavour of the Star Wars movies.

This supplement for **Risus** covers character creation and certain elements of game play, as specifically applies to a Star Wars game. For the most part, the rules as found in the Risus rulebook apply. However, a few new rules need to be added, in five different areas: The Force, The Dark Side, Races, Gadgetry, and Starships.

The new rules in this document rely heavily on the Teamwork rules from **Risus**.

## Character Creation

Characters in Risus Star Wars are created with ten six-sided dice. Funky Dice are not used. Characters may have double-pumpable clichés, and one cliché in particular (the Force) may only be purchased double-pumpable. Both Hooks and Tales may be used.

### Time Lines

The exact time line being used in the game will, of course, affect a character's style. The Star Wars films provide us with three time lines to play with: The Republic, The Clone Wars, and The Rebellion. In addition, Star Wars comics novels have given us a few more time lines: The Pre-Republic Era, Tales of the Jedi Knights, and The New Republic. These eras are listed chronologically below.

**The Pre-Republic Era** – Starships are larger, slower, and generally clunkier. Droids are rare, and much larger and more primitive. Most importantly, neither the Jedi Temple nor the Order of the Sith have yet arisen, so any Force wielders will be poorly trained. Lightsabres haven't been invented yet.

**Tales of the Jedi Knights** – The Old Republic is at its height, and the Jedi have risen as its defenders. However, they are locked in a war with the Sith. Both sides have many Knights, and fight openly against each other. Technology is still rather clunky.

**The Republic** – The Jedi are dwindling in number, reduced to a role of police, judges and diplomats, but the Sith are believed to have been wiped out. The Republic itself has started to decline, due to internal dissention and corruption.

**The Clone Wars** – The Republic is coming apart at the seams, due to the influence of the returned Sith. The rebellious worlds, headed up by the Trade Federation, the Banking Clans, and the Techno-Union Army, have started an interstellar war of grand scale.

**The Rebellion** – Though the Clone Wars have ended, the Republic is now ruled by the Sith Lord Darth Sidious, and only a small number of worlds fight to free the Galaxy and restore the Republic.

**The New Republic** – With the defeat of the Emperor, the Rebels form the New Republic and begin rebuilding. Some worlds, however, remain loyal to the Empire, splitting the territory of the Old Republic into two opposing interstellar nations.

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## Some Suggested Cliches

**Administrator** – filling out paperwork, distributing red tape, analyzing complex forms and regulations

**Belter** – Piloting through asteroid fields, mining asteroids for precious metals, using vacc suits

**Diplomat** – compromising, getting everyone to feel like they're getting the best part of the deal, talking in really, really complex terms

**Doctor** – making sick people well, analyzing new diseases, having really bad handwriting

**Farmer** – growing things, recognizing plants, spitting

**Fighter Pilot** – flying fighters, shooting down other fighters, trick flying, attracting members of the opposite sex

**Gunfighter** – shooting things, quickdraws, trickshooting

**Jedi** – swinging a lightsabre, affecting people's minds, talking mysteriously, making a simple brown robe look cool

**Mechanic** - fixing or modifying things, scrounging parts, bitching about poorly-written tech manuals

**Merchant** – Buying, selling, analyzing the market, appraising goods, trying not to lose his shirt

**Moisture Farmer** – trying to grow food on a planet with no water

**Pirate** – using any sort of weapon with minimal training, stealing ships, stealing cargo, stealing virtue

**Scientist** – making the simple complex, talking confusingly, and, oh yeah, science

**Sith Lord** – swinging a lightsabre, looking menacing, killing people over the vidscreen, plotting to rule the galaxy

**Smuggler** – flying freighters, appraising contraband, shooting blasters, making wise-ass remarks

**Soldier** – firing guns, operating tanks or speeders, taking orders

# The Force

The Force is a subtle and powerful ally. As a cliché, it must be purchased double pumpable, so every die in The Force costs two dice to purchase, and no character may start with more than two dice in The Force.

A character with two dice in both The Force and Jedi is considered a Knight; six dice in both Jedi and The Force are required to be a Jedi Master.

The Force may be used in any of the following ways:

- As a sense roll, rather than using any other cliché;
- As a Team Member on any Jedi roll, contributing its sixes;
- As a pool of double-pumpable dice on any other roll.

For example, Luke Skywalker desperately needs to drop a proton torpedo into a small thermal exhaust port on the Death Star. He pumps his Force one die (meaning he'll drop to Force [1] for the rest of the battle), gaining three dice to add to his Fighter Pilot, bringing him to Fighter Pilot (7) for his next attack.

Want to control another's mind with the Force? Roll your Force against the opponent's highest cliché. If you win, the target must do what you ordered him to do. If you lose, the target may do as he likes.

Usually, mind controlling is done subtly. The target thinks he perceives something that he does not, or comes to an incorrect conclusion ('These aren't the Droids we're looking for'). Direct control not only leaves the target aware that something is up, but is considered an evil use of The Force, and causes the Force user to gain a Dark Side die.

There are, of course, many other uses for The Force not covered above. But for the most part, these can be achieved by using The Force to boost another cliché. In a few rare occasions, however, the GM may allow a character to roll The Force as a stand-alone cliché for purposes beyond merely sensing things.

## Luke Skywalker

(As of the Battle of Yavin IV)

**Concept:** Moisture Farmer turned Fighter Pilot and Jedi Knight

**Story:** See Star Wars Episodes IV to VI

**Hook:** Darth Vader is his father, and is trying to turn him to the Dark Side

**Clichés:** Fighter Pilot (4), The Force [2], Farmer (1)

**Gadgets:** Father's Lightsabre (4)

## The Dark Side

The Dark Side is a faster, more seductive and easier road to power. Dice in The Dark Side may be gained during character play, but this is not a good thing! In any game session where the character does something evil, the GM may require the player to make a Dark Side improvement roll. As with standard **Risus**, this means that the player must roll dice equal to his Dark Side cliché, and if all the dice come up even, he gains another.

Should the character wield The Force in a decidedly evil fashion, he will automatically and immediately gain one die in The Dark Side.

Whenever dice are gained in The Dark Side, the player must immediately roll his total Dark Side, including any dice just gained. If *any* of these dice come up ones, the character has fallen to The Dark Side of the Force. The character becomes an NPC under the control of the Game Master. If a character gains a total of six dice in The Dark Side, the fall to the Dark Side is automatic.

The Dark Side may be used in an identical manner to The Force, with the following differences:

- As a non-double-pumpable Cliche, only two dice are gained when The Dark Side is used to pump another Cliche.
- The Dark Side may be used as a stand-alone cliché in actual injuring combat.
- Any use of The Dark Side is considered an evil act, and guarantees an improvement roll at the end of the session, as detailed above.

Eventually, the character's evil actions will turn him to the Dark Side, controlling and absorbing his entire life.

A character may start with one die in the Dark Side at character creation. Doing so will grant him one additional die for use elsewhere on the character. This is in addition to any bonus dice granted by Character Hooks or Character Stories.

However, gaining this die means that the character must immediately roll as per gaining Dark Side dice, above. If the result is a one, the character cannot start with the Dark Side die, and does not gain the bonus die.

### Darth Vader

**Concept:** Sith Lord and fallen Jedi

**Story:** See Star Wars

**Hook:** Pawn of Emporer Palpatine

**Clichés:** Sith Lord (6), The Dark Side (6), Fighter Pilot (4)

**Gadget:** Lightsabre (4)

# Races

A horde of alien races exist in Star Wars, ranging from the near human to the totally bizarre. If a player wishes to play an alien Race, the GM must define two things:

- The Race's Cliche;
- The Race's Hook.

A Racial cliché indicates the sort of things that the Race is noted for. As an example, Wookies are noted for being intimidating, for being fierce brawlers, and for being able to build or fix anything mechanical. Racial clichés may be teamed with appropriate clichés(Brawler or Mechanic for a Wookie, for example).

Racial Hooks are the flaws and problems associated with being a member of an alien Race. Wookies, continuing our example, cannot speak Basic and are considered slaves by the Empire.

Any persons electing to play an alien Race gains the Racial Hook, as well as one bonus die in the Racial cliché.

---

## Droids

It is possible to play a Droid, if the player so desires. The Droid cliché grants the ability to speak the binary language plus an increased tolerance of unpleasant environments – Droids don't need to breathe, eat or drink, though they do need power and lubricants. Droids also frequently have interesting built-in devices, allowing them to perform several different tasks. The player should select the general type of Droid – Protocol, AstroMech, Probe, Medical, just to name a few - and consider that when using such built-in gadgetry.

The downsides to playing a Droid - the Droid Hook - are numerous and considerable, however. First of all, Droids must be owned by someone, usually another party member. Droids are disliked by many. ("We don't serve their kind here.")

Finally, Droids do not recover lost dice in the normal fashion – they must be repaired, requiring a Mechanic roll with a Difficulty of five per die currently missing. Each such roll replaces one lost die. If correctly equipped, a damaged Droid may perform such repairs himself.



# Gadgetry

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Every die spent into Gadgetry gains two dice for the Gadget. Examples of Gadgetry are Han Solo's Millennium Falcon, or Luke Skywalker's Lightsabre.

Gadgets have their own cliché dice, divided up into whatever clichés the player desires. The Gadget may team up with the player, though never as the team leader, and thus lend its sixes. Gadgets may have Hooks, granting them one additional die.

A character may start with one item of Gadgetry. A player may not spend more than two dice into a Gadget at character creation, meaning no starting Gadget will have more than four dice, five if Hooked.

If at least half of the character's backstory (if the Character Story option is in use) details the gaining of or modification of the Gadget, the player may place the additional Story die into the Gadget, allowing Gadgets of six or even seven dice.

---

## Improving Gadgetry

Gadgetry may be improved. One pip can be added to a Gadget if the character makes a Mechanic roll with a TC of three times the dice value of the Gadget. Three pips equals one die, and must be converted as such; pips are otherwise ignored, but must be recorded for upgrade purposes. Upgrading a Gadget may be done at the end of any session in which the character states that he is spending time upgrading the Gadget. No Gadget may be improved above nine dice.

A new cliché may be added to a Gadget if the GM approves. The difficulty to add a new cliché to a Gadget is equal to eight times the number of clichés the Gadget already possesses. Note that only one cliché may be used at a time on a Gadget, and no Gadget may have the Force, Jedi, or the Dark Side.

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## Droids Redux

A Droid may be gained as a Gadget, becoming an NPC controlled by the GM, but owned (and required to obey, to the best of its ability) by the character with the Droid Gadget. Droid Gadgets gain three dice per die expended, rather than two, and have both the Droid Hook and one die in the Droid cliché as a free bonus.

However, bear in mind that while the Droid must obey its Master, it can only do so to the best of its ability. Sometimes, its behaviour will be...not what the Master expected. Thus the increase in dice gained for selecting a Droid as a Gadget.

## Gaining Gadgetry after Character Creation

A character may be 'loaned' Gadgetry during play, but such things will never permanently belong to the character. At the end of the current adventure, the Gadgets in question will be lost. This covers the Rebel Alliance assigning a starfighter to a pilot, for example; the starfighter is not the pilot's personal property, to use as he sees fit.

If a character, at the end of an adventure, has any "Free" Advancement Points, he may assign them to a new Gadget, as with any other cliché. If a successful Advancement Roll is made for the Gadget, the player may add it to his character sheet. Such a Gadget will, of course, start at one die, or two dice for its clichés. Gaining a Gadget in this manner reflects some amount of effort put into the Gadget, such as a Jedi Padawan building his first Lightsabre.

Gadgets may also be merely purchased, by expending dice in Wealth. This is covered in greater detail below.

Only one new Gadget may be gained per Adventure, and only one Gadget may be used at a time in any event. Each improvement traded in will grant the character one die in his new Gadget. No more than four improvements may be traded in on any single new Gadget.

## Losing Gadgetry

A character may choose to expend a Gadget's dice by "Taking The Hit" with the Gadget. However, should a Gadget be reduced to zero (or fewer) dice through such action, the Gadget is destroyed and erased from the character's sheet. Gadgets may be repaired, if not destroyed, requiring a Mechanic roll with a Difficulty of five per die currently missing. Each such roll replaces one lost die.

A Gadget may also be lost as a consequence of a player's action, beyond merely "Taking The Hit". For example, Luke Skywalker loses his father's Lightsabre in Episode V when his hand is cut off. A Gadget lost in such a manner may be replaced by succeeding in one Advancement Roll. No bonus dice are gained for this roll; rather, the Gadget is replaced. The roll is made with the dice invested in the Gadget, not with the dice the Gadget itself possesses.

A Gadget may be marked as 'Expendable'. Such Gadgets are used up after the first time their dice are rolled, successful or not. This halves the cost of the Gadget (or, alternately but equally, doubles the dice you get for selecting the Gadget.) The Gadget may be replaced, as detailed above.

A Gadget may instead be 'Depleting'. Such Gadgets lose one die from their cliché on each use, successful or not. This is considered a Hook, but grants *two* additional dice rather than one. The Gadget may be repaired, as detailed above.

## Wealth

Some characters just happen to have a goodly supply of cash; this cliché reflects this. A Wealth roll is required only if the character wishes to buy something quite expensive. Examples include: A blaster (5), a droid (10), a landspeeder (15), a stock light freighter (20), or a starfighter (25). Unlike other rolls, failure does not result in the loss of a die. Rather, success causes the *permanent* loss of one die in Wealth. This loss can be recovered through character advancement.

Wealth can be used to purchase Gadgets, as suggested above. In the event that it is used so, the character gives up one *permanent* die per Gadget Die Cost gained. This is *instead* of the loss given for more mundane items.

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## Sample Gadgets

Holdout Blaster: Blaster [1], Gadget Cost: 1d

DL-16 Personal Blaster: Blaster (2), Gadget Cost: 1d

DL-44 Heavy Blaster: Blaster [2], Gadget Cost: 2d

S-14 Sporting Blaster Carbine: Blaster (3), Hook: Useless against Armour, Gadget Cost: 1d

E-11 Blaster Carbine: Blaster (4), Gadget Cost: 2d

T-37 Heavy Blaster: Blaster [3], Gadget Cost: 3d

Stormtrooper Armour: Armour (3), Hook: Poor Visibility, Gadget Cost: 1d

Bounty Hunter Armour: Armour (4), Gadget Cost: 2d

Mandalorian Battle Armour: Armour (6), Gadget Cost: 3d

Sonic Grenade: Explosive [2], Expendable, Gadget Cost: 1d

Thermal Detonator: Explosive [6], Expendable, Gadget Cost: 3d

MedKit: Medicine (4), Depleting, Gadget Cost: 2d

Padawan's Lightsabre: Lightsabre [1], Gadget Cost: 1d

Knight's Lightsabre: Lightsabre [2], Gadget Cost: 2d

Master's Lightsabre: Lightsabre [4], Gadget Cost: 4d

# Starships

Starships of any sort must be purchased as Gadgets, if they are to be the private possession of a character. However, the rules for creating Starships are a little more strict than for other Gadgets.

A Starship's dice are divided among three clichés: Offensive, Defensive and Cargo. Any of these pools can be zero dice, but if all three are zero, then there's not much point to having the Gadget.

**Offensive** cliché covers the ship's weapons, and to a lesser degree its hull strength and shielding. It is used when making an attack with a ship.

**Defensive** cliché covers the ship's shielding and mobility. It can be used in place of Offensive, provided the pilot is not intending to actually damage his opponent. It can also be used for speed checks, when racing or fleeing.

**Cargo** cliché covers the ship's cargo holds, tractor capability and life support. It can be used to boost a Merchant, Pirate, Smuggler or Diplomat roll.

Like any other Gadget, a Starship will gain two dice to split up among its clichés for each die spent acquiring the Gadget. Starships can be damaged in combat, like any other Gadget. The missing dice can only be replaced by repairing the starship, requiring a Mechanic roll with a Difficulty of five per die currently missing. Each such roll replaces one lost die.

---

## Sample Ships

A-Wing Fighter: Offensive (1), Defensive (3), Cargo (0), Gadget Cost: 2d

X-Wing Fighter: Offensive (4), Defensive (2), Cargo (0), Gadget Cost: 3d

Y-Wing Fighter: Offensive (3), Defensive (2), Cargo (0), Hook: Obsolete by modern standards, Gadget Cost: 2d

TIE Fighter: Offensive (2), Defensive (1), Cargo (0), Hook: Symbol of the Empire, Gadget Cost: 1d

YT-400 Stock Light Freighter: Offensive (0), Defensive (0), Cargo (2), Gadget Cost: 1d

YT-900 Stock Light Freighter: Offensive (0), Defensive (1), Cargo (3), Gadget Cost: 2d

YT-1300 Stock Light Freighter: Offensive (1), Defensive (3), Cargo (4), Gadget Cost: 4d

# Character Advancement

Character Advancement in RISUS Star Wars is tracked using Advancement Points (AP). Each cliché on the character's sheet can gain Advancement Points. In particular, an individual cliché will gain an AP under each of the two circumstances:

- The first time in the session that a character successfully uses the cliché at a non-trivial moment; and
- The first time in the session that a character rolls all sixes on a cliché roll.

In addition, each character can gain anywhere from one to eight "free" Advancement Points per session. These AP are "free" because they are not automatically assigned to any one cliché; however, before any Advancement Checks are made, the character must have no unassigned AP. AP can be assigned to any cliché with five dice or less, or to a new cliché not currently possessed by the character.

"Free" AP can be gained for the following:

- One for participating in the session;
- One for at least attempting to role-play the character;
- One if the character made a significant discovery;
- One if the character displayed heroic behaviour;
- One if the character solved a significant challenge;
- One to three if a Story was completed, based upon the difficulty of the Story.

## The Advancement Roll

At the end of any session, a character may attempt an Advancement Roll for any cliché that has Advancement Points invested into it. This includes for new clichés, which are assumed to have one die for purposes of this roll. The character rolls the cliché's dice, and if he matches or goes under the total AP for the cliché, then the cliché increases by one die, and all AP are removed from the cliché. If, however, the Advancement Roll fails, the character will lose a number of AP from the cliché equal to its current number of dice.

RISUS was created by S. John Ross, of Cumberland Games (<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>). This document mentions specific rules from RISUS, but does not directly quote from the RISUS rulebook. As such, it qualifies as a Type A, or RISUS Supplemental, document. The author would like to express his gratitude to Mr. Ross for such a neat game.

# **RISUS**

A post-apocalyptic [\*Risus\*](#) Adaptation of *Gamma World* by Hank Harwell  
Version 2.2 3/3/06

In the early 1980's, gaming giant TSR released a science-fiction role-playing game (RPG) entitled *Gamma World*. It was set in a distant future after an unknown apocalypse reduced civilization to Dark Ages levels. However, people were not only struggling against their environment for survival, they had to deal with glowing radioactive cities, monstrous mutations (even some amongst their own kind), gleaming, insane robots, and the occasional mysterious device of the long-dead Ancients. Life became a little harder.

[\*Risus\*](#) is a fun little game system written by the highly creative S. John Ross. Rather than statting out skills or attributes, characters in [\*Risus\*](#) are described by using clichés.

In order to get the maximum use out of this adaptation, you will need access to a copy of the [\*Risus\*](#) rules (which are free and easily obtainable via the Internet) and a copy of one of the various (1,2,3, or 4) editions of *Gamma World* (which are not free, and only the 3rd and 4th editions are readily available). A copy of [\*The Risus Companion\*](#) is recommended but not required. This conversion *might* make sense without the GW rules; all that is really needed is the setting detail, and you could piece enough of that together by visiting the sites listed below under **References**.

## **Character Creation**

Characters are built using the standard 10-dice method (i.e., spreading ten dice across various clichés to describe your character). Referring to the [\*Risus\*](#) rules, the following advanced options should be used: I, II and III (Hooks and Tales, Pumps, and Double-Pumps). Funky Dice can be used for powerful mutations. From [\*The Risus Companion\*](#), Lucky Shots and Questing Dice are also recommended. If you don't have the [\*Companion\*](#), don't worry; these will be summarized below.

As noted above, characters are built by the use of clichés, that describe (in very broad terms) abilities, skills, motivations, philosophy/religion, competency and many other things. The number of dice allotted to each cliché indicates its strength.

*Sample Character:* Chazz

Pure Strain Human Swordsman (4)

Bitter Deposed Clan Chieftain (3)

Collector of Ancient Trinkets (2)

Questing Dice (destroy all mutant badgers) [] [] [] [] []

Chazz is a Pure Strain Human (PSH), that is, a human with no mutations whatsoever. He was also the chieftain of a small clan of other PSH's, until he was deposed by a rival leader. This occurred as a result of his inability to lead his tribe to a fertile area to settle. Although he is a strong fighter, simple economics proved to be his undoing.

His wife and children left with him, only to be slaughtered by a band of Badders, thus establishing his hatred of mutated badgers.

He now wanders the wasteland collecting items of interest in the belief that someday, one of them will return him to power.

### *Lucky Shots and Questing Dice*

The alert reader will note that the clichés listed for Chazz do not total 10. A player can purchase five (5) *Questing Dice* for every one (1) cliché die. If Chazz happened to stumble upon a Badder (mutant badger) patrol, he could spend one of his Questing Dice to supplement a combat roll to boost his chance of success. However they can only be used on rolls involving his quest. *Lucky Shots* are similar. They are purchased at a 3-for-1 rate, but can be used for *any* roll Chazz just has to make.

### *Suggested Clichés*

#### **Cliché [What Its Good For]**

Blacksmith	[working with fire, working with iron, making tools]
Cook	[developing recipes, mixing ingredients, preparing food]
Explorer	[reading maps, drawing maps, discovering trails]
Farmer	[knowing the proper seasons for planting, knowing how to get the best crops, plowing, fertilizing, weeding, reaping]
Fisherman	[knowing where to fish, baiting a hook, landing "a big one," casting a net, drawing a net, mending a net, telling "fish tales".]
Gambler	[taking risks, knowing cards, calculating percentages, dealing cards, reading faces, rolling dice, loading dice, marking cards, bluffing]
Herbalist	[recognizing herbs, knowing which herbs to use for a given reason, how to find them and use them and how to make healing salves and medicines]
Horseman	[breeding horses for desired abilities, riding horses]
Hunter	[tracking prey, shooting animals, skinning animals]
Leatherworker	[curing leather, carving leather, making leather products]
Loemaster	[knowing history, writing history, keeping track of dusty books, talking about the past]
Mechanic	[building engines, fixing engines, salvaging engines]
Musician	[reading music, playing music]
Sailor	[tying knots, piloting boats, navigating rivers]
Scavenger	[pulling parts from wrecks, selling/trading parts, building contraptions]
Thief	[breaking into houses, stealing things, fencing things, picking pockets]
Trader	[bartering, fast-talking, appraising]
Wanderer ("Disowned")	[going it alone, being weird and antisocial, not bathing]
Weaponsmith	[making weapons]
Weaponsmaster	[using multiple weapons]
Weaver/Tailor	[making cloth, making clothes, repairing clothes]

Woodworker	[carving wood, whittling wood, making tools and furniture out of wood]
Writer	[reading books, writing books]

## Of Mutants And Men

PC's & NPC's, flora & fauna

What separates *Gamma World* from other sci-fi games is the availability of mutations. *Terra Tertia* has attempted to maintain this aspect. Mutants come in three main varieties: Humanoids (mutated humans), mutated animals and mutated plants.

*Sample Character:* Rex

Alpha Male Ark (4) [Greeting by Sniffing, Howling at the Moon, Running in Packs]

Cunning Leader in the Ranks of the Fit (3) [Barking Orders, Leading a Troop of Mutated Animals, Studying Military History & Tactics]

Club-wielding Hunter (2) [Tracking Prey, Clubbing Victims]

Rockhound (1) [collecting pretty rocks]

*Sample Mutant Clichés from Gamma World*

### Cliché    [What Its Good For]

Ark [Looking like a bipedal sentient dog, howling at the moon, greeting by sniffing, craving the taste of human hands]

Badder [Looking like a bipedal sentient badger, ]

Hoop [Looking like a large sentient rabbit, communicating by telepathy, transmuting metal to rubber]

In *Terra Tertia*, it is possible to have a “do-it-yourself” mutant. Start with the stock: Human, Animal, or Plant. Add a few mutations (as clichés), and *voila!* Instant Mutant!

*Sample Mutations*

<u>Cliché</u>	<u>[What Its Good For]</u>
Boring tendrils	[putting down roots, climbing, grabbing]
Carnivorous jaws (Plant)	[eating what bugs you]
Chameleon Powers	[camouflaging]
Cryokinesis	[giving the cold shoulder, freezing things mentally]
Electrical Generation	[shocking people, things who touch, giving off a bolt of electricity]
Explosive and/or radiated fruit or seeds	[shooting or dropping seeds or fruit that explode]
Gas generation	[giving off bad BO]
Heat Generation	[Making things warmer]
Heightened Physical Ability (specify)	[being bigger, being stronger, being faster]
	Heightened Balance
	Heightened Constitution
	Heightened Dexterity

	Heightened Precision Heightened Strength Increased Metabolism Increased Speed [seeing farther, identifying and tracking odors, discerning faint sounds]
Heightened Sense (Sight, Smell, Hearing, etc.)	Heightened Hearing Heightened Smell Heightened Taste Heightened Touch Heightened Vision [seeing things in the infrared spectrum, seeing heat-producing things in the dark]
Infravision	[carrying your own light, shining out in the darkness]
Light Generation	[grabbing things, moving things, waving] [slowing down breathing, speeding up metabolism, going into a self-induced coma]
Manipulation vines	[avoiding mental-based attacks]
Mental control over physical state	[having extra arms, legs, etc.]
Mental defense shield	[making food from light, giving off oxygen, living off of carbon dioxide]
Multiple Body Parts (specify)	[shaking off annoying snake, insect bites, not getting sick after ingesting poison]
Photosynthetic Skin	[shaking off exposure to high doses of radiation, not developing mutations]
Poison Resistance	[having a hard shell]
Radiation Resistance	[setting things on fire telepathically]
Partial/total Carapace	[having sharp, pointy, sticky things covering your body instead of hair]
Pyrokinesis	[emitting a blast of radiation energy through the eyes]
Quills/Spines	[cutting through things, people, etc.]
Radiated eyes	[mimicking the shape and appearance of animal, but not the abilities]
Razor edged leaves	[blasting people with supersonic waves]
Shapechange	[seeing in the ultraviolet spectrum, seeing things that produce radiation energy and electrical workings]
Sonic attack ability	[flapping, flying]
Ultravision	
Wings	

## We, Robots 'bots & 'droids

Robots and Androids are artificial beings designed to perform various repetitive, dangerous, tedious, or otherwise menial tasks. In *Terra Tertia*, they can be allies, enemies, or obstacles.

*Sample Character:* GR8-1 (Government Robot 8-1)

Pompous diplomatic android [4] [can translate over 30 language groups, including dialects, observes several national customs, performs protocol functions]

Short-circuiting public service robot (2) [goes off on a Hitler-esque speech tirade, orders executions for no apparent reason, stutters]

*Sample Robot Clichés*

**Cliché            [What Its Good For]**

Cargo Lifter (Light, Heavy)	[lifting cargo to and from transports]
Cargo Transport (size)	[moving cargo from one place to another]
Ecology Bot (Agricultural)	[Farming, planting, weeding, irrigating, harvesting]
Ecology Bot (Wilderness)	[studying life in the wild, protecting new growth, putting out wildfires, caring for animals]
Engineering Bot	[making repairs to other mechanical units, building other mechanical units]
Medical Robotoid	[performing surgery, giving first aid, diagnosing illnesses, dispensing medicines]
Security Robotoid	[keeping the peace, patrolling, subduing life forms bent on breaking the peace or harming one another]
General Household Robotoid	[dusting, cleaning, vacuuming, washing]
Supervisory Borg	[controlling lesser robotic units, communicating with think tanks, having organic material]
Defense/Attack Borg	[defending Supervisory Borgs or Cybernetic Installations, attacking aggressors]
Warbot	[waging war]

**The Six Billion Domar Man**

Cyborgs

Cyborgs are organic beings who are enhanced by the implantation of cybernetic equipment, or are cybernetic equipment enhanced by the implantation of organic tissue. Players may wish to redefine a mutation as a cybernetic implant instead.

**Strangers In A Strange World**

Cryptic Alliances

Cryptic Alliances are quasi-religious/political factions that have aligned themselves toward a common goal. Some are neutral, some are benign and some are hostile. Below is a list of the Cryptic Alliances as clichés that players may want to use for their characters. More detail can be had by consulting any of the Gamma World rulebooks, or by perusing the Internet (see **References**, below)

*Sample Cryptic Alliance Clichés*

**Cliché            [What Its Good For]**

Archivists	[worshipping artifacts, storing artifacts, recognizing artifacts and robot types, begging, buying and stealing artifacts]
Brotherhood of Thought	[traveling in threes, seeking peace between races, unifying intelligent creatures, practicing defensive unarmed martial art]
Followers of the Voice	[worshipping computers, living near ancient installations, obeying computers, searching for computers]
Friends of Entropy (The Red Death)	[killing, maiming, looting]
Healers	[treating illnesses and wounds, caring for the injured, wandering the countryside in search of someone to care for, using Ancient technology, knowing about and using medicinal herbs]
Knights of Genetic Purity ("Purists")	[hunting down and destroying mutated humans, fighting with sword or lance, riding, using ancient technology weapons, serving as mercenaries]
Radioactivists	[worshipping radiation god, having a resistance to radiation, lurking in]
Restorationists	[recovering ancient information, seeking to rebuild the lost civilization, using Ancient technology weapons, working with robots, avoiding other cryptic alliances]
Seekers	[hating technology, convincing humans and mutants to work together, living in large cities, possessing wealth, being suspicious of animal mutants]
The Created	[working for artificial beings to rule the world, believing that computers, cyborgs, robots and androids should continue, subverting and sabotaging human and humanoid plans]
The Iron Society	[working to destroy Pure Strain Humans, living near radiated areas, using mutant powers and Ancient technology in battle]
Ranks of the Fit	[limiting rulership to mutated intelligent animals, living under a military code, conquering areas, using simple weapons with limited Ancient technology]
Zoopremisists	[being a sentient mutated animal, terrorizing opponents, seeking to establish mutant animals as world leaders, living in secret among other mutants, signaling others telepathically, making bombs, avenging threats or discrimination to animals, opposing the Ranks of the Fit]

### **Withering Heights**

"Dead zones" and Hazards

Many locations in *Terra Tertia* still glow with radiation energy as a result of the Apocalypse. Some mutations allow mutants to emit radiation or poison as a part of their makeup. These become hazards that will be encountered by the characters.

Should the character be exposed to radiation or poison, he will have to make a saving throw. Essentially, the GM should take the cliché rating for the source of the radiation/poison (i.e.,

Glowing Slag Heap That Used To Be Lubbock, Texas [4]), roll the dice, and the result establishes the target number for the player to beat. If the player makes his saving throw, he avoids exposure; if not, he is given a *condition*. Until the player is cured of the radiation/posions exposure, he must beat the saving roll again, or get progressively worse (i.e., lose cliché dice) until he is reduced to zero and dies from radiation sickness/poisoning. The GM will determine how to cure the condition. (credit: Vincent Diakuw's [Dungeonautica](#) Site)

## Ye Newe Curiosity Shoppe

Technology of the Ancients

The technology of the ancients is still out there, waiting to be rediscovered and used. Many characters in *Terra Tertia* will not understand what certain devices are, nor how to use them. In order for a character to use any device, the GM must first decide if its operational, then how many cliché dice to assign to it. The GM and the player begin a combat round. If the device wins, the character just can't figure it out. If the player wins, he is able to operate the device. All sorts of devices are available to the character to find, from digital music players to exercise equipment to cell phones and ray guns.

## References

[The Apocalyptic Post](#) (webzine)

[DabberDave's Gamma World Website](#)

[Digital Fortress: Gamma World](#)

[Gamma Hero](#)

[Gamma World Net Ring](#)

[The Post-Apocalyptic Forge](#) – chock full o' PA goodness!

[Universal Gamma World Conversion Chart](#), courtesy of the Gamma World Mail Group

Vincent Diakuw's [Dungeonautica](#) Site

[Wasteland Hero](#)

**Disclaimer:** material presented here is an adaptation of the *Gamma World* system from [TSR/WOTC](#) for [Risus: The Anything RPG](#) by S. John Ross. This material is not official and is not endorsed by [TSR/WOTC](#) nor by S. John Ross/[Cumberland Games and Diversions](#).

# Risus Character Cliché Generator

Adjective	Occupation	Preposition
[RACE]	Abbot	about to [DO SOMETHING]
[RELIGION]	Accountant	above [NEGATIVITY]
abandoned	Actor	according to [SOMEONE]
abashed	Actuary	after [GOAL]
aberrant	Administrator	against [OPPOSITION]
abhorrent	Advocate	ahead of [OPPONENT]
abject	Aerospace engineer	along with [SOMETHING ELSE]
ablaze	Aesthetician	alongside [COMPANION]
abnormal	After School Program Worker	among [OTHERS]
aboriginal	Agent	as far as anyone knows
abrasive	Agrarian	as long as [IMPEDIMENT]
abrupt	Agronomist	as well as [SOMETHING ELSE]
absent-minded	Air traffic controller	aside from [DRAWBACK]
abstracted	Airman	astride [MOUNT]
absurd	Alchemist	barring [POTENTIAL SETBACK]
abusive	Alderman	because of [DRIVING FORCE]
acceptable	Ambassador	before [HISTORY]
accessible	Analyst	behind [SUPPORTER/MENTOR]
accidental	Anesthesiologist	beside [COMPANION]
accurate	Animal trainer	besides [SOMETHING ELSE]
acrid	Animator	beyond [CRITICISM]
ad hoc	Anthropologist	but [GOTCHA]
adamant	Antique dealer	by means of [HISTORY]
adaptable	Arbitrator	close to [SOMEONE]
addicted	Arborist	despite [OBSTACLE]
adorable	Archaeologist	due to [SOURCE OF SKILL]
afraid	Archbishop	during [TIME LIMITATION]
agonizing	Archer	except [LIMITATION]
alcoholic	Architect	far from [PERSON/PLACE]
alert	Archivist	following [EVENT/TREATMENT]
alive	Armorer	for [CAUSE]
alleged	Art director	from [HOME]
alluring	Art therapist	in addition to [SOMETHING ELSE]
aloof	Artist	in spite of [OBSTACLE]
ambiguous	Assassin	inside [PLACE]
ambitious	Assayer	instead of [FORMER SKILL]
amuck	Assessor	like [SOMEONE ELSE]
ancient	Astrologer	minus [KEY SKILL]
animated	Astronaut	next to [SOMETHING]
apathetic	Astronomer	notwithstanding [OBSTACLE]
aquatic	Astrophysicist	of [PLACE]

aromatic	Athlete	on account of [REASON]
aspiring	Attorney at law	on behalf of [SOMEONE/THING]
astonishing	Au pair	outside of [PROBLEM]
auspicious	Audiologist	owing to [REASON]
available	Auditor	prior to [INCIDENT]
average	Author	since [EVENT]
aware	Aviator	subsequent to [EVENT]
bad	Bacteriologist	till [FUTURE EVENT]
barbarous	Bagger	to poop on
bashful	Bailiff	underneath [EXTERIOR]
bawdy	Baker	unlike [SOMEONE]
beautiful	Balloonist	until [FUTURE EVENT]
belligerent	Bandit	upon [ACTION]
berserk	Bank robber	via [ROUTE]
better	Bank teller	with [PROBLEM]
big	Banker	without [SOMETHING]
billowy	Barber	
bizarre	Bard	
black	Bargeman	
boorish	Barista	
boring	Barkeeper	
boundless	Barker	
brash	Barrister	
brawny	Basketweaver	
breezy	Beader	
bright	Beautician	
broken	Beekeeper	
burly	Beggar	
cagey	Bellmaker	
callous	Bellman	
capable	Biographer	
capricious	Biologist	
ceaseless	Biomedical Scientist	
changeable	Bishop	
cheerful	Blacksmith	
childlike	Boatman	
chilly	Boatswain	
chivalrous	Boatwright	
chubby	Bodyguard	
chunky	Bondbroker	
clammy	Bonecarver	
classy	Bookbinder	
cloistered	Bookkeeper	
clumsy	Bookseller	
coherent	Botanist	

cold	Bowyer
colossal	Brewer
combative	Bricklayer
comfortable	Brickmaker
cooing	Broker
cool	Budget Analyst
cooperative	Builder
courageous	Bureaucrat
cowardly	Burglar
crabby	Business analyst
craven	Business owner
credible	Busker
creepy	Butcher
crooked	Butler
cuddly	Cab driver
cultured	Cabinet-maker
curly	Caddy
curved	Call girl
cynical	Calligrapher
daffy	Cameraman
damaged	Candlemaker
damp	Cannoneer
dapper	Captain
dashing	Cardinal
dazzling	Cardiologist
deadpan	Carpenter
debonair	Cartographer
decisive	Cartoonist
decorous	Cartwright
deep	Carver
defective	Cashier
delightful	Censor
demonic	CEO (Chief Executive Officer)
deranged	CFO (Chief Financial Officer)
deserted	Chairman of the board
determined	Chairman of the School Board
devilish	Chamberlain
diligent	Chancellor
direful	Chaplain
dirty	Cheesemaker
disagreeable	Chef
discreet	Chemical Engineer
disillusioned	Chemical Technologist
dispensable	Chemist
dizzy	Chicken sexer

domineering	Chief Mate
draconian	Chief of Police
dramatic	Chimneysweep
drunk	Chiropodist
dry	Choreographer
dull	Circuit preacher
dusty	Civil engineer
dynamic	Civil servant
dysfunctional	Clarinetist
eager	Cleaning staff
earsplitting	Clergy
earthy	Clerk
economical	Clerk
educated	Clockmaker
efficacious	Clothier
efficient	Clown
elated	Coach
elderly	Coachmaker
elfin	Coachman
elite	Cobbler
eminent	College president
empty	Comedian
enchanting	Composer
encouraging	Computer engineer
endurable	Computer programmer
energetic	Con artist
entertaining	Conductor
enthusiastic	Confectioner
equable	Constable
erratic	Construction worker
ethereal	Consul
evanescent	Consultant
evasive	Controller
evil	Cook
excellent	Cooper
excited	Coppersmith
exclusive	Copyist
exotic	Copywriter
expensive	Coroner
exuberant	Corporate executive officer
exultant	Correctional Officer
fabulous	Correspondent
faded	Cosmetologist
fallacious	Cosmonaut
fanatical	Courier

fancy	Court jester
fantastic	Cowboy
fascinated	CPA
fast	Craftsman
fat	Crier
faulty	Cryptanalyst
fearless	Cryptographer
feigned	Cryptologist
fertile	Culinary cook
festive	Curator
filthy	Custodian
finicky	Customs officer
flagrant	Cutler
flashy	Dairymaid
flawless	Database administrator
flippant	Demographer
flowery	Demolitionist
foregoing	Dentist
forgetful	Deputy
fortunate	Designer
frail	Detective
fretful	Dictator
friendly	Dietician
functional	Digger
funny	Diplomat
furtive	Director
futuristic	Disc jockey
gabby	Dishwasher
gamy	Dispatcher
gaping	Distiller
garrulous	Ditch digger
gaudy	Diver
gentle	Dock laborer
giant	Doctor
giddy	Doctor of Chiropractic
gigantic	Doctor of Physical Therapy
glamorous	Dogcatcher
gleaming	Domestic worker
glib	Dominatrix
glorious	Doorman
glossy	Draftsperson
godly	Dramatist
good	Drayman
goofy	Dressmaker
gorgeous	Drill instructor

graceful	Driver
grandiose	Drummer
great	Dustman
greedy	Ecologist
green	Economist
groovy	Editor
grotesque	Educator
grouchy	Electrical engineer
gruesome	Electrician
grumpy	Elevator Operator
guarded	Embalmer
guiltless	Embroiderer
gullible	Embryologist
guttural	EMT
habitual	Engineer
half	Engraver
hallowed	Entertainer
halting	Entomologist
handsome	Entrepreneur
hapless	Environmental scientist
happy	Ergonomist
harmonious	Escort
heady	Ethnologist
healthy	Etymologist
heartbreaking	Evangelist
heavenly	Examiner
heavy	Executioner
hellish	Executive
helpful	Executor
hesitant	Exotic dancer
high	Explorer
highfalutin	Expressman
hilarious	Exterminator
holistic	Extra
hollow	Factory worker
honorable	Falconer
horrible	Farmer
hospitable	Farrier
huge	Fashion designer
hulking	FBI Agent
humdrum	Feltmaker
humorous	Fence
hungry	Ferryman
hurried	Film director
hurt	Film producer

hypnotic	Financial adviser
hysterical	Financier
icky	Fire marshal
idiotic	Fire officer
ignorant	Firefighter
illegal	First Mate
illustrious	Fisherman
imaginative	Fishmonger
immense	Fitter
impartial	Flautist
imperfect	Fletcher
imported	Flight attendant
incandescent	Flight engineer
incompetent	Flight instructor
inconclusive	Flight technician
industrious	Floor manager
innate	Florist
instinctive	Flutist
internal	Footman
invincible	Foreman
irate	Forester
itchy	Forklift operator
jaded	Fortune-teller
jagged	Fowler
jazzy	Fraudster
jealous	Friar
jittery	Fruit Merchant
jobless	Furbisher
jolly	Furrier
joyous	Gambler
judicious	Game designer
jumbled	Game show host
jumpy	Gamekeeper
juvenile	Garbage collector
kaput	Gardener
kind	Gate-keeper
kindhearted	Geisha
knotty	Gemcutter
knowing	Genealogist
knowledgeable	General
labored	Geographer
lackadaisical	Geologist
lackluster	Geophysicist
lamentable	Gigolo
languid	Gladiator

large	Glazier
late	Goatherd
laughable	Gofer
lavish	Goldsmith
law-abiding	Gondolier
lazy	Governess
lean	Government agent
learned	Governor
legal	Grammarian
lethal	Graphic artist
level	Gravedigger
lewd	Grenadier
light	Grinder
likeable	Grocer
literate	Groom
little	Guide
lively	Guitarist
long	Gunsmith
longing	Guru
lopsided	Gynecologist
loutish	Haberdasher
lovely	Hairdresser
loving	Harnessmaker
low	Harpist
lowly	Hatter
lucky	Hawker
ludicrous	Headmaster (Headmistress)
lush	Herald
luxuriant	Herbalist
lying	Herder
lyrical	Historian
macabre	Hosier
macho	Host (Hostess)
maddening	Hotelier
madly	House painter
magenta	Housewife
magical	Human Resources Officer
magnificent	Hunter
majestic	Hydraulic engineer
makeshift	Hypnotist
malicious	Illuminator
mammoth	Illusionist
maniacal	Illustrator
marked	Impersonator
massive	Importer

materialistic	Industrial engineer
mature	Industrialist
measly	Information Technologist
meek	Inker
melodic	Innkeeper
merciful	Instructor
mere	Instrument maker
midget	Insurer
mighty	Intelligence officer
mindless	Interior designer
miniature	Internist
minor	Interpreter
miscreant	Inventor
moaning	Investment analyst
modern	Investment banker
moldy	Ironmonger
momentous	Jailer
muddled	Janitor
mundane	Jeweler
murky	Jockey
mushy	Joiner
mysterious	Journalist
naive	Judge
nappy	Juggler
narrow	Jurist
nasty	King
nauseating	Knifesmith
nebulous	Knight
needless	Laboratory worker
needy	Lady-in-waiting
neighborly	Lamplighter
nervous	Landlord (Landlady)
new	Landscaper
nice	Lanternmaker
nifty	Laundress
noiseless	Law enforcement agent
noisy	Lawyer
nonchalant	Leadworker
nondescript	Leatherer
nonstop	Lecturer
nostalgic	Lens grinder
nosy	Librarian
noxious	Librettist
null	Lifeguard
oafish	Lighthouse-keeper

obedient	Lighting technician
obscene	Linesman
obsequious	Linguist
observant	Loan officer
obsolete	Lobbyist
obtainable	Locksmith
oceanic	Lord Chamberlain
odd	Lumberjack
offbeat	Lyricist
old	Magician
omniscient	Magistrate
onerous	Maid
optimal	Mailman
orange	Make-up artist
ordinary	Management Consultant
organic	Manager
ossified	Manicurist
oval	Manservant
overconfident	Manual therapist
overjoyed	Manufacturer
overrated	Marine
overt	Marketer
overwrought	Marketing Manager
painful	Marksman
painstaking	Marshal
panoramic	Martial artist
parched	Martial Arts Instructor
parsimonious	Mason
pastoral	Masseur (Masseuse)
pathetic	Master of hounds
peaceful	Matador
penitent	Materials engineer
perfect	Mathematician
periodic	Matron
permissible	Mayor
perpetual	Mechanic
petite	Mechanical engineer
phobic	Mediator
picayune	Medic
piquant	Medical Representative
placid	Medical Technologist
plausible	Medical Transcriptionist
pleasant	Mentor
plucky	Mercenary
pointless	Mercer

political	Merchant
possessive	Mesmerist
precious	Messenger
premium	Meteorologist
pretty	Microbiologist
prickly	Military Leader
productive	Milkman
profuse	Miller
protective	Mime
proud	Miner
psychedelic	Minister
psychotic	Missionary
pumped	Mobster
puny	Model
purple	Modeller
quack	Molecatcher
quaint	Moneychanger
quarrelsome	Moneylender
questionable	Monk
quick	Mortician
quiet	Music Director
quixotic	Musician
quizzical	Mutual Fund Analyst
rabid	Nanny
racist	Navigator
ragged	Negotiator
rambunctious	Netmaker
rampant	Newscaster
rare	Ninja
raspy	Notary
ratty	Nuclear Engineer
rebel	Numerologist
receptive	Nun
recondite	Nurse
red	Nursemaid
redundant	Oboist
reflective	Obstetrician
relieved	Occupational therapist
reminiscing	Operator
resolute	Ophthalmologist
resonant	Optician
rhetorical	Oracle
righteous	Organist
ritzy	Organizer
robust	Ornithologist

romantic	Orthodontist
round	Otorhinolaryngologist
royal	Painter
ruddy	Paralegal
rural	Paramedic
rustic	Pardoner
ruthless	Park ranger
sable	Party-leader
sad	Pastor
sassy	Patent attorney
satisfied	Pathologist
scandalous	Pawnbroker
scarce	Peddler
scary	Pediatrician
scientific	Percussionist
scintillating	Perfumer
scrawny	Personal Trainer
secretive	Pewterer
sedate	Pharmacist
seemly	Philanthropist
selective	Philosopher
self-absorbed	Photographer
shallow	Physical Therapist
shocking	Physician
short	Physician Assistant
shrill	Physicist
silly	Physiologist
sincere	Pianist
skillful	Piano tuner
skinny	Pickpocket
sloppy	Pilot
slow	Pirate
small	Plasterer
smelly	Playwright
sneaky	Plumber
snobbish	Poet
snotty	Police officer
soggy	Political scientist
somber	Politician
sordid	Poll-taker
spectacular	Pope
spicy	Porn star
spiffy	Poulterer
spiritual	Premier
splendid	Presenter

spooky	President
spurious	President of the board
squalid	President of the School Board
square	Press officer
squeamish	Priest
stalking	Prime minister
standing	Principal
statuesque	Printer
steadfast	Private detective
stereotyped	Proctologist
stimulating	Procurator
stingy	Professional athlete
strange	Professional gambler
subdued	Professor
successful	Programmer
succinct	Project Manager
sulky	Proofreader
supreme	Prostitute
swanky	Psychiatrist
sweltering	Psychologist
taboo	Public Relations Officer
tacit	Public speaker
tacky	Publisher
talented	Quartermaster
tame	Queen
tan	Rabbi
tangible	Race driver
tasteful	Radiographer
tawdry	Radiologist
tearful	Rat catcher
temporary	Reactor engineer
tender	Reader
tenuous	Real estate agent
tested	Real estate developer
testy	Receptionist
therapeutic	Record Producer
thinking	Recording engineer
threatening	Referee
tight	Refuse collector
tightfisted	Registrar
tiny	Remedial teacher
tiresome	Repairman
toothsome	Reporter
torpid	Researcher
tough	Respiratory Therapist

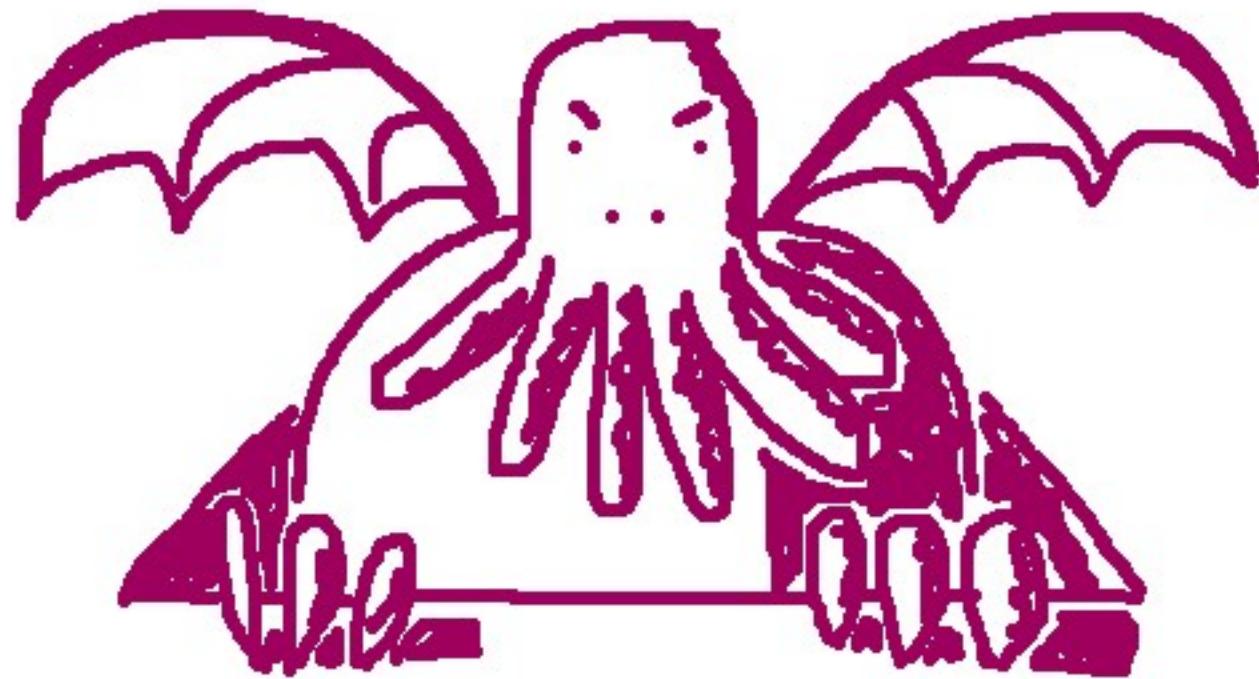
towering	Rigger
tranquil	Roofer
trashy	Ropemaker
tricky	Sacker
trite	Saddler
truculent	Sage
typical	Sailmaker
ubiquitous	Sailor
ugliest	Salesperson
ugly	Salter
ultra	Sapper
unaccountable	Saucier
unadvised	Sawyer
unarmed	Saxophonist
unbecoming	School Principal
unbiased	School superintendent
undesirable	Scientist
unequaled	Scout
uneven	Screenwriter
unsightly	Scribe
unsuitable	Sculptor
unusual	Seaman
upbeat	Seamstress
uppity	Second Mate
upset	Secretary
uptight	Secretary general
utopian	Security guard
uttermost	Senator
vacuous	Servant
vagabond	Sex worker
vague	Sexologist
vengeful	Shaman
venomous	Sheepshearer
versed	Shepherd
victorious	Sheriff
vigorous	Shipwright
vivacious	Shoemaker
voiceless	Shop assistant
volatile	Sifter
voracious	Signalman
vulgar	Silversmith
wacky	Singer
waggish	Skinner
wakeful	Slave
warlike	Slavedriver

warm	Slaver
wary	Sleuth
wasteful	Smelter
watchful	Smith
weak	Sniper
wealthy	Sociologist
weary	Software engineer
wee	Software project manager
well-known	Soil scientist
wet	Soldier
whimsical	Solicitor
whispering	Sound technician
wholesale	Special agent
wicked	Speech therapist
wide	Spelunker
willing	Spin doctor
wiry	Sports instructor
wise	Spy
wistful	Stage designer
woebegone	Statistician
womanly	Steersman
wonderful	Steward(ess)
wooden	Stock-breeder
woozy	Stockbroker
workable	Stonecutter
worried	Store Manager
worthless	Street artist
wrathful	Street musician
wretched	Street vendor
wry	Stripper
x-rated	Student
yellow	Stunt coordinator
yielding	Stunt double
young	Stunt performer
youthful	Surgeon
yummy	Surveyor
zany	Swimmer
zealous	Swimming coach
zippy	Swineherd
zonked	Switchboard operator
	Swordsmith
	System administrator
	Systems analyst
	Tailor
	Tallowchandler

	Tanner	
	Tapestrymaker	
	Tattooist	
	Tax Collector	
	Taxidermist	
	Taxi-driver	
	Teacher	
	Technical engineer	
	Technician	
	Technologist	
	Telegraph operator	
	Telephone operator	
	Tentmaker	
	Test pilot	
	Thatcher	
	Thaumaturgist	
	Theatre director	
	Theologian	
	Therapist	
	Thief	
	Third Mate	
	Thresher	
	Tinker	
	Tinsmith	
	Toolmaker	
	Torturer	
	Trademark attorney	
	Trader	
	Tradesman	
	Translator	
	Trapper	
	Treasurer	
	Troubadour	
	Truck Driver	
	Tumbler	
	Tutor	
	Undertaker	
	Upholsterer	
	Usher	
	Valet	
	Ventriloquist	
	Veterinarian	
	Vibraphonist	
	Vicar	
	Victualler	

	Video-editor	
	Vintner	
	Violinist	
	Wainwright	
	Waiter (Waitress)	
	Watchman	
	Weaponsmith	
	Weaver	
	Webmaster	
	Wedding planner	
	Welder	
	Wet nurse	
	Wheelwright	
	Window-dresser	
	Wine connoisseur	
	Winemaker	
	Wireless operator	
	Woodcarver	
	Wood-cutter	
	Wrangler	
	Writer	
	X-ray technician	
	Xylophonist	
	Yak Herder	
	Yodeler	
	Zookeeper	
	Zoologist	

# CTHULHU RISUS



by

Manu Saxena

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Rules Summary</b>	<b>p. 6</b>
<b>Character Generation</b>	<b>p. 7</b>
<b>Game System</b>	<b>p. 12</b>
<b>Combat</b>	<b>p. 14</b>
<b>Tools</b>	<b>p. 20</b>
<b>Experience and Advancement</b>	<b>p. 22</b>
<b>Sanity and Insanity</b>	<b>p. 24</b>
<b>Spells</b>	<b>p. 26</b>
<b>Monsters</b>	<b>p. 31</b>
<b>Options</b>	<b>p. 33</b>

## **CTHULHU RISUS**

(When you think about what Risus means in Latin, that title should fill you with fear!)

The main Risus site is here:

<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

This is a recast version of Risus written for gaming in the Cthulhu universe. This means that I (Manu Saxena) basically took some of the original rules and twisted them (almost but not quite beyond recognition), but much of the rules on this site are unchanged, and you should know that material was written by S. John Ross. All those portions of the rules taken from the original Risus are copyrighted by S. John Ross (Risus, including those portions of it on this page, is Copyright © by S. John Ross 1993-2000) - but he still lets fans do sites like this, which I think is really cool.

You can get the basic Risus rules by S. John Ross for free from this link:

<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/downloads.htm>

By the way, I am a proud member of the International Order of Risus, and if you like Risus or just want to support more imaginative work like it, I highly recommend that you order the Risus Companion and become one, too.

Note: no copyright or trademark challenge is intended to anyone by my posting this material.

The Risus-style art used here was done by Francisco Vogel, a nice fellow who's also translated Cthulhu Risus into German. Thanks, Francisco!!!! Here's to you keeping your sanity and all your limbs for a while yet!

Before I talk about the game, I want to talk about something a little more important, namely the results of this past Presidential election. When it comes to Presidential candidates, I've learned my lesson: we should no longer be satisfied with settling for the lesser of two evils. I really have grown sick and

tired of it. Thus, I can't help but think the **Cthulhu for President** movement has a lot going for it.

Cthulhu's political positions can be found at <http://www.cthulhu.org/>, which has such gems as:

“**Q)**How will Cthulhu deal with a strongly bipartisan Congress?”

“**A)** Cthulhu will have no problem dealing with Congress, as they will be the first to be eaten.”

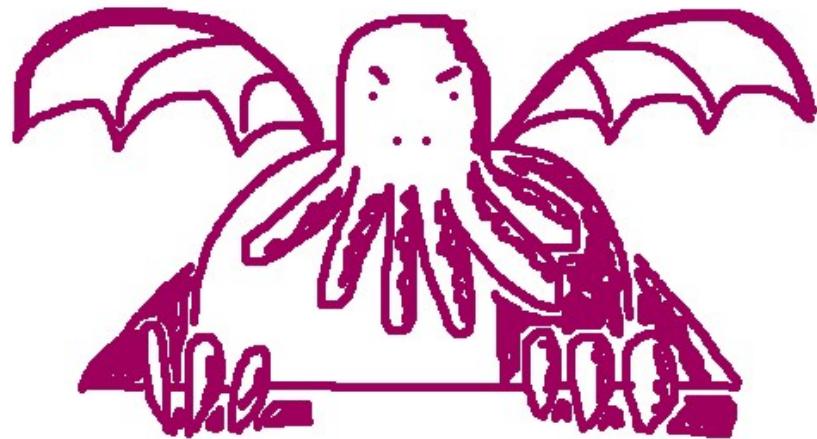
And:

“**Q)**Will he, as president, go jogging?”

“**A)** The Great Cthulhu is in perfect health, and due to its high metabolism and steady diet of human flesh, has no pathetic human need for exercise. In fact, those humans caught jogging will be destroyed immediately.”

If you're the type who'd like to support these kinds of positions (and who isn't?), why not check out:

<http://www.cthulhuforpresident.com/>



### Now, about the game!

I love gaming in a Cthulhuesque universe, but something one quickly learns about such a setting is that the lifespan of a typical character is quite short, and sooner or later they'll wind up either drooling-at-the-mouth insane, gorily sacrificed by a cultist, or ingested by some nameless tentacled horror. It is hard to spend an hour creating a character

knowing the great likelihood of their eventual fate, and even harder to justify spending another hour on a new character after your previous one has just been rent limb-from-limb by a shoggoth while on his first adventure.

Hence, here is my proposed solution: use Risus as the gaming engine! It is hard to find a setting better suited for 30 second character creation than the Cthulhu mythos. Even if your character just got eaten, sacrificed, or pulled into an alternate dimension, a new character is just a few seconds away. The advantages of this should be clear.

**I must rush to point something out however:** please be warned that **Risus** is no longer freeware; it's actually shareware with a trial period of 97 years. If you haven't registered by that time, you will be ignominiously disintegrated by S. John Ross (the illustrious author of Risus) with the touch of a button. Or so I'm told. :-) I, of course, am proud to be an official member of the International Order of Risus, and

thus will most likely not be disintegrated, at least not by S. John Ross.

Of course, if Cthulhu wins the election you don't really have to worry about personal disintegration (more like personal dismemberment and total body mastication), so I suppose you can try to get out of the shareware deal that way.

What follows below is my own copying, paraphrasing, extensive revising, etc. of the original Risus rules to adapt it to Cthulhuesque gaming. I've left a fair portion of the original rules out, but what remains should work for a Cthulhu Risus game (and of course you can get the original rules from the link above and use however much of them you like).

If you already know Risus and just want the quick summary of the main differences in Cthulhu Risus, here they are:



## Rules Summary for Cthulhu Risus

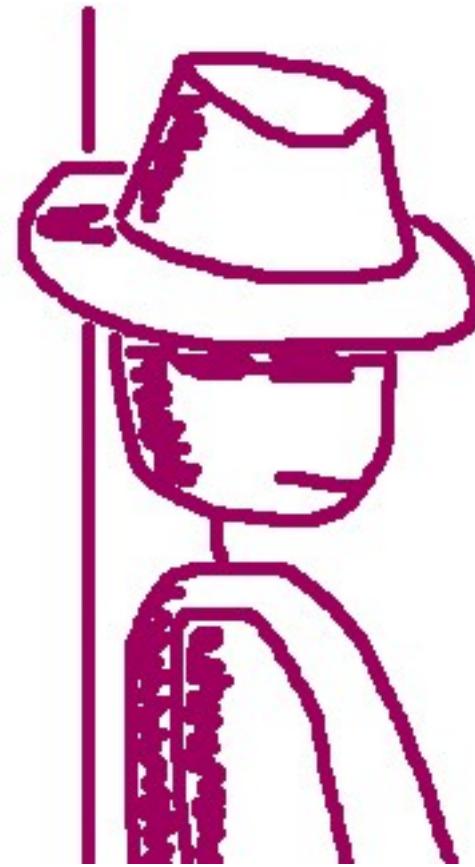
1. We will use the “high dice” variation for all checks, which means the value of a roll is equal to the highest single die rolled; multiples of the high die are also added in. The GM's roll (instead of picking a target #, the GM selects a # of dice to roll to oppose the player) is the target # to equal or beat (otherwise consider it a tie).
2. We will not use the inappropriate cliché rule (but exceptions can be

made if what you want to do is really, really funny). If none of your clichés are appropriate for what you want to do, use just one impaired die (it loses on a tie).

3. Especially entertaining, appropriate, or clever actions (or descriptions of them) get bonus dice.
4. **Sanity Rule:** when asked, make a Sanity Check using an appropriate cliché (the most “mental” cliché the character has). The GM will decide on the number of opposing dice (proportionate to the horror of the situation). You may gain points of insanity during the game; to pass the Sanity Check, you need to beat the GM's roll + your current insanity points.
5. **Trauma Rule:** instead of having your cliché dice reduced immediately, you gain a wound when you lose a round of combat (mark whether it's lethal (like from a gunshot, stab wound, or monstrous bite) or if it's a less lethal

wound, such as from a naked punch or a grappling attack or the grasp of a tentacle). Once the total of your wounds is equal to your cliché, then any subsequent wounds lower your cliché dice.

6. **Risus points:** Characters start with 2 free bonus dice, which can be spent for extra dice on checks at any time, or to reroll any die.
7. **Grunt rule:** To make record keeping easier for the GM, the GM can define some NPCs as grunts, which means it takes only 1 hit (or up to 3 or more hits, depending on how the GM defines the grunt) to take the grunt out in combat. A *leader* is an NPC who's basically just like a PC. And then of course there are monsters...



## CTHULHU RISUS RULES\*

### CHARACTER CREATION!

Characters are defined by Clichés (sometimes several of them). Clichés are a

---

\* Pun intended! :-)

shorthand which describe what a character knows how to do. The ``character classes'' of the Neolithic Period of RPGs were Clichés: Fighter and Magic-User, Space Marine and Star Merchant. You can take Clichés like that, or choose a more contemporary one, such as Biker, Spy, Computer Nerd, Supermodel, or William Shatner (formerly an actor - now just a Cliché). Which Clichés are permitted are up to the GM.

Clichés are defined in terms of Dice (by which we mean the ordinary six-sided kind you can scavenge from your old **Yahtzee** set). This is the number of dice that you roll whenever your skill as a Fighter, Supermodel, or William Shatner (for instance) is challenged. See ``Game System," below. Three dice is professional. Six dice is mastery. One die is a putz. Characters are created by naming them (and describing them if you have the time), and listing their Clichés. When designing your character, you have 10 dice with which to define his Clichés (a Normal

Schmoe would be built on anywhere from 3 to 5 dice). A straightforward Cthulhu character might look like this:

### **Greg Vainsson the Investigator**

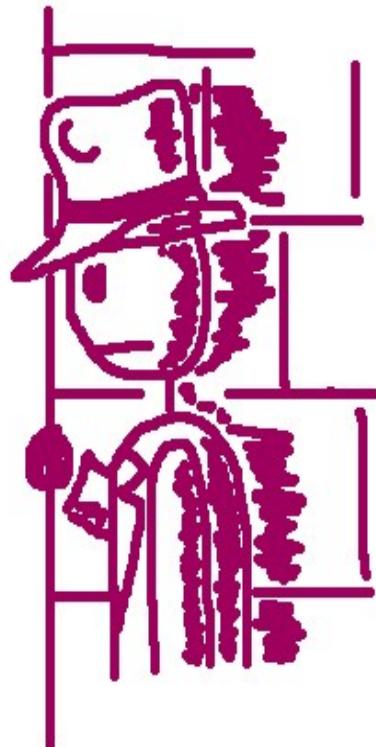
*Description:* Tall, blond, and frowning. Once Greg gets on someone's tail, it's tough to shake him. He gets tired of dealing with the routine divorce case, but occasionally something weird and unsettling shows up that makes him long for them.

**Clichés:** Grim-faced Private Detective (4), Tough-Looking Biker (2), Computer Geek (3), Reluctant Occultist (1)

A character may have any number or combination of Clichés, but more than 10 different Clichés would be odd, considering the number of dice you get. Characters shouldn't begin their career with more than 4 dice in anything, but just because you're creating a character today doesn't mean that he's beginning his career! The GM will

tell you if he's requiring ``beginners" for the game. It's not our business.

Note: it's highly recommended that at least one of your clichés be clearly physical in nature, and another one be clearly mental in nature. This makes it more likely that you will have an appropriate cliché to use in most situations.



## SOME SAMPLE CTHULHU CLICHÉS (AND WHAT THEY'RE GOOD FOR)

**Antiquarian** (knows history, art, and lots about old things)

**Athlete** (working out, staying healthy, annoying others by jogging)

**Biker** (Riding Harley, brawling, being Invisible to other motorists)

**Bimbo** (Available in both genders. Distracting, teasing, *not* teasing...)

**Bodybuilder** (being strong, being muscled, being Governor)

**Book Dealer** (having a lot of books, knowing about books)

**Computer Geek** (Hacking, programming, fumbling over introductions)

**Con Artist** (Convincing other people to give you money, evading cops)

**FBI Agent** (intimidating, shooting, having inside knowledge)

**Gambler** (Betting, cheating, winning, running very fast)

**Gangster** (Shooting, speaking with an accent, intimidation)

**Geezer** (Wheezin', cursin', bitter reminiscin', failin' to understand kids, knowing local history)

**Hairdresser** (Dressing hair. If anything.)

**Journalist** (being nosey, persuasive, writing, having sources)

**Latin Lover** (Seducing, loving, running from irate husbands)

**Librarian** (knowing books, able to get to rare books)

**Linguist** (knowing another language)

**Mad Cultist** (Raving, world-domination, sacrificing people, cackling)

**Martial Artist** (Fancy hand-to-hand combat, out-of-synch speech)

**Magician** (Palming things, sawing ladies in half, public speaking)

**Mechanic** (knowing cars, fixing cars)

**Medical Doctor** (diagnose diseases, patch up wounds, give big bills)

**Novelist** (Drinking, brawling, cut-rate world traveling, introspection, writing)

**Occultist** (knowing about weird and occult things, recognizing Mythos texts and creatures)

**Olympic Athlete** (Running, swimming, jumping, skiing, javelin-tossing)

**Outdoorsman** (Following tracks, building shelters, finding wild food)

**Parapsychologist** (doing research, knowing about psychic phenomena)

**Pastor or Priest** (praying, sermonizing, performing liturgies)

**Pilot** (flying planes or helicopters)

**Policeman** (Eating donuts, writing tickets, arresting people)

**Police Detective** (noticing clues, doing research, shooting)

**Private Investigator** (following people, doing research, noticing clues)

**Professor** (knows a lot about their specialty, doing research)

**Psychologist** (knows a lot about people, can treat insanity)

**Race Car Driver** (driving real fast, looking good on TV)

**Soldier** (Shooting, hiding, partying, catching venereal diseases)

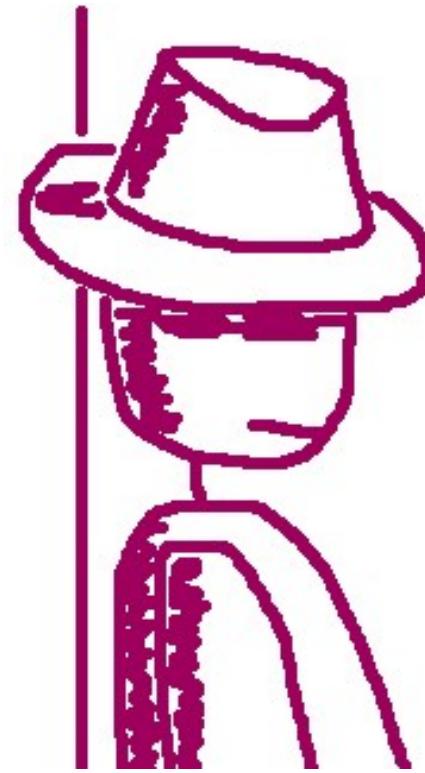
**Sorcerer** (Casting spells, looking mysterious)

**Special Forces** (Following orders, looking stern, following orders)

**Student** (learning things, partying, mooching off others)

**Thief** (Sneakin' around gaining access and objects they shouldn't have)

**Writer** (doing research, knowing about their latest topic, communicating, writing)



These are just examples to get you started - players should feel free to make up their own Clichés (subject to GM approval). In particular, Note that the GM will require the "fine tuning" of any Cliché that he considers too broad.

## THE GAME SYSTEM

Whenever anybody wants to do something, AND the GM doesn't think that success would be automatic, the player rolls dice. If the total rolled beats (equals or exceeds) the opposed roll made by the GM, success! If not, failure!

In Cthulhu Risus, we will use the “high dice” variation for checks, which means the value of a roll is equal to the highest single die rolled; multiples of the high die are also added in (look at it this way: roll the dice and see what's high; take away all your other dice that don't show that same number).

So instead of picking a target #, the GM selects a # of dice to roll to oppose the player. The value of this roll is the target # the player needs to equal or beat. Otherwise, if it's player vs. player consider it a tie.

*For example, Jeff Lord, Antiquarian (4), is trying to determine the nature of the writing on an unidentified clay tablet found at a new archaeological site. The GM decides*

*this is going to be a tough job and assigns 6 dice to the difficulty – unidentified tablet (6). Jeff's player rolls a 6, 5, 5, and a 4, giving him a 6. The GM rolls a 4, 4, 2, 3, 2, and a 1, giving him a total of 8 (for the two 4s). Jeff cannot identify the writing on his own.*

The reason for using this variation is to make the curve less “lumpy”, so that those clichés with fewer dice will have some chance against those with more dice.

In Cthulhu Risus, everything is rolled as an opposed check, even if no one is actively trying to stop the character from doing something. For example, suppose a character is trying to climb a wall: use whatever character cliché is appropriate, vs. a cliché for the wall, like High Wall (3). So instead of picking a target number, the GM picks an opposing cliché and assigns a number of dice to it. If a character is trying to throw something at a target, use the appropriate character cliché vs. a cliché like Range (2) or Distance (4); if a librarian (3) is trying to find a rare book, it

would be the librarian cliché vs. Rare Book (4), and so on.

The reason for doing this is because we're going to use the High Die option for combat, so why not use it for everything? Another advantage of this is that now it no longer matters what kind of dice you use: you can use d6, d8, d10, whatever, as long as everyone uses the same kind of dice.

The values picked for opposing clichés can be subjective, but anybody can still *try* anything: Crossing a chasm – say, a Chasm (2) - by swinging on a rope, vine or something similar would be child's play for a Swashbuckler or a Lord of the Jungle with a 6 dice cliché, easy for a Pulp Archaeologist with 4 dice, and challenging but definitely doable for a Gymnast, Barbarian, or Thief with 2 or 3 dice. Even a Wheelchair-Bound Eccentric Occultist with 1 die could try it, but the consequences (and likelihood) of failure are likely to be high.

**Note:** remember that you can use a Risus point to add a die to your roll or reroll any one die. You can wait to use a Risus point until after you've rolled. This is a powerful thing.

*For example, Jeff's roll, above, was 6, 5, 5, and a 4, giving him a 6, since 6 is the high die. Jeff's player could choose to use a Risus point to reroll the 6. If it comes up 4 or less then Jeff would instead get a 10 for the two fives; if it comes up a 5 he'd get a 15!*

### **Option: Narrative Risus Points**

This option was inspired by the FATE version of FUDGE, in particular the Aspect concept. This option is an addition to the regular uses of Risus points. To use this option, it helps if you have colorful adjectives with your clichés, for example “Grizzled, cynical private eye (3)” or “Dashing young soldier (3)” or “Greedy gambler (2)” or “Curious history student (4)”, etc.

With this option the GM can call on one of your clichés and offer you a Risus point to do a specific action in accordance with it; you can choose to do the action and accept the point or refuse to do the action and thus reject the point.

*For example, the GM might say, “John, the Curious history student (4), notices what appears to be a very old manuscript in his uncle’s library – and he’s curious about it. Here’s a Risus point if you open it and read the first few pages.” John’s player can accept the point and open the book, or ignore the book and not get the point.*

Players can also do the same thing to the GM. For example, Kate’s player can say, “Kendra [Cute Reporter (3)] uses her sexy smile to win the clerk over, and he lets her into the rare book section” and offer one of her Risus points to the GM. The GM can accept it and let her character in, or not (in which case the player doesn’t have to pay the Risus point).

## THE COMBAT SYSTEM

“Combat” in this game is defined as any contest in which opponents jockey for position, utilize attacks, bring defenses to bear, and try to wear down their foes to achieve victory. Either literally or metaphorically! Some examples of combat include:

**ARGUMENTS:** People using whatever verbal weapons they have at hand to make their points. Truth is the first casualty.

**HORSE-RACING:** People on horses running around and around a dirty track, trying to get nowhere first.

**DOGFIGHTS:** People in airplanes or spaceships flying around and trying to blow each other out of the sky.

### **ASTRAL/PSYCHIC DUELS:**

Mystics/psionics looking bored or asleep, but trying to rip one another’s egos apart in the Otherworld.

**WIZARD’S DUELS:** Sorcerers using strange magics and trying to outdo the other.

**DUELING BANJOS:** Banjo players using strange melodies and trying to outdo the other.

**SEDUCTION ATTEMPTS:** One (or more) characters trying to score with one (or more) other character(s) who is(are) trying to resist.

**COURTROOM ANTICS:** Prosecution vs. Defense. The goal is victory. Justice is incidental.

**ACTUAL PHYSICAL COMBAT:** People trying to injure or kill each other.

The GM decides when a combat has begun. At that point, go around the table in rounds, and let each combatant make an attack in turn. What constitutes an ``attack'' depends on the sort of combat, but it should ALWAYS be roleplayed (if dialogue is involved) or described in entertaining detail (if it's physical and/or dangerous and/or normally requires contraceptives). Especially entertaining actions (or descriptions of them) get bonus dice.

Attacks require rolls against character Clichés. The GM must, at the outset of combat, determine what TYPE of Clichés are appropriate for the fight. In a physical fight, Clichés like Viking, Barbarian, Soldier, Swashbuckler, and Novelist are appropriate. Clichés like Hairdresser and Latin Lover are not. The GM can penalize an inappropriate cliché by a few dice, or rule that it just can't be used.

An attack must be directed at a foe. Typical physical attacks are punching, kicking, grabbing, holding or pinning, hitting with a weapon, and shooting or throwing something. Both parties in the attack (attacker and defender) roll against their chosen Cliché. Low roll loses.

*Note: for ranged combat, the GM may decide to assign opposing dice based on the difficulty of the shot rather than any of the opponent's clichés. For example she may assign 2 opposing dice because of*

*the range, one die for the target's speed or cover, etc.*

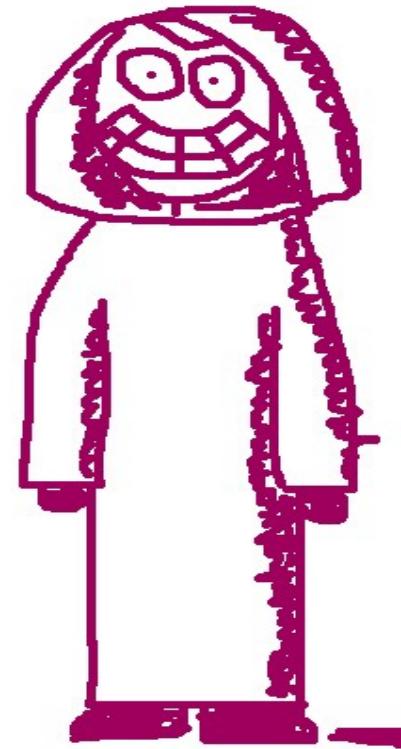
The loser of the combat round has their attack deflected or avoided, while they are affected by the winner's attack. *In Cthulhu Risus, the loser does not automatically subtract from a cliché*: instead the loser gets a **wound**.

For attacks with weapons like knives or guns or Tindalos teeth the wound is considered “lethal” in nature; it’s “less lethal” if the attack was more like a punch, kick, or a grappling attack. Mark the type of wound you get so you know how quickly it heals. If using boxes on a character sheet, one way to indicate the type of wound is to put one diagonal line in the box for less lethal wounds and put an “X” for lethal wounds.

***Once the total of your wounds is equal to your cliché, only then do any subsequent wounds lower your cliché dice.***

The reason for this rule is to mitigate the death spiral and lengthen combats, so they aren't as brutally quick as Risus usually is.

**Option: Degree of Success.** For every 5 points the loser lost by, they get 1 additional wound. This adds excitement and incentive to get those really high rolls.



**Example of Combat:** George Masters [English Gunplay (3), English Boxing (2), Intrepid Investigator (4), Sorcerer (1)] is desperately trying to put out a fire in a barn drenches the straw with buckets of water. Unfortunately a couple of convalescent Deep Ones were under the straw, and the water revived one of them. A small Deep One (5) rises out of the straw and starts lumbering towards George, who draws his revolver and shoots.

The GM assigns the shot a difficulty of (2) for the range and rolls a 3 and a 2 for a result of 3; George rolls a 5, 4, and a 2 (from English Gunplay (3)) for a result of 5, and hits the Deep One, who takes one wound. The Deep One groans but keeps moving forward. George shoots again while calling out for help; this time the GM gives the difficulty a (1) because the Deep One is even closer, and rolls a 5; George rolls a 5, 5, and a 4 for a total of 10, so hits and does an extra wound (they're using the **Degree of Success** option), so the

Deep One takes 2 wounds (it now has taken a total of 3).

The Deep One has now reached George, and bashes at him while he ducks and jabs. It's English Boxing (2) vs. Deep One (5); the Deep One gets a 6, 6, 5, 4, and a 1 for a result of 12, while George rolls a 1 and a 2 for a result of 2. The Deep One does 2 (less-lethal) wounds to George, and the next hit he takes will lower his boxing cliché. George had better do something clever quickly, or he's going to be lunch for this Deep One...

## TEAMS:

These are useful for players ganging up on a powerful opponent, say, for example, a monster. When a bunch of cultists are bent on ganging up on a player, use the Grunt Squad rules instead.

The team leader is the one with the highest most appropriate cliché. Everyone in the team describes their action and how it coordinates with or otherwise is a part of the collective effort. Everyone rolls their

cliché. Any die equal to the Team leader's high die gets added in.

*For example, suppose the team leader has a 4 dice cliché and rolls 4, 3, 2, and a 2 (so his high die is 4) and suppose team member A gets a 5, 4, and a 3 while team member B gets a 6 and a 5. Only team member A's 4 gets added in, so the total for this team of 3 members is 8 (team leader's 4 plus member A's 4).*

If the team wins the round, great; if it loses, one member of the team takes 2 wounds. Determine who takes the hit by volunteer, randomly, or by having everyone roll their cliché and having the low roller get hit.

**GRUNT SQUADS:** This is just special effects for dealing with multiple opponents. When you want the heroes to be attacked by a horde of 700 rat-skeletons inside the lair of the Wicked Necromancer(5), but don't feel like keeping track of 700 little skeletal sets of dice, just declare that they're a team, fighting as Skeletal Rat-Horde(7). Mechanically, the Rat-Horde is

the same as any other single foe - except it has more dice!

Grunt-Squads can have any level of cliché the GM feels is appropriate. Grunt-Squads stick together as a team until they're defeated, at which point any survivors will scatter (though at least one will always remain to suffer whatever fate the victor decides).

Eventually, one side will be left standing, and another will be left beaten. At this point, the winners usually decide the fate of the losers. In a physical fight or magical duel, the losers might be killed (or mercifully spared). In Courtroom Antics, the loser gets sentenced by the judge, or fails to prosecute. In a Seduction, the loser gets either a cold shower or a warm evening, depending on who wins.

You needn't use the same Cliché every round. If a Viking/Swashbuckler wants to lop heads one round, and swing on chandeliers the next, that's groovy, too.

Wounds are lost at a "healing" rate determined by the GM. In physical combat, the cause of the wounds will affect the healing rate: stab wounds or bullet wounds heal slower than if the "wounds" were just representing the loss of position in a wrestling match instead of actual physical damage, for example.

If the combat was in vehicles (space fighters, mecha, wooden sailing ships) then the vehicles themselves are likely damaged, too, and must be repaired.

**Option:** Another way to ***fight multiple opponents***:

All combatants roll their clichés. Everyone rolling higher than the outnumbered fighter can cause one wound; the lone fighter can hit any one opponent he rolled higher than. Highest roll goes first.

*Example:* Three cultists, Fred, Ned and Ed - each a *Fanatic Cthulhu Cultist* (2) - are

attacking Nancy, the intrepid investigator: Antiquarian (4), Crouching Tiger Kung Fu (3), Occultist (2), Yoga Meditator (1). The fanatic cultists roll 2 dice each getting a 4 (for Ned) and a 2 (for Ed, and also Fred); Nancy rolls 3 dice for her Kung Fu, but only gets a 3.

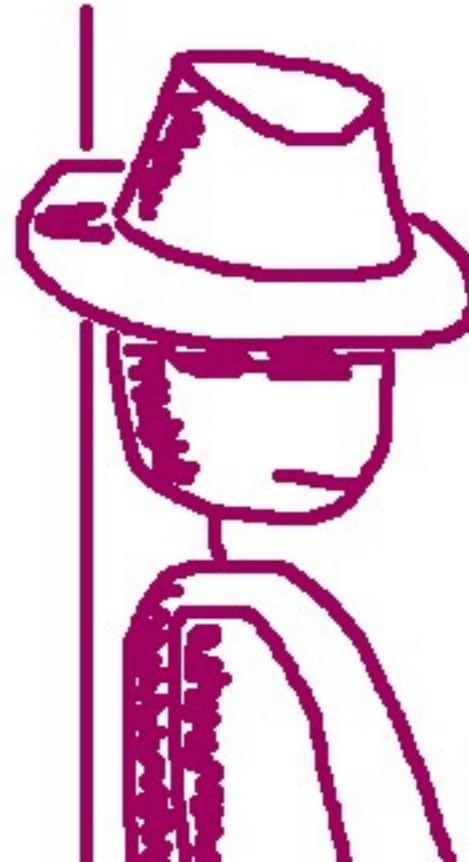
*Cultist Ned, who got the high roll, grabs Nancy with the intent of subduing her (throwing her to the ground and tying her up), which means she gets one "less lethal" wound representing the influence of Ned's grab. Nancy's Kung Fu (3) is higher than that, so she's not disadvantaged yet - although Ned's grabbed her he hasn't been able to affect her yet (but once she gets two more wounds - a total of 3, her current combat cliché - then further wounds will start lowering her cliché).*

*Nancy has the next highest roll and she can hit any one opponent who got worse than she did, in this case either Ed or Fred – so she says she hits Ed with a Kung Fu kick. Since Ed was just a 1 hit grunt, the*

*GM says Ed falls unconscious, knocking over a filing cabinet on the way down. Fred isn't able to do anything, since his total was lower than Nancy's.*

### **Option: Separate Attack and Defense**

When it's your turn to attack, you describe your action and use the appropriate cliché as usual, and the target of your attack describes how they defend and with which cliché - which needn't be the same cliché as they use to attack. If the defender loses, a wound is taken to the cliché they defended with. And the same applies when you are attacked.



### **PROPER TOOLS**

Every character is assumed to be equipped with the Tools of His Trade (at least the portable ones). Warriors are wearing armor and wielding good weapons. Cowboys have leather chaps,

lasoo, a couple of pearl-handled six-guns and some chaw. Netrunners have an expensive jack-in laptop and funny clothes. If, through the course of an adventure, a character LOSES any of these vital totems, his Cliché operates on half the normal number of dice (or not at all, if the GM rules that the equipment was REQUIRED) until they are replaced.

A Barbarian(5), for instance, can fight without his sword as a Barbarian(3), but a Netrunner can't run the net without his cyberdeck. If the Netrunner manages to find another computer to play with besides the kind he's used to, he can operate at half-dice.

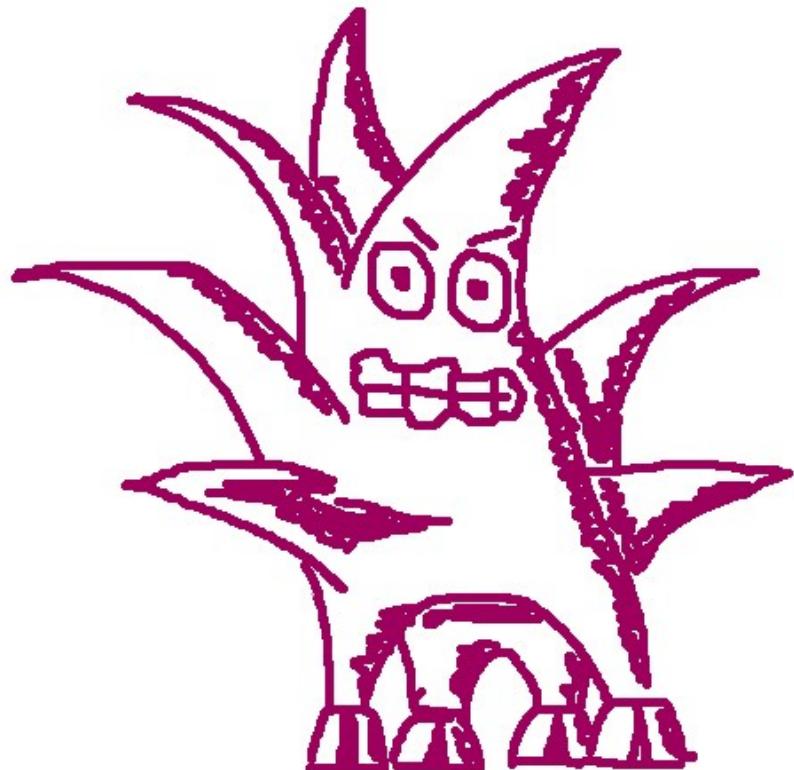
Some special tools (magic wands, hot-off-the-line military cyberdecks, better or cooler weapons, and so on) may give bonus dice to your Clichés when used. Characters never begin the game with bonus-dice gear; they must be acquired in adventures.

## GUNS

For the most part these should be treated like tools, or bonus die items if they're special.

**OPTIONAL AMMO RULE:** if while shooting you roll just 1s and 2s and fail the check, you've fumbled the reload, and have to spend the next round reloading. If rolling just 1s and the check is a failure, the gun has jammed and is useless until repaired.

**OPTIONAL AUTOMATIC FIRE RULE:** when firing a gun on automatic, add one die to the roll and discard one die of your choice. However, if the reload is fumbled it takes two rounds to reload instead of one.



## INAPPROPRIATE CLICHÉS

Will not be used in Cthulhu Risus, unless you really, really want to and it's going to be really, really funny. If none of your clichés are appropriate for what you want or need to do, you get one free impaired die (which means you lose on a tie) to use

on the roll instead. And you can always use bonus dice or pump a cliché.

## CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

At the end of a session, the GM will give out 1 to 3 experience points to all surviving characters. 4 experience points can be traded in to raise 1 cliché by one point, or to add one new cliché with a value of 1. Also, at the start of each new session you begin with a number of additional Risus points equal to the experience you were assigned at the end of your last game.

*For example, in Lilly's first game she started with 2 Risus points like everyone else. She used one point during the game. At the end of the session the GM assigned her 2 XP. At the start of the next session she starts with 3 Risus points – the one that she didn't use last time, plus 2 for the 2 points of XP she received.*

**Note:** some may wonder about the value of having a character advancement rule in a game specifically designed to be compatible with a high degree of character attrition through death, dismemberment, ingestion & digestion, insanity, and other such unpleasantness.

Well, of course just because the game is *compatible* with such outcomes doesn't mean one has to play the game in such a way that those outcomes are inevitable: there's no reason one can't use the system simply to take advantage of the easy character creation. But, since you brought it up...

**Inheritance Option:** As an option for those games where character attrition will be (or winds up being) high, you can allow the carry over of experience from a recently lost character to a newly created one, plus the inheritance of any Mythos texts or other valuable items if this makes sense in the story. This helps take the sting out of losing a character and can help

keep players motivated to have their new characters continue to take chances and adventure.

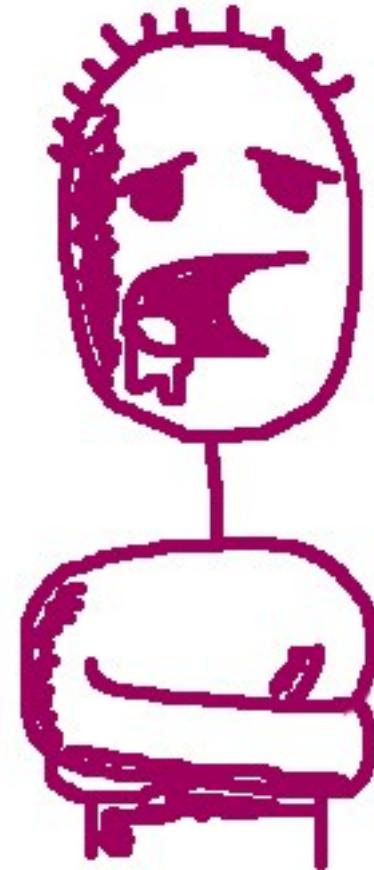
For example, suppose Greg the investigator survived 3 sessions and earned 8 experience points, which were used to raise his private detective cliché by 2 points. Now suppose Greg is eaten by a Hound of Tindalos in the beginning of the fourth session. With the inheritance option, Greg's player can create a new 12-point character (by using the 8 XP), instead of a regular 10-point starting character. And if Greg had found any special items the new character might be able to inherit those as well, if together with the GM the player can find a way for this to make sense in the story.

***“But why bother? We’re doomed no matter what we do!”***

This comment occasionally comes up: why bother adventuring in a Cthulhu-esque universe at all, if the inevitable result is

going to be unfortunate and rather messy for your character? Well, of course it doesn't have to end that badly – it depends on what kind of story the players and GM enjoy. But yes, usually there is a good chance that a player character will meet with an unpleasant end. So why bother? You may not want to if your goal is just to rack up XP and treasure – but if the goal is to, say, solve a mystery and save the world (or maybe even to save just one innocent person from a grisly, unspeakable end) then if your character dies or loses his sanity in pursuit of such an end, well then maybe that's OK.

So it all depends on your goal. If your goal is to conquer the world by summoning Cthulhu, you have only yourself to blame for what happens ☺



## SANITY AND INSANITY

You may gain points of insanity during the game, either by failing a Sanity Check or because what you encounter is so horrible the GM just assigns you an insanity point.

You make a Sanity Check by using an appropriate character cliché vs. a number of dice determined by the GM (either equal to a monster's cliché or otherwise proportional to the horror of the situation), plus a modifier equal to your current insanity points.

For example, suppose your character Jane Intrepid has 2 insanity points when she suddenly feels grasped around the leg by a tentacle. She looks behind her to see the horror of a Shoggoth (6) rising up from the ground to eat her. The GM calls for a Sanity Check, and will most likely make her opposing roll using 6 dice (give or take a few for situational modifiers): let's say she rolls and gets one 5 as the high die. You the player must beat the GM's roll (of 5, in this case) + 2 (because of Jane's two insanity points), i.e. get a 7 or above in order to make the Sanity Check.

If another character, Jack, is also grasped by the shoggoth but has 4 insanity points, his player would need to beat a 9 (5 for the

GM's roll plus 4 for the insanity points) to pass the check.

If you succeed, your character is able to keep their fear from dominating them and can act normally (although even if you succeed you may still get an insanity point if the GM determines it's a horrible enough situation).

If you fail the Sanity check, you get an additional point of insanity and you are temporarily insane. This usually means you'll run screaming from the area as fast as you humanly can, followed by gibbering in a corner for a period of time (but the GM may feel free to assign you something else equally bad or even worse, if it'll be more fun or appropriate). The period of time your character is temporarily insane is equal to how much he or she failed the check by, in rounds (or minutes or hours or days, if the GM judges it more appropriate to the story).

If while temporarily insane you fail another Sanity check, your character is really in trouble! The GM gets to assign your

character a permanent phobia or other appropriate mental illness, in addition to detailing the immediate unpleasant effects of the failure. If you keep getting more and more insanity points, you'll eventually wind up a gibbering lunatic.

Insanity points and associated mental illnesses can be healed by appropriate therapy or therapeutic actions, as the GM dictates.

Appropriate clichés for a Sanity Check are things like Calm Meditator, Cool and Collected Hostage Negotiator, Centered Qi Gong expert, etc. - anything that would help make the character calm under pressure. If more than one cliché is appropriate, use the highest one and add +1 die for each additional appropriate cliché.



## SPELLS & SCARY STUFF

Learning a spell usually requires study from a Mythos text that lists the spell and

its instructions, and depending on the spell may require an elaborate ritual involving knives, fire, blood, and all sorts of mind-bending messiness. Some spells just require an incantation, and once practiced for awhile a spell can be done without the original text. First learning a spell from a text requires multiple Sanity checks, the more powerful the spell the more checks. In fact, one usually needs to make a Sanity Check (typically against an opposed roll of 2 to 4 dice by the GM) every few pages while reading a Mythos text.

Some Mythos texts to learn spells from:  
*The Book of Dzyan*, *The Book of True Magick*, *De Vermiis Mysteriis*, *The Eltdown Shards*, *Monstres and their Kynde*, *The Necronomicon*, *The Pnakotic Manuscripts*, *The R'lyeh Text*, *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*, *The Zanthu Tablets*.



### General spells:

**Contact** a specific type of monster (see monster section below); takes 3 Sanity checks to learn.

**Summon** a specific type of monster; takes 6 Sanity checks to learn, plus gain 1d3 insanity points automatically.

**Bind** a specific type of monster; takes 8 Sanity checks to learn, plus gain 1d6

insanity points automatically. Once bound, the creature obeys all commands of the master who it's bound to; however, it will often try to escape if it can (usually by taking advantage if commands are phrased ambiguously).

**Command** a specific type of monster; takes 4 Sanity checks to learn. One needs to cast this spell each time one gives a command (unlike **Bind**, which only needs to be cast once).

**Dispel** a specific type of monster; takes 2 Sanity checks to learn.

**Note:** *Contact Byakhee* is a completely separate spell from *Contact Shoggoth*, which is also different from *Contact Deep One*, etc. Each such spell needs to be learned separately. The same is true for all the other spells listed above.

For the above spells, make a check (with appropriate clichés, like Sorcerer, Occultist, etc.) against the monster's cliché

value to succeed. For Contact, just use half the monster's cliché value. You can add 1 die to your roll for every wound (represents draining some of your blood, or the like) or every point of insanity you are willing to gain. Also, others can help by adding to the dice total in the same way. Once cast, the GM will require a Sanity Check for all the above spells except Dispel. For Summon, depending on what's being summoned you may automatically get an insanity point.



### Other Spells:

**Space Elixir** (enables travel through space without a spacesuit); takes 4 Sanity checks to learn.

**Open Gate** (opens a portal to another place on earth or another world); takes 6 Sanity checks to learn, +1d3 automatic insanity points.

**Elder Sign Circle of Protection** (when the sign is drawn inside a circle, monsters can't cross the circle); takes 2 Sanity checks to learn.

**Enchant/Bless item** (adds bonus dice to item, and now item can affect monsters normally immune to that type of item); takes 4 Sanity checks to learn.

**Dust of Ibn Sultan** (makes the invisible visible); takes 2 Sanity checks to learn.

**Powder of Abu Rumi** (damages monsters from beyond, one wound per dose); takes 4 Sanity checks to learn, +1d3 automatic insanity points.

**Sign of Healing** (sign drawn in the air, heals wounds); takes 3 Sanity checks to learn.

**Sign of Harm** (sign drawn in the air, causes wounds); takes 6 Sanity checks to learn, +1d3 automatic insanity points.

**Transference** (transfers a wound or insanity point from target to caster); takes 2 Sanity checks to learn.

**Projection** (transfers a wound or insanity point from caster to target); takes 8 Sanity checks to learn, +1d6 automatic insanity points.

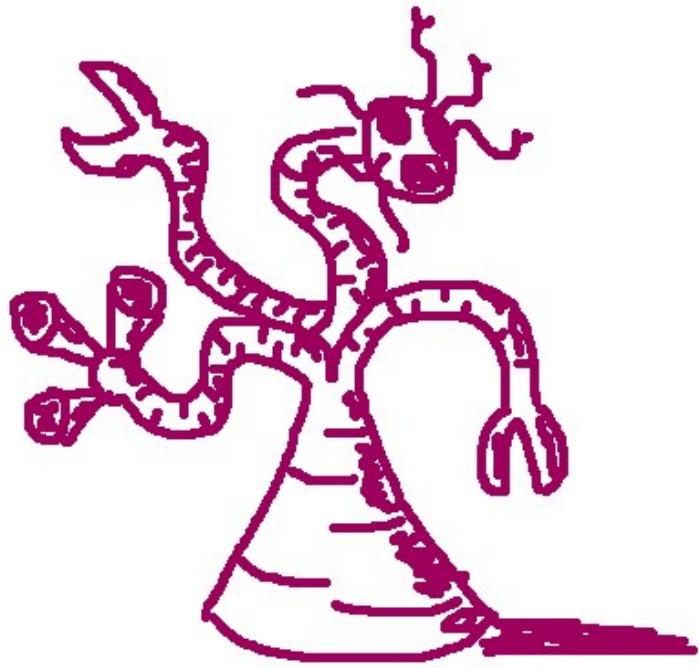
For all the above spells, the GM will determine an appropriate number of opposing dice based on the power of the effect desired or on what it's being cast on: one opposing die for each wound you're trying to heal or cause, one die for each die of blessing attempted, one die for each dose of powder, dice for how far the gate goes, how far the space elixir is to last, the value of the cliché of the monster it's being cast on, etc. You can add additional dice to

the roll as described above. A Sanity Check is also usually required after casting each spell (except for the **Sign of Healing** spell).

For a spell like the **Elder Sign Circle**, the opposing roll can be made when a monster tries to cross the circle instead of when the circle is first drawn.

For the **Powder of Abu Rumi**, make a check when creating the powder in the lab, basement, or other appropriate location (it takes one hour per attempt to make the powder).

For the **Dust of Ibn Sultan**, make one check to make the dust; the monster it's used on doesn't get a chance to resist it. The same is true for the **Space Elixir**; if made successfully, the user doesn't need to make another kind of check (except perhaps a Sanity check at the GM's discretion).



## MONSTERS YOU'RE LIKELY TO WISH YOU HADN'T SEEN

**Byakhee** (see in the dark, fly through space, bear messages, carry riders)

**Color Out of Space** (amorphous translucent rainbow-colored blob, parasitizes all life, drains will to live over

time, immune to normal weapons, creates larva, repelled by magnetism)

**Cultist** (knows occult things, knows ceremonies, likes to sacrifice people & summon monstrous entities)

**Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath** (bunch of walking tentacles, drains life, immune to most spells, hates cold)

**Deep One** (amphibious, likes to breed with humans, usually lives in the sea, likes Massachusetts)

**Dimensional Shambler** (can shift through time and space, likes to grab and abduct people, hard to hurt)

**Ghoul** (walking undead, unaffected by normal weapons, grabs and eats people, has no brains)

**Hound of Tindalos** (teleports through time and space, likes to eat humans, hard to hurt, regenerates)

**Rat-Thing** (intelligent unusually big rats, may cast spells, eat people)

**Shoggoth** (huge amorphous amoeboid, unaffected by normal weapons, hates captivity)

**Terror from Beyond** (predatory tendrils with a big mouth, hard to hurt, immune to most spells, usually invisible)

A particular monster's cliché value can differ from that of others of its kind, depending on the specific creature's size, malevolence, etc. Some examples: Baby Shoggoth (5), Small Shoggoth (10), Medium-sized Shoggoth (15), Typical Deep One (7), Big Byakhee (5), Big Ghoul (4), Typical Hound of Tindalos (8), Typical



Cthulhu Cultist (2), Small Dimensional Shambler (6).

Here's an idea on how to interpret "hard to hurt" and "regenerates":

**Hard to hurt:** the creature ignores every other wound.

**Regenerates:** once reduced to apparent death, the creature begins to heal one wound per round (or whatever time period the GM likes). True destruction requires drastic measures, like complete dismemberment, a dispel, etc.



## MORE OPTIONS:

Because we like to have options...

**To make monsters weaker:** one way to do this is instead of using the trauma rule

for monsters the GM can use regular Risus damage (i.e., the monster loses one die for each wound it takes).

**Attacking multiple opponents in one round:** the attacker gets a penalty of one die per opponent in their attack.

*Example: Continuing the combat above, Nancy decides she wants to punch Ned off of her and hit Fred in the same round.*

*Since she's attacking both cultists at once, she gets a two-die penalty to her roll. This would leave her with only one die left (from her Kung Fu (3)), so she decides to pump her cliché (see options below), getting 2 extra dice (getting back to her original total of 3) for this round, but she automatically takes two wounds. If her player rolls high enough, Nancy will be able to hit both remaining cultists in the same round.*

**Use unopposed checks** as in original Risus. If the total rolled beats (equals or exceeds) the Target Number the GM sets, success! If not, failure!

Target numbers follow this scale:

**5:** A cinch. A snap. A challenge for a Schmuck. Routine for a pro.

**10:** A challenge for a Professional.

**15:** An Heroic challenge. For really inventive or tricky stunts.

**20:** A challenge for a Master. Nearly superhuman difficulty.

**30:** You've GOT to be Kidding. Actual superhuman difficulty.

For Sanity checks, multiply the number of wounds or points of insanity by 5 to get the required target number.



#### **ADVANCED OPTION: HOOKS and TALES**

Normally, a character is created using 10 dice. With this Advanced Option, players can bargain for extra beginning dice by giving their character a Hook and/or a Tale.

A Hook is some significant character flaw - an obsession, a weakness, a sworn vow, a permanently crippling injury - that the GM agrees is so juicy that he can use it to make the characters life more interesting (which usually means less pleasant). A

character with a Hook gets an extra die to play with.

A Tale is a written "biography" of the character describing his life before the events of the game begin. The Tale needn't be long (two or three pages is usually just fine); it just needs to tell the reader where the character is coming from, what he likes and dislikes, how he became who he is, what his motives are. Some Tales are best written from the player's omniscient perspective; others are more fun if written as excerpts from the character's own diary. A character with a Tale provided before gameplay begins gets an extra die to play with.

## **ADVANCED OPTION II: PUMPING CLICHÉS**

In an emergency, any character may pump his Clichés. If the Ninja(3) comes face to face with a Monster(6), it might be necessary.

When a Cliché is pumped, it receives a temporary boost in dice. This boost lasts

for a single round of combat, or a single significant roll otherwise. However, after that round or roll is resolved, the character gets a number of wounds equal to the number of dice he gave himself in the pump. This is treated like "injury" to the Clichés sustained in combat, and must "heal" in the same fashion. If in doubt about what kind of wound the character takes, use the interpretation that yields the harshest result (i.e., the more lethal wounds). Unless you'd rather not (i.e., the less lethal wounds – fatigue).

I recommend that these wounds be interpreted as fatigue, unless the GM has a special reason for wanting them to be more deadly.

## **ADVANCED OPTION III: DOUBLE-PUMPS**

If this option is used, characters may be created with double-pump Clichés. These Clichés, when pumped, give you TWO dice in the pumped roll for every die you'll lose at the end of it. Thus, a Sorcerer(5) could

be a Sorcerer(11) for a single combat round, at a cost of three dice. This option is appropriate for any Clichés based on supernatural powers, such as wizards, telepaths, and humanoid-torch style superheroes. They're also appropriate for any other Clichés the GM approves them for.

Double-pump Clichés cost twice as many starting dice to buy. Thus, the following would be a legal starting character:

### **Sinsibilus the Sorcerer**

*Description:* Thin, spindly and mysterious, with a tired cat on his shoulder. Likes to poke around where Man Ought Not, turn people in to toads and the like. Likes the woods.

**Clichés:** Sorcerer [3], Alchemist (2), Outdoorsman (2)

The hard [square brackets] indicate a double-pump Cliché. Since it costs double, Sinsibilus is effectively a 10-dice character.

### **ADVANCED OPTION IV: CLICHÉ SPECIALTIES**

With this option, a character's cliché can have a specific specialty. When that specialty is in use, the player can add an extra die to the roll and discard any one die of his choice. For example, A cliché of Chef (3) can have a specialty of Sushi, or a Soldier (4) can have a specialty of Rifle. When making sushi, the chef (3) player would roll 4 dice and discard one of the 4 dice after rolling.

The specialty should be fairly specific and not too broad, for example a Martial Artist (3) should not have a specialty of Kung Fu since that's too broad – in fact, as broad as the original cliché! Instead a specialty of striking, grappling, or ground fighting could be appropriate.

Each character can get a maximum of one free specialty to start with. More specialties cost 1/2 a point each.

*Thanks for reading and happy Cthulhu gaming!*



*THE DUNGEONAUTICA: Risus suggestions, interpretations, and elaborations for Dungeoneers. Don't know what Risus is? Click [here](#) and get ready for a real treat. Then come back and check out Dungeonautica. Dungeonautica © Vincent Diakuw 2004-2007. Risus © S. John Ross 1993-2000.*

### What is Dungeonautica?

Dungeonautica is a swords and sorcery instance of Risus: The Anything RPG. Risus kicks all sorts of posterior, as does its author, S. John Ross.

### What is an instance?

An instance is a particular example of a class of things. In this case, Dungeonautica is a specific example of the class of "web freebies based on Risus." Calling it an instance is shorter than saying "expansion/explanation/elaboration."

### How do I use Dungeonautica?

Read through the chapters and ignore anything you don't like. Then read through again and fix anything you have only lukewarm feelings for. Then take the really choice bits and email them to all of your Risus playing friends.

### How should I not use Dungeonautica?

There is no wrong way to use Dungeonautica. That being said, Dungeonautica is not warranted for use as a philosophy of life, political manifesto, corporate vision statement, extended meditative mantra, school absence slip, drug prescription, record of a congressional sub-committee hearing, or space shuttle operations and procedures manual.

Dungeonautica changed my life, defined my politics, boosted my company into the Fortune 500, centered me, got me out of gym, raised my libido, clarified the hearing of February 12th, 2002 in Washington, D.C., and helped me achieve a stable low-earth orbit.

[Email](#) me your anecdote if you use anything from it in play and it works out really well, and I'll consider you a true pal o' mine.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Offer void where prohibited, taxed, or restricted by law. Or wherever being a pal of Vin will earn you the Unbelievable Geek (5) Cliché.

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
Dungeonaut Information .....	3
D11: How to Create a Dungeonaut.....	3
D12: Classy Clichés.....	3
Physical .....	3
Mental .....	3
Spiritual .....	4
Emotional .....	4
Hey! .....	5
D13: Dungeonaut Alignment.....	5
D14: Dungeon Gear for Your Dungeonaut.....	6
Spells .....	7
D21: Spells In General.....	7
D22: Spells In Specific .....	8
Dungeonaut Information .....	9
D31: Your Dungeonaut Team.....	9
D32: Encumbrance .....	9
D33: Cake-Your Choice of Beef or Cheese.....	9
D34: Light.....	9
D35: Retainers .....	10
D36: Traps .....	10
D37: Wandering Monsters.....	10
D38: Experience Points .....	11
Encounters .....	12
D41: Getting the Drop .....	12
D42: Ranges .....	12
D43: Saving Throws .....	12
Conditions .....	12
D44: Morale.....	13
D45: Running Away .....	13
Monsters .....	14
D51: Monster Teams .....	14
D52: Monster Clichés .....	14
D53: Monster List: Acid Lasher to Zoom! Zoom!	14
Acid Lasher.....	14
Assilisk .....	14
Zoom! Zoom! .....	15
Treasure .....	16
D61: Random Treasure.....	16
D62: Magic Items .....	16
D63: Magic Items List: All-seeing Eye to Zealot's Horn.....	17
All-seeing Eye (Good) .....	17
Zealot's Horn .....	17
Dungeonaut Master Information .....	18
D71: Dungeonaut Design Philosophy.....	18
D72: Dungeon Clichés? .....	18
D73: Room Clichés?.....	18
D74: Picking Target Numbers .....	19
Meanwhile, Back in the States .....	20
D81: Wherever You Go, There You Are.....	20
D82: Town Clichés.....	20
D83: Liars and Beggars and Guards, Oh My! .....	21

## Dungeonaut Information

*Wherein we learn the ins and outs of burly barbarians, eloquent elves, depressing dwarves, and wascally wogues... er, rascally rogues.*

### **D11: How to Create a Dungeonaut**

Dungeonauts are created like any other Risus character. See Risus p.1.

Below are detailed some of the Classy Clichés of the swords & sorcery genre.

### **D12: Classy Clichés**

Classy Clichés are used to build characters that fit the settings of dungeon delving style games. In each of four categories, sample Classy Clichés are named and provided with suggested adjectives. We also indicate what characters from that category are known for. The What You Are Known For guidelines help the DM to set Target Numbers. Target Numbers are GM defined totals that you have to meet or beat on a Cliché roll to succeed. CONFLICTS THAT AREN'T COMBAT (Risus p.4) doesn't specify uncontested rolls, but the system implies them. Instead of rolling an opposing Cliché, the DM simply picks a number (see D74).

#### **Physical**

Physically oriented Clichés choose active, projective force first; passive, resistive force second; and thoughtful interaction last, or not at all. They try to see every challenge in terms of how they can use their muscles and athletic prowess to prevail.

Cliché Suggestions: Acrobat, Adventurer, Assassin, Archer, Bandit, Barbarian, Berserker, Champion, Dwarf, Fighter, Gladiator, Gnome, Guard, Hunter, Knight, Mariner, Martial Artist, Nomad, Outlaw, Pirate, Ranger, Rogue, Soldier, Thief

Cliché Modifiers: Active, Ambitious, Animated, Brash, Brawny, Callous, Courageous, Fast, Graceful, Ignorant, Laconic, Mighty, Nimble, Rugged, Stealthy, Strong, Surly, Tactless, Tough, Vital

Tools of the Trade include a dangerous looking hand weapon, an equally dangerous ranged weapon, serviceable armor, dusty boots.

You Are Known For... keeping watch, repairing arms and armor, giving and taking orders, getting help from old buddies, military protocol, intolerance for foolishness, picking pockets, failing to realize that everyday life isn't a life or death struggle, never playing it by ear, and inability to just relax.

#### **Mental**

Mentally oriented Clichés know that might equals right - they just don't like it. To them, every encounter is a chance to show that wits and words are superior to steel and sinew; that plans and preparation trump muscle and mayhem; and brains are superior to brawn - or at least not as sweaty.

Cliché Suggestions: Alchemist, Conjurer, Dragonfly Sprite, Elementalist, Enchanter, Illusionist, Loremaster, Mage, Necromancer, Philosopher, Sage, Scholar, Sorceror, Sylph, Warlock, Wiseman, Wizard

Cliché Modifiers: Airy, Attentive, Bespectacled, Cautious, Condescending, Creative, Feeble, Inattentive, Intense, Learned, Longwinded, Oblivious, Observant, Patient, Productive, Shy, Sickly

Tools of the Trade include a big dusty book, wimpy looking weapon, a staff, writing implements.

You Are Known For... doing research, writing scholarly papers, identifying arcane things, losing lucidity while indulging in decadent vices, fear of carousing, athletic incompetence, and being inscrutable.

### Spiritual

Spiritual Clichés believe that the cosmos is embodied in a wholeness and implicate order; a weave, warp, and weft; a Master Plan. Spiritual Clichés are committed to right action - they just can't agree on how right action should be defined.

Cliché Suggestions: Ascetic, Cleric, Druid, Elf, Healer, Monk, Mystic, Oracle, Nymph, Paladin, Priest, Shaman, Undine, Witch

Cliché Modifiers: Centered, Dignified, Divine, Fertile, Focused, Innocent, Inspired, Loyal, Motivated, Naive, Patient, Pure, Righteous, Self-righteous, Serene, Twilight, Understanding, Unperturbable

Tools of the Trade include a holy symbol, modest garments, a hammer for smiting infidels.

You Are Known For... ministering to the needy, interpreting oracles, dealing with church bureaucracy, seeming holier than thou, never getting down and dirty, hatred for making exceptions, and having no sense of humor.

### Emotional

Emotional Clichés see the world as a web of interaction between sentients. They analyze and work with relationships. They like to scratch backs and have theirs scratched in return - and not just backs, either. They are often slaves to passion.

Cliché Suggestions: Bard, Courtier, Dancer, Entertainer, Hobbit, Juggler, Minstrel, Noble, Salamander Fairy, Siren, Troubadour

Cliché Modifiers: Attractive, Charming, Clueless, Easy, Enthusiastic, Excited, Flaky, Foolish, Friendly, Generous, Loving, Lunar, Passionate, Perceptive, Persuasive, Sexy, Vivacious, Witty

Tools of the Trade include several changes of clothes, a musical instrument, jewelry, silver tongue, dog-eared copy of 'How To Win Friends and Influence NPCs'.

You Are Known For... lack of shame, love of crowds, anecdotes about indiscretions, never putting in an honest day's work, failing to pay the piper, falling into bed with the first charming local you see.

Hey!

Pay attention to those Cliché Modifiers now; don't just write Fighter (4) on your sheet and move on. Pretty it up a bit, define it, narrow its focus and broaden its appeal. Why write Elf (3) when you can write Guarded Elven Twilight Wanderer (3); or Thief (2) when you could write Cudgel-Fisted Drunken Burglar (2)?

Here are some 'generic' Cliché Modifiers that are 100% guaranteed to spice things up: Addicted, Cannibalistic, Escaped, Famous, Flaming, Ghostly, Guilty, Incomprehensible, Insane, Insatiable, Untrustworthy, Tentacled, Vampiric, Violent

#### ADVANCED OPTION V: Cliché STUNTS

For each Cliché create a special stunt related specifically to that Cliché. Whenever you do this stunt you may reroll any dice that come up '1'. Careful though. This is META-GAMING. The inevitable price? Neither you (I mean you the Player) nor your friends can incorporate that Cliché stunt into another Cliché on another Character ever again. Ever. So smoke 'em while you got 'em.

#### **D13: Dungeonaut Alignment**

In Dungeonautica, alignment represents your Dungeonaut's overall philosophy of life. Luckily, Alignment is just another Cliché! Just pick one from below, or make one up, and tack it onto one of your existing Clichés. If you put it on a Cliché with a lot of dice, then ethical concerns will wind up being important to the character. If you put it on a lesser Cliché then, for you at least, ignorance is bliss.

- Angry
- Brave
- Cheerful
- Cautious
- Forgiving
- Greedy
- Helpful
- Lazy
- Prankish
- Vengeful

Umm... no offense, but 'alignments' are lame.

Yup. You might consider choosing a pithy quote that will color your entire character. For example, let's say you are a Nomadic Barbarian [4], Lonely Talespinner [3], Mysterious Master of the Oasis [2], Prizewinning Tomato Gardener [1]. That's all well and good, but try adding this for your Alignment:

Night is the university of the dervish

Now you're cooking!

#### **D14: Dungeon Gear for Your Dungeonaut**

A Dungeonaut player 'must' keep track of two kinds of Gear.

Tools of Her Trade (Risus p.2): Every Cliché has proper tools as given in section D12. Do not let these become lost or damaged. Naturally they will repeatedly be lost and damaged. Repairing and replacing Tools is one of the main things to do in town (see D82).

Ordinary Gear: Rope, lanterns, etcetera. You can carry as much of this as the encumbrance (see D32) rules allow. Dungeonautica Masters always want to know if you have a 55 foot rope as opposed to just 50 feet, or whether your boots go up to your tender thighs, or just cover your shins. Don't let your DM down. Most of them have decades of practice punishing characters in games where equipment lists are the holy grail.

Ordinary Gear should always be rated in dice, just in case. The town table lists a lot of Gear. The price shown is per die.

## **Spells**

*Wherein we learn the ins and outs of warping the fabric of reality, bending iron-willed villains to our will, channeling the power of the Gods through the force of our devotion... and paying for pizza with illusory gold.*

### **D21: Spells In General**

Spells are a special effect derived from a magic-enabled Cliché. In Cliché contests, using a spell is something that happens when you are describing what happened to cause your opponent to lose a die.

For example, you roll your Passionate Fire Magus [4] and get 14. Your opponent, a 15 member Kobold Dinner Party [3], rolls 8. You say, "With a cry of Shazbam, I open a portal to the elemental plane of fire, dropping 5 of the surly beggars into instant incineration!" GM shakes head sadly.

Outside of combat, spells are made up by players to overcome obstacles in just the same way that non-spellcasters make up other actions.

For example, your Passionate Fire Magus [4] needs to get past a sturdy door. Rolling and beating the difficulty handily, you say, "With a cry of Shazbam, I blast the recalcitrant barrier with a ball of elemental fire, incinerating it instantly!" GM shakes head sadly. A Knock-kneed Burglar would have picked the lock (instantly!), while an Emotionally Stunted Woodsman would have chopped her way through (instantly!).

Spells can't accomplish anything that some other potential Cliché couldn't accomplish just as easily. They just make it faster, or creepier, or "burning-er."

### **D22: Spells In Specific**

Magic is picky. It tends to fail if you don't do every little thing perfectly. This usually means a lot of studying, praying, or collecting of strange components.

Spellcasters always have spell-related Tools of the Trade, like spell books, weird dried animal parts, holy writings, and similar.

The more carefully and specifically you define your spell casting strengths and weaknesses, the more lenient the DM will be when giving you Target Numbers for appropriate spells.

## Dungeonaut Information

*Getting by with a little help from your friends. Carrying your house on your back. Showing a little thigh (or a big...).*

### **D31: Your Dungeonaut Team**

In the real world, teams are carefully selected individuals brought together to perform a specific task. Examples include commandos, software engineers, and Saturday Night Live writers. In these teams, the members have almost exactly the same skills - just different specializations.

Well, in Dungeonautica, teams are just the opposite. Your characters should have widely varying skills. This is because the specific purpose of Dungeonautica teams is to meet impossibly varied challenges especially formulated by the DM to mess them up.

### **D32: Encumbrance**

Keeping track of the weight of objects, from coins to cadavers, is tedious and frustrating. On the other hand, having to drop something valuable to make space for something potentially vital, only to have it turn out to be worthless, is hilarious.

Therefore in Dungeonautica you can always carry ten things. Each thing you carry beyond ten is worth a die of encumbrance. If the objects are unusually large or awkward use Funky Dice (Risus p.6) of encumbrance. Any time you need to do something requiring ease and grace (like avoid falling into a pit, or earn a few extra coins pole-dancing), you must defeat your encumbrance. Also, you must defeat the encumbrance in a CONFLICT THAT ISN'T COMBAT (Risus p.4) in order to add another item.

Some types of items collectively count as 1 item: coins, potions, ammunition, and Tools of the Trade (Risus p. 2) consume only 1 slot each.

### **D33: Cake-Your Choice of Beef or Cheese**

If you've played other RPGs you may have noticed that the Dungeonchicks wear "chainmail bikinis" while the Dungeonchunks are buried in masculine plates of steel. Dungeonautica offers equal opportunity gawking. Everyone shows a lot of belly, thigh, and cheek. Anyone who wants to be covered up has to use up an encumbrance slot on clothing. Plus, NPCs will always wonder if they have something to hide, and will be perpetually calling out things like "Take off your jerkin!" and "Show us your elbows!"

### **D34: Light**

DMs always try to spook the players by dropping their Dungeonauts into total darkness. Also, shadows always seem deep enough to hide a goblin with a long knife. So you might want to carry some illumination.

Torches and lanterns cast adequate light out to an indeterminate distance. Like all gear, they are rated with dice. Roll against the appropriate location Cliché (see D72) to determine if they cast enough light.

### **D35: Retainers**

Retainers are groups of NPCs hired to soak up damage, do menial tasks, and be the butt of all sorts of meta-game humour. When a Dungeonaut hires, or is given, retainers he gets a temporary Cliché like:

#### **Squad of mildly embarrassed Royal Guards[5]**

Each die of the Cliché stands for 1 retainer. If you want to have various levels of retainer competence, use Funky Dice (Risus p.6).

Retainers eat up your treasure, either in salaries, support, or incompetence. You lose a share of all spoils equal to their share of the total Cliché dice. You must share out every time you get some loot. For example, if you are a 10 dice character and you have 5 dice of retainers when you find a sack of gold under your latest victim, the retainers eat up one third of the coins.

Retainers never have any loot, even the same minute that you give them their share, so don't bother hacking them up to try and get your money back.

### **D36: Traps**

Dungeonauts are always wandering about where they shouldn't. Traps are one of the ways that they are made to feel unwelcome. When a Dungeonaut encounters a Trap you roll a CONFLICT THAT ISN'T COMBAT (Risus p.4) against the Trap Cliché. The good news is that you can only lose one die! The bad news is that losing generally means the trap snared you. Now you'll have to engage in a normal contest. May the best Trap - errr, Dungeonaut - win!

My favourite Traps follow. You can change the dice rating of course. Especially if you want to raise it:

- Pit Full of Spikes, Snakes and Bones [3] - unit is 10 feet of falling
- Brass Nozzle of Unpredictable Flame [5] - can engage entire team
- Falling Block of Stone, Slightly Harder than your Head [4]
- Pressure Plate Activated Floor Spears [2]

### **D37: Wandering Monsters**

Wandering Monsters are just like Dungeonauts, except they're defending their homes instead of trying to steal other people's stuff. In *Dungeonautica* you use a location Cliché that suggests how well patrolled the dungeon is. The Dungeonauts form a team (Risus p.3) based on sneaking around. Each time the Dungeonauts lose, they encounter a Wandering Monster. Each time they win, Wandering Monsters become less likely (the Dungeonauts are learning the enemy's time-table, routes, habits etcetera).

This is a conflict that could last through the entire gaming session (see A WORD OR TWO ABOUT SCALE, Risus p.4). If one side or the other is defeated before the Dungeoneering is done, Wandering Monsters are either never encountered, or are encountered at the DMs whim (just like in your other favorite game!).

### **D38: Experience Points**

Risus doesn't use these, but they are kind of a sick tradition in RPGs. So, every time a Dungeonaut wins a Cliché contest, she gains 1 XP for each Cliché die she lost (yup, if you rout the opponent, you get nada). Every 100 XP you have is a "Level." For each Level you have earned, you can re-roll a single die that shows a 1. This entitlement regenerates between sessions.

Or you can just keep track of XP and Levels to count coup on other players, ignoring the re-roll thing entirely.

## Encounters

*Risus works well for all forms of conflict. Surprisingly, Dungeonauts work toward just one form of conflict... that's right, the hangover. But where am I going to get enough gold to buy another round? Hey! I'll just take it from that guy...*

### D41: Getting the Drop

Getting the drop on someone means that you have cleverly (or inadvertently) achieved a tactical advantage that would allow you to make an attack with no effective defense by the victim. In this case, roll the conflict normally and stop trying to make up special rules that will take the story away from you and put it into the game system.

### D42: Ranges

Range only matters if someone knows where you are and is trying to avoid you. In this case, the avoider receives a temporary Cliché (such as Very Far Away [4] for fighting, or Isolated by Layers of Red Tape [6] for bureaucratic maneuvering). The avoidee must defeat this Cliché in order to get within conflict range.

### D43: Saving Throws

Saving throws are one-shot Cliché rolls against a specific condition. In Dungeonautica, they are the most common sort of CONFLICTS THAT AREN'T COMBAT (Risus p.4). Use them in particular when characters are exposed to long range attacks, curses, devious traps, and the like. Magic Items (see D62) in particular are famous for creating awkward and/or painful conditions. Failure to make the Saving Throw forces you to suffer from a condition peculiar to the attack.

A massive red-gold dragon flies overhead, blotting out the sun. As she circles, she noses the distinctive scent of her own treasure. Surprising, considering that she is several hours away from her lair. But what's this? Below her is a party of Dungeonauts leading heavily-laden mules. She skims low along the road and blasts the Dungeonaut team with her flaming breath.

You could certainly roll this out as a contest. However, unless the Dungeonauts can fly, or the dragon decides to get up-close and personal, why not use a Saving Throw? The DM will roll the Dragon's Molten Jawed Slayer of Man and Beast [5d10]. The result provides a target number for whatever Cliché the poor bastards below choose for defense. Assuming they fail, each victim is horribly burnt. On the up side, they don't lose any Cliché dice.

### Conditions

A condition is an ongoing impediment created by failing a Saving Throw. Let's say you are horribly burnt as in the example above. Anytime you try to do something where being horribly burnt would be an impediment (say, charming a pretty chambermaid, or sitting down without screaming), you will have to beat the Cliché that created the condition. If you can't, you fail out-right.

The DM decides what is necessary to cure a condition. Get ready to pony up the dough.

**D44: Morale**

In primitive games where all the tactical interest lies in physically bashing monster's heads in, special rules are needed for letting people get away. After all, it's hard to fight someone who isn't there. In Dungeonautica, Dungeonauts run away when they are afraid of losing. Monsters are just the same.

**D45: Running Away**

The winner of a round can escape automatically. The loser can run away successfully by sacrificing all but one of the dice remaining in his Cliché. If you have only 1 die remaining, you cannot run away.

## Monsters

*Some creep, some crawl, some fly, some dig. But they all squirm on the end of your blade.*

*Of course, some squirm because Dungeonauts give them indigestion....*

### D51: Monster Teams

Monster Teams are handy shorthand just like Grunt-Squads (Risus p.3). The only option you may want to exercise is using Funky Dice (Risus p.6) for larger or tougher monsters. Me, I just make one bad-ass monster with lots of unique Clichés. To each his own, though.

### D52: Monster Clichés

Saying that a monster is a Lonely Orc Shaman [4], Desperate Sweepstakes Player [3], Scantly-clad Temptress (orc-style) [2], Orc Historian [1] is darn funny, but can be exhausting if you expect the Dungeonauts to wade through dozens of encounters. I propose a little sleight of hand. Monsters have a best Cliché (in the case of our Orc, it's 4). Using a spread of x, x-1, x-2, assign numbers to the elements in this list until you run out. The order is up to you.

- Fighting
- Moving
- Thinking /Special Effects
- Searching
- Charming

Don't worry about assigning clever names to the numbers that correspond to these abilities unless you feel funny, feel inspired, feel guilty, or your players force you to.

### D53: Monster List: Acid Lasher to Zoom! Zoom!

[Email](#) me your funky creatures if you want to see them appear in subsequent versions of this document. All submissions used will be credited as you indicate.

#### Acid Lasher

This 100 pound sewer dwelling monstrosity is basically a giant rat with a tongue coated in highly acidic saliva. Every time someone loses a Cliché die, the rat has licked some of their gear. A random item is destroyed. Yes, if the random item "your coins," then all of your coins are destroyed. Sometimes their lairs contain an acid-proof item or two.

#### Assilisk

The little known cousin of the somewhat better known Basilisk and the all too familiar Medusa. An Assilisk is able to appear in a variety of forms, humanoid and otherwise, but all have the same petrifying attack. The Assilisk drops its drawers to reveal its spectacularly ugly posterior. If at any time during an encounter with the Assilisk the DM rolls a '1' on any die, the Assilisk reveals its "true colours." This provokes a Saving

Throw (see D41) using the most appropriate Clichés for any Dungeonaut whose player can't convince the DM that she would have been looking the other way. Note that this is one of the times when ostensibly negative Cliché descriptors like inattentive, near-sighted, or distracted can really come in handy.

Any Dungeonaut who fails the Saving Throw suffers the condition Petrified. Petrified characters are turned to stone and cannot move. This is a pretty severe condition, but it has some counterbalancing perks; the character is able to pose for family photos with almost endless patience, and becomes an expert at holding up hats and holding down papers. If your Dungeonaut has purely mental special powers, charitable DMs may allow her to use them. The only cure for Petrification is Fleshification, and the only thing we know for sure about Fleshification is that it doesn't involve Assilisk rumps.

### Zoom! Zoom!

Zoom! Zoom!s are ultra-fast imps that tear about dungeons making life miserable for the "velocitylly disadvantaged." They look and sound like dust-devils. They can do very little on their own, but form teams of 1 Zoom! Zoom! per die. Their attacks fling Dungeonauts about like rag dolls, bouncing them off of walls, ceiling, and floor. If you've ever hung around after dropping your kids off at Kindergarten, you'll have a good idea of how this works.

## Treasure

*Shiny, sparkly, glinty. Bagged, pouched, pocketed. Borrowed, bought, stolen. Owed, lost, cursed.*

### D61: Random Treasure

Naturally the Dungeonaut Master will place treasure wherever she feels it is appropriate. Treasure is also found based on location Clichés - Overflowing with Treasure [5] - and is assigned randomly when a dead monster is searched.

Searchin' a Body: Roll 3 dice for the treasure. Use Funky Dice (Risus p. 6) where d4 means the creatures should have lots of treasure, through to d20, meaning they should seldom have any. Consult the table below. This roll is the Target Number (TN) for a CONFLICT THAT ISN'T COMBAT (Risus p. 4).

Dungeonaut Roll is...	Treasure value is...
< half TN	rags and trinkets
<= TN	TN coins
> TN	TN x 10 coins
> 2x TN	TN x 100 coins

### D62: Magic Items

Magic Items come in three types: Cures, Consumable, and Good

Cures: Placed by the DM, these items cure specific Conditions. They are consumed when used. Example: Balm of Curing Dragon Burns.

Consumable: These items, usually potions, have a specific temporary benefit. They are consumed when used. Example: Potion of Levitation.

Good: Few and far between, Good items are permanent and provide a Cliché that is activated by using the item. This Cliché is like any other Cliché that the Dungeonaut has, but is normally somewhat limited; and of course is only present when the item is used. If a Good item loses all of its Cliché dice, it is destroyed. Examples: Dancing Sword [3] - Magic blade, can fight on its own, usable mainly for combat. Cloak of Invisibility [4] - Good for sneaking around.

Where appropriate, Dungeonauts can form a team with their own Good magic items. The Dancing Sword could be used this way.

**D63: Magic Items List: All-seeing Eye to Zealot's Horn**

[Email](#) me your snazzy items if you want to see them appear in subsequent versions of this document. All submissions used will be credited as you indicate.

All-seeing Eye (Good)

The All-seeing Eye grants visions of distant locations. The Cliché roll is compared to a Target Number based on the distance and familiarity of the location. The Cliché might have to duel the Cliché of a defensive item, such a Pendant of Proof Against Spying, or a Cliché of a target creature, such a Very Private Loner [3].

Zealot's Horn

The Horn duels against a team formed of everyone within hearing when it is blown. The winder of the horn may make any reasonable suggestion to, or request of, any who are defeated by the Zealot's Horn. The target must comply unless to do so would immediately endanger him.

## Dungeonaut Master Information

**DM:** *They're hardly divisible, sir - well, I can do you Cliché and love without the rhetoric, and I can do you Cliché and rhetoric without the love, and I can do you all three concurrent or consecutive, but I can't do you love and rhetoric without the Cliché. Cliché is compulsory - they're all Cliché, you see.*

**Guildenstern:** *Is that what people want?*

**DM:** *It's what we do.*

*- with my apologies to Tom Stoppard*

### **D71: Dungeonaut Design Philosophy**

Don't do it. I mean the nitty-gritty detail stuff that makes you tear your hair out when you realize the game is only two hours away and you haven't even statted-out the Fighter/Lich/Bugbear you thought up at the end of the last session. In Dungeonautica, Clichés do all the work. Trust me, and give any sort of dungeon feature, whether malevolent or benign, a Cliché. Then roll out the conflict against a player. The interplay of die-by-die description will provide more inspiration and information than you will ever need.

### **D72: Dungeon Clichés?**

I trust you we're reading along with section D71? Then you know the answer is "Yes, yes, three times yes!" Here are some examples. Caves Infested with Legions of Chaos, Long Sealed Tomb of the Pharaoh, Wild Hunt Ridden Forest of Doom, Haunted Lodge of the Blackwood Monks, and Isolated Lair of the Bandit King. You get the idea - what would suffice as the title of a site-based adventure becomes the core of a set of Clichés. Now add Clichés like Heavily Patrolled Fortress, Littered with Gruesome Traps, Haunted by the Undead, and Lots of Convenient Hiding Places as needed; the evening's pillaging has all but written itself!

### **D73: Room Clichés?**

You didn't think we'd stop there, did you? Whether you like Dungeon Clichés or not, I know you'll want to use room Clichés. You know how your players react to hearing that a room is ancient summoning room, suffused with an eerie green glow. Now picture their faces when you say "an Ancient Summoning Room, Suffused by an Eerie Green Glow ... FOUR!"

The Dungeonauts may form an appropriate team to take on whatever the room has to offer, but they don't have to (or in some cases may not be allowed to).

Using this method, you can dispense with monsters and their Clichés entirely - they just become part of the round by round description of the contest between a Room Cliché and the Dungeonauts.

This is the descriptive heart of Risus' abstract mechanic taken to its limit.

A Dungeon can be elegantly and, even better, quickly built by assigning it a standard 4-3-2-1 pattern of Room Clichés, with a 5 to 7 dice climactic Room Cliché. Here is an example.

### The Lair of Dread Kalypso, Liche-Queen of the Fens

- Refuse Pit Congested with Noxious Rubbish and Diseased [1]
- River of Goo crossed by Treacherous Bridge [2]
- Energy-draining Trapped Passageway [3]
- Zombie Infested Crypt of Fallen Foes [4]
- Liche-haunted Temple Split by Bottomless Chasm [7]

Oh, the moans of the players as their Cliché dice are infected by Disease, hammered by falls from the Treacherous Bridge, drained away in the Trapped Passage, slashed by the rotting claws of the Zombies; then they still have to face Kalypso in her lair. When they lose dice are they mesmerised by her Liche magic? Tossed into the bottomless chasm to dangle precariously? Pinned onto the Temple altar while Elder Horrors gnaw at their entrails?

### **D74: Picking Target Numbers**

Target Numbers are chosen based on the fit of the Cliché to the task. How Clichés fit to tasks depends just as much on the genre and tone of the game as on the Cliché itself. For example, Streetwise Orphan Seeking a Father is usually a bad fit to leaping between two speeding vehicles. If the genre is Action-Comedy though, it isn't a poor fit at all.

Level of Fit	Target Number
Perfect-this task is meat and drink to the Cliché	5
Excellent-maybe she doesn't do it everyday, but she'd never call herself this Cliché if she couldn't do it	10
Good-the Cliché has some training or experience with this sort of thing, but the Dungeonaut would just as soon not do it	15
Poor-there is nothing about the Cliché that suggests the ability to complete this task	20
Terrible-this task is the antithesis of all that the Cliché stands for	25

## **Meanwhile, Back in the States**

*Player: Sure, when we're on our way to the dungeon you can't get us there fast enough. But when we want to get back home, it's plague, pestilence, highwaymen, and worse!*

*GM: I'm just trying to spice things up a bit.*

*Player: I for one don't find drowning in a mudslide... twice!... all that spicy.*

### **D81: Wherever You Go, There You Are**

Clichés again - now you define them to represent the benefits and hazards associated with travelling. There are obvious ones like Blizzard [3], Mudslide [4], and the dreaded Tornado [5]. But don't forget The Road that Stretches Like a Spear of Boredom Aimed at Your Soul [6] and the Pilgrims that Just Won't Make It without the Help of Pure Hearted Heroes [7].

- Healing Shrine
- Mysterious Stranger
- Plague Refugees
- Insect Infestation
- Particularly Confusing Stretch of Terrain
- Heartwarmingly Beautiful Scenery

### **D82: Town Clichés**

Of course you can make town have Clichés just like every other location. Clichés can describe the level of trade, crime, cleanliness, crowdedness; the nuances of the nightlife, the caliber of the king; the art of the architecture, the corruption of the clergy. Here are a few examples:

- Capital of the Civilized World (4)
- Crime Ridden (2)
- Shopping Mecca (3)
- Dirty (3)
- Craftwork City (4)
- World-class Dining (3)
- Spiritually Expansive (2)
- Littered with Human Refuse (4)

### **D83: Liars and Beggars and Guards, Oh My!**

While you are in town you'll be doing a lot of buying, selling, and trading. Here is a list of goods and people, and their prices.

Thing	Cost	Notes
Beggar	10% of total	The really good ones have 6 dice.
Lantern	15	never runs out, but can be broken
Tavern	1	per serving. Quality brews will have their own Cliché dice.
Alchemist	50	per die value of item identified
Tools of the Trade	100	per die of Dungeonaut Cliché in question.
Rations	5	per day
Liar (Conman, Thief)	all you have	Each time you lose a Cliché die, you lose an equal fraction of your wealth.
Rope	1	per foot
Torches	1	per torch. They run out, but aren't broken by mishaps.
Prayers	100	per die value of request
Day to Day Expenses	5	per Dungeonaut level. You can skip food and rent this way.
Bow	100	
Ammunition	1	per shot of whatever your Dungeonaut uses
Mount	100	per die. Has 10 item capacity per die. 1 is a sick mule, 5 is a powerful stallion.
Clothes	10	per die. 1 is shreds and patches, 5 is noble robes.
Room	2	per occupant. 5 if you are alone. That's how they get ya.
Guard, friendly	5	to bribe for information
Guard, hostile	50	to stay out of jail
Jail	all you have	fight a Cliché battle with the cell. Each roll is one week. Once one side wins, you go free. They keep all your stuff.
Gambling	all you have	fight a Cliché battle with the venue. Each roll is a different game of chance. Each roll is worth an equal fraction of your wealth.

*Being stranded on a desert island is the least of your worries, here on...*

# GAVIGAN'S ISLE

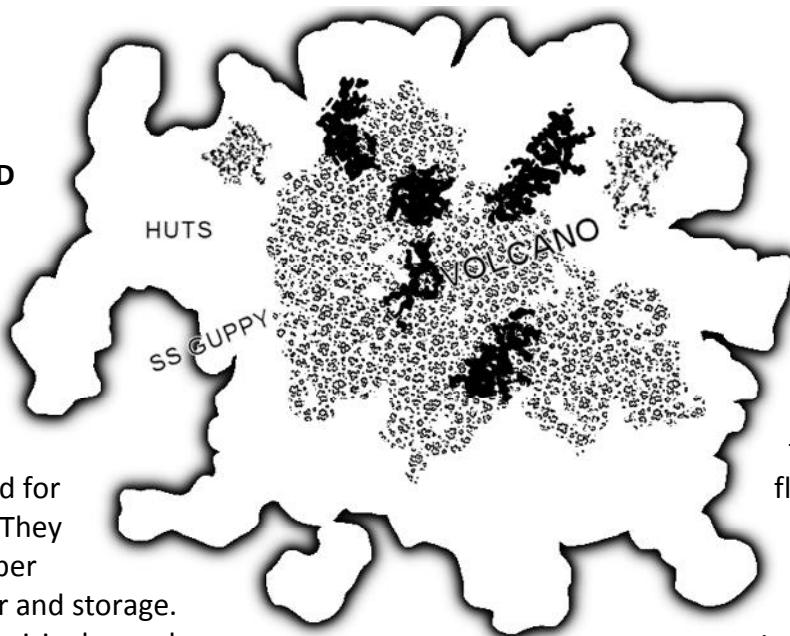
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## PLAYER INFORMATION

- 1) Make up any character that could be found on a cruise ship in the South Seas. (Don't use Sidekicks or Shieldmates.) Be sure to include whatever Tools of the Trade you need.
- 2) Sadly, you're shipwrecked! You lose any Tools of the Trade you had with you, except ones that you can carry along with you while you're swimming for your life. Any Sidekicks and Shieldmates you tried to sneak along are lost, too.
- 3) You awake on the shores of an uncharted desert isle, along with the other player characters, who you may or may not know from the ship.

### A TROPIC ISLAND NEST

Surprise! The PCs are not alone on the island! These seven castaways have been on the island for a long long time. They have built a number of huts for shelter and storage. They seem in surprisingly good shape for a group that has been marooned for years. What isn't obvious is that they also suffer from a curse. They betray none of the inhuman nature of their condition at first. . They are, in fact, cannibals, and have lost their taste for any flesh but human flesh. (They do eat a surprising amount of cocoanut cream pie; even cannibals like cocoanut cream pie.) They do their best to make their new guests feel welcome at least



until they can get them alone or in groups small enough to overpower. Then they are relentless in their lust for flesh. They are also greedy and competitive, each one trying to get the best prey for himself.

### THE HUTS

There are 5 huts: 1) Storage, locked; 2) Gavigan and Cappy; 3) Doc Huntley; 4) Mr. & Mrs. Moneybags; 5) Cinnamon and Betty Sue. The Doc's hut contains his salvaged books and bamboo-constructed scientific

## STARRING...

**Gavigan:** former First Mate of the **SS Guppy** (4), Well-meaning Accident-prone bumbler (4), Howling, ravenous cannibal (3). **Hook:** Most likely to screw up PCs escape attempts.

**Captain Josiah “Cappy” Grisby:** Tough Ex-Navy Man (4), Gruff Captain of the **SS Guppy** (3), Howling, ravenous cannibal-thing (4).

**Hook:** Most likely to resort to force to foil PCs escape attempts. Note: Cappy has, concealed in his hut, a loaded pistol that was taken off a bank robber that fled to the island months ago.

**Cornelius Moneybags IV:** Jaded Multi-Billionaire (4), Blue-blooded Ivy League alumnus (3), Howling, Ravenous Cannibal-Thing (3), Fugitive from the Securities & Exchange Commission (1).

**Hook:** *Most likely to use bribery and pit the PCs against each other to foil PC escape attempts.*

**Mrs. Cornelius Moneybags IV (aka “Sweety”):** Bored Socialite Accustomed to a Certain Standard of Living (4), Aging Cougar (4), Howling Ravenous Cannibal-thing (3).

**Hook:** *Will put young, handsome newcomers off-kilter by making romantic overtures, with promises of great wealth, until her true motives become apparent.*

**Cinnamon Starr:** Fading Hollywood Femme Fatale (4), Ruthless Self-Promoter (4), Howling Ravenous Cannibal-Thing (3).

**Hook:** *Prefers to use her feminine wiles to seduce hunky newcomers into a compromising (and fatal) position. Also insanely jealous of any potential feminine competitors.*

**Professor Ray “Doc” Huntley:** Celebrated Polymath (5), Renowned Inventor and Scoutmaster (4), Howling Ravenous Cannibal-Thing.

**Hook:** *Most likely to devise traps and inventions to capture newcomers.*

Note: Doc created the trapped lock to the storage hut, the crossbow trap, the steam pipes, and the pit traps. He has many more traps located around the island.

**Betty Sue Winters:** No-Nonsense Kansas Farm Girl (4), Perky Brunette, Howling Ravenous Cannibal-Thing.

**Hook:** *Most likely to lull characters into a stupor with good cooking and down-home hospitality.*

gear. Male newcomers can bunk with Gavigan, Cappy, and the Doc; females can

bed down with Cinnamon and Betty Sue. In the common area between the huts, there

is a bamboo table and chairs, a bicycle-powered washing machine, a bamboo pedicab, and a small table built from a salvaged crate. If the crate is turned over, the words “Danger: radioactive” are visible. Bamboo tubing brings steam from geothermal vents.

Nearby, there is a well-tended vegetable patch (with some strange-looking vegetables), a disused bamboo bowling alley, and an overgrown golf course. Appropriate knowledge of botany, agriculture, or radiation can determine that the vegetables are strangely mutated. Eating a vegetable may endow the consumer with a power such as telepathy, super-strength, super-vitality, or some other power for a day or so, but it will also prove fatal without treatment.

The storage hut has a special lock devised by the Doc; if picked or forced, a crossbow trap fires at whoever opens the door. In the middle of the room is a pit trap, concealed under a layer of dirt and a palm mat, containing bamboo spikes coated with human dung. Inside, along with supplies, are the following:

- A collection of butterfly specimens and the notebooks of a famous lepidopterist, Lord Beasley. Included is a perfect specimen of the world's rarest butterfly, the Pussycat Swallowtail.
- The script and score of a Notes a musical version of *Hamlet*, written on palm frond paper; includes a business card from missing Broadway producer Harold Hecuba.
- An autographed basketball with the “Harlem Globetrotters” logo. The autographs correspond to the members of the team who went missing during a worldwide tour several years ago.

- Several locked bank deposit bags, full of high-denomination bills, taken from a bank robber several months ago.

## ISLAND FEATURES

Unless indicated otherwise, most of these features may be placed at the pleasure of the gamemaster.

- 1) Volcano: the source of the Castaways' geothermal power. Located in the center of the island, the crater contains an ancient obelisk carved with mysterious glyphs, the source of the curse on the Islanders. See the stats for the Obelisk below.
- 2) Mountains: There are several mountains located on the island, full of caves, lava tubes, and a lot of potential rewards and menaces.
- 3) Jungles: The entire island is covered with a light growth of jungle, but heavier jungle is indicated on the map below. Many types of jungle creatures and exotic plants can be found there.
- 4) Abandoned gold mine: shows signs of being worked recently. A surfboard has been stashed in the back of the mine; it has the name “Deke Roberts” embossed on it. (Deke was a famous surfer who disappeared during a tsunami.)
- 5) A deep pit: full of bone shards, discarded clothing, etc., showing sharp tooth-marks. The skulls and long bones have been cracked open and scooped out.

## RELICS

Scattered around the island are remnants of past visitors, many of them done in by the Castaways.

- 6) The wreckage of the **SS Guppy**. Despite only a 2-foot hole in its hull, many attempts at repair seem to have failed

(largely due to the influence of the Obelisk).

- 7) A wrecked biplane, evidently sabotaged. Can it be repaired?
- 8) A sunken Japanese mini-sub, also sabotaged. Could this provide a means of escape?
- 9) The smashed remains of several advanced robots. With the proper equipment and enough time, they could be repaired by a skilled cyberneticist.
- 10) Buried pirate treasure. Opening the lid activates a crossbow trap. The crossbow is smeared with human dung.
- 11) Buried caches of human bones, with marrow and brains missing, showing signs of being chewed by human teeth. These are the hapless victims of the castaways, and they could probably be identified with proper forensic equipment and personnel.

#### NATIVE CREATURES

These are all under the sway of the Obelisk. They can be located in any appropriate part of the island.

- Wild boars. Once a feature of the Castaways' diet, they are no longer hunted because the Castaways only crave human flesh.
- A rare man-sized cave-dwelling species of arachnid, the Black Mourning Spider
- Quicksand. While the Obelisk cannot create it, the demonic entity can conceal it, herd the newcomers towards it with his other servants.
- Stinging insects, mosquitoes, man-eating plants, animated vines, etc.

#### NON-NATIVES

These animals are not native to the island, and are thus immune to the Obelisk's influence.

- A gorilla who is attracted by perfume. It is fairly intelligent for a gorilla, and might be persuaded to help the newcomers – if he doesn't fall in love with the one with the perfume!

#### Perfume-loving Gorilla (5)

- A Watubi witchdoctor who knows how to destroy the Obelisk, and the tribesmen who protect him. They will not stay overnight on the island under any circumstances, and will attempt to slay anyone who has fallen under the Obelisk's sway.

#### Watubi Witch Doctor

**Shaman (5), Resourceful Herbalist (3), Foe of the Obelisk (3).  
Shieldmates: Watubi Tribesmen (3), Island Spirits (3)**

- The Jungle Boy can only mimic human speech. He has been on the island for months, hiding from the Castaways (who tried to befriend and eat him months ago). Somehow, he is immune to the curse of the Obelisk. If the Newcomers can overcome his fear of other people, they can probably befriend him.

#### Jungle Boy (5)

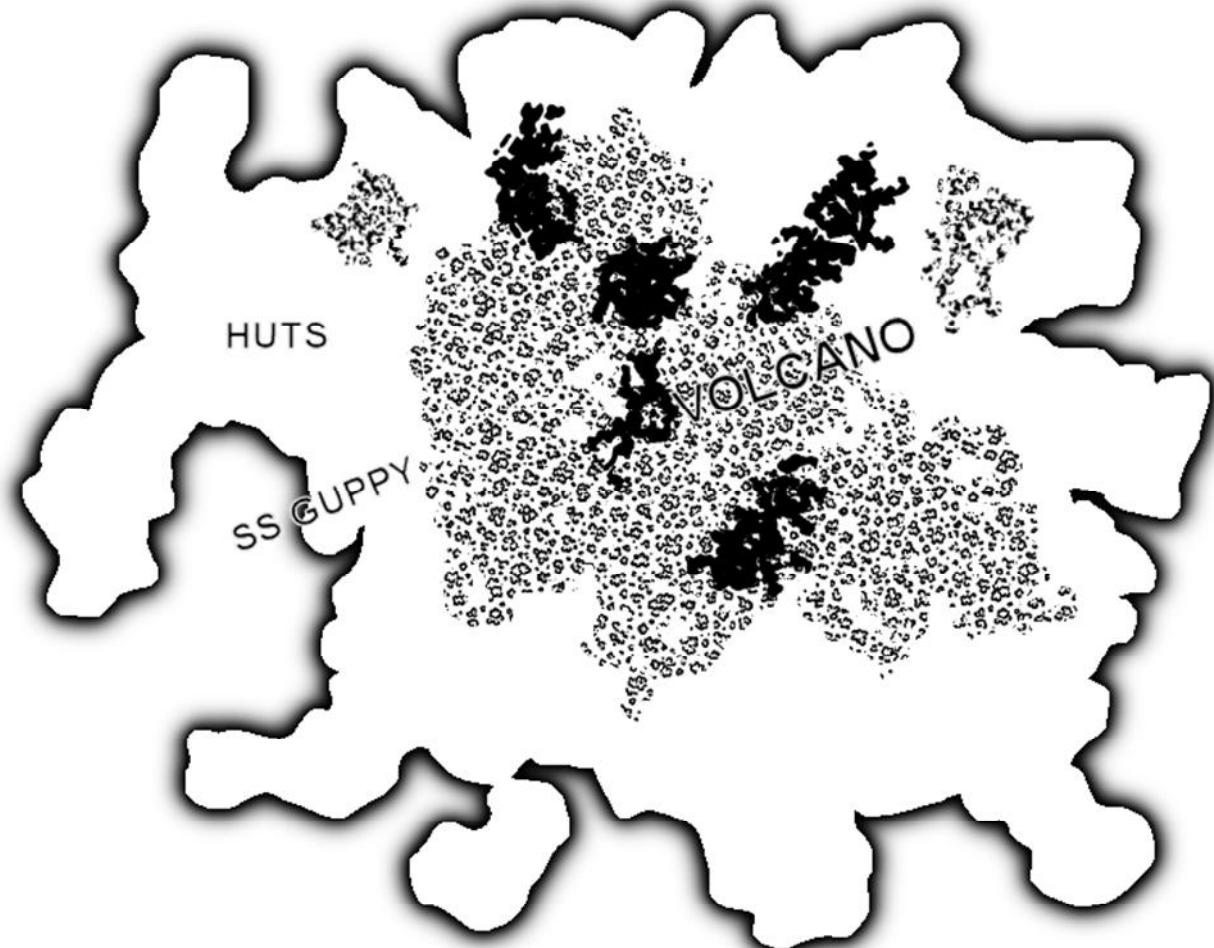
**Hook: Immune to Curse of the Obelisk, can only mimic human speech**

## The Obelisk

**Mysterious Lemurian Obelisk (6), God of the Island (5), Lord of the Cannibals (4)**

is actually an intelligent, malevolent entity worshipped ages ago in Lemuria. It can see whatever goes on upon the island, but can only read and control the minds of its cannibal servitors and any creature native to the island, manipulate the weather. It uses storms to bring new prey to the island, and attacks survivors with nightmares of unrelenting hunger, which can only be assuaged by eating the flesh of the victim's friends and family. After the victim tastes human flesh in his dreams (he loses the days-long combat), he is transformed into a ravenous, howling cannibal-thing, like the Castaways.

Dedicated to the Memory of Sherwood Schwartz (1916-2011)



# GENERIKUS

## A **Risus: the Anything RPG** Variant

### **WELCOME!**

What you now possess is a modification of the **Risus: the Anything RPG** created by S. John Ross. **Risus** does what it was intended to do swimmingly; however, I have found myself wanting something that allows for a little more generic-ness to the rules that comprise **Risus**.

I enjoy the freeform mayhem of character creation and combat that **Risus** brings to the table, but wanted to add my own contribution. I wanted something that could be used to provide the oomph to power fantasy super heroes but at the same time have the capability to be scaled back to run a gritty horror campaign. Thus, **GENERIKUS** was born.

Consider this my attempt to grab **Risus** by the collars, slap it around a bit, get it to stop slouching and stand up straight.

### **WHAT YOU WILL NEED**

First off, the vast majority of what I will be presenting will make about zero sense without first having a copy of **Risus** in your hot little hands. It's free, it's six pages, and you can find it [here](#).

Seriously – I'll wait.

Okay, once we've gotten that out of the way, you'll also want to have some dice handy. You'll need d6's, d8's, d10's and d12's. Others may be helpful or handy, but those are the only ones that this will actually make use of.

While not required, you may also want to get the 64-page [Risus Companion](#), which I will be stealing bits of... Rather, making reference to. In any event, it's very handy for doing these sorts of modifications.

It also helps to have a vivid imagination and a willingness to ditch many of your preconceptions to role-playing games in general, but whatever.

### **THE MORE THINGS STAY THE SAME...**

Alright, so you have read and absorbed the rules of **Risus**. Now it's time to shake it up and...keep things the same. Sort of.

First off, the concept of the Cliché is still integral to how **GENERIKUS** works. There is still the 6-die cap on any Cliché. Combat is largely run the same, with "damage" to a Cliché being expressed as a loss of die for that Cliché.

**GENERIKUS** also can make use of any of the first three "Advanced Options," but it doesn't assume that you are using any of these. However, it does make extensive use of the "Funky Dice Option," and that is where the path begins to differ.

### **...THE MORE THEY CHANGE**

Okay, now we're getting to the nuts-and-bolts of how **GENERIKUS** works.

### **DIE TYPES CHANGES**

**GENERIKUS** makes use of the following "die types:"

- d6
- d8
- d10
- d12
- d16
- d20

"Hold the phone – you said that we'd only be using up to the d12!"  
And I stand by that statement.

The d16 and d20 "die" I speak of are really just a simplified way of saying, "two d8's" and "two d10's," respectively.

Yes, yes, I know. The probabilities for rolling a true d16 and two d8's are different, as well as the fact that when rolling two d8's you aren't going to have a possibility of a "1" being rolled.

Which is just the way I intended it.

The d16 and d20 types are intended for those creatures and beings whose abilities far outstrip those of mortals, and thus it only makes sense that they are more likely to succeed at any given task – even ones that would otherwise be near impossible if not for their godlike powers.

So my intended breakdown of the various die types with regard to power scaling looks like this:

- d6 – normal mortals
- d8 – upper end of “normal” mortal power
- d10 – low powered superbeings
- d12 – high powered superbeings
- d16 – dragons
- d20 – demigods/gods

Obviously these are just basic benchmarks and can be changed to fit your specific needs; scaling the die types per these sorts of “powers” enables both players and GM at a glance to figure out what sorts of things that their character(s) should be capable of per any given game world.

Purchasing dice should be scaled based on the intended level of power for the campaign. Die types have a number of points associated with them equivalent to their number of sides, i.e. d6 is 6 points, d12 is 12 points, d20 is 20 points, and so forth.

A good rule of thumb in terms of determining points to spend vs. campaign power is to multiply the maximum intended starting die type number by 10; thus, a campaign of gritty horror where the starting characters are limited to d8’s would have 80 points to spend on clichés that could use either d6’s or d8’s.

As usual, double pumps would cost double (thus making larger die types more costly to double pump comparatively).

## Cliché Changes

If you are anything like me, you may want to make use of a Cliché to support other Clichés to keep with a given genre. Thus, an alternative way of “working the Cliché” needs to be used. The following is adapted from J. Scott Pittman’s “Son of Risus,” which is available from the [RisusTalk Yahoo Group](#).

### BURNABLE CLICHÉS

A Burnable Cliché is one that can be lowered (a.k.a. “burned”), usually to provide bonuses to

the character or as “fuel” for powers. Burnable Clichés are defined when the Cliché is chosen. For example, a vampire could have a *Blood Pool* Cliché that could be used to power his vampiric powers or to raise his physical attacks/defenses for a single turn.

A Burnable Cliché is one that decreases automatically every time it is used. For example, a *Minor Gadgets* Cliché loses one die each time it is used. Once the Cliché is used up, the character is “out” until it is refueled in some fashion (in this case, the character has to “load up” again at his laboratory or whatever).

### SPECIALTY CLICHÉS

Players can gain a Specialty to a Cliché if they like. This represents some sort of “signature maneuver” that the character possesses with regard to one of his Clichés.

This requires the equivalent of a 1 die purchase at character creation (without actually purchasing a die), but can also be purchased later with Experience Points (which are discussed in just a bit).

A Specialty allows a player to re-roll any “1” when performing a very specialized action with a Cliché. If the player is not using that Cliché, he cannot use the Specialty.

Specialties should be described in at least two ways; for example, a character might have the *White-Hatted Cowboy* Cliché with a Specialty of *Throwing Hot Lead from His Silver Six-Shooters*. In this case, the Cowboy must be firing his pistols – not just any, mind you; his **silver** pistols – for the Specialty to apply to a given situation.

Thus, character is more capable of performing specific actions that they are familiar with at the cost of limiting that familiarity to a specific task.

### Rule Changes

Well, this first one is not so much of a *change* so much as an *exclusion*. For many campaigns, the comedy aspect is more a byproduct, and not necessarily something that you want to have reflected in the rules. Thus, the whole **Inappropriate Cliché** section will probably not apply for a more serious – or rather, less silly – campaign.

To compensate for that, I have come up with something similar but different to give **GENERIKUS** a slightly more familiar feel.

### **DOUBLED-DOWN VARIANT**

If the difference between the high and low rolls for a given attack is equal or greater than twice the low roll, then the low roller loses twice the Cliché dice for this attack.

Or – the easier-math-way of saying it – if the higher roll is greater than three times the lower, then the lower roller loses two die from the particular Cliché.

However, if I had originally thought of it this way, I wouldn't have come up with the cool "Doubled-Down" name.

So, as an example, I will give the following character:

#### **Arthur "Ace" Cleveland**

*Hardboiled Private Investigator (5d6)  
Gifted Telekinetic [4d6]*

"Ace" has come across a Gremlin (2d8) and decides that he will handle the beastie with a non-pumped telekinetic attack - the Gremlin just isn't worth more to him.

"Ace" rolls very poorly for a total of 5; the Gremlin rolls very well - both 8's for a total of 16. Thus, because the difference between the high and low roll is greater than twice the low roll (high roll, 16 – low roll, 5 = 11 > 2 X low roll, 5), "Ace" loses 2 Cliché die in his *Telekinetic* Cliché as opposed to the one he would normally lose.

GM: "Well, 'Ace,' it appears that the Gremlin's natural ability to wreak havoc with things electrical is severely interfering with your psychic powers."

Player: "Grrr... I reach for my hand cannon - this thing is toast..."

This also takes into consideration the much higher differences that can be generated with "higher" dice in play – which I believe makes a bit more sense, inasmuch that one who is significantly more powerful than another should be able to deal more capably with lesser foes.

### **GOLIATH RULE VARIANT**

The following is adapted from the **Risus Companion**, and should be used as a staple of **GENERIKUS**.

If the combatants score the same total for a given combat roll, the combatant who rolled the **fewest dice** is the winner. Only if they rolled the **same number** of dice is a tie really a tie.

This depends on the number of die actually rolled – not the size of each respective Cliché when healthy.

### **TEAMING UP VARIANT**

It makes sense – to me, anyway, and I'm the one doing the writing – that more powerful allies would be able to provide more powerful support.

Thus, add the highest roll of the die for the given support Cliché to be added to the Team Leader's total.

### **CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT CHANGES**

This is one of the biggest changes I have made, mostly for two reasons. One, I wanted to have characters be able to feel like their previous exploits give them a greater insight into being more capable of dealing with future confrontations – much like a more traditional experience point system.

Two, I wanted to keep – to some extent – the capriciousness that was the **Risus** die-rolling advancement system. There's nothing like trying and failing.

Thus, **GENERIKUS** characters earn experience points (henceforth referred to as "XP" because I'm a lazy typist) based on the adventures that they undertake. The amount of experience is going to greatly depend on the difficulty of what they have accomplished vs. what level of relative power the characters are at. For example, some normal mortals through luck and ingenuity foiling a vastly powerful dragon should earn more than a group of super-powered beings beating up random street toughs.

### **CLICHÉ ADVANCEMENT**

When a player wants one of his character's Clichés to advance, he looks at the total amount of XP that said character has accrued. Then, he makes a single roll of the Cliché in question, trying to roll **under** the number that is his XP.

Should he succeed, he subtracts the result of his roll from his previous XP total – which represents the amount of effort that it took to get better at a given Cliché. He also adds a die (of the same die type) to the Cliché in question – thus making him a better "whatever" through practice, training, etc. Should he fail, the player subtracts the difference of the previous XP total and the roll total from his XP – which represents the amount of effort that was expended in trying, but not

quite succeeding. No die advancement occurs in this case.

A player can attempt to try to better a Cliché again as many times as he wants (and as the GM thinks makes sense for the given genre of campaign), however the erosion of XP after multiple failures will likely cause the player to want to wait until he has a better chance of success – meaning he has accrued more XP through adventuring.

Once the limit of six die has been reached for a given die type, a player can then try to advance the die **type** of a Cliché. The GM has final say for the die type cap on the campaign, so try not to bicker too much about it. We're supposed to be having fun, remember.

For die type advancement, a player rolls similarly to the previously described method, with the following addition – the roll total of the particular Cliché receives a positive modifier that is equal to the die type that is next on the progression. Thus, a Cliché using a d10 die would receive a +12 (since the d12 is the next in the progression) to the roll – making it more difficult to get under the XP total (and representing the difficulty of getting "better" once you're already "pretty darn good").

If successful, the Cliché advances to the next die type, with one less total die in the Cliché – if you had a 5d6 and advanced die type, you would then have 4d8.

As this will lead to progressively more powerful characters rather quickly, the GM may want to limit die type advancement to Clichés that have five or six die in them to start with.

I'll give some examples of what I'm talking about so that this makes a little more sense.

We'll take **Batty**, a *Dark Costumed Vigilante with Serious Parental Issues* (5d8). He has 24 XP available for use advancing.

Batty's player decides that he wants to be just that much better at vigilante-ing and informs the GM that Batty has been training – and it is thus time for an advancement roll.

Example #1: Batty's player rolls his *Dark Costumed etc. etc.* Cliché and lucks out – a 17. The XP total is now adjusted to 7 (XP total, 24 – Cliché roll, 17 = 7), and the *Dark etc. etc.* Cliché is now (6d8).

Example #2: Batty's player rolls and rolls high – a 34 (which, coincidentally, is what his player

wished he rolled against the Jolly Jester in the previous session). As the roll is obviously higher than the current XP total, the difference (10) is subtracted and the XP total is now 14 – also, Batty must have pulled a muscle on the parallel bars because he just couldn't nail the dismount (or something – players, come up with something genre appropriate to describe either success or failure).

Now, if Batty had been trying to advance the die type because he had just created a super-y serum with his *Master of All Things Science* Cliché (also 5d8), it would look similar but different: in the first example, he would have failed because the modified total Cliché roll would have been a 27 (roll, 17 + next die type, 10). Such is the price of bettering yourself.

Based on how advancement works, the GM now has an idea of how to assign XP for the intended genre and style of campaign (more for more intended powerful characters, less for less).

### OTHER ADVANCEMENT

XP can also be spent obtaining a Specialty for a given Cliché. To do this, simply subtract the value of the Cliché's current die type directly from the XP total and name away.

You'd think with the big header for this last section that I might have had more in mind, but I didn't.

### MORE BETTER EQUIPMENT

What I've written so far has been largely for both player and GM. Here I'd like to drift from that for just a spell and cater to just the GM.

Well, the GM and maybe players (like myself) who like to say, "Hey, it would be really cool if my character could get X..."

Players like to have "stuff" that is above and beyond the normal ken of your everyday Joe. Why just have a sword when you could have a *Blade of Vicious Disemboweling*?

Obviously, the power level of the campaign is going to have a large impact as to what sorts of mechanical bonuses whatever gear will provide.

For lower powered campaigns, it might make sense to just provide gear that gives a flat bonus, denoted as (+X), to whatever Cliché might make the most sense.

For example, a grim-n-gritty fantasy campaign might produce a *Finely Wrought Dagger* (+1), which could then add "1" to the *Sneaky*

*Backstabber* Cliché of the party sneak. A *SWAT Sniper* might get a *Laser Sight* (+2), and so on.

For campaigns that are looking for a more powerful feel it might make sense to stat out weapons or equipment as if they were Clichés in their own right.

For example, a campaign that was more steeped in magic might could see a *Scepter of Draconic Control* (2d10). In this case, it is likely that the bit of equipment could very well function as a *Burnable* Cliché (which the more astute of you will remember as being previously discussed).

In either case, make sure that you give the item a fancy name – the players will treasure it all the more.

There is also the very likely possibility that enterprising players might want to create their own equipment – and, hey, that's less work for you.

Unless they are having it made for them by a particularly helpful NPC, the character should have some Cliché relating to the creation of the item in question.

For example, it is unlikely that the *Furious Barbarian of the Eastern Swamps* is going to be putting together a Dellway 9600 Laptop.

Assuming that it makes sense for the character to make the item, figure that each (+X) is the one-to-one equivalent of XP to expend, to a maximum of (+4). For items that are in their own right Clichés, use the Specialty Cliché rules for determining cost per die type.

## THAT'S ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT

Thus brings to a close about all I can think of in terms of making **Risus** just a *shade* more "crunchy" while at the same time capable of running any number of different games.

One note: I haven't actually play-tested any of this yet, so be sure to check the release version that you may get – I'll update this as I find issues with what I've come up with (hopefully with the appropriate fixes).

## GENERIKUS © by Steve Warfield 2007

Permission is granted to print, copy, modify and generally tinker with as necessary to make your game cooler. Just give me credit as I've credited others.

## Risus: the Anything RPG © by S. John Ross 1993-2007

About the "author," as if such a title could be applied to someone who did so little work...

Steve lives in the Capital-region of NY with his wife and two daughters. And a cat, whose gender matters little since the surgery.

After serving for some time in the US Navy – which really screwed up his gaming capability, by the way – he finally found his calling as a NY State employee at the [College of Nanoscale Science & Engineering](#), where he works as Senior Laboratory Technician. He currently plays with the [Iron Gamers Guild](#) and likes writing about himself in the third person, thank-you-very-much.

Thanks to all the guys I've played with: Bob, Chris, Dale, Ray, San and Tim; as well as all the guys I currently play with: Andrew, Bryan, Mike and Sean. Thanks also to [RPG.net](#) for showing me things like **Risus** actually existed.

Special thanks to my wife, Amiee, and my daughters, Belle and Shannon, for not bothering me too much whilst I was writing this.

A note on the title: I Googled a bunch of different variants before I settled on **GENERIKUS** (mostly to keep myself out of legal trouble); the word **GENERIKUS** is actually Hungarian for "generic." Go figure.

**Little Punk Demons****(very late) Halloween Spectacular!****[Alligator Man]**

HELLO I AM  
ALLIGATOR MAN I  
LIKE TO EAT LITTLE  
KIDS FOR LUNCH

**[William Joseph Simmons]**

Uh, the name is really just speculation...

**[Escaped Convict... wielding an axe]**

He is an escaped convict who wields an axe. He is *definitely* not anyone who might be named Uncle Fester.

**[Silverstein's Monster]**

No OFFICIAL information on this monster is known- once more, the name is purely speculation. That hair? Those cheap but stylish clothes? He is totally scene.

**[Spectralized Demon]**

If this *annoying thing* is given too much time to float around and marinate, it will become a Little Punk Demon of the GM's choosing.

**[Kim Turry]**

Here it is- quite possibly the most frightening monster you will ever face in any campaign, and the official "non KKK" Grand Wizard. Or maybe he is, that's a lot of white in his suit. Regardless, he has many tricks up his sleeves; he can drive people insane by turning his own hair neon green, become swirly to avoid attacks and summon Spectralized Demons at the GM's will.

*Art and descriptions by Zachariah F. Lazarus  
(zachlazarus@gmail.com)*

# Basic Dungeon Denizens



## [Pudding]

Pudding is yet another play on the most common weakest enemy of console RPGs. Not really sure how it attacks but it's speculated that it sucks. Let's call it a "Sucker Thingie". That'll work.



## [Generic Bat]

He's not too enthusiastic.



## [Incompetent Beholder]

That gaze of death doesn't quite work yet, but he's *trying*. damnit. Look at that focused lower lip!

If you could see this *clansman's* face, he'd be looking pretty happy. But you can't. He's a junior but he's working up in the ranks.



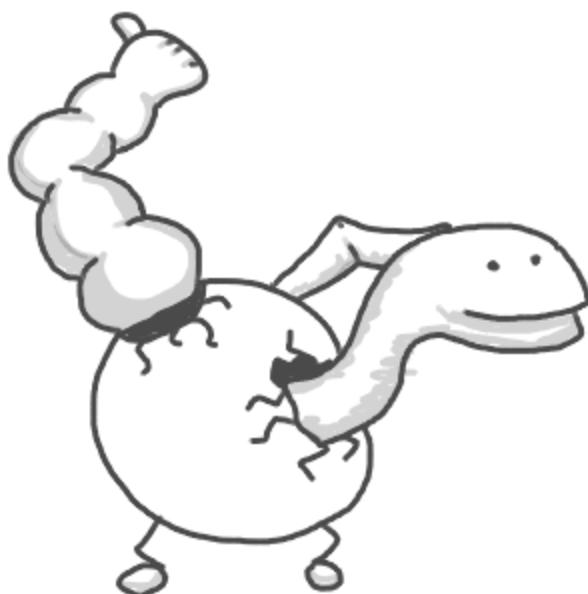
## [Happy Cultist]

A form of genie that even low class sorcerers can summon. It can grant whatever the GM deems a "pathetic wish".



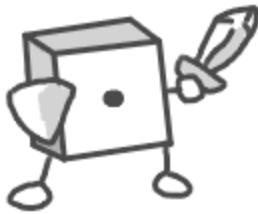
## [Crappy Genie]

This guy's before even the hatchling stage. Guess he didn't eat up all of his shell yet, or he's mentally defective. And look at his right wing! Wait... Holy crap, that's not a right wing at all! It's a beefy arm!



*Art and descriptions by Zachariah F. Lazarus  
(zachlazarus@gmail.com)*

# Luck Fort

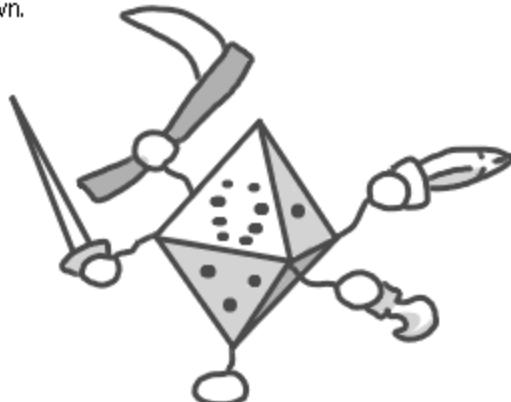


## [Cube Knight]

Animated warriors made from dice. These guys are weak, but attack en masse. Upon one's death, roll a dice- if 4 or above, a Blade Anima should spawn.

## [Octahedral Crusader]

Similar to the Cube Knights, but much more formidable. On death, roll a dice- if 1+, it spawns a Blade Anima. 2~3+, an additional Rapier Anima. 4~5+, an additional Hook Anima. If 6, all four Animas should spawn.



## [Blade Anima] [Rapier Anima] [Hook Anima]

## [Scythe Anima]

These rise from fallen die warriors. They float around until they decide their move, then make a dive at their unlucky target.



## [Master of Chaos]

Supreme master to all in Luck Fort. Roll 2 die every turn that passes- these will represent his eyes. If either eye is a 1, all dice rolls that turn are considered 1s. If doubles of any other number show up, all dice rolls that turn are the number there are two of. He can use his turn for either a normal bite/tackle attack, or spit out some fodder Cube Knights.

*Art and descriptions by Zachariah F. Lazarus  
(zachlazarus@gmail.com)*

The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20071021032710/http://codepoet.org:80/~markw/risus/fantasy.html>

# Risus Fantasy Cliches

The [Official Risus Page](#) lists a few cliches that are apropos for fantasy gaming, but there are some gamers (you know who you are) who want to drill down a little deeper into the fantasy genre and detail their character just a titch more. To that end, this page of fantasy cliches are provided.

I'm sure there are a lot of fantasy cliches that I've missed. If you, gentle reader, can think of any I should add, [lemme know](#) about it.

## Fantasy Races

Races are included that have been extant in a number of fantasy games/novels for long enough to become cliches in their own right. This means I've included only the more common, well-known fantasy races from books and fairy tales. Folks that want to play some strange / bizarre race from their own fav fantasy novels can come up with 'em on their own.

**Dwarf** - Being gruff, seeing things in the dark very well, growing a big beard, wielding an axe menacingly, crafting fine stonework edifices, drinking really strong ale but not getting affected very much by it.

**Elf** - Being tall, being thin, being poncy, seeing very far distances, shooting arrows from a longbow, having pointy ears, being good-looking, having a strange ken for magic and animals, being a complete nancy.

**Nymph / Dryad** - Living in trees, casting strange spells on unsuspecting woodsmen, hating fire, being coquettish.

**Halfling** - Being small, being plump, eating a lot, getting kicked around, telling riddles to dragons, whining, complaining.

**Orc** - Being surly, having big teeth and tough skin, belching and farting, bullying weaker creatures

**Troll** - Having skin like tree-bark, living under bridges, eating billy-goats, saying "Uurggh!"

**Fairy** - Being small, flitting about the woods, glowing, sprinkling dust.

**Leprechaun** - Being small, hoarding pots of gold, being lucky, wearing green, liking clover.

**Wraith** - Being spooky, wearing a hooded cloak, having piercing red eyes that seem to hover in the midst of your fog-like "head".

**Gnome** - Being small, balding, having lots of facial hair, inventing things, possessing a strange kinship with creatures of the forest.

**Giant** - Being big, stomping around, eating a lot, sleeping a lot, yelling "Fee fie fo fum" or some such, being easily tricked.

**Doppelganger** - having amoral tendencies, being lazy, spying, replicating folks and doing away with the originals, stealing things.

**Lizard man** - having sharp teeth, looking cold, despising and eating other humanoid creatures, wielding serrated weapons.

**Pixie** - looking cute, laughing mischievously, turning invisible, playing tricks.

**Centaur** - Shooting arrows, drinking, carrying off human women, galloping at high speeds.

**Dragon** - Breathing fire, flying, hoarding treasure, kidnapping Beautiful Princesses, killing adventurers. (A dragon would call for Funky dice if anything would, I think. It might also call for a hook or two. Or might just be relegated to being an NPC. S. John Ross had [these words to say](#) about playing a Dragon cliche.)

**Kobold** - being even tinier than a goblin, making oneself invisible, floating around and changing location very quickly, irritating half-giants, stealing things.

**Half Giant** - being big, looking stupid, hitting medium sized people, wearing very sturdy armour, drinking too much, being irritated by kobolds.

**DragonOrc** - being meaner than orcs, being cleverer than dragons, using impressive breath weapon, pissing off player characters, seeming to die at the showdown but coming back later, smoking expensive cigars.

**Poison Elf** - pointing swords at people, having very long pointy ears, lying through your teeth, skulking around in shadows, getting lost in forests.

**City Lycantrophe / Were-Rat** - living in the sewers, turning into a rat, turning into a rat-person, stealing food, not wearing armour, infecting adventurers.

And just in case you think I forgot...

**Human** - Possibly being any/all of: good-looking, resourceful, versatile, lucky, charming, organized, smart; reproducing quickly and in large numbers; liking the theater, festivities and drinking ale.

## Mixed-Race Characters

Some of you out there might be inclined to ask: "But what if we want to play mixed-race characters". Simple: take two cliches. Really, it's just that simple. You might want to clear with the GM (or exercise a modicum of common sense) before you go mixing races willy-nilly. For example, a Dwarf-Gnome mixed-race character sounds plausible, as does an Orc-Troll combo, but a Giant-Dryad combo or a Troll-Fairy combo are way out of line. Best judgement.

## Optional Rules for the Human Cliche

There's a couple of variations on playing Human characters:

1. All characters are Human by default unless they take one (or more) of the other race cliches; there's nothing special about Humans and they have no racial powers.
2. As before, all characters are considered Human by default; nobody needs to take the 'Human' cliche to play a Human character, but if a character takes the 'Human' cliche they can use it for any of the following rolls: charm, luck, carousing, sex appeal, fast talk, etc. I guess taking the cliche makes them "more Human than Human"... or something.
3. Mandate that every player take at least one race cliche for their character. All races have special bonuses. Humans have the bonuses described in #2.

Any of the above methods are equally valid, just make a house rule for however you want to play.

## Fantasy Occupations

These are cliches that have more to do with a character's vocation. Picking one of these could give you some special skills, equipment, or a plausible motive for adventuring.

**Cleric** - Wearing priestly robes and ornaments, warding against evil, converting the world to Yendorism.

**Blacksmith** - Hammering, pounding, clanging, heating metal 'til it's very hot, sticking very hot metal in water, cursing.

**Gladiator** - Yelling, fighting, putting on a good show for the fans, saluting the emperor when you are about to die.

**Theif** - Skulking, sneaking, picking locks, picking pockets, running away very fast from police.

**Guard** - Standing in one place for a long time, leaning on a menacing looking halberd, shutting up when the king tells you to shut up.

**Farmer** - Growing food, hopefully.

**Knight** - Riding a horse, slaying dragons, rescuing maidens, delivering some really stilted dialogue, getting swords from watery tarts.

**Bard** - looking debonair, travellin' lite, bein' brash, wowin' babes, getting into and out of trouble.

**Crypt Ranger** - bearing the scars of previous encounters, looking grim, haunted by dark memories and shadowy spirits from the nether realms, wearing a hood.

**Monk** - maintaining a level composure, uttering mystic platitudes, reliving monastery flashbacks, meditating, playing a woodwind instrument, being oblivious to the environment.

**Shadowjack** - skulking around, seeming mysterious, wearing dark robes, shadow walking, engaging in fancy sword play.

**Soldier of Fortune** - wandering, drowning sorrows in drink, mourning lost friends and better times, squandering ill-gotten gains.

**Weaponmaster** - being too serious, staring down opponents, dazzling enemies with fancy weapon plays, bein' frugal, wearing black. (GM's might optionally require a double-pump or break down this cliche into smaller pieces if it seems a little too broad. Alternatives would be: Swordmaster, Bowmaster, Staffmaster Knifemaster, etc.)

**Assassin** - Poisoning people, stabbing people, shooting people in the back, wearing black clothing, sneering evilly.

**Paladin** - Turning undead, smiting evil, riding really big horses, being holier-than-thou.

**Alchemist** - Brewing potions, blowing things (and himself) up, turning lead into differently shaped and colored pieces of lead.

**Hireling** - Carrying heavy bags and chests, setting off traps, serving as cannon fodder. (Back in the day, Poll-S paints had a line of AD&D paints, one of which was called "Hireling Flesh". It was a sickly gray-green color, perfectly suited for a zombie or other corpse.)

**Beautiful Princess** - Screaming loudly and piercingly, being captured, being rescued, looking good no matter what the circumstances, having a king for a father who will pay some sap to rescue you in spite of the fact that you're an incredible brat.

**Berserker** - Foaming at the mouth, chewing on shields, killing everything and anything that you can get your hands on.

**Beggar** - Looking pitiful, asking for money, telling interesting and/or tragic tales, coughing up blood on command.

**Priest** - talking about god, talking more about god, talking people out of their money, performing miracles, burning witches and heretics.

**Vampire Hunter** - smelling of garlic, looking at people's shadows, watching people's reflections in mirrors, being nervous, pointing crosses at pale people, staking vampires.

**Arial Lancer** - riding dragons, not falling off at high velocities, lancing, wearing fancy armour, arguing with dragon about the direction, being ignored by dragon mounts.

There's still plenty of other Fantasy occupations that could be listed here. If anybody's got any other ideas, lemme know.

## Magic-User Cliches

To our good fortune, Jason Puckett has already written up a superlative list of different magic cliches. I will therefore not attempt to duplicate his work here.

[Jason Puckett's Page on Risus Magic](#)

## Additional Magic Cliches...

Here are some other reader-contributed magic-user cliches:

**Chronomancer** - speeding things up or slowing 'em down, rerolling bad dice throws, stepping 1d6 rounds into the future, altering

history.

**Rheomancer** - illuminating things with foo fire, throwing lightning bolts, manipulating metallic objects with electromagnetic fields, reanimating dead things (for as long as the charge lasts).

**Prestidigitator** - summoning things from afar, making things go away.

**Cryomancer** - shattering things by making 'em really cold, summoning fogs, makin' it rain ice blocks, spanning obstacles with ice bridges, obstructing pursuers with ice walls.

**Aeromancer** - flying, far speaking, creating vacuums, summoning winds/air elementals.

**Hydromancer** - walking on water, scrying, flowing under doors, breathing/talking underwater, changing river courses, summoning tidal waves.

**Geomancer** - detecting gold/gems, walking through walls, turning stone towers to sand castles, petrifying critters, invoking earthquakes, moving mountains.

**Shadowmaster** - sending shadows on errands, seeing in the dark, hiding items in shadows, making people jump at shadows, creating shadowstuff (dissipates if taken out of shadow), teleporting via shadows, invoking nightfall.

**Illusionist** - tricking people, letting things disappear, becoming invisible, creating illusionary people, animals and things, making people sleepy, misplacing one's hat

If anyone can think of any good fantasy-genre magic-user cliches that aren't on Jason Puckett's list, lemme know and I'll add em here. (Or you could tell Jason, either way.)

## Magic Object Cliches

Check out my [rules for magic object cliches](#) for a description of how magic objects can be bought as cliches. Here follows a list of classic fantasy-genre magic objects.

**Bag of Holding** - Putting tons and tons of gold in, pulling out a wardrobe when you need a change of clothes, not getting weighed down by all the stuff in this bag, putting halflings when they annoy you.

**Bag of Tricks** - Pulling out a bear trap, pulling out a set of pom-poms, pulling out some ramen noodles (hot), pulling out a big ferocious lion on an abysmally bad roll.

**Cloak of Invisibility** - Turning invisible when you wear it... Not much else, really.

**Shoes of Stealth** - Skulking around without a sound, waiting for the other shoe to drop *but not hearing either of them drop!*

**Crystal Ball** - Seeing cloudy smoke, seeing flitting firefly-esque lights, seeing strange distorted reflections of your face as you peer in, maybe even seeing a vision of the future or something.

**Vorpal Sword** - Cutting off the heads of Jabberwocky's, making the sound "Snicker-Snack" as you do this.

**Ring of Fire Protection** - Putting it on and walking through a bonfire, putting it on and rescuing a child from a burning cottage, putting it on when you see a dragon and getting eaten.

## Fantasy Hooks

The following is a list of hooks that would be appropriate for fantasy characters to take:

- Compelled to rescue fair maidens
- Protecting nature against the evils of man
- Bigotry toward characters of another race/religion
- Gotta kiss every frog you meet
- Leperous
- Some silly code of honor
- On a crusade to convert the heathen to Anitsirkism

## Links

[Risus Dungeon Crawl](#) by Nathan E. Banks is a wonderful tratiste on one of the most cliched RPG genres ever.

## Contributors

**John Crimmins** - Added the following: Centaur, Dragon, Assassin, Paladin, Alchemist, Hireling, Beautiful Princess, Berserker, Beggar

**Rene Vernon** - Came up with a better description of Orcs and added the following: Bard, Crypt Ranger, Doppelganger, Lizard Man, Monk, Pixie, Shadowjack, Soldier of Fortune, Weaponmaster, Chronomancer, Rheomancer, Prestidigitator, Cryomancer, Aeromancer, Hydromancer, Geomancer, Shadowmaster

**Stefan Schoberth** - Contributed the following: Kobold, Half Giant, DragonOrc, Poison Elf, Illusionist, Priest, Vampire Hunter, Airial Lancer, and City Lycantrophe.

The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20071012052749/http://codepoet.org:80/~markw/risus/magicobjects.html>

# Risus Magic Objects

Some rules for using Magic Objects in Risus.

## Temporary Magic Objects

If you're playing a fantasy Risus campaign and you want your wizard characters to be able to make magic objects, here are some handy rules you can use.

Basically, it works somewhat like the "pumping" rules. First, you find an object that you want to imbue with a spell (a wand, a staff, a jewel, whatever). Next, you pick one of your magical cliches. Finally, you subtract however many dice you want from your cliche and they go into the magic object.

Example:

Randolph the Fire-mage wishes to make a "wand o' fire" that he (or his friends) could then use to shoot fire streams. To do so, he pumps his Firemage(4) cliche by two dice. This gives him a wand-o-fire(2) and leaves him at Firemage[2] for as long as the wand is in operation; At the end of a session of play, when Randolph rolls for cliche advancement, he still rolls 4 (not 2, 4) dice to see if his cliche advances.

Not that the magic-user does NOT "heal" from this pumping as normal. The dice lost from enchanting the magic object are not recovered until until:

- the object is dis-enchanted (to dis-enchanted an object, the magic user simply wills it)
- the magic user gets knocked unconscious and can no longer "sustain" the enchanting
- the object is destroyed.

This provides balance because the dice are still being subtracted from somewhere, but allows those dice to return to the magic user when the magic object is terminated. It also allows for magic objects to be created on a more ad-hoc, temporary basis. Additionally, it uses an already established "pumping" rule that players should be familiar with.

## Permanent Magic Objects - Object Cliches

By "Permanent", I mean objects that your character starts with and could possess indefinitely. How do you do it? Simple! You take a cliche. :-)

Most of the cliches in Risus seem to be for roles, occupations, archetypes, or job / position title. I didn't see anywhere in the rules where it says that cliches *have* to be occupational, so the door's wide open to make object cliches. Some examples of object cliches might be: Crystal Ball, Vorpal Sword, Scrying Stones, Stealth Boots, Cloak of Invisibility, Bag of Holding, and many others.

The Risus rules state that each cliche you take comes by default with the equipment that suits your profession. The rules further state that if your equipment is lost, you may have to use the cliche at a reduced roll (such as a thief using improvised, poor quality tools to pick a lock), or you may not be able to use the cliche at all until you find suitable replacement equipment (such as a netrunner losing his cyberdeck). Object cliches should be considered an example of the latter; you can't use the object if you've lost it. In game terms, you might even consider the magic object cliche "wounded" and "healing" takes place when you recover the lost object or find a suitable replacement.

Object Cliches can be used for more than just the object itself. With an object cliche, you should also be able to:

- Use it for "Knowledge" rolls, i.e. you can "talk shop" about a particular object.
- Use it for "Streetwise" or "Request for Information" to find out where such a magic object could be found. (Handy if you lose your original.)
- Use it for "Negotiation" or "Haggling" rolls to negotiate a price for buying (or selling) a (replacement) magic object.

## Caveats for Magic Objects

Here are some additional restrictions that could be put onto the creation of magic objects to provide a little more balance make things more interesting:

- Object requires magic material (sorcerer's gold, oriaculum, etc.)
- Object must be enchanted at specific location (mountaintop, i.e.)
- Object requires time to "cook" before fully ready
- Object might have a "hook" (backfires every Tuesday, when raining, etc.)

As you can see, some of these additional caveats could segue into fully-fledged adventures...

## Caveats for Magic in General

In order to prevent magic users from being too powerful, here are some restrictions that could be placed on magic users.

- Require a single-pump for particularly exuberant uses of magic
- Limit the scope of acceptable magics (deliniate what "spells" the character is allowed to cast in the description of the cliche)
- Set higher target numbers for spellcasting
- Incorporate a "backfire" rule for rolls that are less than 1/2 target
- Require mages to take a hook (w/o getting an additional die)
- Require mages to "roleplay it out" more often

## Other Risus Magic Stuff

Jason Puckett has written up [some excellent material](#) for doing more detailed, more balanced magic in Risus campaigns .

The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20071005225145/http://codepoet.org:80/~markw/risus/martialarts.html>

# Risus Martial Arts Cliches

Martial arts movies are replete with some of the most campy cliches known to man. The [Risus](#) game system seems remarkably well-suited for role playing in this genre. This page contains a list of cliches describing some of the more common characters you see in Kung-Fu movies.

Inspiration for these cliches comes from any number of Bruce Lee / Jackie Chan / Chow Yun-Fat / Jet Li flicks as well as a bunch of others like: *The Legend of Fong-Sai-Yuk*, *Iron Monkey*, *Big Trouble in Little China*, and of course the immortal *Kung Pow*. Some inspiration also comes from the *Mortal Combat* and *Tekken* games and the ever-popular *Feng Shui* RPG.

## The Cliches

**Kick-Fu Fighter** - Whirly kicking, across-the-room kicking, upside down helicopter kicking, kicking down doors, kicking through tables, kicking just because you can.

**Acrobat-Fu Fighter** - Jumping around, doing lots of flippy things, having a gift for finding naturally-occurring uneven bars in urban sprawls.

**Gun-Fu Fighter** - Drawing guns out of your belt / sleeves / ankle holster, shooting locks off doors, sliding across tables / floors / rooftops while shooting, sliding underneath someone and giving them the "ejector seat" maneuver.

**Dance-Fu Fighter** - Flipping around your girlfriend / sidekick / one of the bad guys / unsuspecting passer-by really fast so that your dance partner kicks all the bad guys and knocks 'em out.

**Improvised Weapon Master** - Fighting people with chairs / tables / ladders / garbage can lids / fire hoses.

**Blade Whirler** - Drawing blades really quick, flashing blades, spinning blades, maybe even stabbing somebody with one of your blades.

**Ninja** - Wearing black pajamas, moving stealthy-like, pole-vaulting up to a roof, throwing ninja stars, squinting a lot.

**Crazy Driver** - Not being particularly choosy about who actually owns the cars you drive, miraculously finding the keys behind the sun shade, hotwiring a car in record time, flipping a car up sideways so you can drive down a narrow alleyway, finding lots of naturally-occurring inclined planes so you can jump over things, escaping from bad guys at a top-speed chase--in reverse.

**Big Guy** - Being tall, being fat, being broad-shouldered, being "big boned", thumping people.

**Bimbo / Girlfriend** - Looking coy, wearing lots of makeup, wearing provocative outfits, screaming a lot.

**Store Owner** - Looking pitiable / confused / innocent, getting picked on by local thugs, having lots of fruits and vegetables in bins that can be easily kicked over, NOT having a lot of money in the till.

**Gangsta** - Signing, trash talking, wearing the colors, wearing stylin' high-top shoes, callin' on your gantsta buddies.

**Cop** - Putting a siren on top of your unmarked beater car, showing people your badge, yelling "freeze", firing and THEN yelling "freeze".

**Hit Man** - Not talking much, wearing a cheap suit, looking intimidating, stalking targets, telling people to go out in the alley but still not talking much.

**Zen Monk** - Wearing orange robes, being bald, not being perturbed, uttering cryptic sayings that astound your friends and bewilder your enemies.

**Kid** - Being plucky, using campy slang words, having a mom that loves you, stumbling into the bad guys lair, easily getting caught by the bad guys.

**Wino** - Sleeping on park benches, drinking your hooch, being filthy, having an astounding amount of information at ready recall.

**Little Old Man** - Being little, being old, being a man, having a scraggly Fu-Manchu goatee.

**Evil Sensei** - Being gruff, having a crewcut and a big lanternjaw, lumbering around your dojo while teaching your students to say "Strike hard! Strike first! No mercy sir!"

## Martial Arts Hooks

The following are some hooks appropriate to Martial Arts gaming:

- The gangsters are chasing you
- The Yakuza are chasing you
- The Mafia are chasing you
- The cops are chasing you
- The thugs are chasing you
- The kids from the rival dojo are chasing you
- The Emperor's soldiers are chasing you
- The monks from the temple are chasing you
- The gods of lightning and thunder are chasing you (might be worth more than one extra die)
- You're accused of a crime *that you didn't commit!*
- You've got a kid / love interest that needs protecting--a lot
- You can't hit a girl

## Other Stuff

If you're looking for more John Woo-style Risus action, check out [The Innocents Must Die](#) by Dylan Craig.

# SWORDS AND SANDALS

## A campaign setting for Risus: The Anything RPG

©2007, Guy Hoyle

The myths of ancient Greece speak of heroes, gods, and monsters, of mighty quests and tragic fates. It differs from standard fantasy in many ways, yet much of it has found its way into our books, our movies, even our RPGs.

"Swords and Sandals" is not quite a dry adaptation of Greek history and mythology. It draws inspiration from several other sources as well, including Italian sword-and-sandals movies (or "peplums"), the "Hercules" and "Xena" TV shows, and the inspired "[Mazes and Minotaurs](#)" RPG.

To use these rules you'll need a copy of Risus: the Anything RPG , (copyright 1993-2001) by S. John Ross. All references to Risus refer to [the PDF Version \(1.5\)](#) . I also assume that you have a copy of [the Risus Companion](#) ; if you don't, you're missing out on some crunchy bits of Risus goodness.

## CHARACTER CREATION

*Swords and Sandals* follows the standard Risus method of character creation as described in Risus (p. 1), which is briefly summarized as follows:

- 1) Take 10 d6;
- 2) Divide them up into piles of 1-4 dice each;
- 3) Name each of the piles a juicy epic-sounding cliche, like "Battle-Hungry Warrior", "Wealthy Tamer of Horses" or "Beautiful Ill-Fated Maiden" (see JUICY EPIC-SOUNDING CLICHES below);
- 4) come up with a brief description of the character, his personality, what he wants out of life, etc. ;
- 5) come up with a more-or-less pronounceable Greek-sounding name, so the other players don't have to call you "Rich's character" or "the guy with the hairy back";
- 6) write it all down so you don't forget.
- 7) That's the simple way of doing things. If you want it more complicated, here are some other things you can do.

### ADDING MORE STARTING DICE: Hooks and Tales

**Tales:** add 1 dice for coming up with a better backstory. Here's where you tell where your character comes from, who his family, friends, and enemies are, why the gods love him or hate him, what has made him famous or infamous, etc.

**Hooks:** add another dice for coming up with some interesting flaw or weakness that adds to the story-telling possibilities, such as "Doesn't know that he's married to his sister" or "Fated to die by a loved one's hand."

#### **OPTIONAL OPTIONS: Other Ways To Spend Your Dice**

**Double-Pumped Cliches:** good for that massive, heroic effort so often found in the epics and muscleman movies alike. Some clichés may be required by the GM to be bought this way. They cost twice as much as normal dice when you start out, but they improve with experience the same as any other dice.

**Funky Dice:** for characters like Heracles, Achilles, or Helen of Troy. In *Sword and Sandals*, most characters don't start out with Funky Dice, but earn them with experience.

**Sidekicks and Shieldmates:** frequently found in Greek myth. A Sidekick is a single companion; Shieldmates are a group of mostly-faceless helpers (bodyguards, spearmen, philosophers, musicians, whatever). Each cost 1 of your starting dice to get 3 dice for the Sidekick or Shieldmates' clichés.

**Lucky Shots and Questing Dice:** particularly for characters who are favored by the gods, or particularly good at something, or on a quest of some kind. This comes in the form of extra dice which can be added to a cliche roll. Lucky Shots can be added to any cliche roll; Questing Dice can be added to any cliche roll that fits a narrow type of activity (such as Questing For the Golden Fleece) that you specify when buying the Questing Dice. You get 3 Lucky Shots or 5 Questing Dice for every starting die you sacrifice.

## **THE WELL-HONED CLICHE**

It's tempting to think of cliches the same way we think of character classes in other RPGs, but you can pack a lot more into a cliche than into a character class. According to [Anatomy of a Cliché](#), clichés can reveal some or all of the following information about the character. I've also provided some handy examples to illustrate what I'm talking about.

Profession: King of Mycenae, Priestess of Aphrodite, Epicurean Sage  
Race or Species: Son of a Wood-Nymph, Satyr With Pretensions of Herodom, Wise Old Centaur  
Cultural Background: Egyptian Sorcerer, Rustic Arcadian Huntress, Athenian Social Climber, Laconic Spartan Orator  
Personal History: Former Amazon Queen, Defrocked Priest of Poseidon, Ex-Philosopher  
Degree of Dedication: Diehard Monster-Slayer, Reluctant Charioteer, World-Wary Swordslinger  
Religion or Philosophic Bent: Dedicated Stoic, Enthusiastic Priestess of Dionysus, Poseidon-Worshipping Charioteer  
Social Class or Financial Means: Cash-Poor Aristocrat, King of the Beggars, Evil Tyrant, Lost Heir to the Kingdom  
Gender: Haughty Amazon, Girl Charioteer, Thessalian Witch  
Demeanor: Happy-Go-Lucky Sidekick, Dour Cynic, Fatalistic Spearman  
Group Affiliation: Suitor of Helen, Initiate of the Eleusinian Mysteries, One of the Seven Against Thebes  
Appearance: Mad Philosopher's White-Armed Daughter, Mighty-Thewed Slayer of Men, Snaggle-Toothed Beggar, Flowing-Haired Achaean Prince, Cow-Eyed Queen of Sparta  
Ham-Handed Reference: William Shatner in a Toga, the Ancient Greek version of Cliff Clavin, Steve Reeves-type Muscleman, the "Red Tunic" Guy (the ancient Greek version of a Redshirt)  
Goals: Actor In Search Of Eternal Fame, Philosopher Looking For An Honest Man, Evil Advisor Plotting To Usurp the Throne  
Self-Image: Swordsman Who Can't Trust Himself Anymore, Sidekick Who Thinks He's A Hero, Beautiful Princess Who Thinks She's Ugly, Overenthusiastic Under-talented Would-Be Hero  
Sub-Plots and Relationships: The Daredevil Charioteer Everybody Goes To For Romantic Advice, The Treasure-Hunting Philosopher Who's In Love With The Beautiful Girl Philosopher Who's Always Stealing His Thunder  
Problems: Blind Poet, Lucky Drunk, Born Loser, Warrior-King Secretly Dying From An Old Injury, Rightful King Of Ithaca Deprived Of His Throne

## JUICY EPIC-SOUNDING HEROIC CLICHES (AND OTHERS)

(Add salt and pepper to taste)

Amazon Princess	Clueless Know-It-All	Favored of (god, king)
Ancient Mariner	Clumsy Hero	Feeder of Wolves
Antlike Myrmidon	Cold-Hearted	Fleet-Footed Herald
Architect	Ravager	Follower of the Week
Barbarian Queen	Competent Man	Garrulous Old Man
Barbarian With No Name	Con Man	Gentle Giant
Beautiful Sorceress	Conqueror of (place, people)	Gentleman Thief
Beloved Companion	Cook	Girl of the Week
Berserk Warrior	Crusty Old Salt	Gloom-and-Doom Soothsayer
Blind King	Crusty Old Salt	Godlike Warrior
Blind Poet	Delighter in Slaughter	Gold-Greedy Merchant
Blind Seer	Despised Outlaw	Gold-Greedy Pirate
Blind Philosopher	Devious Manipulator	Goldsmith
Blood-Spattered Chirurgeon	Devoted Charioteer	Grey-Bearded Soothsayer
Bold Cattle-Reaver	Dim-Witted Companion	Grizzled Old Veteran
Bold-Hearted Bandit	Eccentric Millionaire	Hard Bargainer
Born Liar	Engineer	Haughty Aristocrat
Born Loser	Enthusiastic Epicure	Haunted Hero
Boulder-Fisted Brawler	Epicurean Sage	Haunted Hero
Boyishly Handsome Prince	Everyman	Herald of (ruler, place)
Braggart Soldier	Evil Tyrant	Herder
Bumbling Hero	Evil Tyrant's Daughter	Hero In Disguise
Calm-Browed Mentor	Exiled King	Heroic Do-Goode
Cartographer	Faithful Companion	Heroic Sociopath
Celebrated Playwright	Faithful Dog	Hetaira with a Heart of Gold
Champion of (place, event, people)	Faithful Steed	High-Leaping Acrobat
Child of (god, nymph, famous person)	Fall Guy	High-Vaulting Bull Leaper
Clever-Handed Crafter	Far-Sighted Archer	
	Far-Travelled Voyager	

Honest Thief	Proud Aristocratic	Shipbuilder
Horse-Riding Amazon	Pain-In-The-Butt	Silver-Tongued Devil
Hot Philosopher	Obstructive	Singer of Battles
Chick	Bureaucrat	Slave Dealer
Hulking Barbarian	Old Campaigner	Sleep-Wary Sentinel
Humbled Hero	Overenthusiastic	Smith
Inscrutable Orphic	Under-talented	Smooth-Tongued
Jack Of All Trades	Would-Be Hero	Sophist
Jerk With A Heart Of Gold	Palace	Sneering Tyrant
Ladies' Man	Administrator	Spear-Famed
Leader of Battles	Philosopher King	Stalwart
Leader of Men	Polyglot	Spirit Advisor
Leatherworker	Polymath	Spoiled Princess
Life Of The Party	Potter	Stalwart Champion
Long-haired Nature	Priest of (god, place, people)	Steadfast Companion
Boy	Prince of (place, people)	Stoic Mentor
Lovable Rogue	Prodigy	Stoic Wise Man
Lover of Battle	Protector of (place, people)	Street Performer
Lucky Drunk	Pugnacious Pugilist	Struggling Actor
Mad Philosopher	Pythagorean Mystic	Struggling Playwright
With A Plan To Take Over The Throne	Reckless Rogue	Surly Magician
Mad Philosopher's Beautiful Daughter	Reclusive Genius	Sweet-Throated
Man Of A Thousand Faces	Reluctant Monster	Singer
Mean Drunk	Renowned Actor	Swift-Stalking
Mean Jock	Repentant Traitor	Hunter
Messenger	Rich Bitch	Swift-Striking
Midwife	Rookie	Raider
Much-Scarred	Rootless Wanderer	Teacher
Monster-Slayer	Sacker of Cities	The Contender
Navigator	Seamstress	The Quiet One
Nice Jock	Shallow Female Love	The Swordslinger
Noble Savage	Interest	Tragic Hero
Noble Warrior	Shepherd of the People	Trickster Mentor
	Ship Captain	Waif Prophet
		Warrior King
		Warrior Poet
		Warrior Princess
		Weaver

Well-Oiled	Wing-Footed	World-Travelling
Muscleman	Warrior	Sage
Whiz Kid	Wing-Worded	World-Weary
Wide-Faring Poet	Herald	Swordslinger
Wild Spear-Warrior	Wise Old Man	Would-Be Poet
	Woodworker	Mystagogue

## HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM THAT OTHER GAME?

When coming up with a player character for a "Swords and Sandals" campaign, it might seem that everybody is a fighter. In most Greek myths, this is mostly true. The typical Greek hero is a warrior-aristocrat, either without an inheritance, or wrongly deprived of his inheritance. They adventure widely, seeking to find a city to rule by marriage, by conquest, or by fortune. However, most of these heroes have other distinguishing traits, as well.

Crafty heroes definitely have their place in myth. Theseus, Oedipus, Odysseus, and even Heracles all won renown by solving some kind of puzzle or using their wits. These are a kind of fighter-rogue combination, in fantasy RPG terms. Others won fame by slaying monsters, such as Bellerophon and Perseus (and, again, Heracles). Uncommon in the myths themselves is the "wandering do-gooder" or knight-errant, though this is much more common in the sword-and-sandal movies featuring well-oiled musclemen such as Steve Reeves, Gordon Scott, and Mickey Hargitay. It should be noted that the mercenary warrior stereotype, fighting for hire, is largely absent from the Greek myths as well; any swordsman looking for employment would usually seek to become part of the household of a king or other nobleman. Other common pursuits for noblemen included raiding by sea (sometimes called "piracy"), cattle-raiding, and hunting. Holy warriors such as paladins are unknown.

Priests are not uncommon in myths, though they are not usually portrayed as adventurers. However, some heroes are closely related to the gods, and may have served as their priests (at least in game terms). Heralds, often regarded as sacred, may act as priests of Hermes in his role as Messenger

of the Gods. The role of priests has been given more leeway in this setting; see "Priestly Magic" in the Magic section, as well as "The Gods".

Magicians likewise abound in the stories (such as Circe and Medea), though not often as player-character adventurers. The role of the magician has been broadened in this campaign (see "Magic", below).

Thieves such as those found in typical fantasy RPGs are rare, since there are few large urban environments in the Greek world (though places such as Egypt and the Hittite Empire can definitely support them). Many heroes such as Theseus and Odysseus perform thief-life functions. Bandits, sea-raiders, and cattle-raiders likewise have an outlet for some of the functions of a thief. Often, sieges involve burglar-like sorties into the besieged city (or sneaking out, if one lives within the city).

Some anachronistic or fabricated character types such as philosophers, elementalists, and daedalists, have been included, partly because the genre tends to encourage such things. They have also been included as a nod to the "other" RPGs. Philosophers seem like a logical part of any Greek-influenced RPG because they are etched into our perceptions of Greece, even though they are anachronistic for a Heroic Age setting. Elementalists hark back to the fireball-throwing mages of D&D. Daedalists are an example of taking a mythical character, Daedalus, and extrapolating him into an entire group of "magicians" (as well as a nod to Clarke's Law, that "any sufficiently-advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic").

## HOOKS AND TALES

There are plenty of great potential hooks and tales (duh!) in the Greek myths. Some are fairly common, while others are rather rare. Here are some ideas you can use when developing hooks and backstories.

- Most heroes tended to die on the battlefield or through accident or treachery rather than old age. Older kings tended to settle down and leave the wars to the young.
- Passions tended to run high against the highly competitive warrior-nobles, so you often hear of them killing someone in a fit of anger. Quite often this would be a father or a brother, and would lead to exile.

- Quite often, one of the gods is sufficiently peeved at a character to make his life difficult. Hera did this to several of Zeus' illegitimate offspring as well as his paramours. Poseidon raised storms and sent sea-monsters off the people who committed offenses against him. Ares tended to aid the enemies of the hero he hated, and hampered the blows he struck in combat. Aphrodite would interfere in a character's love life, perhaps getting him involved in a disastrous affair, breaking up his marriage, or any number of other calamitous affairs of the heart. Dionysus can send maenads and forest creatures after victims to drive them mad or tear them to pieces, or make the crops fail and seduce their women into his band of maenads. Most of the gods don't want the offending heroes to die, they want them to suffer. Don't tick off Apollo or Artemis, though.
- Many heroes are impulsive, acting without considering the consequences of their actions (for example, Paris' abduction of Helen, Jason's rashly vowing to retrieve the Golden Fleece, Odysseus' revealing his true name to Polyphemus). Stubbornness, lechery, and jealousy are also common.
- Heroes often travel incognito, sometimes disguised as a beggar. Since there are no inns or hostels in Achaea, they often depend upon the kindness of strangers. In spite of Zeus' command that houseguests are sacred, there's a distressing tendency for kings to feel threatened by any mystery guests in their households, and thus making an attempt to have them secretly bumped off.

## MAGIC

There are several distinct "styles" of magic. These are some of the better-known types of magic; there are many others to be found in obscure corners of the world. Barbarians have their own strange magic practices, too! It is not uncommon for a hero to practice some kind of magic, especially if they have divine blood.

Daedalism: "Sandalpunk" gadgeeteers, they practice arts and crafts such as architecture, blacksmithing, sculpture, painting, jewelry, astronomy, and mathematics. They are capable of prducing elaborate gadgets such as combination locks, mechanical birds that sing, intricate plumbing systems, and buildings that ward against ill health and most basic curses (through study of "sacred architecture" or "sacred geometry"). The pinnacle of the

Daedalist's craft is making animated statues, solar mirrors that can set ships afire, ships that sail without wind, and the like.

Elementalism: an obscure branch of philosophy based upon the manipulation of the four elements (earth, air, fire, and water), using tools, rituals, and prayers. Some elementalists specialize in the use of a single element; others work with all four. They find it easier to work with pure substances rather than mixtures of the elements, though it is often very difficult to find the purest essences of each element (all matter is a mixture of these four elements, to some degree). Many elementalists (alchemists) devote themselves to the search for these very pure substances.

Metamorphosis: Metamorphs transform themselves or others into other shapes, such as other animals or humans. Most metamorphs rely on spells, charms, or magical herbs to change from shape to shape, but the more powerful ones need not rely on these. Some metamorphs who are the children of gods or nymphs can change to a single shape and back at will; these are scorned by other metamorphs, who do not consider them to be true practitioners of the art.

Necromancy: Many people will leave prayers and requests to the underground powers buried in graves, left in caves, or dropped in a well; this is the kind of necromancy anybody can practice, and it's only evil if the intent of the supplicant is evil. True necromancy consists of summoning up and controlling the dead, with all that implies (including dealing with the supernatural guardians of the dead). Necromancy must often be practiced at certain times (such as at night), and often at or near an entrance to the underworld (to be closer to the spirits of the dead). The most powerful necromancers can bring the dead back to life, although this tends to arouse the implacable wrath of Hades. Necromancy is very much akin to sorcery, differing mainly in focusing upon the dead and cthonic powers; they share many of the same types of spells, prayers, and rituals.

Orphism: mystic songs and poetry affecting the emotions of those who listen to the music. Orphics study the songs and poems of those who have gone before them, and gradually learn to compose their own songs. The greatest orphics can affect beasts, trees, even rocks and rivers. They do not have control over these things, but can sway them to act in friendship or in anger.

**Pharmakia:** Pharmakoi (sing. pharmakon) are makers of potions, medicines, and poisons (though they mostly do not admit to the latter). Naturally, they make antidotes, too. Probably the second most common form of magic (after priestly magic), few villages are without some wise woman who knows a thing or two about pharmakia. The most powerful pharmakoi are looking for the panacea, or universal cure to all wounds, diseases and poisons.

**Priestly Magic:** Of all the magic practiced in the Greek world, priestly "magic" is by far the most common and visible. The gods affect every aspect of Greek life (see "The Gods", below). Priests confer blessings upon worshippers; officiate at sacrifices, feasts, funerals, purifications, and athletic games; call upon the gods to fulfill their requests; interpret the mood of their patron gods; and express the displeasure of the gods when necessary. They tend to worship a single god, though they respect the other gods as well.

**Prophecy:** Oracles, prophets, soothsayers, augurs, and sibyls are blessed or cursed with the ability to see the future and the past through a variety of means. Many catch glimpses of other times and places through spontaneous visions; others must go through lengthy ordeals, such as dwelling in special places or inhaling the smoke of burning herbs. Clairvoyants can perceive far-off events, and while psychometrists and object readers can tell what happened in the past to a place or object. These prophecies are almost always ambiguous or vague, sometimes thwarting the intentions of those who sought them in the first place.

**Sorcery:** magic of trickery and compulsion. Sorcerers confuse people, make them perceive things which are not really there, and bind them to their will. Many sorcerers have the evil eye, and lay curses upon those who arouse their wrath. They use an array of magical props and tools, and often rely on chanting, magical gestures, wax "voodoo" dolls, and the inscription of spells and curses upon magically-prepared substances to work their magic. They often incorporate hair, blood, and other cast-offs from their victims into their spells to make them more effective. Sorcery also shares many tools and techniques with Necromancy (see Necromancy).

## **Protective Magic**

There are many types of protective magic available, though the availability and reliability varies. Most people know simple gestures and prayers to turn away the most common harmful magics, and asking the appropriate god or spirit for protection is available to almost everybody. These protections do not grant immunity to these harmful magics, and they provide little protection from magical experts, but they make day-to-day life possible.

Sorcerers and necromancers can make charms, amulets, and protective talismans that will protect the bearer from specific instances of spells, or from the restless dead, but not against sorcery or necromancy in general. Most people carry around a few charms for protection from day-to-day evils.

Daedalists with an understanding of sacred architecture or sacred geometry can craft buildings and landscaping that can ward off evil influences, like an ancient Greek "feng shui", or bind the evil within an enclosure (like the original Minotaur within the Labyrinth). Most such protections are not portable, and are subject to destruction or disruption simply by destroying the edifices themselves.

The most effective protection against the songs of an orphic are, of course, stopping up your ears so that you cannot hear the song. This is ineffectual against more powerful orphics, since they can even make the deaf hear.

As discussed earlier, pharmakoi can create antidotes and preventative measures for poisons, though sometimes the cure will have side effects and interactions of its own.

The only protection against priestly magic is with more priestly magic from a sympathetic god; otherwise, you must seek to placate the god that has it in for you.

## THE GODS

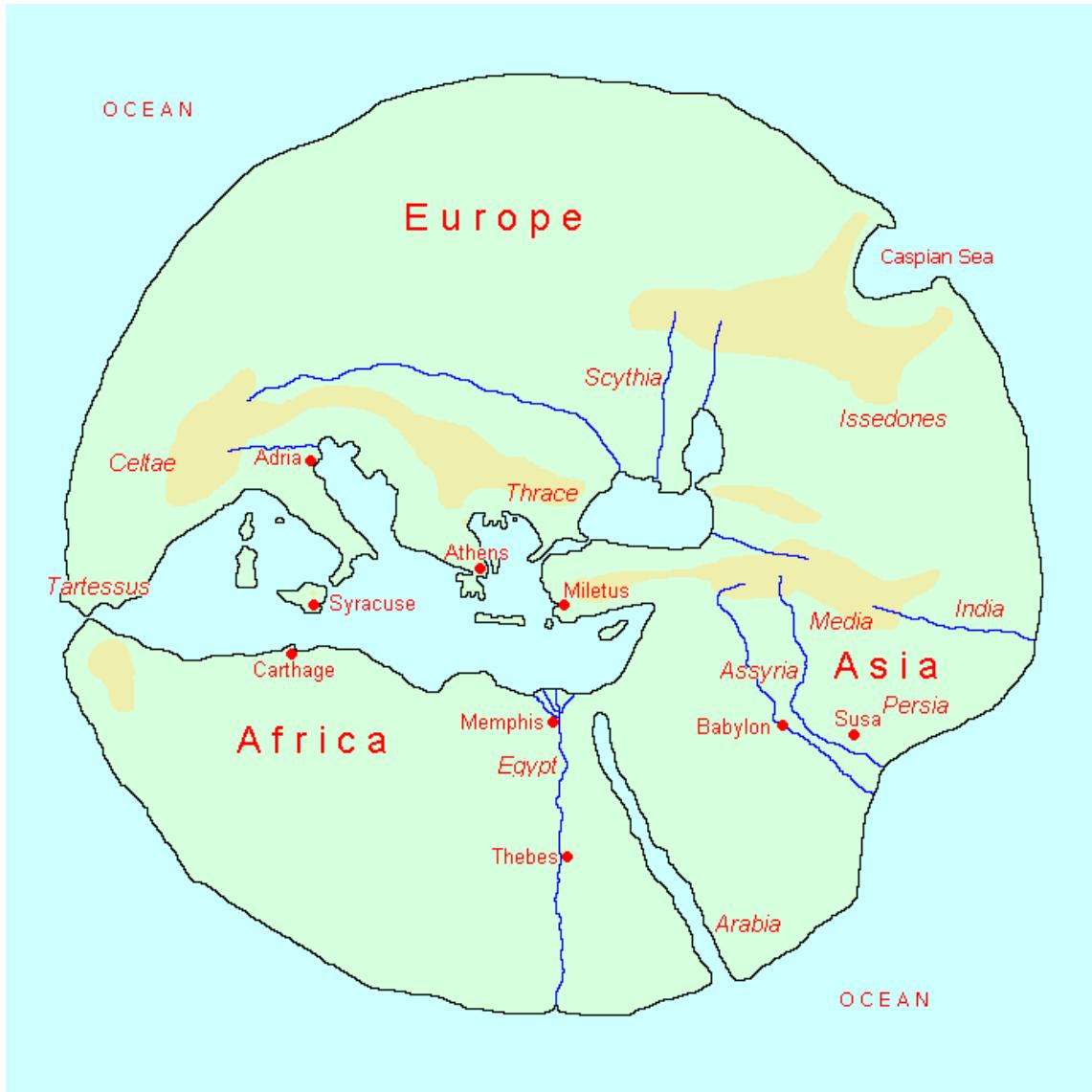
Most heroes have a divine patron or parent, and have earned the displeasure of some god or another because of the circumstances of his conception (Hera despises the issue of Zeus' infidelities, for example), something they've done (such as stealing some god's sacred cattle, or cuckolding them), or something they didn't do (omitting an important sacrifice, especially if you promised one).

Many times a character will want to contact a god to ask for help or a favor. Priests can try and contact a god during a sacrifice. The children of the gods can also appeal to their divine parents, who might answer if they happen to be looking in on their children. Anybody can appeal to the gods during times of great distress. Basically, the gods will only respond if it would be really, really interesting for them to do so, and they usually expect something in return -- and the heroes had better be forthcoming!.

Listed below are the major Gods and some areas they are usually associated with. There are many other gods, which may also be encountered during the course of the game.

- Aphrodite: all aspects of love
- Apollo: archery, healing, shepherds, music, athletics, prophecy, plagues
- Ares: uncontrolled war, fear, terror
- Artemis: hunting, forests, she-bears, the moon, childbirth
- Athena: wisdom, cunning, intelligent warfare, many crafts
- Demeter: fertility, crops, growing things
- Dionysus: wine, vegetation, pleasure, frenzy, madness
- Hephaistos: Metalcraft, beneficial fires, craftsmanship, volcanoes
- Hera: women, childbirth, queens, mothers
- Hermes: flocks, travelers, profit, gambling, eloquence, thieves, traders, conducting the dead to the underworld
- Hestia: Hearth, the home
- Poseidon: the sea, seafarers, earthquakes, horses
- Zeus : weather, sky, lightning, thunder, lightning, protecting fugitives, oracles, kings

## THE WORLD



(more details to come)

# RISUS: SWORD AND SANDALS

## Example Characters and/or NPCs

### (c) 2007, Guy Hoyle

Here are some fully-fleshed NPCs, as well as some "character seeds" for the players to customise. [Square brackets] indicate double-pumped cliches.

#### Testikles the Thracian

Much-tattooed berserker from Thrace with a one-sided rivalry with Herakles

Tattooed Thracian Berserker With A Grudge Against Herakles (4)

Hulking Barbarian Who Doesn't Know How To Act In Polite Company (3)

Voted "Best Pillager In Thrace" Five Years Running (2)

Insanely Mean Drunk With A Short Attention Span (2)

Hook: Imagines he was slighted by Heracles

Questing Dice: Looking for Herakles [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Tale: Testikles, a red-haired Thracian barbarian, was one of the foremost warriors in Thrace. To prove his prowess, he issued a challenge to Heracles, to meet him in single combat. Unfortunately, Herakles never got the message, being busy with his Twelve Labors and voyaging with the Argonauts. Testikles took this as either cowardice or contempt on Herakles' part, and vowed to seek him out and prove his own might. So far, he has met Herakles 3 times. The first time he passed out drunk just as Herakles made his appearance at a feast. The second time, he was showing off his prodigious might by engaging in a head-butting contest and knocked himself out (to Herakles' amusement). The third time Herakles was serving as a slave to Queen Omphale (dressed as a woman); Testikles didn't recognize him and put the moves on the Son of Zeus, and was knocked out by the wrathful demigod.

## **Megaera**

Teenage Warrior Girl With A Thirst For Conquest

Spoiled Warrior Princess (4)

World-Travelling Seeker Of Ways To Kill People [2]

Sidekick: Ecstasia, Bubbly Ancient Greek "Flower Child" (3), Would-Be Bard/Actress/Priestess/Journalist, whichever takes her fancy that week (3)

Hook: Has earned an impressive number of enemies for a teenage girl, whom she encounters pretty much on a weekly basis.

Tale: Megaera is a typical spoiled teenage girl who just happens to be a very accomplished warrior princess. She has travelled the world learning ways to slaughter lots of people. For a teenage girl, she has a very impressive list of sacked cities to her credit. She's got issues, however, stemming from the brutal slaughter of her family and the tragic destruction of her home town, which she kinda feels guilty for; she was supposed to be on guard duty when the invaders snuck in, but she was making out with this totally hot dude.

Still, at heart, she's still a typical prom queen, albeit a vengeance-crazed one. She's constantly being attacked by friends and relatives of the people she's slain. Her one companion is Ecstasia, who can charitably be described as "ditsy". Even Megaera really doesn't know why she tolerates Ecstasia, but she has been useful from time to time.

## **Skandros the Satyr**

A Satyr Obsessed with Becoming A True Hero

Ex-Follower of Dionysus, Scorned by Aphrodite

Shabby-Looking Wanna-Be Hero

Satyr Struggling Against His True Nature

Questing Dice: Enduring Hardships (blessing of Dionysus) [ ][ ][ ][ ][ ]

Hook: Trying to maintain dignity as a Hero while Aphrodite throws romantic entanglements his way

Tale: Skandros was a member of the retinue of the god Dionysus (known as Zagreus on the island of Crete). However, he couldn't keep his mind on frolicking and dancing; he was too interested in the clash of arms between Achaean and Minoan warriors, their chariots and horses, their tall spears and painted shields. Secretly he gathered up odd pieces of armor until he had a rag-tag suit of his own. Skandros asked Dionysus to excuse him from his duties and allow him to win honor and booty. Amused by the satyr's determination, and his odd assortment of armor, Dionysus blessed his prodigal satyr with great vitality to endure the difficulties that surely would come. However, Skandros foreswore the promiscuous ways of satyrs as "unheroic", and thereby managed to insult Aphrodite. As a result, the goddess plagues him with amorous intrigue whenever possible, seeking to ruin the Satyr's heroic facade.

Skandros is truly committed to the ideals of heroism, but he doesn't always know exactly what they are. He makes many people uncomfortable by watching them intently but discreetly, trying to see "how heroes do things". However, he is very sensitive about his efforts to appear heroic; anyone who ridicules Skandros risks his unbridled wrath.

## CHARACTER SEEDS

These are some very basic characters just waiting for their Hooks and Tales to flesh them out. Feel free to change details, names, etc.

### Peripetes

*Dubious Philosopher with a taste for leisure*

Surprisingly Competent Polymath (4)

Creatively Lazy Scrounger (3)

Enthusiastic Epicurean Philosopher (3)

### Erissa of Knossos

*An athletic young maid trained as a Minoan Bull Dancer, wandering the world since Theseus brought down the Minotaur*

Athletic Young Ex-Bull-Dancer (4)

Rootless Wanderer With A Talent For Thievery (3)  
Struggling Street Performer (2)

### Erebus

*Gloomy young lad singing morbid songs, making his aristocratic parents angry, and dwelling a bit too much on death.*

Goth-Like Orphic (4)

Angst-Ridden Teenager Rebelling Against His Parents (4)

Teenager Secretly Dabbling A Bit Too Much In Necromancy (2)

### Agonistes

*Disinherited prince seeking to reclaim his birthright*

Proud Aristocratic Pain-In-The-Butt trying to claim his dead father's throne (4)

Sharpshooting Archer with no time for the ladies (4)

Part-time Student of Chiron the Centaur (2)

### Drimios

*Son of Zeus, Priest and Prophet of the King of the Gods, and well-muscled bodybuilder type who travels around righting wrongs*

Tempestuous Son of Zeus (4)

Priest of Zeus with Occasional Glimpses of Foresight (2)

Mighty-Thewed Do-Gooder [2]

### Gyveros

*Multi-talented son of Hephaistos*

Laid-back Jack-of-all-trades (4)

Daedalist son of Hephaistos who avoids weaponry (3)

Intelligent, optimistic escape artist (3)

## **Osteos**

*Rustic Healer and battle-trained surgeon, who has travelled far and wants to tell you all about it*

Crusty old-fashioned Arcadian pharmakon (4)

Blood-spattered chirurgeon and priest of Apollo the Healer(3)

Far-travelled voyager with a lot of advice to give (3)

# THE QUIET Agency

## A setting for RISUS by Michael David Jr. Ver. 1.0

### RISUS CAMPAIGN RUNDOWN

**Genre:** Superhero/Conspiracy/Monster Hunting

**Tone:** Serious/Humorous Moments

**Campaign Options:** Options I, II, III, and IV from the Risus rules. Lucky Shots & Questing Dice, Sidekicks and Shieldmates, Eye of the Tiger, and Boxcars & Breakthroughs from the Risus Companion. Strip Risus? Sigh. If you must.

**Points/Dice:** 120 points or GM Choice

**Description:** The Quiet Agency is part superhero comic, part horror movie, and, yes, part X-Files. It is an organization of low-powered metahumans and superb normals gathered together by the enigmatic Mr. Smith. Their purpose: to investigate those mysteries that other superpowered beings won't or can't deal with. Their mysteries run the gamut from straight horror mystery to more four-color fare. The official universe of the Agency is called the Mandeville Universe, of which more will be written of later. It's a typical superhero universe setting with huge dollops of Saturday Morning cartoons and syndicated TV of the past 20 years. But use what you want and how you want. Go head.

### HISTORY

No one knows exactly when the QUIET Agency officially began. The first recorded case of the QUIET Agency was in 1998. A rash of metahuman murders in Chicago captured the headlines. Three precise blows killed each victim, even metas reported with invulnerability. Smith's first two agents were former government super The Eagle and Andrea Stoker, descendant of Salem witch hunters. They determined the killings done by a minor demon named Canaclas who wanted to use metahuman blood as a catalyst for a massive demon summoning. The Eagle and Stoker defeated the demon and its host.

The critical acclaim gained from solving the "Chicago Meta Murders" gave the Agency several contacts and good press. It gave them a reputation for investigating cases involving the strange and the bizarre. Finally, contacts were made in the metahuman and occult communities that increased business and aid.

Over the next five years Smith gathered together the organization of normals and metahumans. The shadowy nature of their cases continued. Each case was analyzed and Smith called together the people he thought was best qualified for the situation at hand.

Not everything was praise and accolades. Some scholars were incensed that the Agency proved that a recently discovered lost gospel was actually an assassination tool designed by a mad sorcerer. Senator Jedikiah "Big Jed" Keane was censured and defeated in a recall election after an Agency investigation revealed his links to drug trafficking. Keane still has powerful friends and these friends can give the QUIET Agency trouble at inopportune times.

Past enemies and allies have plagued the Agency. The mysterious nature of their investigations has an air of disquiet that critics can play off of. The darkest moment of the Agency came when one of Senator Keane's political allies began a federal investigation. Agents from both the QUIET Agency

and the FBI joined forces to investigate the claims and found that Keane was behind the circus. Evidence was presented that disproved the accusations of the panel. The investigation was dropped.

Now, in 2006, the investigations continue.

## THE AGENTS

Smith fields about 40 agents at any one time. The agents are considered representatives of the QUIET Agency and are expected to act in a way that will not demean it publicly. Mr. Smith has no problems with dirty tricks and street tactics if the need arises. He frowns upon the unnecessary loss of life, especially innocent lives lost. Repeated "accidents" result in suspension or expulsion from the QUIET Agency.

Agents are picked by personal invitation by Mr. Smith himself. There is no set of circumstances that definitely secure recruitment. He does tend to choose people who are creative, independent, and able to think on his feet. Paranormal abilities, while present in several of the agents, are not a must.

The Agency fields what could best be described as an eclectic group of people. Former FBI agents, lycanthropes, and even a former god number themselves among their ranks. The Eagle and Andrea Stoker were chosen because of some friends of Mr. Smith. Detective Arlen Schlatter was the working officer with the first two agents. His clashing with some higher-ups in the police department led him to accept Smith's offer to join the Agency. Jeremy Merryweather was a renowned researcher scheduled to take a job with the Smithsonian. A chance encounter with the supervillain Bonelord and a page from The Necronomicon introduced him to another world. Bodyguard arid former centerfold Jeanne Vercoutre was accused of murdering her last employer. The resulting hearing (and the carnage surrounding it) got her into the fold. The latest member of the Agency, Timothy Kay, was said to just of suddenly appeared in the QUIET Agency offices.

Mr. Smith provides transportation. A stipend is provided for lodging and other expenses. Smith expects agents to be careful with the transportation. One too many destroyed cars will result in a chunk being taken out of the paycheck. A package is available with necessary equipment (flashlight, first aid kit, communicator, etc.). The agent who wants them unless the situation demands otherwise must provide weapons and licenses.

In the case of several members of the agency, certain dependencies must be indulged in to ensure survival. Smith realizes this, but the agents are warned against overindulging in said actions. This can impede on Agency work and bring down the law. That is not good for anyone.

Agents can have personal lives. They are on call during their time of duty. The family of an agent is given death benefits when the agent dies. Smith considers the family and lovers of is agents as his responsibility. Enemies who harass, injure, or kill relative and friends of the Agency have a tendency to meet with "accidents". The Cult of Typhon was wiped out to the man after Andrea Stoker's sister was attacked and almost killed by the cultists. When asked about the Typhon situation, Mr. Smith makes a reference to striking the serpent that strikes your heel, then smiles.

## CHARACTER CREATION AND OTHER STUFF

For clichés, I recommend clichés that fit into a four-color superhero setting, but with a twist. The agents below give an example of the typical superpowered being that exists in this world. Think of archetypes and stock characters, and then go crazy. In the Quiet Agency Universe, appearances are deceiving. The Armored Hero might be a wealthy playboy representing his company. He could also be a spirit being inhabiting the armor as his vessel.

120 points for a basic character gives the ability to have a funky dice double pumped cliché or two and still allow for 2-3 clichés to flesh the character out.

For an initial list of clichés, I recommend Guy Hoyle's Anarchomerica: Character Creation section at the Risusiverse wiki. The lists of Stock Characters (especially the Supers, Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror section) are essential for running any sort of cinematic style. More cliché ideas are coming in the future. Feel free to add some flavor. On Fire Guy (4) is good. Phlogiston Furnace (4) is good with extra icing on the top.

The QUIET Agency uses regular Risus Combat. For the most part, combat is normally handled as basic x vs. y conflict. In most superhero universes you have a great variety of clichés that interact on a regular basis, with a myriad of origins. Only in certain GM determined conditions are the Inappropriate

Clichés rules used. Most other situations are handled using the When Somebody Can't Participate rules.

For example, an Aerial Morphibot [4d12] can battle a Rune Festooned Golem [4d12] on equal footing. Said Morphibot [4d12] would be an Inappropriate Cliché versus a Three Headed Eldritch Ghost Lord [5d12], unless the player can come up with a really good reason why not.

## ADVENTURES WITH THE QUIET AGENCY

### *Investigation*

The main purpose of the Agency is this. Mr. Smith decides on what to investigate and sends the best-qualified agents to deal with the problem. Mysterious disappearances, unsolved murders, unusual robberies and bizarre origins have all been encountered by the Agency.

### *Artifact Retrieval*

Some of the Agency's funding is raised by retrieving lost treasures and property for museums and (on rare occasions) private collections. Often, Mr. Smith has his own reasons for finding the items that have nothing to do with charity. Supervillains and organized crime might also have some problems with agents who relieve thereof their ill-gotten gains.

### *Advisory Capacity*

Not all of the people who Mr. Smith has hired are field agents. Some serve as specialists in their chosen fields, and their expertise is another source of income and connections for the Agency. Superhero teams who do not have a resident sorcerer or super-scientist can contact the Agency for assistance in identifying artifacts or other interesting things.

### *Liquidation*

Vampires, werewolves and demons sometimes inhabit places where they are not supposed to be. Some of the more militant members of the Agency specialize in disposing of those beings that plague the living. Mr. Smith does not condone the compulsive or baseless slaughter of aliens or supernatural beings. He does this only in the most extreme circumstances such as the decimation of a town or threats to the fabric of reality.

### *The Past Returns*

The past of the Agents sometimes has a tendency to haunt them. A conglomerate of men, women, and things that forms the QUIET Agency all have enemies and situations that goes beyond the mere problems at hand. Old foes, rivals and unfinished business can add more layers of complexity to an already difficult situation.

### *Interactions with Metahumans*

The QUIET Agency can mobilize a decently powered force of metahumans in times of great crisis. Although most of the metahuman members of the Agency are not of the greatest power level, they are skilled and crafty. Individual members have contacts with other metahumans or agencies, and might get drawn into situations that require their help.

### *Conspiracy*

Although Mr. Smith acts for the most part on the side of good, his actions show that he is more concerned with his own agenda. At first glance there seems to be nothing connecting the various cases investigated by the Agency save a touch of the bizarre. Exploring further into the subject reveals a pattern of interference and balancing that goes beyond mere coincidence. Connections and favors are made to provide support for some unforeseeable goal. Some of the older members of the Agency (especially Arlen Schlatter) have come to realize this fact. Agents of the QUIET Agency may be well treated and well liked by Mr. Smith, they are only pieces in a games that Smith is playing with other conspiracies and forces in the world.

## WHO IS MR. SMITH

Who is Mr. Smith? A question like that has many possible answers, and will frame how the Agents interact with the missions and the world. The man who created and runs the Quiet Agency is the only one who knows the true answer to this query. As is his nature, Mr. Smith is not telling.

Below are a baker's dozen of possibilities for the unoriginally named Mr. Smith, and sometimes how this choice affects the Agents.

Mr. Smith is what he claims to be--a man born to wealth that gathered people together to solve mysteries and explore the unexplained. Helping metahumans is a way to make contacts and money. The more militant members of the Agency involve themselves in the more exotic and dangerous missions. Eventually the group will break up as agents seek their fortunes elsewhere.

Mr. Smith is one of the Secret Masters and the Agency is a tool of the Illuminati. As a roving branch of Warehouse 23, the Agency is designed to infiltrate the tight knit world of metahumans. The members of the Agency are chosen according to their worth and their access to the strange and the bizarre. Most of the artifacts and villains encountered are facets of the Conspiracy that need to be put under control. They are sent to Warehouse. Certain members are allied to different conspiracies, leading to interesting interactions.

Mr. Smith is the last living superhero of a world that does not exist anymore, destroyed in a forgotten crisis. He was the mightiest hero of his age, but even his power was not enough to avert the Cataclysm. Eventually he was reborn in this new world, remembering what had come before. The agents are current incarnations of some of his former comrade in arms gathered again to his side. The artifacts he collects and the evils he liquidated may be precursors to another Cataclysm.

Mr. Smith is a participant in the War between Heaven and Hell. What side he is on is open to debate. On the side of Heaven Mr. Smith gathers the vessels of angels (and truth be told, some of the pagan gods as well). Celestial reliquaries are preserved and distributed. Demonic ones are destroyed. On the other side of the coin, a Demonic Mr. Smith acts to manipulate his agents (who know his true leaning) to pervert the holy. The Agency on the side of hell actually causes more chaos than it solves. And in the middle Smith is a wild card in the War for the souls of Man.

Mr. Smith is a powerful astral being possessing a variety of bodies as he needs to. He seeks people and artifacts to create a balance between the forces of Law and Chaos before one or the other rules. This makes his goals seem more mercurial to the average viewer of the Agency's adventure and to the agents themselves. Many of the agents have powers that are based in the spirit world or my making pacts with lords of Law or Chaos. Anyone who can sense the supernatural can sense the power behind Mr. Smith. Witnesses claim that demons have cowered in fear when the meet with him and refuse to speak.

Mr. Smith is an experimental A.I. (from Warehouse 23) that is exploring a world that he cannot comprehend with mere logic. Magic and the supernatural fascinate him. Money is siphoned off of a multitude of government and corporate budgets. The "Mr. Smith" the agents encounter is an android, hologram, and a simple face appearing on a TV screen. Bizarre weapons are available for testing and the Agency is never at a loss for computer accessing information. Smith, while acting human, is still an A.I., though, and its loyalty and desired might be different from the mortals he employs...

Mr. Smith is a mad collector who seeks to fill his chambers with unique objects d'art. The Agency is his most public way to achieve his end. Eventually someone who works for him will discover this mania. Smith will then find very dangerous missions for the agents or employees who dare to challenge him to often. This Mr. Smith is very high strung.

Mr. Smith is the first interdimensional traveler to visit this world and he is staying to protect it. People and artifacts from other timelines have begun to infiltrate the once stable forces of history. Smith wants to maintain the basic integrity of the world as more random entries begin to wreak havoc

with history. The agents are entities from other dimension who Smith gathers to (a) counteract the machinations of other travelers who seek to profit from the chaos; and (b) eventually send them back to their own realities whether they like it or not.

Mr. Smith is actually the created son of Adam, the first creation of Frankenstein and his Eve, a clockwork woman created by a doctor in Germany. Abel F. Smith gathers other outcasts and unique beings to battle the forces of supernatural evil. The artifacts that are gathered are dangerous items that must be contained or destroyed. He has no problem with destroying those who threaten him and his associates. The Agency is considered an unwelcome enemy by any organization of monsters that meddle in the affairs of man.

Mr. Smith is the creation of the three original members of the Agency: Andrea Stoker, The Eagle, and Arlen Schlatter. After the Chicago Meta Murders, the trio realized the need (and potential financial gain) in investigating the unexplained. Mr. Smith, portrayed by former B-Movie actor Tarl McIntyre, is useful in acquiring additional clients and publicity. Most of the other agents do not know this. If anyone finds out the true origin of the Agency it could cause problems.

Mr. Smith is the latest incarnation of Merlin who is very concerned as to the nature of his recent reawakening. As the time for the calling of Arthur approaches, he gathers together the incarnations of the lesser-known Round Table Knights as his agents. The retrievals and the quests are Smith/ Merlin's way of testing the mettle of the knights and gathering tools for the battles ahead. Other supernatural forces (including Morgana Le Fey) are aware of the powers Smith is gathering and react accordingly for good or ill.

Mr. Smith is one of the last dragons that exist in the mortal world today. The surge of magic that caused by the rise of metahumans awoke the slumbering Smith (his real name is hard to pronounce by humans). The Nazis captured him to use his inherent magic to power a Hitlerian infernal device. A band of Allied heroes rescued the weakened Smith from this horrendous fate. To pay back the ingenuity of the humans who saved him, Smith created the agency to help them with the identification and collection of strange artifacts; not only is he helping old friends, but is accumulating a horde of artifacts and money (dragons are like that). He is usually found in human forms but when angered his draconic nature reveals itself.

Mr. Smith is a servant of Eris the Goddess of Discord or one of the 1000 faces of Nyarlthotep. Gods knows what either of these two beings wants. The agents are along to ride the chaos that only these purveyors of chaos can provide. Hail Eris! All praise the Crawling Chaos!

## SAMPLE CHARACTERS

The following characters are typical of the type of agents Mr. Smith fields. Each agent is built up to 120 points. More background on the characters will be found in future versions of The Quiet Agency.

### PETER DEREVENKO

A former law student who dropped out of law school when strange incidents began to happen to him. Piotr is a descendant of the mythical Bogatyri, the mythical hero knights of Russian legend. He often times has dealings with creatures of that myth cycle. He was hired after an incident with one of the daughters of Baba Yaga.

#### Cliches:

Descendant of the Bogatyri (4d10)

Construction Worker (4)  
Ex-Law School Student [3]

**Hook:**

*Myth Magnet*: As a descendant of the Bogatyri, Piotr is a magnet to mythological beings, especially faeries. While sometimes this is useful, this can also cause problems in GM-decided situations. Ex.: die penalty when sneaking because a nymph in the park your hiding in likes you; penalty sneaking in a build because the house fey doesn't like him.

**Natasha** (Real Name Unknown)

A Russian fey who has become close to Piotr. Most people consider them a couple, but both of them deny it.

**Cliches:** Drop Dead Gorgeous Vila Fey (3), Mistress of the Crossbow (3)

**Hook:** Impulsiveness

**SARA BANNISTER**

The game is all that matters to Sara Bannister. She comes from a long line of con men and grifters that have traversed the US and Europe. Sara is currently "retired" from the business. After a situation that she refuses to discuss, she was pardoned by the federal government and "directed" towards the Agency. Her skills are quite useful in investigators, but she is also used in delicate "retrieval" scenarios. Sara is carefully watched around the valuables.

**Cliches:**

Silver Tongued Ex-Grifter (4d8)  
Gorgeous Actress (4)  
Well Connected Player [3]  
Vicious Dirty Fighter (3)

**Lucky Shots:** [ ] [ ] [ ]

**Hook:**

*Hard to Resist the Con*: Sara's greed sometimes overwhelms her more altruistic aspirations. 1 die penalty in situation where she can get away with conning someone.

**AUTHORS NOTE**

This is a long time coming. The Quiet Agency first appeared in an article in the GURPS APA All of the Above back in 1997. I did several articles for the APA, then some notes here or there. I plan to do some character profiles, sample missions, and universe integration someday. But I wanted to get at least this version out for people to take a gander at now. Thanks for Reading.

Mike David Jr, April 2007

The Wayback Machine - <https://web.archive.org/web/20080512020159/http://risus.guyhoyle.net/anatomy.htm>

## A QUICK GUIDE TO THE ANATOMY OF A CLICHÉ

This guide is intended as a supplement to S. John Ross's "Anatomy of a Cliché" from his *Risus Companion*, which is available to members of the International Order of Risus (<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>) for all things Risus!)

### Personal History

Sometimes adding a variation on "former" can add a level of depth to an otherwise ho-hum cliché.

- Former Elvis Impersonator
- Defrocked Witch-doctor
- Retired Paperboy

### Degree of Dedication

The numbers don't tell the whole story. Is your character committed to his chosen cliché, or does his enthusiasm lag sometimes? Is his talent natural-born, or does it come with great difficulty?

- Part-time Pacifist
- Struggling Brain Surgeon
- Assistant Assassin
- Fanatical Frothing-Mouthed Fundamentalist

### Social Class or Financial Means

Though Risus does not have rules for money or buying stuff, you can tell a lot about the financial means of a character by his clichés.

- Generous and Popular Vagrant
- Stingy, Inhospitable Philanthropist
- Penniless Tycoon
- Imprisoned Billionaire Homemaking Guru

### Gender

Many clichés imply a gender (like Professional Football Player or Housewife), but gender-based cliches are quite fun to play with.

- Female Donald Trump
- Aging Male Prostitute With A Heart Of Gold
- Cross-Dressing Paladin
- Blacksmith Babe

### Demeanor

Attitude is often everything.

- Jolly, Happy Berserker
- Affable, People-Friendly Assassin
- Careful, Timid Demolition Derby Driver

### Ham-Handed Reference

These would be references to actors, actresses, fictional characters, and genre conventions.

- William Shatner
- Rhyming Lawyer
- Gomer Pyle
- Martha Stewart
- Red-Shirt (from *Star Trek*)
- Used Chariot Salesman
- A “brick”, “flyer”, “energy blaster”, or other comic book stereotype.

## Goals

Your character's personal goals determine how his skills develop, and distinguish them from characters with similar Cliches

- Eager Young Performer Lookin' for Nookie
- Dedicated AcTOR In Search Of Eternal Fame
- Bitter Mad Scientist Out To Have His Revenge On Everybody Who Laughed At Him

## Self-Image

How does your character see himself? Do others see him the same way?

- Self-Loathing Accountant
- “The Best Pickle Salesman In The Whole Darn Faire!”
- Grieving, Suicidal Lawyer

## Subplots and Relationships

Cliches can involve other people and how they interact with the character.

- Handsome Young Swordsman Working His Way Through The Local Girls
- Nervous Ex-Gangster On The Run From The Mob
- Plastic Surgeon to the Stars

## Problems

Some see them as problems; others see them as opportunities.

- Enormously Obese Contortionist
- Stuttering Country-Western Singer
- Blind Fighter Pilot

# Adventure Street Omnibus

(VERY MUCH UNDER RE-CONSTRUCTION)

## Table of Contents

Introduction

What are Pulp Adventures?

What is *Risus*?

Master Cliché List for Pulp Adventures

Guy Hoyle's "A Quick Guide to the Anatomy of a Cliché"

Character Creation Guidelines

## Daring Adventure Tales

Setting Notes

Pulp Examples

Helpful Clichés

    Sample Character, Jackson Dare

House Rules

    Why No Magic Rules?

    Why No Weapons or Vehicle Rules?

## Ripping Air Yarns

Setting Notes

Pulp Examples

Helpful Clichés

    Sample Character, John Scipio, "The Phoenix"

House Rules

    Aircraft Rules

## Stellar Space Magazine

Setting Notes

Pulp Examples

Helpful Clichés

    Additional Clichés

    Sample Character, Captain Stella  
    "Blaze" Bannister of the Space  
    Rangers

House Rules

    Spacecraft Rules

## Strange Western Stories

Setting Notes

Pulp Examples

Helpful Clichés

Additional Clichés

Sample Character, Sheriff Hiram Parish

House Rules

Magic and the Supernatural

American Indian "Medicine"

Locale: Lonesome Gulch, pop. 312

## Weird Crime Report

Setting Notes

Pulp Examples

Helpful Clichés

Sample Character, Jackson Dare

House Rules

Magic and the Supernatural

Background: The Supernatural, Paranormal and Otherwise Unknown Criminal Division (S.P.O.U.C.D.)

## Resources

### **Introduction**

Pulp is the literary equivalent of "junk food." It is not high art, but it is a lot of fun nonetheless.

#### **► What Are Pulp Adventures?**

Pulp adventures take their name from the publishing method of choice for the popular press from, say the turn of the century to the 1950's. Cheap paper made of pressed wood pulp was used to print magazines affordable to the working class. These magazines covered a wide range of genres: science fiction and fantasy, horror, detective mystery, globe-trotting adventure, sports, wild west, and even romance.

No matter what genre was featured, there were some near-universal conventions: clear-cut heroes and villains, an insidious plot, a mystery, "deathtraps" and the triumph of the Right over the Wrong.

Pulp magazines were published regularly from the 1920's through the 1950's, peaking during the 30's and 40's. Eventually, paper quality improved, but because the stories were all written along a certain style, the name "pulp" became associated with the adventures themselves rather than the medium.

Pulp authors wrote stories featuring simple, almost visceral themes such as good vs. evil, order vs. anarchy and the like. As gritty as the stories could become, they almost always offered an escape from the grim realities of the day. Although they were simple stories in terms of theme, often they featured rather complicated characters. The "heroes" of hard-boiled detective pulps were hard-drinking, chain-smoking, skirt-chasing, acid-tongued insomniacs. The protagonists of gangster pulps were, well, *gangsters*. But no matter how rough such anti-heroes were, there was always something redeemable about them, which again fits in with the underlying black-and-white themes.

Many readers, when discovering the pulps for the first time, are shocked to discover that the pulps are often full of latent and sometimes overt sexism and racism. This can be blamed on the fact that they are products of their times, in which gender roles were very rigid and anyone who differed from the average "White Anglo-Saxon Protestant" template of an "All-American" was either locked into subservient roles or held in deep suspicion, or both.

### Pulp Heroes

Pulp heroes in general are "All-American-Boy (or Girl)-Next-Door" types. They are not motivated by a desire for personal glory, but by an almost overdeveloped sense of right and wrong, justice, and fair play.

As an example, take a look at the personal code of Doc Savage, one of the greatest pulp heroes:

*Let me strive every moment of my life, to make myself better and better; to the best of my ability, that all may profit by it.*

*Let me think of the right and lend all my assistance to those who need it, with no regard for anything but justice.*

*Let me take what comes with a smile, without loss of courage.*

*Let me be considerate of my country, of my fellow citizens and my associates in everything I say and do.*

*Let me do right to all, and wrong no man.*

Pulp heroes stand as paragons of clean living, education, and morality. Although they appear on the surface to be the "hometown boy or girl done good," there is a presence about them, a charisma that causes them to stand out from the crowd.

They are not superheroes. That is, they are not "endowed with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal man." Rather, they are highly trained, educated and motivated. They succeed not because they have super-powers, but because they are determined, clever, and possess a strong moral character.

To roleplay these heroes, the player must "buy in" to the concept that the PC is deeply committed to preserving the ideals of Western (specifically American) civilization. These ideals of justice, fair play, humility, "stick-to-it-iveness," ingenuity, humor, and, when necessary, self-sacrifice.

Players should not expect to be showered with wealth at the end of a successful adventure or campaign. Rather, their reward is the satisfaction that they have helped humanity.

### ► What is *Risus*?

[Risus](#) is a FREE rules-lite role-playing game (rpg) that focuses on clichés to describe characters, rather than stats, skills, and attributes. Its features are extreme fast play, flexibility, and humor. In fact, it is billed as a "comedy rpg", but the author, S. John Ross allows that it can be used to play serious games "if you insist." For more information, and to download your own FREE copy, go to the [Risus](#) site at <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>.

- [Master Pulp Cliché List](#)
- [Guy Hoyle's Article on clichés](#)

The best way to *really* get the most out of [Risus](#) is to customize your character's cliché. [Here](#) is a great article that explains how clichés work, and may give you a good idea for how to put your character together.

### *Character Creation Guidelines*

Typically, Characters using the Adventure Street Omnibus series of pulp settings will use the standard [Risus](#). In other words, players will have 10 dice to allocate among various clichés. There is a limit of 4 dice allocated to anyone cliché. I personally like the idea of an rpg where regular, ol' fashioned six-sided dice stolen from an old board game can be used to play, so there Funky Dice will not be used. As players create their characters, they might want to add a Hook and a Tale. A Hook is a character flaw, a physical/mental/social disability that the GM could use to his great advantage. A Tale is just what it sounds like: a detailed background story that breathes life into your character. Hooks and Tales each give a bonus of one (1) die that can be allocated among either clichés or Lucky Shots or Questing Dice, which are explained below. Language skills must be specified in either the clichés or in the tale. character creation rules.

A player can elect to use one cliché die to buy three Lucky Shots. These "shots" allow the player to add one die to any roll that the character really, really has to make. Questing Dice are similar, with two glaring exceptions: A player can buy five (5) Questing Dice for every one cliché die he spends, and while Lucky shots can be applied to any roll, Questing Dice must be applied to a task related to a specific Quest that the character is engaged in. This will be explained in more detail with the sample Character from *Ripping Air Yarns*.

If a player decides to forgo Lucky Shots and Questing Dice, he may choose to Pump a cliché or Double Pump one. These rules are carefully explained in Advanced Option II of the free [Risus](#) Rules set available from <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>.

Finally, in *Adventure Street Omnibus*, Boxcars and Breakthroughs from the [Risus Companion](#) are used. If a player rolls the dice for any given cliché, and they all come up sixes ("boxcars"), he may roll the dice again adding the second total to the first. If he rolls boxcars again, he continues as above.

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# Daring Adventure Tales

*“Two-Fisted Globe-Trotting Adventure!”*

## v Setting Notes

Daring Adventure Tales is the basic setting for this sourcebook. Players can explore lost worlds, solve puzzling mysteries, don mask and cloak and avenge crime on the mean streets, and save the world for democracy.

## v Pulp Examples

- The Shadow
- Doc Savage
- Secret Agent “X”
- Justice, Inc.

## v Helpful Clichés

- Big Game Hunter
- Explorer
- All-American Athlete
- Inventor/Gadgeteer
- Gentleman Spy
- Spy
- Ace Reporter
- News Photographer
- Agency Detective
- Costumed Vigilante
- Vigilante
- Private Investigator
- Scientific Detective
- Foreign Legionnaire
- Military Veteran
- Marine
- Sailor
- Ship’s Captain
- Escape Artist
- Stage Magician
- Bon Vivant/Dilettante/Socialite

## v Sample Character

### Jackson Dare

Rugged Soldier-For-Hire (4)

Fearless Outdoor Survival Guide (3)

Beer-Swilling, Cigar-Chomping Tall Tale Teller (2)

Lucky Shots [] [] []

## v House Rules

### - Why No Magic Rules?

Players may be surprised to find that magic rules are not included in the basic setting, *Daring Adventure Tales*. This is because in the classic adventure pulps of the 1930’s magic makes almost no appearance. What is first taken for evidence of the supernatural is nearly always shown to have reasonable explanations.

Magic does make appearances in other genres of the pulps, and *Strange Western Stories* and *Weird Crime Report* both contain a set of rules for emulating pulp

magic in *Risus*.

- **Why No Weapon or Vehicle Rules?**

*Risus* tends to emphasize story over mechanics. Combat is designed to be fast, and additional rules covering weapon types and damage modifiers are unnecessary. *Risus* combat, which can be anything from a high school debate to a running firefight among rival street gangs, is predicated on two concepts: combat is essentially wearing an opponent down in order to gain an advantage and “to the victor go the spoils,” i.e., the winner gets to decide the loser’s fate.

Again, this fits ideally with the spirit of the pulps. Combat is fast and furious, with incredible feats of derring-do, and occasionally, little regard for reason (how else could you get 11 shots out of a six-shooter without reloading?). However, there is not much detail in the narration of the combat sequence (one possible exception is in the Air Pulps, where the types of engines and machine guns were described in almost excruciating detail).

Vehicle rules follow the same rationale. The fewer the rules, the quicker the action. Personal vehicles can be created using the “Sidekicks and Shieldmates” rules from the *Risus Companion*. Players can spend one die from their 10-dice limit at character creation to create a three-dice vehicle (car, plane, boat, jet pack, whatever). A good example of this is found in *Ripping Air Yarns* with the sample character, “The Phoneix.”

If necessary, GM’s may assign dice to a vehicle during the course of a sequence in order to help play out the scenario.

# Ripping Air Yarns

*Featuring “The Phoenix”*

v **Setting Notes** These pulps deal with air piracy, espionage, sabotage, smuggling, etc.

v **Pulp Examples**

- G-8 and his Battle Aces
- Bill Barnes
- Kerry Keen

v **Helpful Clichés**

- Aviator/Aviatrix
- Spy
- Gadgeteer
- Explorer
- Bootlegger (Smuggler)
- Flying Ace
- Foreign Legionnaire
- Marine
- Military Veteran
- Soldier of Fortune/MMercenary
- Trusty Greasmonkey (Mechanic)
- Gambler
- Bon Vivant/Dilettante/Socialite

v **Sample Character**

John Scipio – “The Phoenix”

Masked Avenger (4)

Daredevil Aviator (3)

Crack Airplane Mechanic (2)

Lucky Shots [] [] []

Personal Aircraft (as per Sidekicks rule in the *Risus Companion*) – “The Phoenix”

Tri-phibious Fighter-Bomber Made From Salvaged Airplane Parts (3)

**Backstory (Tale):** As a young man, John Scipio was fascinated by the miracle of flight, in its youth even as he was. At the age of 15, John managed to find a way to and joined the Lafayette Escadrille, a squadron of American pilots flying for the French government in the Great War.

Although he was not a pilot when he arrived, and served in a variety of subordinate roles in the squadron, he displayed an aptitude for flying and due to losses was soon pressed into flying in the waning days of the war. After the Armistice, he could not satisfy his hankering for flying stunts, so he joined up with a barnstorming tours at air shows.

However, the tours proved to not be a steady income producer, so John started a business as a commercial air courier. One day, John was flying over the U.S.-Canadian Border when he was attacked by air pirates. His plane was forced to crash-land. The pirates raided his cargo while John lay unconscious and bleeding. They left him for dead, but he survived. Finding an

abandoned airfield, he began building a fighter-bomber capable of landing on land, water, or ice. Once it became operational, John dubbed it “the Phoenix” and set off to find the air pirates. When he meets them again, “The Phoenix” will have the upper hand, and the air pirates will be put out of commission – permanently. Until that time, John has adopted the identity of “The Phoenix” after his aircraft. Although he is determined to make the pirates pay, John takes on spies, saboteurs, and smugglers, fighting crime while he searches for his sworn enemies.

The plane bears no markings other than an illustration of a phoenix rising from the flames.

#### v House Rules

Vehicle rules – Compare cliché of pilot with cliché rating of aircraft. Use whichever dice is higher for rolls. This simulates two things: A good pilot can get the most out of even a bad aircraft, and a good aircraft can make an average pilot better.

Creation: Use “Sidekicks and Shieldmates” rules from [\*Risus Companion\*](#)

*Questing Dice* Another Advanced Option presented in [\*Risus Companion\*](#) is Questing Dice. This option allows a player to spend one of his cliché dice to purchase up to five (5) Questing Dice. Each one can be used to supplement any roll related to a particular quest that the character may be on. For example, using the above sample character, John Scipio, instead of spending one die to purchase three Lucky Shots, we buy five Questing Dice. The limitation is that these can *only* be used to supplement rolls related to his quest of discovering the air pirates who tried to kill him. However, they would not always be used in rolls related to his vigilante cliché.

# Stellar Space Magazine

*Featuring The Space Rangers*

## v Setting Notes

Science Fiction Pulps initiated the “Golden Age” of Science Fiction, mostly through the efforts of John W. Campbell (editor of *Astounding*) and Hugo Gernsback (editor of *Amazing Stories*). Isaac Asimov, in a discussion of the history of modern (post 1926) science fiction, notes that between the years 1926 and 1938, adventure themes were dominant in the “Sci-Fi” pulps. This is evident in the fact that the original American science fiction hero, Buck Rogers, was first introduced to the public as “Anthony Rogers” in the short story “Armageddon 2419 AD” by Philip Francis Nowlen and published in the August 1928 issue of *Amazing Stories*. Less than a year later, the story was picked up and turned into a comic strip and Buck Rogers’ fame took off. Imitators quickly followed Buck, the most notable of which was Flash Gordon.

The comics were then turned into movie serials starring Buster Crabbe. The serials gave us the beloved images of bulbous, finned art deco rocketships, rayguns and alien princess femme fatales.

Stellar Space Magazine is a setting dedicated to reliving the adventurous spirit of 1930’s pulp sci-fi.

## v Pulp Examples

- *Amazing Stories*
- *Astounding*
- *Buck Rogers* and *Flash Gordon* serials and comics
- *Flash Gordon* (1980 movie)

## v Helpful Clichés

- Spy
- Gadgeteer
- Explorer
- Bootlegger (Smuggler)
- Marine
- Military Veteran
- Soldier of Fortune/M Mercenary
- Trusty Greasmonkey (Ship’s Engineer)
- Gambler
- Bon Vivant/Dilettante/Socialite

*Additional Clichés*

- Space Pilot
- Space Ranger
- Radio Operator
- Rocket Scientist
- Alien Prince/Princess
- Alien Warrior
- Robot

## v Sample Character

### Captain Stella “Blaze” Bannister of the Space Rangers

Beautiful, But Tough-As-Nails Space Ranger (4)

Cliché (3)

Cliché (2)

Lucky Shots [] [] []

## v House Rules

Vehicle rules – Compare cliché of pilot with cliché rating of spacecraft. Use whichever dice is higher for rolls. This simulates two things: A good pilot can get the most out of even a bad spacecraft, and a good spacecraft can make an average pilot better.

Creation: Use “Sidekicks and Shieldmates” rules from [\*Risus Companion\*](#)

## v Background – The Space Rangers

The year is 2219. It has been 150 years since earth, Luna, Mars and the Asteroid Belt established the United Terran Space Federation. Prior to that time, missions from earth colonized the moon (Luna), Mars and the Belt. With earth, these three make up the Four Member Worlds.

When the first manned mission reached Mars, the crew discovered the remains of a technologically advanced society. After many years of close study of records and relics of the Martian civilization, leading scientists and engineers introduced a “next generation space engine,” capable of traveling the solar system in a matter of hours and minutes, as opposed to weeks and months.

At about the same time as the Mars mission, a mission also traveled to Venus and discovered a race of sentient beings. The Venusians, while friendly to the earthmen, have thus far declined entry into the Federation.

The Space Rangers were formed to be the law enforcement and military force of the Federation. Various moons of Jupiter have been set aside as penal colonies for the Federation, inmates sentenced to hard labor in the mines, digging out solarite ore, which is used to fuel the next generation space engines.

# Strange Western Stories

*“Weird West” Adventures*

## v Setting Notes

## v Pulp Example

- Deputy Marshall Lee Winters, written by Lon Williams, appearing in *Real Western Stories*

## v Helpful Clichés

- Western Lawman
- Cowboy
- Gambler
- Bartender (Saloon keeper)
- Native Guide (Indian Scout)
- Clergyman (Preacher)
- Banker
- Bank Robber (Train robber)
- Judge
- Noble Savage (Indian Chief, Indian Brave)

*Additional Clichés*

- Gunslinger
- Bounty Hunter
- Trick Rider
- Rifleman
- Cavalry Officer
- Cavalry Trooper
- Sod Buster
- Ranch Hand
- Prospector/Miner
- Schoolmarm
- Indian Medicine Man

## v Sample Character

### Sheriff Hiram Parish

Steely-eyed Western Lawman (3)

Cowboy Horseman with an Uncanny Relationship with His Horse (3)

Rifle Marksman (2)

Rational Skeptic Who Sometimes Fears He May Be Wrong (1)

(Sidekick) Horse, Amigo

Trained Wild West Saddle Horse (2)

Stubborn Mule When Faced With Supernatural  
(1)

## v House Rules

## **Magic and The Supernatural in *Strange Western Stories***

The only “magic” available to players in *Strange Western Stories* is that gained from the “Medicine Man” cliché. The basic mechanic from *Risus*, Target Numbers, is used to determine the success or failure of the use of Indian “Medicine.” If more “magical” options are desired, please consult the more detailed rules contained in *Weird Crime Report*, as well as the notes for American Indian Medicine, below.

### **American Indian Medicine –**

American Indian “medicine” is a blending of folk magic, mysticism, luck, personal charisma, and a knowledge of treating illnesses and injuries.

For the individual Indian, it was seen as a charm of protection that would be unique to that person. Often, it took the form of an animal or other natural phenomena. Among many tribes, a boy approaching puberty would undergo a rite of passage that involved a solitary fast and ordeal. The first animal that appeared to the young man in his dreams during this vigil would become the totem of his “medicine.” This totem could sometimes be reflected in the name the boy chooses for himself upon entering adult society.

Occasionally, a totem may carry a ritual prohibition. Breaking this taboo would carry with it the penalty of negating the medicine. The medicine would be restored, but only after a lengthy and complicated purification ritual. In *Risus* terms, this prohibition would count as a Hook.

Medicine Men were those individuals within the tribe who understood and accessed the rituals of the tribe’s medicine in order to ensure the success of the tribe. They would be called upon to treat the sick and injured, drive away evil spirits and control the weather. They could also be accomplished and fierce warriors, and battle chiefs often looked to them for advice and inspiration in the face of battle.

Medicine Men were also responsible for producing “medicine bags,” which were pouches of various components produced in a ritual fashion as a protective amulet for the wearer. In *Risus*, should a medicine man wish to create a medicine bag, he would expend one die from his “medicine man” cliché for each medicine bag. The bag then functions as a temporary set of three “Lucky Shots.” Once the shots from the bag are used, they do not heal; after the third shot has been expended, the bag is depleted. The medicine man’s cliché can be healed at a rate set by the GM, or it can be “healed” using the character advancement rules from the main *Risus* rules at the end of the adventure.

### v **Locale** – Point Blank, pop. 312

Backstory – Point Blank is a small town nearby to Forlorn Gap, where Deputy Marshall Lee Winters is the chief lawman. Technically, Winters has jurisdiction over Lonesome Gulch, but tends to allow Sheriff Parish free range in enforcing the law in his county.

#### **Buildings:**

- Saloon
- Hotel/Stage Office
- Telegraph Office
- Jail/Sheriff’s Office
- General Store
- Assayer
- Bank
- Livery Stables
- Newspaper Office

- Schoolhouse
- Church
- Doctor's Office
- Barber
- Shoenfrau House, or "Miss Violet's Home for Wayward Girls"

I am indebted to David E. North's *Risus* adaptation **Wild West!** and to Tim Ballew's **Silverlode 1908**  
For inspiration on this setting.

# Weird Crime Report

*Featuring "The Spook Squad"*

## v Setting Notes

Horror pulps are just what the name implies: ghost, vampire, werewolf, and monster stories written to give you a good chill and lead you to sleep with the lights on. There were several leading authors known for their work in this area: H. P. Lovecraft,

"Shudder Pulps," a.k.a. "Weird Menace" stories are a subgenre that uses many of the elements of the Horror story. There is a villain, at first thought to be supernatural in either origin or power that threatens the well-being of the city/country/world. This villain kidnaps a beautiful girl and subjects her to extreme cruel and sadistic torture. Her boyfriend manages to rescue her and defeat the villain, which is usually shown to be an ordinary mortal being, albeit an evil genius. "Weird Menace" was a theme prominently featured in the radio drama *I Love A Mystery*. That radio drama later inspired the Saturday morning cartoon, *Scooby-Doo* (the original series). If you think of the old *Scooby Doo* cartoons ("I'd have gotten away with it if wasn't for you pesky kids!"), then you pretty much have an idea of what "Shudder Pulps" are like.

## v Pulp Examples

Some of the magazines that featured horror stories:

*Unknown*

*Weird Tales*

Some of the magazines that featured "Weird Menace" tales:

*Dime Mystery*

*Horror Stories*

*Terror Tales*

## v Helpful Clichés

- Ghost Chaser
- Occult Scholar
- Psychic Investigator
- G-Man

## v House Rules

Character Creation

As per standard [\*Risus\*](#) rules, with the following Advanced Options:

Pumps and Double Pumps, Sidekicks, Lucky Shots, and Boxcars

## v Sample Character

### Special Agent Laurents Gilchrist

- Psychically Sensitive G-Man [3]  
Erudite Connoisseur of World Literature (2)  
Short Tempered Martial Arts Student (2)

House Rules

## v Magic and the Supernatural

### ***Guiding Principles***

Outside of the Horror Pulps, there is almost no mention of magic and the supernatural. Occasionally, there may be a hint of something otherworldly, but these hints are later proven to have rational, mundane, non-magical explanations (giving them more in common with the Shudder Pulps than the Horror Pulps).

On the other hand, the Horror Pulps provide just about the only evidence of magic and the supernatural. In these stories, magic is performed by following a formulaic ritual. There is usually a sacred locale, specially prepared components, an arcane symbol or two, and a verbal incantation. Because of this formulaic approach to magic, it was not necessarily limited to “trained mages.” Anyone could pick up a book of spells, so to speak, and provided they followed the instructions accurately, could cast a spell.

This actually translates well to *Risus*. It follows one of the cardinal rules: Anyone Can Try Anything. In addition, GM’s will assign target numbers based on the cliché being used to read the formula and cast the spell. Grimoires, or spell books, are considered bonus die gear in the hands of a character with a cliché appropriate for reading and/or casting the listed spell. Characters using clichés not appropriate to the reading/casting will face higher Target Numbers, thus negating the advantage of the bonus die.

### ***Magic and Character Creation***

Remember, Pulp heroes are, for the most part, red-blooded Americans committed to preserving the “Natural Order of Things.” Since magic violates “The Natural Order,” and deals with “Things Man Was Not Meant To Know,” no Pulp Hero can take a witch doctor or voodoo priest cliché. The only exception is the Indian Medicine Man cliché from *Strange Western Stories*. However, players are free to take clichés from the Academic Section of the Master List that deal with arcane studies. These do allow a character to read/cast from a grimoire, as well as maybe remember some small charm that could be helpful in certain circumstances. The Pulp Hero may have a psychic ability, but these are generally low-level: danger sense, limited telepathy/ESP, etc. – no “Jedi mind control” techniques!

### ***The Mechanic***

This is no different from the basic mechanic in *Risus*. When a player decides that his character will attempt to cast a spell from either a memorized charm or from a musty tome, or a hieroglyphic text on the wall of a pyramid tomb, the GM will assign a target number to the spell. I’m borrowing the table from Tim Ballew’s excellent game *Silverlode 1908* -- this was one of the inspirations for *Strange Western Stories*). He actually lifted it from S John Ross’ (the Venerable Creator of *Risus*) essay on *Elemental Magic*:

<b>Simple (TN 5)</b>	Any effect up to and including that which helps the party achieve something as a whole, or that acts as a tool to facilitate another activity.
<b>Ordinary (TN 10)</b>	A standard effect that is meant to overcome a single obstacle that faces the character, or handle the character's share of an obstacle that faces the party.
<b>Complex (TN 15)</b>	The effect would hog the scene a bit.
<b>Difficult (TN 20)</b>	The effect would entirely upstage the other players, turning the other characters into bystanders for the rest of the scene and then some.

<b>Dangerous (TN 25)</b>	The effect would shortcut (or instantly rewrite) the whole scenario.
<b>Impossible (TN 30)</b>	The effect would utterly wreck the campaign world or campaign plotline.

In deciding the TN for a given spell attempt, the GM will consider two factors: Dramatic Necessity and Spotlight Sharing (Hogging). Higher numbers will be given to those actions which limit the involvement of the other players and which suck the fun out of the adventure for everyone (including the GM). Should a player fail a roll in casting a spell, the text from the grimoire mysteriously disappears, leaving only pages of blank paper, and any other nasty badness the GM can devise for the failed caster.

- **Insanity**-- In *Weird Crime Report*, GM's may elect to use a set of sanity rules adapted from <http://home.triad.rr.com/flintlocklaser/sleep/rules.html>. When confronted directly by the supernatural, GM's may require the player to roll against the cliché most closely associated to paranormal investigator. If the character has nothing resembling "paranormal investigator," then the GM may allow the player to roll two dice, following the *Risus* principle for "When Somebody Can't Participate" from page 4 of the basic rules.

The following table is adapted from the Sleepwalkers rules at the above url:

Event	TN
Performing a minor arcane ritual/Reading minor text	5
Discovering evidence of supernatural creature	10
Performing a significant ritual/Reading a significant text	15
Witnessing an unbelievable atrocity/supernatural attack	20
Performing a major ritual/Reading a major text	25
Confronting a supernatural creature	30

If the player fails the roll, one die is deducted from the cliché. The loss is permanent, although advancement is possible as per standard *Risus* rules. If the cliché is reduced to zero, then the character is determined to have descended into madness, and any recovery is at that point is up to the GM.

- **Background** – The Supernatural, Paranormal and Otherwise Unknown Criminal Division was established in 1928 by the personal authority of Director J. Edgar Hoover of the F.B.I.

During the 1920's, there was a rise in crime on a national scale in connection with National Prohibition. Along with increased activity of bootleggers, the Ku Klux Klan and agents of foreign governments, there were some crimes that had no rational explanation. Hoover authorized the S.P.O.U.C.D. (pronounced "Spooked") to investigate these crimes and to "neutralize or suppress beings and energies with malevolent intent." Their field reports go directly to Director Hoover, who after reading them, order them permanently sealed. Agents have a great deal of latitude and possess the highest of security clearances.

In order to maintain cover for the S.P.O.U.C.D., or "Spook Squad," as it is known within the Bureau, critical information and training is issued nationally to field agents by so-called

“horror films.” Many scriptwriters and directors have been recruited for this purpose. Directors James Whale and Tod Browning have been especially helpful.

The Wayback Machine - https://web.archive.org/web/20071030202102/http://www.gamesforfree.net:80/bobstuff/Risus/esidarap.html

# ESI'DARAP

A Risus supplement by Zach "Grimmy" Lazarus

This is a fantasy supplement for Risus, created by our overlord S. John Ross. You probably know this, so let's cut to the chase. Also if fictional religions, gods and points of good and evil offend you don't even bother. Also, it takes itself seriously to a certain extent, but that doesn't mean you can't have comical adventures. And please don't get the notion this is "the way things are supposed to be" - freely chip off parts of this setting and blend it with others! The material provided besides the bare bones basis of what Esi'darap *is* (and it *is* a giant cave) was basically just provided there for "default information" in its category. You may use this any way you like; save for using parts of it online or copying it somewhere online without credit.

## -BACKSTORY-

Esi'darap is the underworld of Terra- the opposite of the so called Promised Land.  
However, until recently, it didn't even exist...

At one time there were two gods- Phoenix and Paragon. Phoenix was a colossal bird with a magnificent red and gold coat, which provided the equivalent of sunlight to the lands of Terra. This was the first quarter of the day, as Paragon rested. In the next quarter, Paragon would come to visit with Phoenix, tinting the sky with a relaxing deep orange. Paragon was equally as magnificent as Phoenix- but with a blue and white plumage. The third quarter of the day, Phoenix rested while Paragon lit up what would be a black canvas of sky- with a beautiful white ambiance, blue reflecting off of his majestic feathers, the sky turning to a subtle dark navy color. In the final quarter of the day, Phoenix would awake and visit with Paragon, the sky becoming a tranquil purple. After the quarter was over, Paragon would go back into rest.

Terra was a paradise- people worshiping their god of choice, living in harmony. However, the gods one day got in a fight over whose coat shown more majestically. The argument went on for 3 whole days and drove Terra into sort of a mass hysteria; regardless of it being a somewhat trivial dispute, the Terrans didn't know exactly what was going on, the tongue of the gods being inaudible to their ears. The more brash worshipers of Phoenix eventually started an underground movement to decimate the worshipers of Paragon in swift attacks, banishing them to a giant, abandoned maze of caves known as the Abyss.

They succeeded and overthrew the church of Paragon, and eventually the god became weaker and weaker- until he finally fell onto the earth, where headstrong Phoenix worshipers restrained him and discarded him into the Abyss, with the rest of the Paragon worshipers.

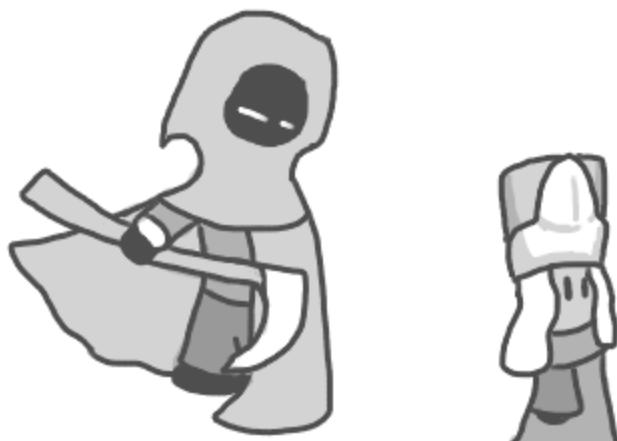
However, the remaining Paragon worshipers managed to keep him alive with devout worship and meticulously handled care- all of them barely finding ways to survive in the deep abyss, living off of foliage which appreciated the dank atmosphere.

Those trapped beneath the earth eventually became accustomed to the new atmosphere- where Paragon would stay awake all day, every day, to care for his worshipers to his highest extent. The entire cave system was lit up with a somewhat melancholy yet powerful teal, more on the blue side than the green. The larger chambers of the caves would have cloud like mist delicately hanging from the ceiling, sort of negating the inhabitants of feeling like they were confined to a dark hell. They all began to make their own cultures, rivaling that of the world above. Not soon, but one day they will overthrow the order of the Phoenix- even if that meant destroying the god himself. One day, they will escape their new "home"- Esi'darap.

## -RACES-

**The Imps**

A pet project of Paragon's back before he and Phoenix made the Terrans- the first experiment with sentient beings. The Terrans may actually have never been made if Phoenix didn't remark on his distaste for the Imps. Favoring dark places, Paragon crafted the Abyss for them and they lived happily in seclusion from the Phoenix's brilliant shine oft visible on the surface. When the Forlorn arrived, they happily accepted them as brethren.

**The Forlorn**

The humans banished to the Abyss now known as Esi'darap. All of them devoutly worship Paragon- striving to keep him full of power from their hopes. They wear long cloaks and thick clothes to help keep them warm, and practice using scythes oftenly in hopes that, in the hands of skilled masters, they could trump the more commonly seen above-ground swords and spears.

**The Magi**

The most tender carers of Paragon in his darkest days were blessed with some of the restorative power of Paragon- their skin turned a gentle blue and their hair an impossibly light white, both colors imitating parts of his own palette.

**-SAMPLE CLICHES-**

As usual, don't feel obligated to stay within the reaches of the ones listed here...

**Reaper:** Lots of skill with scythes. Main combat class. Most likely to talk about how he and his friends can "never stop trying".

**Healer:** Somehow received restorative magic powers, either through mutation or blessing. Most likely to be yelling out the name of the male lead in tight situations.

**Surger:** Acquired offensive magic abilities in one way or another. Most likely to scratch chin while eyes are arrogantly closed.

**Rogue:** Slender and very fast on the feet. Most likely to giggle mischievously.

**Mixer:** Has some skill with miniature scythes and an odd sort of magic that backs up their scythe attacks. Most likely to have a smug sense of superiority.

**-SAMPLE CHARACTERS-****Ara the Magi (f)**

A 27 year old high priestess of Paragon. Can communicate with monsters.

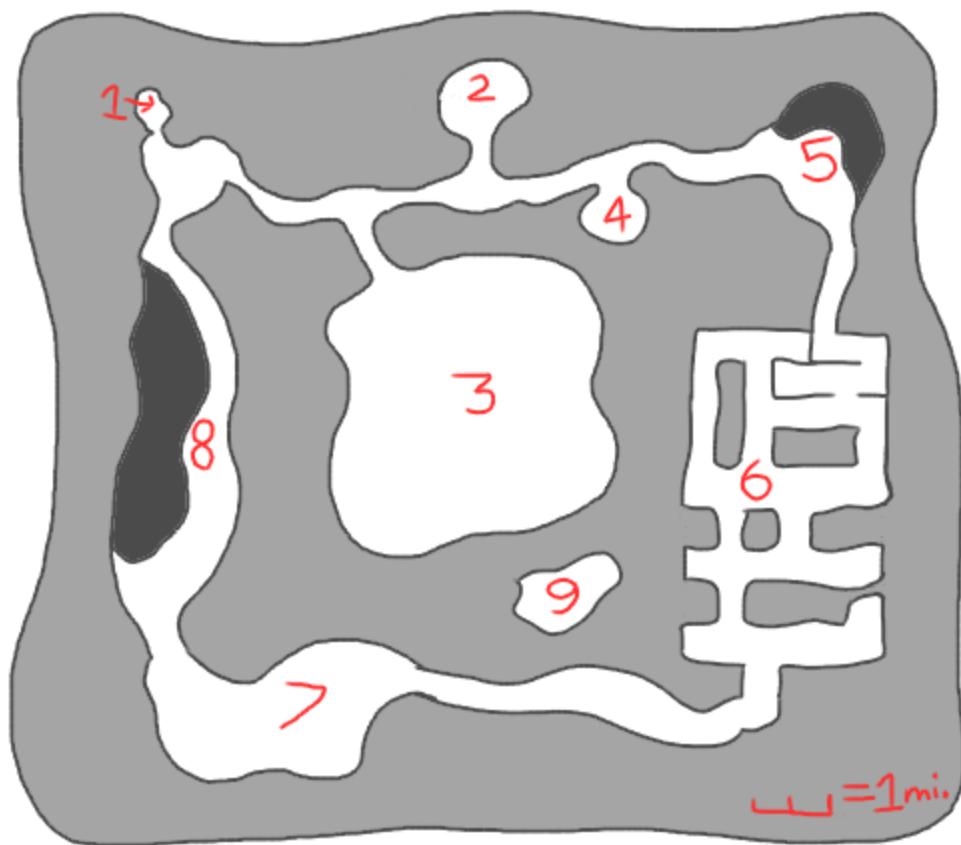
**Clichés:** Healer (4), Scholar (3), Cunning Linguist (3)

**Vega the Forlorn (m)**

21 year old treasure hunter. One of the few non-imps to brave the poisonous tunnel.

**Clichés:** Reaper (4), Swashbuckler (3), Master Debater (3)

**-UNDERWORLD MAP-**



#### -POINTS OF INTEREST-

- 1: The stairway to the upper world.
- 2: The resting place of Paragon.
- 3: The main Forlorn/Magi city.
- 4: The place which edible sub-subterranean plants are farmed.
- 5: Known as "The Abyss's Abyss". Absolutely nothing is known of what is down this pit.
- 6: An astounding labyrinth made from an obsidian-like stone. Giant halls with amazingly high ceilings.
- 7: The main Imp city.
- 8: A giant cave filled with noxious gas the imps don't have trouble breathing. About 40 feet into the pit is the top of a dark lake; incredibly huge, incomprehensibly frightening beings have been known to peer out of the water and up into the cave occasionally. It's speculated that these legendary things are the cause of the fumes.
- 9: The enigmatic temple where the high Imps, Forlorn and Magi discuss issues worthy of note. There are no obvious tunnels that lead here- they are all hidden.

#### -MONSTERS-

Esidarap holds, generally, the common sort of monsters you'd expect to find in a giant cave. It does have some unique oddities though, which I will link to once I create sheets of. Until then you can get some miscellaneous monster sheets at my [main page](#).

#### -SCENARIO IDEAS-

Starting a journey should be easy enough (if it's not, refer to S. John Ross's excellent [Big List of RPG Plots](#) for help on that). However, if you'd like help in advance for ending one, here are three basic endings:

**Mended Fences:** In the heat of the inevitable Paragon followers v.s. Phoenix followers war, all fighting is ceased after observing a selfless act of kindness from a Paragon follower to a wounded Phoenix follower.

**Retribution:** Paragon v.s. Phoenix war happens, Paragon side crushes Phoenix side by stroke of luck. From here on, either "the job is finished" or a peace treaty is compromised, perhaps leading to another "golden age".

**Accustomed to the dark:** In the final moments before starting to siege the upper world, the Forlorn and Magi begin to realize that they are living better below the earth than they were above it. They make

great leaps and bounds in technology, and sleep easy knowing they are superior to their cousins on the surface.

**-SPECIAL THANKS-**

S. John Ross, Joshua Moore and Will Douglas. (list subject to grow?)  
I'm sure you guys know who you are. Thanks!

**-IN CLOSING-**

It was fun logging the few hours I did into this setting and I'm pretty proud of it. If you have any comments (or critiques) or make use of it, please let me know by dropping a line to zachlazarus -at- gmail -dot com. (with the at and dot obviously replaced with @ and . ) That would be awesome.

[Back to Main](#)

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# Risus Master Pulp Cliche List

*While exhausting, this list is by no means exhaustive. If you think up a cliché you would like to play, write out a clear, clever description (“what it’s good for”) and ask your GM to consider it. If it’s well-done and does not unfairly tip the balance of the game, he just might go for it!*

This list was cobbled together from a number of sources, including members of the [Risus Talk List](#) (especially [Guy Hoyle](#)) and members of the [Pulp Games List](#), (especially [Joe Coleman's list](#) of Pulp-Style Archetypes). Any similarity between this list and the others is purely intentional (after all, why should I reinvent the wheel, right?)

## Academics

Cliché For	What It's Good
<i>Absent-minded professor</i>	Forget head if it wasn't attached, invent miraculous but troublesome device or substance, leave isolation chamber doors ajar, accidentally shrink the kids
<i>Anthropologist</i>	Know aboriginal folktales, know tribal customs, eat disgusting things, speak obscure languages
<i>Antiquarian</i>	Quote from obscure authors, know obscure facts, cite reference
<i>Archeologist</i>	Discover/explore ancient ruins/burial chambers/temples, read hieroglyphics
<i>College student</i>	Party, chase girls, cram for test, go to class, write home for money
<i>Ghost Chaser</i>	Know all about ghosts, set up cameras to catch ghosts on film, disprove fake ghosts, get rid of real ghosts
<i>Librarian</i>	Sort books, find newspaper articles, “shh!”, find obscure information, repair books
<i>Linguist</i>	Know obscure languages, translate ancient inscriptions, pronounce the unpronounceable
<i>Occult Scholar</i>	Know weird phenomena, remember strange names, find ancient incantation

**Professor's Aide** Pull books for Professor, do research for Professor, teach classes for Professor, give credit to Professor

**Psychic Investigator** Study psychic phenomena, test subjects for ESP and Telekinesis

## Adventure

### Cliché For

### What It's Good

**Aviator/Aviatrix** Fly plane, tinker with engine, storm barns, make an emergency landing

**Big Game Hunter** Shoot wild animals, interpret native drums, speak native languages, survive in the wild

**Explorer** Drive dogsled teams, climb mountains, push back the frontiers of the known world, map uncharted areas, get antsy when you're home too long, go somewhere nobody else has ever heard of, meet people you can't talk to, stumble on lost civilizations, collect exotic memorabilia, tell stories about how you got that scar, learn scandalous phrases in foreign languages

**Human Fly** Climb skyscraper without gear, walk across tightrope, tip off photographers

**Jungle King/Queen** Raised by animals, keen sight and smell, great strength and agility, communicate with animals, survive in the wild, swing from vine, wrestle alligator

**Mountain Climber** Rappel down sheer cliff faces, wear spikes on your shoes, have lots of rope

**Noble Savage** Be confused by technology, spout ancestral wisdom, not be corrupted by modern values

**Treasure Hunter** Follow treasure maps, explore sunken wrecks,

## Athletics

### Cliché For

### What It's Good

**All-American Athlete** Run, swim, jump, throw, wrestle, be a good sport

**Baseball Hero** Pitch, field, throw, bat, slide, chew

<b>Boxer</b>	Punch, jab, jump rope, work on footwork
<b>Football Hero</b>	Tackle, kick, throw, catch, block
<b>Golf Pro</b>	Drive, chip, putt, wear gaudy pants
<b>Swimmer</b>	Dive, hold breath, cross English Channel
<b>Tennis Pro</b>	Serve, volley, wear white
<b>Track and Field</b>	Run, jump, put shot, throw javelin/discus
<b>Wrestler</b>	Grapple, pin, throw opponent

## Business

### Cliché For

### What It's Good

<b>Accountant</b>	Cook the books, add columns, calculate interest rates
<b>Antique Dealer</b>	Know value of antiques, discuss characteristics of old craftsmanship, haggle with sellers, outbid competitors at auctions
<b>Bookshop owner</b>	Obtain obscure titles, dust shelves, know where any book in the shop is, know what's in all the books
<b>Financier/Banker</b>	Wear suits, calculate interest/mortgage rates, invest in companies, make loans
<b>Industrialist</b>	Build factories, mass produce goods, buy smaller companies
<b>Salesman</b>	Convince people to buy, travel, smile reassuringly, apply pressure
<b>Stockbroker</b>	Wear suits, read ticker-tape information

## Crime

### Cliché For

### What It's Good

<b>Bankrobber</b>	Wear masks, "Stick 'em up!"
<b>Bootlegger</b>	Make 'shine, drive fast on rural, mountain roads
<b>Burglar</b>	Break into houses, find hidden safes, walk quietly

	<b>Con Artist</b>	Convincing other people to give you money, evading cops.
	<b>Counterfeiter</b>	Make phony money that looks real
	<b>Criminal Mastermind</b>	Conquer the world, devise fiendish tortures, utilize exotic devices, create elaborate plots, explain plan to enemy before you kill him, hire henchman without explaining what happened to the dozens of other henchmen you hired, secret escape route, destroy secret base
	<b>Femme Fatale</b>	Trade money for love, seduce the rich and elderly, disguise true nature, fall in love for real with hero.
	<b>Fugitive From Justice</b>	Disguise oneself, hide in shadows, protest innocence,
	<b>Gangster</b>	Dark suit with black shirt & white tie, execute squealers, carry out the orders of Mr. Big
	<b>Gun Moll</b>	Heavy makeup, sexy in a cheap and tawdry way, cynical
	<b>Henchman</b>	Follow orders without wondering what happened to other henchmen
	<b>Hit Man</b>	Not talking much, wearing a cheap suit, looking intimidating, stalking targets, telling people to go out in the alley but still not talking much.
	<b>Oriental Mystic</b>	Hypnotize do-gooders, be inscrutable, create illusion, quote Confucius and Lao Tsu
	<b>Reformed Gangster</b>	Old contacts, streetwise, keep nose clean, frequently suspected by police, not trusted by other crooks
	<b>Thug</b>	Pistol-whip victims, brutalize victims, take it on the lam, never squeal, plan heist, steal things, have no personality
Engineering	<b>Cliché For</b>	<b>What It's Good</b>
	<b>Crackpot Inventor/Mad Scientist</b>	Come up with amazing device/plan to revolutionize the world, have weird/crazy/menacing laugh
	<b>Inventor/Gadgeteer</b>	Fix almost anything but it looks weird, invent half-baked contraptions, put together intricate gadgets

out of common objects, stammer and sweat around women

## Espionage

### Cliché For

#### *Gentleman Spy*

Master of disguise, ladies' man, marksman, sophisticate

#### *Spy*

Cross enemy lines, infiltrate enemy territory, collect vital information, attend swanky parties, sit in smoky taverns, collect latest rumors and gossip, use cover identities, plan escape route, sneak around, decode secret messages, eavesdrop, stay out of the way, disguise, know foreign languages, get back with information

## Fine Arts

### Cliché For

#### *Painter*

Wear beret & smocks, stretch canvases, mix paints, live in a loft

#### *Sculptor*

Work with clay, use chisels, make busts/statutes

## Government

### Cliché For

#### *Ambassador*

Negotiate treaties, enjoy immunity from petty crimes, throw formal balls,

#### *Bored Civil Servant*

Insist on filling out paperwork *in triplicate*, refuse to rush

#### *Diplomat*

Carry important messages, be an emissary, pal around with foreign courtiers, indulge in intrigue, keep your eyes and ears open, know what to kiss and when, know about what's in vogue

#### *Politician*

Kiss babies, shake hands, make promises, negotiate compromises,

## Journalism

### Cliché For

#### *Ace Reporter*

Sniff out a scoop, drink like fish, smoke like chimney, bang out a story, protect sources, transcribe conversation

#### *Crusading Journalist*

Have a cause, write about cause, make up facts in support of cause, get other people to join cause

#### *Foreign Correspondent*

Live in exotic locales, know best restaurants and bars, send reports to home office, have contacts in local government

#### *News Photographer*

Have a big camera, flash bulbs in people's faces, make dark jokes at murder scenes

#### *Tabloid Hack*

Be nosy, be pushy, crank out sensationalized stories to sell more copy, be insensitive

## Law Enforcement

### Cliché For

#### *Agency Detective*

Tail suspects, gather information/evidence, intimidate, pick locks

#### *Amateur Detective*

Trouble magnet, find clues professionals overlook

#### *Beat Cop*

Walk beat, direct traffic, find donuts, drink stale coffee, chase fugitive

#### *Costumed Vigilante*

Wear strange costume, foil dastardly crime, track criminal to lair, duke it out, escape from certain death, protect secret identity, drive flashy vehicle, send clueless assistants on senseless tasks, rescue clueless assistants

#### *G-Man*

Agent of FBI/Treasury Dept/Federal Bureau of Narcotics, smoke like a chimney, snappy black suit, trenchcoat,

#### *Hard-Boiled Private Detective*

Broke all the time, never give up on a case, drink gallons of bad coffee, incorruptible, doggedly pursue clues

### What It's Good

### What It's Good

<b>Police Detective</b>	Interrogate suspect, deduce, flash badge, drink gallons of stale coffee
<b>Policeman</b>	Arrest criminals, interrogate criminals, drink gallons of bad coffee, smoke like a chimney, find donut shop
<b>Private Investigator</b>	Weakness for attractive women, dark sense of humor, cynical worldview
<b>Scientific Detective</b>	Observant of smallest detail, condescending
<b>Vigilante</b>	Seek to bring justice and law and order by whatever means necessary
<b>Western Lawman</b>	Wear cowboy hat, ride horses in city, promote the Code of the West
<b>Legal</b>	
<b>Cliché For</b>	<b>What It's Good</b>
<b>Judge</b>	Wear robes, pound gavel, know the law, sentence crooks, be distinguished member of community
<b>Lawyer</b>	Make deal, interrogate, know the law, twist the law, find loophole, "Objection!"
<b>Medicine</b>	
<b>Cliché For</b>	<b>What It's Good</b>
<b>Dedicated Physician</b>	Work long hours in hospital, work miracles at the 11 <sup>th</sup> hour, treasure Hippocratic oath
<b>Dentist</b>	Brushing, cleaning, drilling, causing pain
<b>Family Doctor</b>	Diagnose illness, make house call, treat disease, stitch up wound, prescribe remedy
<b>Forensic Specialist</b>	Know poisons, know telltale signs of causes of death,
<b>Jungle Doctor</b>	Concoct medicines out of exotic plants, champion cause of native peoples
<b>Nurse</b>	Assist doctors, care for patients, wear white uniforms, take temperature, dispense medications, push people around in wheelchairs

<b>Orderly</b>	Push people around in wheelchairs, look tough for agitated patients
<b>Plastic Surgeon</b>	Look at people for ways to “improve” them, have a project girlfriend/wife, maybe have underworld contacts
<b>Psychiatrist</b>	Ask pointless or infuriating questions, analyze neurosis, prescribe mind-altering drugs, make everything relate to sex
<b>Psychologist</b>	Same as Psychiatrist, but can't prescribe drugs
<b>Surgeon</b>	Cutting, stitching, sweating in operating room
<b>Military</b>	
<b>Cliché For</b>	<b>What It's Good</b>
<b>Flying Ace</b>	Fly planes, dogfight, diving out of the sun to surprise opponents
<b>Foreign Legionnaire</b>	Have past to forget, march out into desert, fight Arabs,
<b>Marine</b>	Red-blooded patriot, drive tanks, one-man army
<b>Military Veteran</b>	Use rifles and bayonets, reminisce about the Great War, nightmares
<b>Sailor</b>	Swab decks, tie knots, “Aye, aye, Captain!”
<b>Soldier</b>	Clean rifle, fire rifle, know about tactics and strategy, sleep whenever you can, stay awake during guard duty
<b>Soldier of Fortune/M Mercenary</b>	Overconfident, have contacts with gunrunners, use military training to make a living
<b>Stalwart Lieutenant</b>	Loyal, carries out orders from commander
<b>Nautical</b>	
<b>Cliché For</b>	<b>What It's Good</b>
<b>Deep-Sea Diver</b>	Wear lead shoes, hold breath, explore sunken wrecks, salvage sunken ships, fight off sharks
<b>Sailor</b>	Swab decks, tie knots, raise sails, stow cargo

<b><i>Ship's Captain</i></b>	Wear captain's hat, have three-day stubble for beard
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**Other**

<b>Cliché For</b>	<b>What It's Good</b>
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<b><i>Cowboy</i></b>	Ridin', ropin', brandin', spittin', and shootin'.
<b><i>Gambler</i></b>	Betting, cheating, winning, running very fast.
<b><i>Hobo</i></b>	Hop freight train, sing mournful songs, panhandle, do odd jobs, hobo code, drink anything alcoholic
<b><i>Race Driver</i></b>	Drive fast, tinker with car engines,
<b><i>Trusty Grease-Monkey</i></b>	Work on engines, fix engines with chewing gum and bailing wire, face and hands always smudged with grease

**Performing Arts**

<b>Cliché For</b>	<b>What It's Good</b>
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<b><i>Acrobat</i></b>	Jumping around, doing lots of flippy things, having a gift for finding naturally-occurring uneven bars in urban sprawls
<b><i>Circus Performer</i></b>	Walk tightrope, get shot out of cannon, swing from trapeze
<b><i>Concert Pianist</i></b>	Virtuoso performance, nimble fingers, impeccable evening wear
<b><i>Escape Artist</i></b>	Dislocate shoulder to escape straitjacket, hide key/lockpick in mouth, mystify audiences
<b><i>Film Crew</i></b>	Operate camera, rig lights,
<b><i>Jazz Musician</i></b>	Play in smoky clubs, improvise music, play in band, be late for a gig
<b><i>Movie Star</i></b>	Look glamorous, idolized by millions, sign autograph, memorize lines/blocking, party into the wee small hours, seduce
<b><i>Musician</i></b>	Read music, perform, be temperamental/perfectionist, write music, wear hair long

<b>Radio Announcer</b>	Use radio voice, mimic other voices/accents/dialects, “And now, a word from our sponsor!”
<b>Stage Actor/Actress</b>	Learn lines/blocking, chew scenery, hang out at swanky nightspots
<b>Stage Hand</b>	Raise/lower curtains, move scenery, keep track of props, operate trap door, sweep stage
<b>Stage Magician</b>	Sleight of hand, misdirection, the hand is quicker than the eye, sawing people in half without hurting them, make dramatic gestures, wear tuxedo and top hat, pull rabbit out of hat
<b>Stunt Man</b>	Survive a great fall, throw fake punch, escape from crashing vehicle, slide along a bar, look kinda like a movie star

## Personal Services

### Cliché For **What It's Good**

<b>Aging Friend/Servant/Attendant</b>	Speak confidentially with employer/family friend, worry, give sage advice
<b>Bartender</b>	Mix drinks, listen to other people's problems
<b>Driver</b>	Wear uniform, tinker with car engine,
<b>Native Guide</b>	Know path through desert/wilderness/jungle, carry burdens
<b>Secretary</b>	Take dictation, type, make phone calls, make appointments
<b>Short Order Cook</b>	Wear grease-stained t-shirt, make classic American cuisine, ring bell, “Your order's up!”
<b>Taxi Driver</b>	Know back alleys, drive fast, scare tourists/pedestrians, yell at other drivers

## Public Safety

### Cliché For **What It's Good**

<b>Fireman</b>	Have a pet Dalmatian named “Sparky”, use an axe, slide down poles, wear big boots, climb ladders,
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pull hoses

## Religion

### Cliché For

### What It's Good

*Clergyman (should specify faith/denomination)* Long-winded, preachy, forgive sinners, sermonize

### Missionary

Live among “the people”, try to “civilize the heathen,”

## Social

### Cliché For

### What It's Good

*Bon Vivant/Dilettante/Socialite* Throws around lots of cash, seen it all, drink gallons of champagne, expect to be waited on

# MIGHTY SONS OF RISUS!

## CHARACTER SEEDS

### (c) 2007, Guy Hoyle

These are some very basic characters just waiting for their Hooks and Tales, Sidekicks and Shieldmates, and Lucky Shots and Questing Dice to flesh them out. Feel free to change and add details, cliches, etc. [Square Brackets] indicate Double-Pumped Cliches.

#### **Peripetes the Philosopher**

*Peripetes theoretically seeks modest pleasures in order to attain a state of tranquility and freedom from fear as well as absence of bodily pain through knowledge of the workings of the world and the limits of his desires. He is more fond of the pleasure seeking and pain avoiding than seeking knowledge of the world.*

Surprisingly Competent Polymath (4)

Creatively Lazy Scrounger (3)

Enthusiastic Epicurean Philosopher exploring the pleasure-seeking aspects of his creed (3)

#### **Erissa of Knossos**

*An athletic young maid trained as a Minoan Bull Dancer, Erissa lost her position after the death of King Minos and the destruction of the Minoan civilization. She wanders the world, surviving any way she can.*

Athletic Young Ex-Bull-Dancer (4)

Rootless Wanderer With A Talent For Thievery (3)

Struggling Street Performer (2)

#### **Erebus The Orphic**

*A gloomy young lad singing morbid songs, intent on making his aristocratic parents angry out of youthful rebellion. Like his idol, Orpheus, Erebus pines for a lost love. He dabbles unwisely in*

*necromancy, sometimes walking the thin line between teenage angst and angering the powers of the Underworld.*

Goth-Like Orphic lyrist(4)

Angst-Ridden Teenager Rebell ing Against His Parents (3)

Would-Be Necromancer Thinking About Reviving His Dead Sweetheart (2)

### **Prince Agonistes**

*Disinherited prince seeking to reclaim his birthright, which was stolen from him while he was studying with Chiron the Centaur. He seeks to make a name for himself to aid his cause, which leaves him little time for or appreciation of the fairer sex.*

Proud Aristocratic Pain-In-The-Butt trying to claim his dead father's throne (4)

Glory-Seeking Warrior with No Time for the Ladies (4)

Part-time Student of Chiron the Centaur (2)

### **Drimios, Son of Zeus**

*Son and occasional priest of Zeus, Drimios is a well-muscled bodybuilder type who travels around righting wrongs (aided by the prophetic flashes of insight he receives occasionally from his father).*

Tempestuous Son of Zeus (4)

Mighty-Thewed Do-Gooder [2]

Part-Time Priest of Zeus with Occasional Glimpses of Foresight (2)

### **Gyveros the Deviser**

*Multi-talented son of Hephaistos, Gyveros does not seek the fame of a warrior; in fact, he avoids use of weapons whenever possible. His natural curiosity has often led him into danger, which he escapes from with his wide-ranging skills and cunning.*

Laid-back Jack-of-all-trades (4)

Resourceful son of Hephaistos (3)

Intelligent, optimistic escape artist (3)

Hook: Has a code against killing

### Osteos the Healer

*Rustic Healer and battle-trained surgeon, who has a lot of things to say about a lot of things. He's travelled all over the world seeking cures and remedies as part of the crew of a famous ship.*

Cantankerous ship's healer [3]

Priest of Apollo and Asklepius(2)

Opinionated pharmakon (2)

### Democoön the Warrior

*A well-educated, slightly naive young warrior of noble birth, physically and mentally fit, who has few vices and most of the virtues, and probably needs to have some of his smooth edges roughened up a bit.*

Clean-cut young warrior, ever loyal to his friends and family, and respectful of the gods (4)

Shrewd tactician with an appreciation of music, philosophy, and mathematics (3)

Handsome natural athlete with a competitive nature (3)

### Smintheos the Scoundrel

*Smintheos, the youngest son of a noble father, was too young to inherit much when his father died. He soon found himself thrust out into the world to make his own way, which he did in whatever way he could. He found that people trusted him far more than they should because of his gift for gab and his easy smile.*

Youngest son of a tight-fisted nobleman

Resourceful adventurer with a winning smile

Swift-talking scoundrel with a casual appreciation of other people's property rights

### Nephelos the Necromancer

*Though a necromancer and sorcerer, among other talents, Nephelos uses his magic in the service of "good", to atone for the crimes he committed as a worshipper of Hecate. He lays the restless dead back to rest, and opposes "evil" sorcerers and necromancers who prey on others.*

Wise-cracking magician crusading against evil magicians and vengeful spirits(4)

Ruggedly-handsome ex-worshipper of Hecate, using his powers to atone for his past crimes (4)

Hard-Drinking Two-Fisted Danger Magnet (2)

# The Mighty Sons of RISUS!

A campaign setting for Risus: The Anything RPG

©2008, Guy Hoyle

*The mighty sons of Hercules once thundered through the years!  
These men of steel could never feel  
the curse of a coward's fears!*

*The mighty sons of Hercules were men as men should be!  
They burned with dreams, then turned their dreams  
into history!  
--theme song, THE SONS OF HERCULES TV series*

The myths of ancient Greece speak to us across the ages: of heroes, gods, and monsters, of mighty quests and tragic fates, of badly-dubbed dialogue and shoddy special effects. Though elements of these fables are familiar to us (who doesn't know of Zeus and his lightning bolts, Cupid and his arrows of love, the deadly gaze of Medusa, the mighty labors of Hercules?), it is relatively untouched as a setting for fantasy role-playing games.

*The Mighty Sons of RISUS!* (or *MSoR!*) is a tongue-in-cheek adaptation of Greek history and mythology. It draws inspiration from several sources, including Italian "sword-and-sandals" movies (also known as "peplums"), the "Hercules" and "Xena" TV shows, and the inspired retro-RPG worldview of Olivier LeGrand's "[Mazes and Minotaurs](#)". Within the following pages anachronisms and inaccuracies thrive and stalk the unwary like a large unwary-stalking thing.

To use these rules you'll need a copy of *Risus: the Anything RPG*, (copyright 1993-2001) by S. John Ross. All references to *Risus* refer to [the PDF Version \(1.5\)](#). I also assume that you have a copy of [The Risus Companion](#); if you don't, you're missing out on some crunchy bits of *Risus* goodness.

**MEN AS MEN (and WOMEN AS WOMEN) SHOULD  
BE!**

"Through the centuries, in olden times, there lived...the sons of Hercules!  
Heroes supreme, they roamed the Earth, righting wrongs, helping the weak  
and oppressed, and seeking... ADVENTURE!"

--*introductory narrative, THE SONS OF HERCULES TV series*

"So", you might ask, "is **The Mighty Sons of RISUS!** a game fit only for playing well-oiled  
musclemen and sword-swinging gladiators?" By Zeus, *no!* Not all of the Sons of RISUS!  
were men of steel; they were men (and women), philosophers and priests, magicians and  
poets and rogues "who burned with dreams and turned their dreams into history", "helping  
the weak and oppressed, and seeking... ADVENTURE!" So don't "feel the curse of a  
coward's fear"; feel free to "take the world and shake the world"!

### What is a "peplum"?

*Peplums*, or *Sword and sandal* films, are a genre of low-budget adventure or historical films  
set in ancient Greece, Rome, the Middle East, and other places associated with classical  
antiquity. They often featured loose adaptations of historical or mythological themes,  
characters and events. The term "peplum" refers to the type of garment worn by actors  
(usually professional bodybuilders) to show off their heroic physiques and negligible acting  
skills.

Primarily filmed in Italy between 1958 and 1964, the peplum has enjoyed periodic revivals  
and homages, such as the hugely popular *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* and *Xena:  
Warrior Princess* TV shows.

## CHARACTER CREATION

**MSoR!** follows the standard Risus method of character creation as described in **Risus** (p. 1),  
which is briefly summarized as follows:

- 1) Take 10 d6;
- 2) Divide them up into piles of 1-4 dice each
- 3) Name each of the piles a juicy epic-sounding cliché, like "Battle-Hungry Warrior",  
"Tamer of Horses" or "Hummus-Loving Epicurean" (see **Juicy Heroic (and not-so-  
Heroic) Clichés**);
- 4) Come up with a brief description of the character, his personality, what he wants  
out of life, etc. ;
- 5) Choose or create a more-or-less pronounceable Greek-sounding name, so the other  
players don't have to call you "Rich's character" or "the guy with the hairy back".
- 6) Write it all down so you don't forget.

That's the simple way of doing things. If you want to start with more than 10 dice, or  
you want some additional ways to spend your starting dice, check out Optional Options,  
below.

## OPTIONAL OPTIONS

There are a number of advanced rule options available for **Risus**. Some are allowed in **MSoR!**,  
, some are not. Please refer to **Risus** or **The Risus Companion** for details.

**Hooks and Tales** (*Risus*, p. 5): Hooks and Tales are what the Greek myths are *all* about. Everyone should know something about their character's origins, their background, their heroic strengths and weaknesses. If you don't want to write up an epic about your hero, at least jot down the important details.

**Examples: (Hooks)**

- Meleager's life is tied to a particular half-burned log; if the log burns fully, he dies.
- Jason of the Argonauts is attracted by (and attractive *to*) dangerous women (e.g., the Lemnean women who murdered all the men on their island, the sorceress Medea).
- Odysseus is the target of Poseidon's wrath because he has slain Polyphemus (the Cyclops, Poseidon's son).
- Achilles is doomed to live a short life full of glory since he chose to take up arms instead of living a long but inglorious amongst the daughters of Lycomedes

**Example: (Tales)**

1. Achilles is the son of King Peleus of Aegina, an Argonaut, and the Sea-Nymph Thetis. He is Invulnerable due to being dipped in the river Styx as an infant (heel is vulnerable). There is a prophecy about Achilles: either he lives long life with no fame or short life with great fame. His mother raised him among women to keep him safe, but was tricked into taking up arms by Odysseus. When King Agamemnon of Mycenae gathered the Greek kingdoms to make war on Troy, he was given a prophecy: the Greeks could not defeat Troy without Achilles' participation. And so Achilles became the greatest warrior of the Greeks; yet Agamemnon foolishly offended him by taking back a slave girl, Chryseis. Achilles has therefore withdrawn from battle, much to the dismay of the Greeks. Odysseus is pressuring the stubborn Agamemnon to make peace with Achilles, and Achilles' friend and sidekick Patroclus urges Achilles to return to the fray, but Achilles' wounded pride will not be salved.

**Pumping Cliches:** (*Risus*, p.5): allowed

**Double-Pumped Clichés:** (*Risus*, p.5) allowed

**Funky Dice:** (*Risus*, p. 5) Players may not start out with Funky Dice, but can acquire them through experience later on.

**Sidekicks and Shieldmates** (*Risus Companion*, p.54): allowed and encouraged.

**Lucky Shots and Questing Dice:** (*Risus Companion*, p.50) Allowed. This is especially suitable for representing the favor of the gods.

**Eye of the Tiger** (*Risus Companion*, p.52): allowed. Even Greek heroes can suffer setback and defeat; the montage is a way to recover from them.

**Rescaled Risus** (*Risus Companion*, p.54) To reflect the heroic nature of the characters in MSoR!, the target numbers have been adjusted on the table below. (For the math people, each TN has been divided by 2 and rounded up.)

- 3 A cinch. A snap. A challenge for a Schmuck. Routine for a pro.
- 5 A challenge for a Professional.
- 8 An Heroic challenge. For really inventive or tricky stunts.
- 10 A challenge for a Master. Nearly superhuman difficulty.
- 13 You've GOT to be Kidding. Actual superhuman difficulty.
- 15 Throwing an unloaded chariot, horses not included
- 18 Throwing a loaded chariot, including the driver (in full Dendra panoply), a couple of warriors, their armor, their shield carriers, AND their loot, AND their horses...
- 20+ Changing the course of a mighty rivers, etc.

**Boxcars and Breakthroughs** (*Risus Companion*, p. 54) Allowed. This option gives lucky low-powered characters a bit of an edge against more powerful foes.

**Deadly Combat** (*Risus Companion*, p. 54) Allowed at the consensus of the players and/or the Guy In Charge<sup>1</sup> (see Swing Combat, below).

**Swing Combat:** (*Risus Companion*, p. 55) Allowed. Most combat is presumed to be non-deadly (suiting the tone of the peplums), unless the players and/or the GiC decide that the tone becomes darker.

**Last Man Standing:** (*Risus Companion*, p. 56) Allowed. This fourth type of conflict (the Cascade) is especially great for athletic competitions.

#### Proper Cliché Notation

When you see "Such-and-such Cliché (6)", the parentheses mean that it's a normal cliché. When you see "This-or-that Cliché [6]", the square brackets represent a Double-Pumped Cliche (see **Optional Options**, below, or **Risus**, p. 5). If you see a "{6}" or a "<6>", you know it's a typo, or maybe the typist was drinking.

### Examples of Cliches (and what they can do)

This isn't a definitive list of "character classes" you can play in *MSoR!*; rather, it's a small collection of some of the character types to be found in the "literature", along with some of the qualities associated with them, that can help you get started on a character. Some suggestions on customizing your clichés can be found in "The Well-Honed Cliché". A more voluminous yet equally-non-exclusive list may be found even farther below (see *Juicy Heroic (and not-so-Heroic) Clichés*).

**A Man As Men Should Be** (burning with dreams, turning your dreams into history)

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<sup>1</sup> \***Guy in Charge (GiC):** *Risus*, virtually alone amongst RPGs, lacks an official designation for the person who's running the game (e.g. DungeonMaster, GameMaster, Referee, RisusMaster, etc.). IMO, this is not as an omission, but part of a grand design to truly empower the, um, guy in charge. (Besides, the term "RisusMaster" kinda sucks.)

- Adventuresome Prince** (looking around for a kingdom to conquer, rescuing damsels in distress, doing deeds of derring-do)
- Ancient Mariner** (sailing the seven seas, tying interesting knots, climbing the rigging, getting exotic tattoos)
- Avenging Mother/Daughter/Wife** (wreaking vengeance on those who have wronged her or her family -- I'm looking at YOU, Agamemnon!)
- Evil-Eyed Sorcerer** (casting the evil eye, bending weak-willed people to their wills, being generally naughty)
- Beautiful Witch** (changing people into animals, seducing lost mariners, brewing potions)
- Blind Seer** (getting around just fine without sight, being unable to just come right out and say what you mean)
- Boozed-Up Hedonist** (knowing where the best parties are, indulging to excess, singing loud off-color songs at all hours)
- Breaker of Horses** (knowing your horseflesh, training war horses, not getting kicked in the head)
- Clumsy Hero** ("Sorry about that, Your Majesty"; "Missed it by *that* much"; "That's the second biggest Trojan Horse I've ever seen") )
- Demigod** (having more-than-human abilities or appearance, being harassed by immortal enemies, being followed around by playwrights and poets)
- Delighter in Slaughter** (plunging into battle, wading knee-deep in gore, telling people how you love killing more than life itself)
- Dutiful Priest** (sacrificing to the gods, barbecuing cattle, taking inventory in the temple treasury, telling the people the gods are angry with them)
- Eagle-Eyed Archer** (seeing things way far off, hitting targets other people can't even see, snicking the wing off a fly)
- Epicurean Sage** (living a modest and virtuous life, enjoying worldly pleasures within reason, disdaining superstition and divine intervention)
- Orphic lyrist** (wearing dark clothes, moping about death, trying to think up rhymes for unrhymable words)
- Hairy Brute** (looking unkempt, scaring the locals, expressing yourself through casual violence)
- Hard-ridin', Bow-Totin', Man-Bashin' Amazon** (preaching about feminism, fighting harder than any mere man, looking provocatively good under all that armor)
- Haughty Aristocrat** (ruling, sticking it to the peasants, conquering other aristocrats' kingdoms)
- Haughty Aristocratic Maiden** (looking down her nose,
- Heroic Warrior** (scattering your enemies in your wake, earning tons of glory, getting invited to banquets in your honor)
- Iron-Thewed Wrestler** (pinning your opponent to the ground)
- Ladies' Man** (chatting up the ladies, irritating their fathers, boyfriends and husbands, jumping out the window or hiding in closets)
- Long-Winded Orator** (dominating the conversation, splitting hairs, contradicting what everyone else says)
- Lovable Rogue** (being friendly and full of confidence, tripping over local customs, lacking polish)
- Merciful Healer** (bandaging oozing sores, telling dying patients that they'll be all right)

- Misunderstood Monster** (being cursed by the gods, wreaking havoc without meaning to, meeting a humiliating and ironic end)
- Natural-Born Leader** (leading naturally, keeping the troops happy and successful)
- Exiled Aristocrat** (having no home, being exiled for a crime you did/didn't commit, being tough and mean)
- Otherworldly Oracle** (muttering prophetic gibberish)
- Pill-pushng Pharmakon** (looking for medicinal ingredients, prescribing foul-tasting potions, covering up accidental poisonings)
- Reluctant Hero** (being thrust into extraordinary circumstances beyond your control, doubting your ability to fulfill your heroic obligations, desiring to live an ordinary life)
- Resourceful Archimedean Philosopher** (putting together kooky gadgets with beeswax, string, and an Etruscan army knife)
- Sacker of Cities** (besieging, looting, having fun storming the citadel)
- Seductive Water Nymph** (spending a lot of time at the beach without getting all pruney, avoiding lustful pursuers, choreographing fish into amazing underwater ballets)
- Shaggy-maned Centaur** (riding the range looking for cattle and women to steal, sticking arrows into things, looking for too much wine to drink)
- Smelly Barbarian** (acting and speaking like Arnold Schwarzenegger, storming the gates, sacrificing people to your loathsome gods)
- Spooky Necromancer** (wearing too much dark makeup, casting a pall over any party you attend, having casual conversations with the dead)
- Stoic Philosopher** (being indifferent to pain, being reasonable and logical, not having fun)
- Stout-Hearted Spearman** (fighting in formation, aiming and thrusting, enduring countless Freudian comments about the size of their spears)
- Gloryhound** (sacking kingdoms just for the glory, worshipping yourself, being adored by the populace)
- True Heir to the Throne** (surviving the tragedy that killed your parents, striving to regain your kingdom)
- Two-Fisted Boxer** (taking it on the chin, pounding your opponent into submission, counting to ten)
- Vulgarly Rich Dude** (throwing huge banquets as if they were a simple meal, hobnobbing with kings and high priests, building enormous palaces and then tearing them down)
- Wandering Do-Gooder** (righting wrongs, relocating frequently, finding trouble wherever you go)
- Well-Balanced Elementalist** (playing with fire and air and earth and water, experimenting with Things Man Was Not Meant To Know)
- Well-Oiled Muscleman** (getting a cute princess to oil his muscles, working out in front of an audience, conking a few heads together)
- Wild-Haired Wood Nymph** (communing with nature, fighting off suitors with a stick)
- Wing-Footed Warrior** (racing around the battlefield, scaring the horses)

# Mighty Sons of RISUS!

## Art of the Cliché

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It's tempting to think of clichés the same way we think of character classes in other RPGs, but you can pack a lot more into a cliché than into a character class. In reality, there is a *potentially limitless* supply of clichés! According to [Anatomy of a Cliché](#) (from the Risus Companion, or online at [http://unclebear.com/comments.php?id=406\\_0\\_1\\_0\\_C](http://unclebear.com/comments.php?id=406_0_1_0_C)), they can reveal some or all of the following information about the character.

Profession: Cuckolded King of Mycenae, Beautiful Young Priestess of Aphrodite, Portly Epicurean Sage,

Race or Species: Son of a Wood-Nymph, Satyr with Pretensions of Herodom, Wise Old Centaur, Valley-Girl Nymph

Cultural Background: Sinister Egyptian Sorcerer, Rustic Arcadian Huntress, Athenian Social Climber, Spartan Orator

Personal History: Former Amazon Queen, Defrocked Priest of Poseidon, Ex-Philosopher

Degree of Dedication: Diehard Monster-Slayer, Reluctant Charioteer, World-Weary Swordslinger

Religion or Philosophic Bent: Dedicated Stoic, Enthusiastic Priestess of Dionysus, Poseidon-Worshipping Charioteer

Social Class or Financial Means: Cash-Poor Aristocrat, King of the Beggars, Evil Tyrant, Lost Heir to the Kingdom

Gender: Haughty Amazon, Burly Gladiator, "Boy" Charioteer, Thessalian Witch

Demeanor: Happy-Go-Lucky Sidekick, Dour Cynic, Fatalistic Spearman

Group Affiliation: Suitor of Helen of Troy, Initiate of the Eleusinian Mysteries, One of the Seven Against Thebes, Would-Be Argonaut

Appearance: White-Armed Maiden, Mighty-Thewed Slayer of Men, Snaggle-Toothed Beggar, Flowing-Haired Achaeen Prince, Cow-Eyed Queen of Sparta, Tattooed Thracian Dog

**Ham-Fisted Reference:** the Ancient Greek version of Cliff Claven,

Oprah-Like Queen, "Red Tunic" Guy, "Vulcan"-ish Philosopher

**Goals:** Actor In Search Of Eternal Fame, Philosopher Looking For An Honest Man, Evil Advisor Plotting To Usurp the Throne

**Self-Image:** Swordsman Who Can't Trust Himself Anymore, Sidekick Who Believes He's Ready To Be A Hero, Beautiful Princess Who Thinks She's Ugly, Overenthusiastic Under-talented Would-Be Hero

**Sub-Plots and Relationships:** The Charioteer Everybody Goes To For Romantic Advice, The Philosopher Secretly In Love with His Beautiful Rival, Necromancer Seething At The Way They All Laughed At Him (*The Fools!*)

**Problems:** Blind Poet, Lucky Drunk, Born Loser, Aged Mentor, Warrior-King Who Committed a Terrible Crime Without Knowing About It, Rightful King Of Ithaca Striving To Return Home

### **JUICY HEROIC (AND NOT-SO-HEROIC) CLICHES**

(Add salt and pepper to taste)

Herewith are presented a veritable onslaught of clichés that might be of use to you. Think of them as cliché "seeds", ready to bloom in the fertile garden of your imagination (substitute a less-flowery metaphor if you will). Use them as is, arrange them in your own design, or ignore them altogether.

# The Mighty Sons of RISUS!

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## Metaphysical Madness

A steady diet of beefcake gets a little tedious after awhile. Fortunately, the peplums serve up a little variety in their side-dishes. Magicians, priests, and philosophers are regular features of the Herculean genre, albeit more as occasional sidekicks or antagonists. Hence, they should be fairly rare (but not unknown) as party members.

### Magic

#### Sorcery

Sorcerers (or more commonly, sorceresses) have both the talent and the knowledge to work their occult will upon the world. Like Medea and Circe, sorceresses often display dark temperaments, daring to stray beyond the bounds of divine law. The darker their motivations, the more solitude they usually require for their activities. Despite their dark reputations, they are still sought out by the desperate for their many powers, which include

- 7) necromancy, communicating with and summoning the dead
- 8) fertility, agricultural as well as human
- 9) healing ("pharmakeia", practiced by pharmakoi)
- 10) mind control (including love magic and "bindings")
- 11) conjuring spirits and demons,
- 12) oneiromancy, the ability to perceive, interpret, send, and entwine themselves into the dreams of others
- 13) creating protective amulets, charms, and talismans
- 14) divination, looking forward or backward through time

Not all sorcerers practice the same type of magic; some of them specialize, some of them are only able to pick up a hodgepodge of spells, and others are simply non-specialists, using whatever type of magic seems appropriate for the occasion. The advantage of specialization is that it makes casting your specialized form of magic easier, but other magics more difficult.

Another feature of sorcery is that repeating the same magic upon the same target is increasingly more difficult. It sometimes rebounds upon the caster or the usser, to their detriment.

Magicians often have a streak of divine blood in their background (Medea was a descendant of the Titan Helios), or worship gods such as Hecate or Hermes (both as trickster and psychopompos, or he who guides the dead to the underworld). Whatever the source of their talent, they must be trained by another sorcerer, usually in a teacher-student relationship. A few sorcerers and sorceresses have a number of followers, even schools, such as those of Chiron the Centaur and Asklepios the Healer.

Sorcerous tools of the trade can be numerous, including weird musical instruments (such as the iynx, flutes, and drums), dried parts of dead creatures and people, wax dolls imbued with the hair and nails of a victim, lead tablets for inscribing curses, herbs and potions (beneficial, harmful, and otherwise), scrying tools such as mirrors and bowls of magic water, and many other witchy props. Sorcerers sometimes carry out ceremonies at special times of the day, such as twilight and midnight, in places like graveyards, crossroads, gallows-trees, and caves.

## Priesthood

Priests have a special bond with the gods, as well as certain responsibilities to them and their communities. They are responsible for assuring that the gods receive all the respect due to them, usually through ceremonies and sacrifices. They interpret the will of the gods, often by interpreting omens, and are charged with conveying the gods' messages to the king. They act as advisors and healers to all worshippers, who support the temple with sacrifices (often in the form of meat and produce), and they call upon the power of the gods to help their communities. Some priests, especially those who serve Apollo and Asklepios, are also healers, and may be *pharmakoi* (see [Magic](#)).

Priests are usually regarded as sacrosanct, enjoying personal immunity from insult and injury as representatives of the gods themselves. As representatives of the gods, any injury or harm done to them is regarded as a personal affront by the gods. When Agamemnon enslaved the daughter

of Chryses, the priest of Apollo, the god of archers assailed the Greek camps with plague arrows. Though most priests do not possess magic power in the form of spells, their power consists of their influence with the gods.

Priests may specialize in the worship of one god , a single aspect of a god, or worship all gods equally. Full-time priests usually live in a temple or shrine, but many heroes (especially the offspring of gods) act as priests without this restriction.

Zeus

### **Orphism**

Orphics are mystic musicians, who touch the hearts and souls of their audience with music and magic. They can make their listeners experience any emotion, often exerting a powerful influence upon them. The most skilled Orphics can even affect animals, plants, the land, and the winds. They know secrets which Orpheus brought back from the Underworld in his doomed quest to rescue his beloved, Eurydice.

## **Philosophers**

*Bedivere: "...And that, my liege, is how we know the Earth to be banana-shaped."*

*Arthur: "This new learning amazes me, Sir Bedivere. Explain to me again how sheep's bladders may be employed to prevent earthquakes."*

**--Monty Python and the Holy Grail**

*Cliff: "Due to the shape of the North American elk's esophagus, even if it could speak, it could not pronounce the word 'lasagna'."*

**--Cheers**

Often shunned for their tedious rambling, eccentric behavior, intellectual smugness, ability to detect free food and drink with extraordinary precision, and a scandalous disdain for religion, Philosophers were a nigh-ubiquitous feature of urban Greece, and deserve some representation in a Sandalpunk campaign. But philosophy itself seems like an unlikely addition to role-playing games, in part because most gamers who studied Philosophy in college had notebooks with more doodles of dragons in

the margins than actual notes themselves. How, I pondered glumly, can we use Philosophers, in a game without dragging down the level of fun?

Here's my best shot at solving the dilemma of how to tell all the wooly-bearded, wooly-headed guys apart. I hope there is enough information, scant though it is, to help you play a philosopher as a PC or an NPC. The numerous different schools of philosophy, each with its own particular brand of "the truth", eccentric notions, and cutthroat rivalries, can be a good source of entertainment and (mis)information. Having party guests from two opposing schools at the same dinner party might be sophisticated fun, scandal, a brainy brawl, or the beginnings of a full-scale war of the wise guys.

### Schools of Philosophy

#### **Socratics, Platonists, and Aristotelians**

Even other philosophers sometimes have trouble telling these groups apart. Both are known for studying ethics, logic, rhetoric, and other esoteric subjects, and for crowds of disaffected youth and malcontent intellectuals gathering at their "symposia" (drinking bouts). They sniff at the thought that philosophy might have any practical applications (take THAT, Archimedean!), but are good at spreading the notion that philosophy makes one a better human being.

#### **Socratics**

Socratics are notorious for corrupting youth with questions like "What is Justice?", "What is the best way to live a good life?", and "What happened to all the baklava?". They believe that the wisest man in the world is the one who is aware of how ignorant he is, and many wise people agree that the Socratics certainly qualify.

#### **Platonists**

Platonists believe that the world as we see it is a corrupt version of the ideal form, which cannot ever be reached by material beings; gamers with visions of making off with the "Ideal Form" of a mountain of gold should just keep that to themselves. Oh, and the Platonist version of the perfect ruler is the Philosopher King, which lets you know what they're really plotting late at night over a bottle of ouzo.

Platonists are so disgustingly addicted to the practice of logic and reason that they are difficult to deceive or coerce, even by magic, real-

estate swindles, and pyramid schemes. They make use of models, diagrams, and complicated logical "proofs".

### **Aristotelians**

Aristotelians scoff at Platonists' notion of "ideal forms", but spend an inordinate time looking for "First Causes" and "the Unmoved Mover". They believe that to be fully developed as a human being, they must master a variety of disciplines. They have developed a variety of philosophical exercises which tests their mettle. At any time, an Aristotelian may challenge another to answer random questions about Geography, Entertainment, History, Arts & Literature, Science & Nature, and Sports & Leisure.

### **Hippocrates (or Humourists)**

Healers who apply Plato's theory of four universal Elements to the human body. An imbalance of the bodily Humours ---Sanguine (Air), Black Bile (Earth), Yellow Bile (Fire), and Phlegm (Water)-- cause diseases and excessive behavior. Through such cutting-edge techniques as bloodletting, emetics, purges, and healthful regimens, Humourists strive to balance these four fluids in the body, restoring the victim's personality as well as his health.

### **Pythagoreans**

Suave and mysterious in the way that only mystic math geeks can be, Pythagoreans crunch numbers the way Epicureans munch olives. Reclusive and mystical, these "mathemagicians" are always finding obscure relationships between numbers in odd places, be it in poetry, architecture, geometry, music, astronomy or women's undergarments. Pythagoreans claim that mathematics is the ultimate reality, and that everything can be predicted and measured in rhythmic patterns and cycles. Since they were also expert accountants, they realized the potential profits of the "sciences" of astrology and *feng shui*, which they insist they created long before the Chinese. Being sacred architects, they also know how to build those houses where balls roll uphill and you stand sideways.

Pythagoreans also believe in reincarnation, vegetarianism, and that foods like rabbit and beans are evil.

### **Stoics**

Stoics personify the expression "stiff upper lip". They believe in ignoring pleasure and pain, thinking that these distract them from Logic and Reason, the only thing in life worth pursuing. They can be the featured attraction at a gladiatorial bout, or witnessing the slaughter of helpless screaming widows and orphans, or consummating their marriage with their childhood sweethearts, and they won't bat an eye.

Stoicism is a popular philosophy, even amongst non-philosophers. Spartans, Romans, Native Americans, and Vulcans (the last two rather uncommon), are all card-carrying Stoicks.

### Cynics

These scruffy philosophers believe in "living a life of Virtue in agreement with Nature." Therefore, Cynics give up all worldly possessions, including money, houses, and personal hygiene products, to live a simple, frugal, shameless, and often naked life on the street. They eat what they find, sleep wherever they can, and say whatever they want. They scoff at the false values of those who indulge in materialistic lifestyles, care about things like honor and glory, and wear clothes free from embarrassing stains. Despite this, Cynics are rather popular as dinner guests among the trendy set, who think it's the height of hilarity when the philosophers bark at their guests.

### Epicureans and Hedonists

The only important goal in life, according to the founder of Epicureanism, is the pursuit of food, drink, and company, which means they turn up at parties a lot. They can often be found expounding on the benefits of seeking "modest" pleasures (while pilfering *hors d'oevres* and pouring libations of the host's best wine) to attain a life of tranquility and freedom, free from bodily pain and distress. "Everything in Moderation", they caution, making sure to sample at least one of every tasty tidbit at the table.

A rival colloquium of sensual sages, the Hedonists, disagree: "Everything in Excess!" is their creed. Too much of a good thing is never enough for a true Hedonist. They wax eloquent about the virtues of stuffing every orifice full of whatever gives it the most pleasure, and praise the tranquility and freedom that only massive overindulgence can bring (at least until inevitable blackouts, hangovers, and crossbow weddings).

### Sophists

All the other philosophers claim that Sophists are giving their profession a bad name. They are reviled for two things: their greed for money and power, and their ability to bend logic and reason like a pretzel, Known for twisting the truth until it cries for mercy, they function much like con-men, used chariot salesman, shyster lawyers, and career politicians. They specialize in splitting hairs, putting words into their opponents' mouths, padding expense vouchers, and buttering up wealthy patrons

Debating a sophist is like standing in front of a monkey cage wearing your best white tunic: you're just begging to be pelted with dung.

### **Archimedean**

Derided by as "mere tinkerers" or "menial craftsmen" by the other philosophers, Archimedean are the inventors, engineers, and gadgeeteers. Their workshops are full of sputtering aeolipiles whistling like a teakettle, half-finished prototypes of siege engines, scale models of leaky aqueducts, and the like. Archimedean were inspired by childhood tales of the mechanical servants of Hephaestos and the bronze giant Talos; they are driven by a desire to take things apart to see how they work, and yearning to improve on the design. They dream of creating burning mirrors capable of setting fire to ships, one-man vehicles that fly or swim or roll across the ground, and meddling in the gods' domain. Their tools of the trade include actual tools, measuring sticks, hammers, scaffolds, and well-supplied workshops, as well as lots of stuff to draw calculations and diagrams on.

Contrary to modern sensibilities, the possibilities of mechanized warfare have not yet caught on with the rulers of the Bronze Age. This may have to do with the novelty of the technology, the expense of research ("Call me back when you've got it finished"), or the hazards of actually using these half-tested deathtraps.

# MIGHTY SONS OF RISUS!

## NPCs

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Here are some fully-fleshed NPCs for **The Mighty Sons of RISUS!** As NPCs, they usually have more starting dice than player characters are allowed, representing their increased experience or the will of the gods. [Square brackets] indicate double-pumped cliches.

### Testikles the Thracian

Much-tattooed berserker from Thrace with a one-sided rivalry with Herakles

Voted "Best Pillager In Thrace" Five Years Running [3]

Hulking Thracian Berserker With A Grudge Against Herakles (3)

Insanely Mean Drunk With A Short Attention Span (3)

**Hook:** Imagines he was slighted by Heracles

**Questing Dice:** Looking for Herakles [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

**Tale:** Testikles, a red-haired Thracian barbarian, was one of the foremost warriors in Thrace. To prove his prowess, he issued a challenge to Heracles, to meet him in single combat. Unfortunately, Herakles never got the message, being busy with his Twelve Labors and voyaging with the Argonauts. Testikles took this as either cowardice or contempt on Herakles' part, and vowed to seek him out and prove his own might. So far, he has met Herakles 3 times. The first time he passed out drunk just as Herakles made his appearance at a feast. The second time, he was showing off his prodigious might by engaging in a head-butting contest and knocked himself out (to Herakles' amusement). The third time Herakles was serving as a slave to Queen Omphale (dressed as a woman); Testikles didn't recognize him and put the moves on the Son of Zeus, and was knocked out by the wrathful demigod.

To avenge his humiliation, Testikles, has vowed in his thick-headed way to perform his own Twelve Labors, aimed at undoing those of Herakles.

## Megaera

Teenage Girl With A Thirst For Conquest

Spoiled Warrior Princess (4)

World-Travelling Seeker Of Ways To Kill People [2]

**Hook:** Has earned an impressive number of enemies for a teenage girl, whom she encounters pretty much on a weekly basis.

**Sidekick:** Ecstasia, Bubbly Ancient Greek "Flower Child" (3), Would-Be Bard/Actress/Priestess/Journalist, whichever takes her fancy that week (3)

**Tale:** Megaera is a typical spoiled teenage girl who just happens to be a very accomplished warrior princess. She has travelled the world learning ways to slaughter lots of people. For a teenage girl, she has a very impressive list of sacked cities to her credit. She's got issues, however, stemming from the brutal slaughter of her family and the tragic destruction of her home town, which she kinda feels guilty for; she was supposed to be on guard duty when the invaders snuck in, but she was making out with this totally hot dude. Still, at heart, she's still a typical prom queen, albeit a vengeance-crazed one. She's constantly being attacked by friends and relatives of the people she's slain. Her one companion is Ecstasia, who can charitably be described as "ditsy". Even Megaera really doesn't know why she tolerates Ecstasia, but she has been useful from time to time.

## Skandros the Satyr

A Satyr Obsessed with Becoming A True Hero

Ex-Follower of Dionysus, Scorned by Aphrodite

Shabby-Looking Wanna-Be Hero

## Satyr Struggling Against His True Nature

Questing Dice: Enduring Hardships (blessing of Dionysus) [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

Hook: Trying to maintain dignity as a Hero while Aphrodite throws romantic entanglements his way

Tale: Skandros was a member of the retinue of the god Dionysus (known as Zagreus on the island of Crete). However, he couldn't keep his mind on frolicking and dancing; he was too interested in the clash of arms between Achaean and Minoan warriors, their chariots and horses, their tall spears and painted shields. Secretly he gathered up odd pieces of armor until he had a rag-tag suit of his own. Skandros asked Dionysus to excuse him from his duties and allow him to win honor and booty. Amused by the satyr's determination, and his odd assortment of armor, Dionysus blessed his prodigal satyr with great vitality to endure the difficulties that surely would come. However, Skandros foreswore the promiscuous ways of satyrs as "unheroic", and thereby managed to insult Aphrodite. As a result, the goddess plagues him with amorous intrigue whenever possible, seeking to ruin the Satyr's heroic facade.

Skandros is truly committed to the ideals of heroism, but he doesn't always know exactly what they are. He makes many people uncomfortable by watching them intently but discreetly, trying to see "how heroes do things". However, he is very sensitive about his efforts to appear heroic; anyone who ridicules Skandros risks his unbridled wrath.

## One-Eye the Mariner

*Pipe-smoking do-gooding son of Poseidon, whose capacity for violence (in the name of right) increases dramatically after his consumption of a special magical herb..*

Cantankerous old salt with a unique accent (5)

Bulgegy-armed squinky-eyed Son of Poseidon (5)

Pipe-smoking spinach-eating do-gooding muscleman who can take an awesome amount of pounding [4]

Questing Dice: "I've had all I can stands, I can't stands no more!",  
[ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]

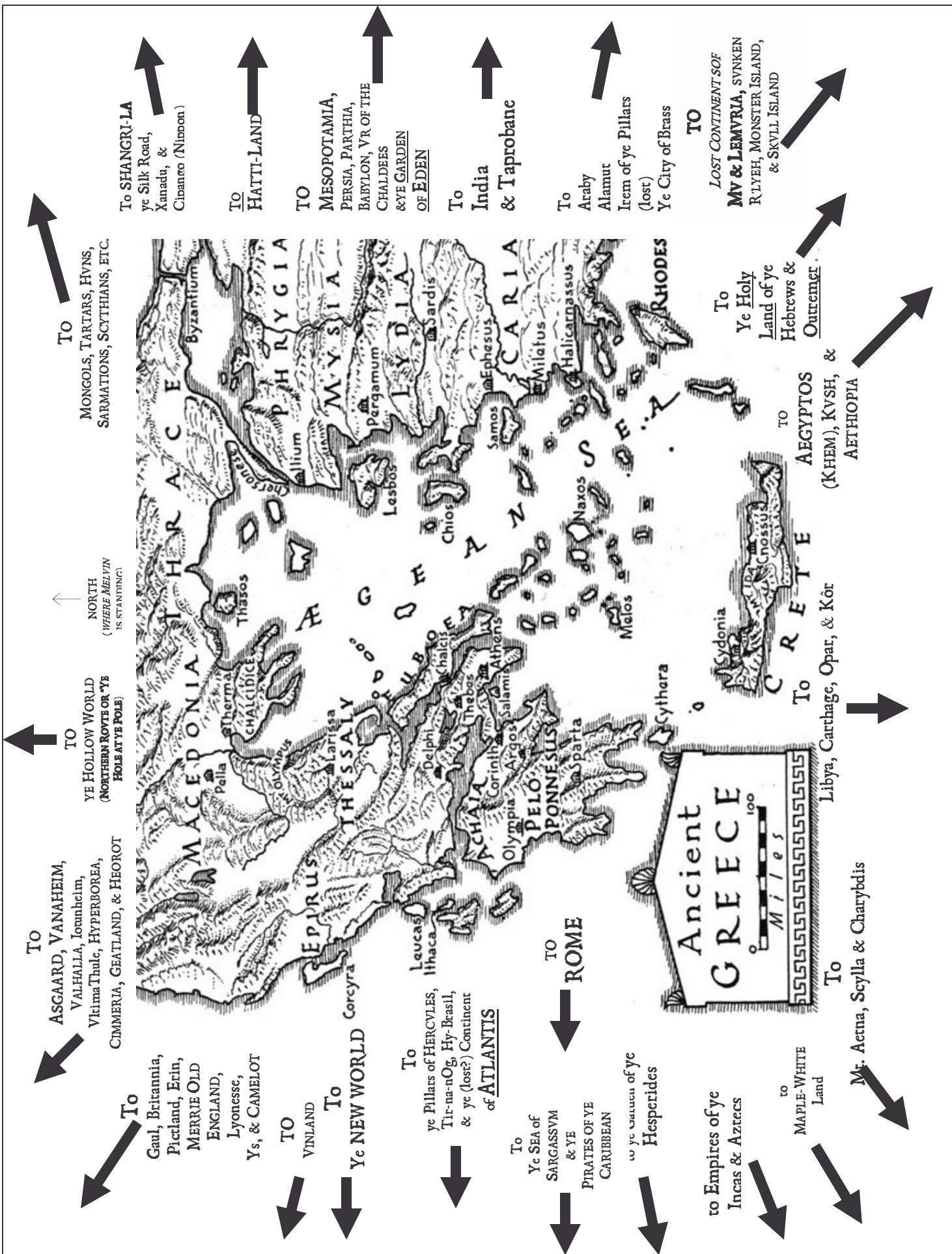
**Hook:** Love triangle between One-Eye, Olivia, and Brutus ensures plentiful brawling

**Tale:** One-Eye the Mariner is a man of mystery. Little is known of his origins, though conflicting stories of his parentage call him both the son of Poseidon and the son of a famous, lost mariner (searching for whom he originally went to sea). Within living memory, he has always appeared as he is now: a bald, one-eyed man well into middle age, slight of build, nevertheless possessing bulging calves and forearms, slightly bow-legged, with a prodigious jaw and a unique accent or speech impediment. He smokes a pipe, a unique affecttation since tobacco is unknown in the ancient world.

One-eye is ill-tempered yet affable to his friends, generous to strangers, and the personification of humility; his one great fault is his love of brawling. He goes to great lengths to avoid killing people, however; rumors claim that he once killed a great enemy with his own fists, and vowed never to take a life in anger again.

He is always found near the sea, typically in towns with sea-ports, when he can be found at all. He is rumored to be both wealthy and philanthropic, especially caring for the welfare of "widders and orphinks" of sailors, though he is rarely seen flaunting his wealth. He has supposedly salvaged the treasures of many a shipwreck; he is an active foe of both pirates and piracy..

Tough and ornery One-Eye's true might does not become apparent until he ingests the leaves of a magical plant (possibly the legendary *moly*), whereupon he becomes a juggernaut of violence. He avoids this extreme unless he has been pushed to the brink of endurance ("I've had all I can stands, I can't stands no more!"). Oddly, One-Eye's one true love has provoked him to displays of extreme violence more than anybody else (though his rage is not directed at her person). His rail-thin girlfriend, Olivia, is sometimes irresistably attracted to the muscular charms of One-Eye' rival and archenemy, the exiled Roman known as Brutus; however, she soon realizes her mistake, and calls upon One-Eye to extricate her from this "predicamink".



## Risus: Mistborn

Risus is a free RPG by S. John Ross. The rules are available here: [www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm](http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm).

Mistborn is an epic fantasy series by Brandon Sanderson; [www.brandonsanderson.com](http://www.brandonsanderson.com)

If you haven't read this series, I recommend you do, so you can get a better feel for the story and world.

This is not meant to be a complete world/setting description, but a starting point for adventures.

The mysterious and powerful Lord Ruler rules the world of the Final Empire. His government is a theocratic feudal system. The Final Empire is broken into Dominances, named for the cardinal directions of the compass, e.g. Western Dominance, Eastern Dominance, Northern or Terris Dominance. The capital city of the Empire is Luthadel located in the Central Dominance. This is where the Great Noble houses are located, the base of the Steel Ministry, and the Pits of Hathsin. The Pits of Hathsin are the Lord Ruler's penal colony, where the only way out is death. It is also the only known place where Atium can be harvested from the crystal geode mines. Hathsin convicts are notable for the multitude of scars on their arms, caused by reaching into the crystal chambers where the Atium geodes form.

The noble houses control the plantations, in the country and artisan skaa (peasant/slave class-they are the same as the nobles in all regards except birth), in the cities. In the cities crews of skaa thieves, scratch out a meager living stealing from artisan skaa and lesser nobles. The nobles may take advantage of the skaa under their control in anyway they see fit, but no skaa mistress may bear half-noble children. This is a crime punishable by death, both for the skaa and the noble. Culture and learning are early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century with the Noble Houses holding cotillion-style balls, where Ladies wear elaborate gowns and Lords wear suits with colorful vests. Political intrigue is the noble's favorite pastime, next to oppressing the skaa.

The Mistborn world is a barren land where five ashmounts (volcanos), which define the borders of the Central Dominance, constantly spew volcanic ash into the sky where it falls to earth. Plants always grow leaves in autumnal hues and the earth must constantly be cleared of ash to allow anything to grow. The sky and sun always appear a sooty red. At night, the Mist covers the land. Resembling a dense fog, the Mist is a source of superstition, thought to contain monsters and evil spirits and many skaa avoid going out at night because of it. It has been this way for one thousand years, since the Lord Ruler's rise to power.

**The Steel Ministry** keeps the nobles and skaa inline with its **Obligators** and **Steel Inquisitors**. Obligators and Inquisitors are the priests of the Lord Ruler. Obligators are also bureaucrats, functioning as notaries, lawyers, and justices. The saying goes that if an obligator didn't witness it, then it is not so. They appear wearing dark colored robes (according to their Canton or Order), shaved heads and elaborated tattoos around the eyes. The more elaborate the tattoo the more important the obligator. Obligators are called Prelans. The High Obligator is the High Prelan.

Inquisitors are powerful and intimidating, their function is to seek out allomancers and destroy them. They are imposing figures with their black robes and metal spikes driven through their eyes and protruding from the back of the skull (there are also eight spikes in the chest and one spike, the Linchpin, between the shoulder blades). Inquisitors are able to use allomancy without needing to ingest metals. They are able to pierce copperclouds by viewing the metals that occur naturally in the human body. The only way to kill an Inquisitor is to separate the spikes in the body from the ones in the head, either by beheading or pulling the Linchpin. The existence of the torso spikes and the Linchpin are closely guarded secrets of the Canton of Inquisition.

**Allomancers**, have the ability to "burn" (or use) ingested metals, thereby enhancing various physical and mental capacities. The metals and alloys must be pure when ingested, or the Allomancer could become very ill or possibly die. A person with only one of the abilities listed below is known as a **Misting**. If someone has more than one of the abilities below, they have all of them, though their capabilities with each may vary. These people are **Mistborn**. Allomantic abilities are hereditary to those of noble birth. While

not a certainty of nobility this is the only known way the trait may be acquired. Thus, nobility have created a clandestine culture surrounding Allomancers and Mistborn, in particular. Most noble houses employ groups of mistings, called **Hazekillers**. They are trained to use their complimentary abilities to defeat Mistborn.

Mistborn often wear a grey cloak made from dozens of free-hanging, tasseled ribbons of fabric joined at a cowl and deep hood, called a **Mistcloak**. This is a badge of office as well as a disguise. Non-allomancers will often, but not always avoid one seen wearing this cloak.

The metals and alloys below are the 8 basic Allomantic metals and the Allomancers associated with them.

**Coinshots** have the ability to burn **iron**, which allows them to "Push" on nearby metals. This can allow them to make metallic objects that weigh less than they do to fly through the air away from them (using coins, for instance, as weapons). For metallic objects that weigh more than they do, this can cause them to be pushed away from the object. It was generally assumed that a Coinshot could not Push on metals that pierce or are otherwise contained in the body of another Allomancer (e.g., ingested metals), however it can be achieved by an exceedingly powerful Allomancer.

**Lurchers** have the ability to burn **steel**, which allows them to Pull on nearby metals. This can allow them to make metallic objects that weigh less than they do to fly through the air toward them. For metallic objects that weigh more than they do, this can cause them to be pulled toward the object. It was generally assumed that a Lurker could not Pull on metals that pierce or are otherwise contained in the body of another Allomancer (e.g., ingested metals), however it can be achieved by an exceedingly powerful Allomancer.

**Rioters** burn **zinc** in order to inflame the emotions of those nearby. This can be used to set off a riot (hence the name) or to enhance any emotion of the target. Only an exceedingly powerful Allomancer can affect those burning copper.

**Seekers** can determine if someone is using Allomancy in the immediate area by burning **bronze**. With practice, an Allomancer can determine the location of the other Allomancer, which metal the other Allomancer is burning, and to what extent the other Allomancer is burning his or her metal. An extremely powerful Seeker can penetrate the copperclouds of other Allomancers.

**Smokers** burn **copper** in order to mask the active use of any Allomancy in a specific area. Groups of them can effectively mask an entire building. This ability is not omnipotent as an extremely powerful Seeker can penetrate a coppercloud. In addition to masking Allomantic pulses, this Misting ability provides its user with immunity to Soothing or Rioting.

**Soothers** burn **brass**, giving the ability to soothe or guide emotions in a particular direction. A group of soothers can affect all the individuals in a particular area. Only an exceedingly powerful Allomancer can affect those burning copper.

**Thugs** or **Pewterarms**, receive greatly enhanced physical capabilities by burning **pewter**. While burning pewter, a Thug can fight or perform physical labor longer than a normal person, and is also many times stronger than his or her normal self. This enhanced strength also allows a Thug to shrug off wounds that would kill or incapacitate a normal person. Pewter burning also provides a Thug with an increased sense of balance and vastly increased speed and dexterity. A Thug performing a "pewter drag" can run for many hours at speeds up to approximately that of a galloping horse. This is extremely draining on the Allomancer's body and will require the Allomancer to burn pewter after completing the physical parts of the pewter drag, just to keep the Allomancer's body from collapsing in near-death exhaustion.

One danger for a Thug is when the Thug carrying something that he or she normally couldn't carry and he or she runs out of pewter to burn, the object he or she is carrying will crush him or her, causing serious injury. Another danger is that a Thug who shrugged off earlier wounds could succumb to these wounds when he or she runs out of pewter to burn.

**Tineyes** burn **tin** in order to enhance all of their senses. This can be overwhelming in the case of bright light, strong odors, and loud noises. The sense of touch is also enhanced. This allows the Allomancers to see through the nightly mists with greater clarity.

### **The Higher Allomatic Metals**, are **Atium, Gold, Aluminum, Malatium, Electrum, Duralumin.**

**Atium** is the most valuable metal in the world, and it is slowly mined from the "Pits of Hathsin". Prisoners of the Lord Ruler mine the metal, as using Allomancy near the atium-producing crystals shatters them. This metal allows the Mistborn to see a few seconds into the future, thereby allowing them to anticipate the moves of an opponent. It also enhances the mind to cope with and understand these new insights, effectively turning a Mistborn invincible for a short time. Atium burns very quickly.

The only known counter to atium is to burn it yourself, showing you what the other person will do. However, this in turn changes what you will do, which changes what the other person will do, creating a confusing "vortex" of atium shadows.

If someone burning atium attacks someone not burning the metal there is a way to combat the atium-burner. The person being attacked can allow their attacker to begin intercepting their future move before they make it allowing the victim to change what they are doing, and as the attacker is aware that the victim has no atium to burn they will see their victim's atium shadow "split" into two separate attacks causing a presumable fatal outcome.

**Gold** allows a Mistborn to see what they might have been if they had made different choices in the past. It is rarely used due to possible severe emotional trauma.

**Malatium**, is an alloy of **atium** and allows a Mistborn to see the potential future of another, if they had made different choices in the past.

**Electrum**, and alloy of **gold**, allows the Allomancer to see his own future.

**Aluminum** drains all other metal reserves of the Mistborn, leaving them powerless.

**Duralumin** is the alloy of **aluminum** and allows the Mistborn to create a sudden, powerful flare of whatever metal(s) the Mistborn burns with it, which depletes that metal store in the process.

**A sixteenth**, un-named metal exists. This metal apparently transforms a normal person into a Mistborn, thereby giving him the power to employ all the other metals.

### **Other Forms of Magic**

**Feruchemy** is another form of magic. It uses the same metals as Allomancy, but in different ways. The metals are worn, rather than ingested, as rings, bracelets, bracers, etc. They are called metalminds. In order to use them they must be stored with a particular attribute, which means that the Feruchemist must spend a period of time with reduced natural abilities, in order to later have enhanced abilities. Metalminds are specific to the feruchemist who made them. A Feruchemist can only use metalminds that she has prepared herself. Feruchemists are often from the Terris Dominance and called "**Keepers**."

**Iron** stores Physical Weight

**Steel** stores Physical Speed

**Tin** stores Senses (One sense per tinmind)

**Pewter** stores Physical Strength

**Brass** stores Warmth

**Zinc** stores Mental Speed

**Copper** stores Memories

**Bronze** stores Wakefulness

**Atium** stores Age

**Gold** stores Health

**Malatium**; UNKNOWN

**Electrum**: UNKNOWN

**Duralumin**: UNKNOWN

**Aluminum**: UNKNOWN

**Mistwraiths** and **Kandra** are magical beings that live in the Mist. They are related, but it is unclear in what way.

**Mistwraiths** are harmless, mindless scavengers, that appear as translucent membranes surrounding a jumble of various skeletons. They roam the mists ingesting the corpses of animals that they come across, which they then incorporate, hap-hazardly into their own skeletons.

**Kandra** are sentient beings that are also able to consume the bones of corpses. However, kandra are able to then flawlessly recreate the flesh that surrounded the skeleton. Further, they can then imitate that being in great detail, enabling them to fool family and friends. They are also able to modify organ systems to suit them, e.g. creating a human voice box when using a dog's skeleton. Kandra are immune to Allomancy, with the exception of powerful Soothing, which allows the Soother to control a kandra's body. Such Soothing is only possible by a Mistborn burning **Duralumin**. Kandra also serve **The Contract**. This is an ancient, quasi-religious covenant of servitude to humanity, in which the kandra vows to serve a specific human, without question for the life of the human and his or her descendants. The Contract specifies that the kandra may not directly harm any human. Beyond this little is known of the kandra society, except the existence of the **Council**, which makes the Contract assignments.

**Koloss** are blue-skinned, red-eyed, brutish humanoids that can grow to upwards of twelve feet tall, with proportionate strength. They are barbaric, given to berserk rages, and often fight amongst themselves for dominance. They are able to speak and are barely sentient, but capable of some abstract thought. An interesting attribute is that they continue to grow after achieving maturity, but their skin does not. A young koloss appears to have loose skin that hangs in slack folds, but as it ages the skin becomes evermore taught. It eventually splits in places, leaving non-healing wounds at various stress points on the body. Koloss wear basic loincloths and carry large, wedge-bladed iron swords. It is unknown whether or not koloss can interbreed with humans, as many humans find koloss frightening and repulsive.

### Special Mechanics

Allomancer clichés must specify Misting or Mistborn (there are few Mistborn, say one out of ten allomancers, which means one out of every hundred people in general). I suggest some sort of dice roll-off or paper/rock/scissors to determine who in the group is Mistborn.

Allomancers must purchase their cliché double pumped. When a Misting Pewterarm [4] is fighting a Mistborn [4] seems evenly matched. However, the Mistborn can shoot coins at the Pewterarm from a

distance or otherwise completely change the nature of combat to suit her, which would make the Pewterarm, unable to participate, thereby dropping the Pewterarm's cliché to [1] die. That is assuming she has the appropriate tools handy, in this case coins. A Mistborn can only change the nature of combat after a successful combat roll.

Feruchemists function much the same way as Mistborn without the ability to change the nature of combat.

All other Risus rules apply to taste. There's no wrong way....

# RISUS: Ironsides

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<a href="#">Dice Rolling and Mishaps</a>	<a href="#">Life Points</a>	<a href="#">Armour</a>
<a href="#">Using Several Callings at Once</a>	<a href="#">Life Points in Combat</a>	<a href="#">Healing and Recovery</a>
<a href="#">Non-Cooperative Teams</a>	<a href="#">Wound Dice</a>	<a href="#">The Effects of Old Age</a>
<a href="#">Bonus Dice</a>	<a href="#">Shock Dice</a>	<a href="#">Religion, Sorcery and Witchcraft</a>
<a href="#">Aimed Attacks</a>	<a href="#">Missile Weapons</a>	<a href="#">Designer's Notes</a>

## 1. Introduction

The 17th Century was an era rife with opportunities for heroes, villains, adventurers, idealists, and vagabonds alike. It was the time of dour Scots witch-hunters, gallant French Musketeers and fearsome Spanish Conquistadores; of the Great Plague, the Thirty Years' War, and the Salem Witch Trials; and of the formulation of the scientific theories of Kepler, Newton and Boyle. The rules that follow are intended as an aid for running a campaign set in any of the multitudinous facets of the 17th Century.

The basic rules are those of the excellent RISUS system (written by [S. John Ross](#) and available on his website, [The Blue Room](#)). It is recommended that all optional rules (as specified in version 1.4 of the system) regarding double-pumps, multiple dice types, etc., are used. In addition, the following new rules apply.

### Definitions:

- *Calling* is used as a substitute for *Cliche*, in keeping with the atmosphere of the setting.
- Callings should be chosen such that they end in nouns; hence, a character may have Callings as a *Blacksmith* (3), a *Loudmouthed Drunkard* (5), and a *Fervent Royalist* (2).
- The Calling which is being used to provide the dice in any round of contestation (i.e., opposed roll), is called the *Active Calling*. This is thus the score which drops by one die when a character loses an opposed roll.

## 2. Dice Rolling and Mishaps

When rolling dice to generate a total, any roll showing only 1's and 2's can be considered to indicate that a Mishap has occurred. The results of a Mishap are usually twice as bad as a simple failure; in a swordfight, for instance, a fighter will not only lose a dice from his Active Calling, but might also lose his or her weapon or shield, or trip over a protruding stone on the ground. The exact nature of the results is up to the GM; it is suggested that these results are the kind of thing that quick thinking and a good dice roll can instantly correct: in other words, inconvenient rather than catastrophic. If the total generated by the roll is still sufficient for success, then the attempt is successful, but has some unpleasant side effect or consequence.

To prevent characters with level 1 Callings from embarrassing themselves every three attempts, any roll of a single dice is only considered to indicate a Mishap if it comes up showing a 1.

### 3. Using Several Callings at Once

If a character has two Callings that might be considered appropriate to the situation – say, both *Bare-Knuckle Pugilist* and *Village Constable* in a tavern brawl – the lower Calling may be used to provide a single bonus die to the higher. The down side of this tactic is that, should the new total be beaten in a contested roll, *both* Callings drop by one die. Similarly, if the higher Calling is pumped to increase the overall total, both drop in level as a result.

Multiple Callings may be judged appropriate, with each extra Calling providing a bonus dice and submitting the the rules above; however, double- and single-pump Callings cannot be combined.

*Example: Werner, the notorious Brigand of Bell's Road, is in combat with three dragoons. The GM rules that both his Highwayman (3) and Swordsman (2) Callings are appropriate to the combat, and so Werner may elect to use his Swordsman Calling to boost his Highwayman Calling by one dice, to Highwayman (4). Every time he loses a round, however, both scores drop by one level. If either is reduced to zero, he is out of the fight. If Werner were to pump his newly increased Highwayman (4) to Highwayman (5), in the round that follows his Callings would drop to 2 and 1 respectively.*

### 4. Non-Cooperative Teams

The basic RISUS rules assume that teams of combatants are coordinating their attacks, with some providing distraction while one rushes in to land a single blow. This situation may not apply if the attackers are rushing forwards in a mob, each intent on inflicting damage. In this case, each attacker rolls separately, but with a bonus of one dice to each of their rolls. Their target rolls only once. Each attacker roll is compared against the target's single roll as if the two were in single combat, and the damage results applied normally in each case. No 'Vengeance Bonus' is given. It can be seen that in this type of brawl, superior numbers can often overwhelm a foe instantly; but, if the attackers are inferior in skill, they take much more risk of multiple casualties than if they were coordinating their attacks.

*Example: During the combat with Werner, the three dragoons each have a total of 3 dice in their attack. They could attack co-operatively, with a total skill of 5 (3 basic, +2 for having three members in the team), gaining the Vengeance Bonus if Werner somehow manages to land a blow on them, but they will only be able to wound Werner once per round. Or, they could try and mob him, each rolling on only 4 dice (3 basic, +1 for mob attack), foregoing the Vengeance Bonus but gaining the ability to wound him up to three times in a round, possibly taking him out of the fight immediately if they all manage to roll higher than he does.*

### 5. Bonus Dice

As outlined in the basic RISUS rules, exceedingly effective or well-crafted items may add to the user's effective skills when used. This should not be confused with *Wound Dice* or *Shock Dice*, which are detailed below. Bonus Dice are only granted in the case of items which make it easier to do whatever they are used for; a finely made rapier, for instance, constructed from exceptional materials and with a grip specially crafted for a particular hand, might give a Bonus Die to its user when it is used for swordplay. Note that this

is a quantity which sets *this* rapier apart from *other* rapiers, not swords in general or all of weaponkind. Items with Bonus Dice, therefore, should be rare and carefully dispensed.

Temporary Bonus Dice may also be assigned by the GM for particularly effective strategies or to reflect a situation which is biased in favour of one contestant. These dice do not persist or convey any long-term benefit once the situation which prompted them is no longer in effect.

*Example: Guard Captain de Luche is fighting a mysterious band of assailants for possession of his castle. He is wielding a spear and retreating up a spiral staircase as he does so; the GM assigns a Bonus Dice to his efforts as a result of his ownership of higher ground and a weapon with a longer reach than his antagonists' swords. The Bonus Dice is added to his Old Soldier Calling of 4, which gives him a temporary Calling level of 5. Should the situation change (because he reaches a landing, for instance), he loses the Bonus Dice; if this reduces his Calling to 0, he is out of the fight.*

## 6. Aimed Attacks

A character may decide to aim for a particular part of his or her adversary in melee combat for a variety of reasons. The foe may be wearing partial armour which the character wishes to circumvent; the character may wish to disarm the foe by striking at their weapon; or, the character may wish to scar the foe's insolent face to goad them into a rage.

The extra effort and attention required for such assaults leave the character open to retaliation, however. The character making the aimed attack must temporarily drop the calling he or she is using by a number of dice to make the attack. These dice are not 'lost' - they re-appear as soon as the character switches back to a more conventional mode of attack.

Attacks aimed at the torso, limbs, or a one-handed weapon require the attacker to operate with a one die penalty; those aimed at the head, chinks in armour, groin (for the tavern brawlers out there), or a two-handed weapon, require two dice to be set aside.

The effects of successful aimed attacks should be adjudicated by the GM. They will cause the foe to lose a level from their active Calling as usual; in addition, they may cause extra Life Point loss, grant a Bonus Die for the next round, flick the foe's weapon out of his or her hand, provoke appreciative applause from onlookers, or whatever the GM deems appropriate. It is important to note that the attack was, after all, a success; the benefits of the strategem should be worthwhile.

## 7. Life Points

In order to handle the effects of illnesses, will-sapping environmental effects, and wounds delivered outside of melee combat, a system of Life Points is used. Each character is assumed to begin with 12 Life Points, which represent the reserves of strength and endurance available to the average adult. Each strongly physical Calling of *at least 3 dice* in level allows the player to increase the character's LP total by 1d6 during character creation. Should these Callings increase during play (through experience), the LP total rises by 1 point (not 1 dice) per level or dice type gained. At the GM and player's discretion, certain debilitating Hooks or Callings may also reduce the LP total by 1d6.

*Example: Herr Gurney Hollenbeck is a scholar and a gentleman whose Callings are Silver-Tounged Courtier (4), Bookworm [2], and Astronomer (2). His Life Point total is the basic 12 points. His brother Siegfried, however, has Callings which reflect his more hands-on approach: Tavern Brawler (3), Musketeer (3), Unstoppable (3), and Athlete (1). He starts the game with a basic LP total of (12 + 3d6): between 15 and 30 Life Points, depending on how the dice come up. He receives no LP benefit from his Athlete Calling because of its low level.*

## 8. Life Points in Combat

Standard combat is handled exactly as portrayed in the basic RISUS rules. However, in addition, characters who lose a round of combat may also lose Life Points, to indicate (firstly) that they have received a physical wound, and (secondly) that they may well drop from their injuries before their will and ability to fight (i.e., number of dice they roll with) is gone. Characters lose a dice roll of Life Points for every *full* 6 points by which their enemy's attack roll exceeded their own. The type of dice rolled is the same as the dice rolled by the opponent for his or her (or its!) attack.

When a character's Life Point total drops *below* 6, he or she is judged to be Seriously Wounded and must halve, rounding up, the number of dice rolled for any physical task. This penalty remains until his or her LP total rises to at least 6. At the GM's discretion, and in the case where the damage was inflicted in a single blow doing more than 6 points of damage, a Seriously Wounded character may lose an extra Life Point per round of strenuous activity until their wounds are bandaged.

When a character's Life Point total drops to 0, he or she swoons from shock and exhaustion and falls insensate. Any further injuries or blood loss which cause the character to drop to -6 Life Points or below will be fatal.

*Example: The ill-fated Holm Durrant is collaring a cutpurse when the ungrateful wretch slides a needle-tipped stiletto between his ribs. The cutpurse's attack roll was a 14; Holm rolled a mere 6. Holm's Calling drops by one dice as usual, but he also loses 1d6 Life Points because the ruffian exceeded his roll by 8. Holm's LP total is a healthy 17, so he is not yet Seriously Wounded and can continue fighting without having to halve his Calling levels.*

## 9. Wound Dice

Particularly deadly weapons (such as envenomed poniards, razor-sharp scimitars, and firearms) may gain 1-2 *Wound Dice*. These dice are added to any damage dice assigned as the result of a successful combat round. Aimed attacks made at the head or bowels may also gain a Wound Dice.

*Example: Holm's reaction to the wickedness perpetrated on him by the footpad in the example above is to draw 'Quietus' - a two-foot, lead-weighted baton with hobnails driven into the shaft - from his belt. This weapon has previously been judged by the GM to be worthy of an extra Wound Dice. Every time Holm lands a blow on the thug (i.e., wins a combat round by any margin), his attack will cause an extra die of damage.*

## 10. Shock Dice

Weapons which are particularly devastating in terms of impact may have 1-2 *Shock Dice*. Examples of such weapons are firearms, polearms, weapons used from the back of a charging horse, and weapons of great

mass or bulk (such as double-bladed axes). Each Shock Dice causes the loser of a contested roll to lose an extra level from the Calling they employed to make their attack roll.

*Example: Lady Caroline is surprised by an shadowy figure at her window one night. Wasting no time, she snatches an ornamental half-pike from her chamber wall and engages the intruder in desperate combat. The Assassin (for he is such) is using his Knifeman Calling of 4 dice in his attack; Lady Caroline is resisting with her Feisty Old Battleaxe Calling of 3 dice. The half-pike gains a Shock Dice as a result of its size and weight; hence, if Lady Caroline manages to land even a glancing blow, she will cause the Assassin to lose 2 levels, not the usual 1, from his Knifeman Calling.*

## 11. Missile Weapons

Ranged combat is rarely conducted as a standard opposed contest. That is to say, combatants do not attempt to wear their opponent down until he or she is at their mercy - instead, missile attacks are applied as once-offs and have their effect on the target's Life Points, instead of their Callings like a melee attack.

The single exception to this rule is when a character who is engaged in melee combat or some other contested task when he or she is shot by a third party outside the contest. In this case, the number of Shock Dice applied to the weapon's damage are subtracted from the active Calling.

The Target Number to hit a human-sized target is equal to the number of yards (or meters, or paces) between the firer and the target. This TN is then modified as follows:

Weapon is a long or shoulder arm (musket, crossbow, longbow)	TN is divided by 2
Weapon is a firearm with a rifled barrel	"
Weapon is being fired using a rest, aiming stick or brace	"
Firer spends an entire Combat Round aiming at the target	"
Target is twice the size of a human (e.g., a horse) - for each doubling in size thereafter	"
Target is half the size of a human (e.g., a dog)	TN is doubled

These modifiers are cumulative, but in an additive sense; in other words, if three conditions for dividing the TN by 2 apply, the TN is divided by 6, not 8.

Once the target is hit, the weapon's Wound Dice are applied as damage, with the usual bonus die for each full six points by which the TN was exceeded.

*Example: Lady Caroline's steward enters her chamber armed with a blunderbuss. This fearsome weapon gets 1 Bonus Die, 1 Wound Die, and 1 Shock Die. The Assassin is six paces from the Steward, and still engaged in combat with the Lady. The Steward fires immediately; his TN is 6, and he rolls (with the Bonus Die), a total of 19. He thus inflicts 3d6 damage on the Assassin (1 basic, +2 for beating the TN by 13), and the Assassin's Knifeman Calling drops by 1 level from the shock.*

## 12. Armour

Armour is divided into two categories:

Soft armour - such as a padded leather jerkin - serves mostly to cushion the user against blunt impacts, knife slashes, and the like. The effects of this armour are simple to model; characters wearing such materials may subtract 1-2 points from any Life Point loss sustained in combat or as the result of missile attacks, depending on the thickness of the armour and whether any reinforcements such as studs or plates have been sewn into it.

Hard armour, on the other hand, almost always consists of metal plate - breastplates, lobster-tail helmets, segmented gauntlets, and so on. This armour works differently to Soft armour in that it doesn't subtract from Life Point damage - instead, it contributes to a buffer of dice that are lost *instead of* Life Points and levels from the Active Calling when a combat round is lost. In other words, the loser erases *Armour levels*, rather than levels of the Calling he or she is using to fight.

The number of Armour levels a character has is equal to the number of items of hard armour he or she is wearing, as follows: helmet, breastplate or mail shirt, gauntlets, greaves, and shield. Hence, it can be seen that the highest Armour level a character can possess is 5. Although Armour level may rise and fall, its Initial value should always be noted; this value is used to calculate the protection offered against missile attacks. One Armour level is also lost for every die of Life Point damage the blow would have caused. Impacts from weapons with Shock Dice lower the Armour level by as many levels as the wearer would have lost from his or her Active Calling had they been unarmoured. Should the wearer not have enough Armour points to soak all the effects of a blow, what points he or she has are first used to negate Life Point loss, and then to negate the loss of levels from the Active Calling.

The loss of Armour levels does not represent a physical deterioration in the armour; rather, it is interpreted as general battering which contributes to the exhaustion and fatigue of the wearer. When enough damage of this sort has been done, the wearer is slowed up and concussed enough that the attackers can begin to place their blows on unarmoured areas with greater ease, or that subsequent impacts on the armour are painful enough to make the armour itself redundant.

This being said, every time a character's Armour is reduced to zero, one piece of armour has been destroyed or caved in, and must be discarded, leading to a 1-point reduction in the character's Initial Armour level until it is replaced. Armour levels regenerate at the same rate as lost Calling levels - one point every half hour. This can be interpreted as the period it takes to readjust straps, buckles, etc., hammer out dents, and massage bruised body parts back to functionality. The number of points regained per half-hour is increased by 1 for every assistant the wearer has in this respect.

Against missile weapons, Hard armour works differently than it does in melee combat. When an armoured character is struck by a projectile, a d6 should be rolled; if this roll is greater than the character's Armour level, the attack has struck an unprotected part of the body and the armour has no effect. If this is not the case, and a part of the body protected by armour plate is struck, Life Point damage is rolled normally, but the total is *halved*.

*Example: Thatcher is battling for his life against a highland warrior armed with a fearsome two-handed sword. The highlander beats Thatcher's defence by six points; in addition, her engraved claymore gains a Wound Die and a Shock Die. Thatcher is wearing a helmet, breastplate, and gauntlets, giving him an Armour level of 3. The fearsome impact of the claymore would have caused him to lose 2 dice from his Active Calling (1 basic, +1 for the Shock Die) as well as 2d6 Life Points (1 for the 6-point margin of success, +1 for the Wound Die) if he was unarmoured; as is, his Armour level of 3 soaks up the Life Point loss and one of the lost Calling levels, leaving him battered and reeling but still on his feet. He will gain no further benefit from his armour until he has a chance to regain his wits.*

## 13. Healing and Recovery

The time unit for the recovery of Calling levels lost as the result of contestation is the hour.

Lost levels recover quickest when a character is resting, or otherwise undistracted. If the character is not resting, but travelling or engaged in some other mild exertion, the recovery time is one hour for every die regained. Any strenuous exertion during this time - such as combat, or another contestation using that Calling - negates any recovery which would have taken place at the end of that hour. If the character is resting, the effectiveness of the healing process is doubled; two dice return every hour.

If a character has lost levels in multiple Callings, these levels return simultaneously; the character doesn't have to wait for one to return to its initial level before another begins to recover. Lost Life Points are recovered at the rate of one per day of rest, or one point per two days of mild exertion, with the same provisos as above. The full-time attention of an assistant - be it a nurse, counsellor, or drinking partner - doubles the rate of recovery. Each assistant can affect only one Calling at a time.

Characters who have been reduced to 0 in a Calling have an additional hurdle ahead of them; their confidence has been shaken, and they will take longer to recover. Their healing time is doubled for each Calling that has been reduced to 0, and they must rest for 1d6 extra hours before the healing process begins. Similar rules apply to characters whose Life Points have been reduced to less than 6; their healing time is doubled.

These rules are biased towards Callings whose use is instant in nature, such as fighting skills or academic debate. More intricate Callings, whose resolutions are measured in days or weeks - such as the *Strategist*, *Composer*, or *Sculptor* Callings - use these time frames, rather than hours, as their time units for recovery. At the GM's discretion, the rest and exertion conditions might be reversed for certain Callings to reflect situations where getting out and keeping busy is better than sulking indoors.

*Example: Freida is a Poet (4) and Object of Adoration (3) whose prestige and self-esteem have suffered as the result of being outmaneouvered by a sloe-eyed Iberian hussy - first, professionally, and then in the bed of her lover. The resulting contestations, which have taken place at the rate of one round a day for the last week, have left both of these Callings at zero. The time unit for recovery is the same as the time unit for the contestation: days.*

*Frieda will thus take 1d6 days to begin recovery of her lost Callings, and will then begin to regain them at the rate of 1 level every day if she stays cooped up in her inn room, pacing and hurling crockery. If her initial roll was 4, she will be her usual self again once 8 days have passed. If she decides to get out of town for a week instead, and rents a cottage on the coast, the time it takes per recovered die will be halved; in other words, she will be penning vitriolic sonnets again in four days, and making village lads trip over their rods by the afternoon of the third day. If her friend and confidante Svensen is around to keep her company and lug her writing desk around, this time will be halved again, but he can only concentrate on getting one of her Callings back to its initial level at a time.*

*Svensen, as it happens, is recovering from being beaten senseless by his Patron after presenting him with an unflattering portrait. The calling he used as the basis for his defence in this confrontation, Streetwise Gutter Artist (5), would have recovered at the rate of four dice an hour while staying at the cottage under Frieda's care - 2 dice every hour for resting, doubled for the presence of an assistant. As soon as his Life Points are all back, Svensen will be well enough to settle the score with his Patron.*

## 14. The Effects of Old Age

Whether through character concept or the progress of campaign time, it may become important to be able to exactly determine the effects of advancing age on a character's health, Callings, and performance in various fields. In *Ironsides*, Age is treated exactly like a Calling; in other words, it has a level, and can be expressed as a variety of different conditions, all with the same effects, such as *Wheezing* (4), *Spry* (3), *Middle-aged* (2), *Doddering* (3), and so on. This Calling should be recorded separately on the character record sheet, so that it is not confused with regular Callings.

The number of dice in a character's Age Calling is subtracted from all a character's existing Callings; when the character has as many Age levels as they have levels in their highest Calling, they succumb to old age and die. Each Age level gained also causes the loss of 1d6 Life Points; if this loss causes a character's Life Points to drop below 6 or even to 0, the normal penalties and rules are applied. At the GM's discretion, Age may also be used as an actual Calling or even a booster, to represent the experience and wisdom of characters who have 'seen it all'.

*Age* level is calculated as follows:

- For every 5 full years of life after age 30, a character has a cumulative 1 in 6 chance of picking up their first *Age* level.
- Once they have gained this level, they will get another level every 1d6 years.

Hence, it can be seen that old age will claim characters at ages anywhere from 40 to 96; in addition, the system allows for increased life expectancy among the active and skilled.

*Example: After many years on the road, Werner has reached the age of 35, and has his first 1 in 6 chance of accumulating his first Age level. Fortune smiles on him, however; he rolls a 4, and is thus unaffected. Five years later, now aged 40, he rolls again, this time with a 2 in 6 chance; again, he succeeds. At age 45, he rolls under the cumulative chance (now at 3 in 6); he gains his first Age level, and records it as Stiff Joints (1). All Werner's Callings now lose 1 level; his Highwayman Calling, for instance, is recorded as (5/4), to reflect that while its initial level is 5, he can only roll 4 dice for it. Werner then gains another Age level each 1d6 years. The GM rolls the dice to see when the next few Age levels will appear, and rolls 2, 2, 5, 3. Werner will gain another level at ages 47, 49, 54, and 57. At 57, he will have 5 Age levels, as many as his highest Calling, and will pass away at some time during that year.*

## 15. Religion, Sorcery and Witchcraft

The use of these rules is optional, and only appropriate to campaigns whose themes include the supernatural. Please read the [disclaimer](#) at the foot of this document if the material below offends your moral or religious beliefs.

<a href="#">Types of Faith</a>	<a href="#">Creating Effects</a>	<a href="#">Effect Modifiers</a>	<a href="#">Trappings</a>	<a href="#">Ingredients</a>
<a href="#">Recovering Faith</a>	<a href="#">Conflicting Effects</a>	<a href="#">Spiritual Combat</a>	<a href="#">Agents</a>	<a href="#">Sorcerous Mishaps</a>

The mechanics for supernatural actions in *Ironsides* are the same for each of the three branches of belief, and operate using a single Calling - *Faith*. Faith may be developed as a single- or double-pump skill, but characters possessing Faith must choose one of three things to have faith in: *Religion*, *Sorcery*, or *Witchcraft*. Anyone may have these Callings, given an appropriate character background, but they may only have one Faith at a time. The single exception to this case comes in the case of characters with the *Sorcery* Calling, who are known as Sorcerors.

Sorcerors *may* also have either of the other types of *Faith*, as long as this Calling is developed to the same level as their *Sorcery* and remains at the same level throughout the character's life. Sorcerors who also have *Religion* are so-called 'white wizards' like Roger Bacon, who regard their mastery of magical spirits as a gift from the Almighty. Sorcerors who also practice *Witchcraft* are so-called 'black magicians', who have sold their souls to Satan but who hold more powers over the denizens of Hell than the average Witch does. This exception applies only to Sorcerors, and is an optional, and fairly expensive option for them to take - the additional *Faith* must be purchased using the player's pool of character creation dice as if it was a separate Calling.

In this setting, the overwhelming majority of supernatural powers affect living creatures in some way, and are usually subtle in appearance. While a Warlock may summon a ball of infernal hellfire into his hand and hurl it at an enemy, most supernatural effects are only noticeable through their effects on the target. Good examples are the blessings and curses used by Priests and Witches.

All supernatural activities and constructs are called **Effects**. Effects are treated similarly to Callings in that they are expressed as a number of dice. These Effects are added to the profile of the character, area, or being they are cast upon. Examples of stand-alone Effects are: *Pious Resolve* (1), *Fertility* (3), *Ghostly Tutor* (2), *Chill Wind* (2), *Bad Luck* (5), and so on. Effects can also be used to modify Callings; a Sorcerer might enchant an underling so that her *Bodyguard* (4) Calling increases to *Bodyguard* (7), for instance.

Priests (characters with *Religion*) achieve their Effects by beseeching the Almighty for aid, or by invoking the power of Saints or angelic beings. Their Effects are biased towards beneficial results; Priests wishing to harm, injure, or debilitate their foes may still do so, but at a two dice penalty to the Effect Total (see below). For example, a Priest wishing to use Divine Power to aid a companion in sneaking past some guardsmen, would suffer this penalty if he or she attempted to cloud the guardsmen's vision, but not if he or she was trying to increase the companion's Active Calling.

Witches or Warlocks (characters with *Witchcraft*) achieve their effects by use of powers granted to them by Satan. No prayers or invocations are required. The Effects generated by witchcraft are biased towards destructive and evil results; witches may still create benevolent Effects, but at a two dice penalty to their Effect Total. A common tactic among witches to circumvent this restriction is to create Effects which appear to have a benevolent result, but are in fact destructive in some subtle way. A Love potion may inspire great love in the drinker but also change their personality from sunny to unkind and cruel; a fertility spell may make the recipient incredibly fecund, but make all the babes born resemble anyone but the father. Witches alone may create Potions; these are handled exactly like normal Effects, with another set of Duration modifiers for the length of time the witch requires the Potion to be potent and drinkable.

Sorcerers (characters with *Sorcery*) achieve their miraculous effects by commanding magical spirits to do their bidding. These spirits typically manifest as 'invisible hands' when a physical Effect is created. Sorcerers are under no restriction in terms of the 'goodness' or 'evilness' of their Effects because they do not receive their powers from any higher being. Instead, Sorcerers use the guidelines and techniques laid down by wizards and necromancers of ancient times, from the days of Solomon onwards, to force spirits to do their bidding. They run the risk, should their invocations fail, of being attacked by the spirits; this event is covered in [Sorcerous Mishaps](#), below.

All supernatural Calling use is based on the caster deciding how many dice he or she wishes to **use up** (in other words, temporarily discard) from his or her pool of Faith, modifying this number based on the desired area of effect, duration, and local circumstances, and then applying the resulting number to the target(s) of

the Effect as a Calling. This number - *Faith* plus all modifiers - is called the *Effect Total*. The creation of effects is not an instantaneous process; it may take anywhere from a minute to several days. This should be decided by the GM and the player in advance.

Modifiers due to *Area of Effect* and *Duration* are as follows:

Number of Targets to be Affected	Mod	Desired Duration of Effect
One person	0	A few hours
A handful of people	-1	A day and a night
Up to 50 people	-2	A week and a day
Up to 100 people	-3	A lunar month
Everyone in a town (1 000 people)	-4	Six lunar months
Everyone in a small city (10 000 people)	-5	A year and a day
Everyone in a large city (100 000 people)	-6	A generation (25 years)
Everyone in a district (1 mil. people)	-7	A lifetime (2-3 generations)

Certain modifiers also apply to each of the three branches of supernatural characters; these are known as *Trappings*. Trappings represent Ingredients (see [below](#)), ritual invocations, the presence of assistants, and other factors which boost the character's Faith. Each condition that applies to the caster adds 1 to the Effect Total. These modifiers are as follows:

Religion	Sorcery	Witchcraft
Chanted psalms and prayers	Mystical invocations in ancient tongues	Dire and blasphemous utterances
A congregation of worshippers	An apprentice or homunculus	A coven of witches or warlocks
Relics, holy water blessed by a Bishop	Esoteric alchemical compounds	Evil herbs and human body parts
Consecrated and holy ground	A summoning circle	Blasted heaths and other evil places

It can thus be seen that Trappings can add up to 4 dice to the Effect Total.

One final modifier is applied to the Effect Total: any Effect which is attempting to modify a target's existing Callings rather than create a new one must lose 1 dice from the Effect Total before it is calculated.

Once the Effect Total is generated, that number of dice is rolled to determine whether the Effect is successfully invoked (and if so, then applied to the target(s) of the Effect as a Calling). No Target Number is calculated; instead, any dice showing 1's are removed from the Effect Total, leading to a reduced result. If a Mishap is indicated on the roll, the Effect fails entirely. All ingredients used are still consumed and dice allocated from the caster's Faith Calling are still gone and must be recovered normally. If the caster is a Sorcerer, a Mishap indicates that he or she is attacked by the spirit commanded; this is detailed in [Spiritual Combat](#), below.

The **ingredients** mentioned above come in two forms; consumable and non-consumable. Consumable ingredients are scattered, burned, or otherwise used up in the creation of the Effect, and are measured in terms of 'uses', where a bottle of holy water might have five 'uses' of holy water within. Non-consumable ingredients are used as 'props' for the rituals associated with the caster's Faith. Each such item is assumed to have the same effect as a single 'use' of a consumable ingredient; the advantage, of course, being that it is

not used up during the creation of the Effect and may be used for an indefinite number of Effects. A character who wishes to gain the bonus indicated under Trappings, above, for having all the right ingredients, must have as many ingredients as the combined negative modifiers to the Effect Total as specified above.

*Example: A witch's spell cast on 50 people, lasting a week and a day, which has an unadulteratedly beneficial effect and is intended to modify their existing Callings rather than create new ones, would be under a total negative modifier of -7. If the witch has three enchanted stones which count as non-consumable ingredients, she must still find four 'uses' of consumable ingredients - baby fat, hemlock, powdered mandrake, bat's blood, or whatever - to gain the Ingredients bonus.*

Ingredients are fairly difficult and time-consuming to come by. Any character with the appropriate *Faith* can manufacture, prepare, or otherwise acquire 1 consumable ingredient per week. If the character has a profession of calling that keeps him or her too busy to spend all week working on ingredients, and they have no assistant or apprentice to do the work for them, they will have to hire intermediaries to do some of the searching on their behalf, and purchase some materials rather than make them up. These efforts cost the character 1d6 shillings per ingredient 'use'. The intermediaries need not have the *Faith* Calling; in fact, they usually do not even know what the relevance of the items they search for is, although some ingredients – notably, the ones used for witchcraft – are unconcealably gruesome and will alert all but the most calloused or naive scroungers as to the their patron's motivations. The pool of suitably skilled intermediaries is also a small one; a character cannot simply pay 6d6 shillings to have 6 ingredient uses brought to him or her at the end of the week. Instead, every additional ingredient sought for in a week *doubles* the cost to the character, as he or she is forced to pay transport costs, incentive and danger pay, and grease the palms of officials or coachmen. A Priest who needed six ingredients in a week, therefore, would have to pay a total of 32d6 shillings. Of course, if he or she had the time or access to suitable acolytes, anyone with the *Religion* Faith could manufacture one of these ingredients in a week.

Often, a character will encounter potent ingredients which yield a large number of effective 'uses', even though they are used up in the creation of a single Effect. A drop of martyr's blood, for instance, can only be used once, but might be judged to be as effective as a full vial (five uses) of holy water. Specialised ingredients of this type can rarely be constructed; instead, they must be discovered in the course of the character's adventures. If rules for their creation are required, it is suggested that 1d6 weeks be added to the time taken to find them, and a further 1d6 to the transit time required for them to arrive or be prepared, incurring extra costs as the GM deems appropriate.

Non-consumable items can only be created or prepared by the most skilled practitioners of each Faith (those with a dice type of d8's or higher); even these skilled individual will require 6d6 weeks per item. These items often have 1-2 Bonus Dice to reflect their potency; only one such Bonus can be added to the Effect Total at a time, although the other bonus items may still be counted as ingredients.

As mentioned briefly above, *Faith* does not follow the usual rules for recovery. Instead, the scale below is used:

<i>Faith</i> is recovering from...	Time taken
0 to 1	1 lunar month
1 to 2	One week
2 to 3	One full day
3 to 4	Twelve hours

4 to 5	Six hours
5 to 6	One hour

The process of recovering *Faith* runs smoothest when the character is spending their time in rest, meditation, and study. If he or she uses her Faith while recovering from earlier spiritual exertions, any benefit he or she would have gained from that particular period of rest is lost, and he or she must begin it afresh.

Several instances may arise where Effects are **opposed against one another**, such as in the case where a Sorcerer or Priest attempts to remove a curse laid by another Sorceror or a Witch. If the characters in question are facing one another head-on, in a contest of wills, the situation is handled as Spiritual Combat, which is detailed below. If one character is simply trying to undo the work of another as in the example above, the process is much simpler. All Faiths may remove dice from an Effect created by another Faith simply by contributing Effect Dice towards such an endeavour. If the population of a tiny hamlet have been cursed with *Ill health* (2), anyone trying to undo this Effect simply has to match the final Effect Total of the enchantment they are trying to dispel - in this case, 2 - with an Effect of their own. If they only manage to come up with a single Effect die, the strength of the curse drops to *Ill health* (1), and so on. The counter-Effect should match the original effect in terms of duration and area of effect; if this does not happen, the relief will either be temporary, or limited to only some people within the targeted individuals.

Any character attempting to dispel an effect created by another character of the same Faith finds this process easier than other would; they get a Bonus Die towards their efforts.

Followers of the Christian religion, the dominant faith of the time, gain several bonuses as the result of their faith's strong physical presence across the land. For one thing, Christian holy sites - churches, cathedrals, sites of pilgrimage, and so on - 'lend' anyone inside them the same number of *Religion* dice that a priest would gain from the Trappings of such a site, and these dice may be used to resist or dispel any Effects a character is currently suffering from.

*Example: Consider an individual who is Marked for Death (3) at the hands of invisible, flesh-rending ghouls as the result of a sorcerer's curse. If this unfortunate soul finds his way onto holy ground, he has a 'borrowed' Faith 1 with which to try and resist the effects of the curse - although, with only a single die, all he would be able to do would be to decrease the severity of the curse by one dice for a few hours. If he could find his way to Westminster cathedral, with a service in progress, his 'borrowed' Religion would be at level 4 - sufficient to completely negate the curse for a few hours or lessen it to 1 dice for a day and a night, and so on. With such a powerful curse, though, to be safe he would have to find a Priest in the Cathedral willing to bless him and remove the curse entirely.*

Sites of unholy power also exist, of course, though they are not as easy to find as village chapels. However, because of the evil aspect of the power found circulating there, they convey no benefit to non-witches entering them.

Characters who already have Faith, but of a different type to the site they are in, take a penalty to their *Faith* equal to half the site's Trappings value, rounded down. Hence, it is harder to invoke a benediction in a witches' grotto than it is to perform the same site on a village common.

**Spiritual Combat** is the term used to describe all supernatural contests, whether between characters of rival faiths, exorcists and possessing spirits, or when supernatural energies themselves are used as a weapon.

Spiritual combat is handled using the standard RISUS rules for contested Callings; the loser of each round of opposition loses a die from his or her Faith, and is defeated when this score reaches 0. Combat of this

sort is modified by the Trappings of the area; hence, it is tougher to tackle a sorcerer in his lab, a priest in her church, or a warlock in his lair than it would be elsewhere. The exact form of this confrontation, and the results of defeat, are up to the GM and players; it may be a simple and invisible contest of wills with the loser falling unconscious, or it could be a whirling melee of ghostly shapes striking at each other in the air between the combatants, with the loser dragged off to Hell. A character who is involved in a spiritual combat may not create any Effects; the sum of their concentration is being used up in the struggle for their survival.

Characters who are attacked physically may not use Effects to defend themselves - as mentioned above, Effects take too long to create. However, raw supernatural energy may be used if the character wishes, or is forced, to participate in a physical fight. The characters may summon their powers in visible or invisible form; streams of black flames, ghostly djinn sweeping massive scimitars through the air, and bolts of holy brilliance are all possibilites for visible Effects. This strategy is resolved by using the Inappropriate Cliches in Combat rules as presented in RISUS, opposing the character's *Faith* (as an inappropriate Calling) against the Active Callings of his or her opponents. Every round of combat thus engaged in drains the character's *Faith* by one level.

**Agents** are independent spiritual entities summoned by characters with *Faith* to do their bidding. Although this is largely the province of Sorcerors, other characters may also achieve this effect. Priests may summon angelic beings such as cherubim or serpahim, or even angels themselves; witches may summon imps, gremlins, or even demons. Agents are basically a collection of Effect dice which act as the being's sole Calling. The murderous spirits summoned to pursue and kill the fleeing unfortunate in the example above would thus use the Effect total that summoned them - 3 - as the basis for all the rolls they may need to make in the pursual of their task. Any alternation of this Effect total affects them too. The creation of an Agent is more taxing than a simple curse, requiring the loss of an Effect Die, but has several advantages. The agents will pursue their target(s) for as long as is necessary to complete the general guidelines specified during their summoning, and have enough initiative to be able to act on their own without needing to be constantly supervised by the summoner. A single agent can also be used to affect many individuals without having to broaden the definition of the effect to specifically include them when it is cast.

*Example: Father Laslo summons a tiny Cherub to earth to watch over a family in his parish who are afflicted by bad luck and illness. His Effect Total is 6. His player decides to opt for a two-dice cherub who will be able to stay with the family for six lunar months. During this time, the cherub will be able to act independently, applying its two dice to curing the baby's whooping cough and the cow's dry udders alike, as well as undoing the spiteful magics of the malevolent goblin that lives nearby. It can, of course, be harmed or even destroyed during the course of its duties, but until it is, it will use its powers in any way possible to fulfil the objectives of the one who summoned it.*

Sorcerors, due to their facility with summoned beings, are able to create a special type of agent called a *homunculus*. This tiny, dwarfish creature may function as if it had the Sorcery Calling in terms of assisting the sorcerer with his magical tasks and creating Ingredients. A sorceror may only have one homunculus at a time; in addition, the intricate techniques associated with the creation process mean that the caster must subtract two dice, rather than one, from the Effect total of the summoning.

**Sorcerous Calamities** result when a sorceror rolls a Mishap during the casting process. In this case, he or she is immediately attacked by the angry spirit. The spirit has a *Might* equal to all the negative modifiers for Area of Effect and Duration of the desired Effect, plus one; hence, a spirit that was being summoned to affect 100 people for a day and a night would have a total Might of 5. The sorceror must engage the spirit in Spiritual Combat; using their initial Faith level as their pool of dice. Defeated spirits are banished back to the spirit world; victorious spirits will inflict their will on the defeated character in one of six ways before

vanishing:

1d6 Roll	Results
1	The spirit causes the character to age 3d6 years
2	The spirit possesses the character for the intended duration of the effect
3	The intended Effect is applied to the sorceror; if this effect was intended to be beneficial, this is done in some way which causes distress or discomfort.
4	The sorceror is spirited away to some far-off or unimaginable location
5	The sorceror loses 1 level from half his or her Callings, chosen randomly
6	The spirit kills the sorceror, and his or her soul is forfeit

This table may also be used to determine (in the case of Priests) the effects of failed exorcisms or (in the case of Witches) the result of displeasing their demonic lords.

## 16. Designer's Notes

The rules laid out above were designed for use in my **Malleus Maleficarum** campaign, an as-yet-uncompleted project in which the players take the roles of a band of witchfinders in an AW setting analogous to England in 1648 - *X Files* meets *Restoration*, if you will. My work on this setting is not yet complete, but I will post a link to it on my [Site News](#) Page (which has an Update Notification feature) when it is. Meantime, several links on the history of this era are available through the Links Page hyperlink below.

I first encountered RISUS by clicking on the 'Try a Random Link' hyperlinks at [RPGNET](#) - it had been a long night's websurfing, and I was at that stage where you start following unusual, fuzzy-headed, trails that grin incriminatingly at you from your History bar the next day. I was immediately impressed by the simple and elegant concept behind the rules; I'd been fiddling with a d6-based, character-concept-driven system for a while, but after getting under the hood with RISUS, I felt like I could file my notes and stop the search - this was what I'd been trying to work out, although from another angle.

I fiddled around with some Bronze Age settings for a RISUS campaign for a while, and considered the pros and cons of a Conan game using RISUS (*Cliches: Reaver* (6), *Slayer* (6), *Thief* (6), etc.), but the dog finally barked when I picked up a book on the English Civil War at a pay-per-weight bookstore.

The rules I'm most proud of are the [Religion, Sorcery and Witchcraft](#) rules. These came to me in a flash of inspiration while I was waiting in an airport lounge in Cape Town. I was very impressed with the ease with which RISUS can accomodate the inclusion of entire paradigms not detailed in the basic rules. For a roleplayer like myself, who is constantly searching for ways to tinker up and customise the settings I use, this was a great relief.

My thanks go to Rene Vernon, for identifying some inconsistencies in the original document, and to Charles I, for making it all happen.

'Ironsides', for those who are unfamiliar with the term, was the nickname given to the heavily armoured

troopers of the New Model Army during the English Civil War.

[Back to the Modules page](#)

[Back to the Links page](#)

# Disclaimer

The rules for witchcraft, faith, etc., as specified above, are not meant to reflect in any way on the contemporary Christian or Wiccan faiths. I'm aware that the historical view of witchcraft as 'devil worship' is incorrect, and I'm more than aware of the evil nature of the witch-burning phenomenon as it occurred in actual history. I also believe that the factors at the root of this practice were human hatred and hysteria, not any characteristic intrinsic to the faith the witch-hunters professed to follow.

If you're a rabid pursuer of this debate (and I know you're out there, I've seen your web pages), please be advised that I do not wish to enter into any debate concerning the historical or moral accuracy of the material on this page. So, chill out. That's an order.

[Back to the Religion, Sorcery and Witchcraft section](#)

## RISUS MIRROR TREK

The setting is the Mirror Universe of Star Trek TOS, shortly after the execution of Captain James T. Kirk of the Starship Enterprise for failure to carry out the destruction of the Halkans.

Notes:

Episodes where events occurred or mentioned are noted by series and name.

Historical: based on historical events, albeit used in a fictional way.

Literary: based on literary event.

Mirrored: events interpreted for Mirror Universe by individual named.

### MIRROR UNIVERSE TIMELINE

Date	Events	Notes
c. 30,000 BCE	Cro-Magnon man hunts down and destroys Neanderthal rivals, leaving archeological evidence of the first systematic genocide in human history.	Decipher Star Trek RPG
c. 4th Millenium BCE	Unknown aliens take or abduct several Humans from Earth to be eugenically bred operatives on a distant planet, lest humanity eventually become a threat to them. Gary Seven will be one of their descendants	Gary Seven from "Assignment: Earth". Mirrored by Guy Hoyle..
c. 31st century BCE	Pharaoh Narmer unites Upper and Lower Egypt, deifying himself and his descendants as the incarnation of Horus, son of Set and Isis.	Historical. Adapted from Decipher Star Trek RPG. Changed the Pharaoh they used to Narmer for historical reasons;. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle; in Egyptian mythology, Set is the enemy of Horus and Isis, and the murderer of his father, Osiris.
3834 BCE	Akharin, a soldier felled in battle, realizes that no injury can kill him. Ruling Mesopotamia with an iron hand for centuries, he eventually goes on to assume many guises, eventually known as Mr. Flint.	Mr. Flint from episode "Requiem for Methuselah". Mirrored by Guy Hoyle..
c. 2700 BCE	Earth is visited by aliens who settle in the region near Carthage, where they are worshiped by the Carthaginians as gods.	Memory Alpha timeline; the Enterprise meets Apollo in TOS episode "Who Mourns for Adonais?". Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
c. 1250 BCE	Greeks under Agamemnon destroy Troy, who gives up his unfaithful wife Helen to his troops for the suffering she caused.	Literary, semi-historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
c. 950 BCE	Flint lives the life of King Solomon on Earth. Widely known for the harshness of	Solomon historical. Adapted from Memory Alpha timeline, mirrored

	his judgements, such as the time when two women both claimed the same son..	by Guy Hoyle.
753 BCE	Legendary founding of Rome by Romulus and Remus, twins reputed to be the sons of Mars, god of War. Romulus is later secretly slain by Remus, who names the new city Rome after the memory of his fallen brother, blaming his death upon the leaders of jealous Italian tribes. Soon after, Rome is master of all of Italy.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle
c. 356-323 BCE	Flint lives the life of Alexander the Great on Earth, conquering Greece, Persia, Egypt with the scientific aid of Aristotle, founding the mighty Alexandrian Empire.	Adapted from Memory Alpha timeline, mirrored by Guy Hoyle. Flint from TOS episode "Requiem for Methuselah".
201 BCE	Carthage surrenders to Rome after the defeat of Hannibal, giving Rome its largest foreign province.	Mirrored by Guy Hoyle
44 BCE	Caius Julius Caesar (actually Flint) assassinated by a conspiracy.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
30 BCE	Following his victory over Octavian, Roman Emperor Mark Antony conquers Egypt, destroying the Pyramids and the Sphinx as a demonstration of his power. Archimedean school of philosophy seizes control of the Library of Alexandria, supplies advanced war machines for Rome's conquest of the Eastern empires and Germania.	Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
3rd Century	The inhabitants of Vulcan engage in terrible and destructive wars including the use of atomic bombs, a result of the violent passions and emotions that govern the Vulcan people.  The Time of Betrayal: Surak of Vulcan leads his people onto a path of peace and logic, abandoning their martial heritage	Memory Alpha timeline.  Mirrored by Guy Hoyle
4th Century	A group of Vulcans who do not follow Surak's teachings of logic leave their homeworld in a wave of emigration. They settle on various planets in the Beta Quadrant, including Calder II, Dessica II, Draken IV, Yadalla Prime, and Barradas III. They will later come to be known as the Romulans.	Memory Alpha timeline. (TOS: "Balance of Terror", "The Enterprise Incident"; TNG: "Unification II", "Gambit, Part II")
6th Century	Kukulkan, a benevolent alien being visits the Mayan civilization on Earth and helps	TAS, "How Sharper Than A Serpent's Tooth". Memory Alpha

	them establish a bloody Mesoamerican empire	timeline. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
c. 800	Frankish Empire established by Charlemagne.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
12th Century	Kulkulkan (known as Quetzalcoatl) visits the Aztec civilization on Earth, providing them immunization against diseases brought by increasingly-common Old World contacts.	TAS, "How Sharper Than A Serpent's Tooth". Memory Alpha timeline. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
1492	Christopher Columbus (in reality, the immortal known as Flint) discovers the New World while searching for a path of conquest to the East.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle. Flint from TOS "Who Mourns for Adonais"
1520	Moctezuma defeats Hernan Cortez, sacrificing him to their gods. Spanish prisoners work with Mexica (Aztec) craftsmen to produce weapons for the Mexica armies.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
1558	Francis Drake, Mary Tudor's world-travelling spymaster, offers Mary's sister Elizabeth information and resources that allow her to overthrow her sister. She takes Drake as her unofficial consort, who betrays her to Spain.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
1588	Spanish Armada invades, conquers England	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
1776	North American colonies rebel against England, forming their own nation; George Washington becomes Emperor	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
1812	England goes to war with United States over the impressment of British citizens by US Navy. America seizes control of British Canada.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
1838	Cherokee tribe rebels against US Government, establishing a semi-independant Cherokee state.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
1850-1853	Millard Fillmore, US President, sends Commodore Perry to Japan to evaluate prospects for conquest. Seizes California.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
1861-65	Abraham Lincoln inaugurated president, 1861 Southern states rebel Lincoln emancipates Southern slaves in 1863, resulting in bloody massacres as the former slaves revolt. Lincoln assassinated, 1865, by Vice	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.

	President John Wilkes Booth, a former actor.	
1914-1919	Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary assassinated by Archduke Franz Ferdinand; World War I begins. Flint serves with Bavarian army as Corporal Adolph Hitler.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle  Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle. Flint from TOS "Who Mourns for Adonais".
1920s	Following WWI, the League of Nations is formed. The US does not join, correctly seeing the League as a threat to US plans for world dominance. "Roaring 20s"; Prohibition; Al Capone elected President. Flint, as Hitler, seizes control of the Nazi Party Stock Market Crash of 1929 cripples US economy, temporarily halting its imperialistic designs.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.  Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle. Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle. Flint from TOS "Who Mourns for Adonais". Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
1933	FDR inaugurated President; marries Edith Keeler, "Angel of the Slums" Adolph Hitler, in reality the millenia-old immortal known as Flint, leads Germany as Chancellor, later assumes total power as Fuehrer.r.	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle. Edith Keeler from TOS, "City on the Edge of Forever" Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle. Flint from TOS "Who Mourns for Adonais".
1942-1945	During WW2, by general acclaim, FDR is declared president for life, so that he can take care of the general emergency without worrying about elections.	Historical; mirrored by Sandy Petersen
1945	FDR dies, apparently during romantic liaison with mistress Lucy Mercer. Harry S Truman becomes President. US drops atomic bombs on Berlin and Tokyo, ending WWII. Adolph Hitler, secretly Flint, abandons this identity and flees into obscurity. United Nations established as an American puppet organization supplanting the League of Nations. Cold War begins	Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.  Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle. Flint from TOS "Who Mourns for Adonais".  Historical. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
1952	FDR's successor, Harry Truman, is overthrown by a military coup, led by General Dwight Eisenhower. The ensuing civil war between Eisenhower and MacArthur is resolved in Eisenhower's favor, and a general purge ensues.	Historical. Mirrored by Sandy Petersen.
1968	Shortly before Eisenhower's death, he appoints Richard Nixon President.	Historical. Mirrored by Sandy Petersen.

1974	Nixon is forced out of office by the machinations of his enemies. "Year of Three Presidents" 1974-1975) as Spiro Agnew, Nelson Rockefeller, and Gerald Ford vie for power. Vietnam becomes 51st US State	Historical. Mirrored by Sandy Petersen, Guy Hoyle. Guy Hoyle  Guy Hoyle
1978	Revolution in Iran. The Ayatollah's forces capture the US delegation. President Agnew nukes Teheran.	Historical. Mirrored by Sandy Petersen.
1980	Military rule in the US briefly ends, as Ronald Reagan becomes president, heralding a new age of reform. Unfortunately, 69 days into his presidency, he is wounded in an assassination attempt by former child actress Jodi Foster, and General Alexander Haig seizes control.	Historical. Mirrored by Sandy Petersen.
1986	Soviet Union, its economy eroding, launches attack against the United States in a last-ditch effort to quell the growing threat of SDI.	Historical. Mirrored by Sandy Petersen.
1989	Gorbachev attempts reform in the USSR. The coup attempt succeeds despite Boris Yeltsin's heroic attempts to thwart it, and hardliners once more rule the USSR.	Historical. Mirrored by Sandy Petersen.
1990s	Genetically enhanced supermen fight WW3. It lasts a while and it's not clear who wins, since both sides are identical by this time. United Terra, successor to the United Nations, is created, seizing eugenics technology in the name of global security	Memory Alpha timeline. Mirrored by Sandy Petersen.  Guy Hoyle.
2063	Zephram Cochrane's first successful test of his Warp Drive results in first contact with the Vulcans. Cochrane seizes the ship, captures the crew, and back-engineers Vulcan technology, the basis for the Imperial Starfleet.	ST:E "In A Mirror Darkly, Parts I & II"
2080s	Imperial Starfleet attacks Vulcan, using genetically-augmented shock-troops to counter Vulcan physical superiority.	Guy Hoyle
Late 21st-Mid-22nd Centuries	The Greater Empire of United Terra (more commonly known as the Terran Empire) expands its territory by conquest and intimidation, including Vulcan, Tellar, Andor, Denobulus, Orion, Trillius Prime	Decipher Star Trek RPG "Mirror Universe" timeline, Memory Alpha Mirror Universe timeline. ST:E "In A Mirror Darkly, Parts I & II"

	(the Trill homeworld), Bolarus IX, and Betazed.	
2150s	Anti-Imperial rebellion spreads amongst Imperial slave worlds.	Memory Alpha Mirror Universe timeline. ST:E "In A Mirror Darkly, Parts I & II"
2155	The ISS <i>Enterprise</i> (NX-01) discovers the USS <i>Defiant</i> (NCC-1764). After a brief power struggle onboard the <i>Defiant</i> , Hoshi Sato takes command and declares herself Empress.	Memory Alpha Mirror Universe timeline. ST:E "In A Mirror Darkly, Parts I & II"
2156-2160	Terran-Romulan war ends in a draw. Establishment of "isolation zone."	Memory Alpha timeline. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
2245	Following the destruction of critical food supplies by a native fungus, 4000 heroic colonists commit suicide on Tarsus IV, allowing the other, more important colonists to survive critical food shortages. Governor Kodos blames the tragic event on the late arrival of the colony's supply ships. Only nine survivors, including Captain James T. Kirk and Lt. Kevin Thomas Riley of Starfleet, were witnesses to the event.	TOS, "Conscience of the King". Memory Alpha timeline. Mirrored by Guy Hoyle.
2250s	Garth of Izar, brilliant Starfleet captain, conquers Axanar, destroys the inhabitants of Antos IV after they refuse to aid him. Garth becomes Emperor with the aid of Antosian cell-regeneration technique.	Decipher Star Trek RPG "Mirror Universe"; TOS episode "Whom Gods Destroy"  Decipher Star Trek RPG "Mirror Universe"; TOS episode "Whom Gods Destroy"
2260s	Emperor Garth deposed by senatorial coup. John Gill, ruthless military historian and tactician, becomes Emperor.	Decipher Star Trek RPG "Mirror Universe"; TOS episode "Whom Gods Destroy"  Decipher Star Trek RPG "Mirror Universe"; TOS episode "Patterns of Force"
2251-2264	Christopher Pike commands I.S.S. Enterprise after the death of Captain Robert April.	Decipher Star Trek RPG "Mirror Universe"
2264-2267	James T. Kirk, protegee Emperor Gill, commands the I.S.S. <i>Enterprise</i> after assassination of Captain Pike. Kirk is widely considered to be Gill's eventual successor.	Decipher Star Trek RPG "Mirror Universe"; TOS episode "Patterns of Force"
2266	Klingon captain Koloth thwarts Kirk's plan to sabotage the ecology of Sherman's Planet using tribbles.	TOS episode "The Trouble with Tribbles". Mirrored by Guy Hoyle

	Rift develops between Kirk and Emperor Gill; Melakon of Ekos steps into the void.	Decipher Star Trek RPG "Mirror Universe"; TOS episode "Patterns of Force"
2267	James T. Kirk disappears following failure to carry out the extermination of the Halkans. Commander Spock becomes Captain of the Enterprise.	Decipher Star Trek RPG "Mirror Universe"; TOS episode "Mirror, Mirror"

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## Risus of Arabia

### Risus of Arabia 3.0

Risus: the Anything RPG, © S. John Ross 1993-2001 <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

"First principles, Clarice. Simplicity. Read Marcus Aurelius. Of each particular thing ask: what is it in itself? What is its nature?"  
Hannibal Lecter

To avoid problems, long ago we started using Fate in place of God or Allah. Monotheism is a must, there are other beliefs, but there is only one True Faith.

For simplicity's sake, the characters are generic Islamic Arab. The era is 'The Golden Age of the Islamic Empire'. All other races, creeds, nationalities are fit only for villains or comic relief.

If you are going to lift from RPG resources on the web; lean toward Supernatural Pulp, rather than High Fantasy.

Traditionally The Nights or centered on the reign of Harun al-Rashid (caliph 786 - 809), I center my setting about 900, when the Abbasid caliphate is in full decline and petty emirs are staking out big chunks of the Islamic empire for themselves; inciting civil wars, border skirmishes, and palace intrigues. The empire stretches from the lower half of Spain, along the coast of Africa, a few Mediterranean islands, the Middle East, down the East African coast to Zanzibar; along the coast of India, Indo-china, to the Spice Islands.

Politically, Autocrats are the rule. And in these troubled times, adventurers find great opportunities traveling the dangerous lands and seas between the great cities of the Lands of Fate.

### Setting Cliches

Jinns in bottles on the beach.

Flying carpet careening through the minaret crowned skyline of Baghdad.

Lost cities in the sands of trackless deserts.

Dancing girls in diaphanous harem clothes.

A dhow in full sail on the seven seas.

### **Cliches for the various lands of the Land of Fate.**

Maghreb (Saharan Africa): Powerful Berber Mages, Salt caravans, Timbuktu, Barbary pirates, Algiers, Morocco, Casablanca

Egypt: Tombs, tombs, tombs, barging down the Nile, Nubian gold mines, (Egypt is, historically, the center of the Arab world)

Abyssinia (East Africa): King Solomon's Mines, the slave trade, She Who Must Be Obeyed, Mountains of the Moon.

Arabia: riding camels, sailing Dhows, resting in oases, sand swept ruins of lost civilizations.

Persia: Like Arabia, only with mountains.

Anatolia (Turkey): Like Persia, only on the Mediterranean Sea.

India: Ornate temples of Doom, jungles, the Ganges, Thugges.

Spice Islands: old men who like piggyback rides, headhunters.

Al-Andalus: Arabic Spain. The height of urban sophistication almost constantly at war with the Franks.

### **Risus of Arabia Adventure Seeds**

Several themes: "powerful demon stories, talisman stories where a magical object protects and guides the hero, quest stories, transformation tales, and tales of demons under restraint"

The two main travel motivators in The Nights are to find treasure or break an enchantment; the usual RPG 'need and greed seeds'.

I defer to The Big List of RPG Plots by S. John Ross. <http://www.io.com/~sjohn/plots.htm>

### **Risus of Arabia characters.**

Characters are built on ten dice.

Options at the GM's whim. The only inappropriate option is Funky Dice.

The Hand of Fate awarded by play involving the Five Pillars of Islam; HoF points are the same as Cool points or Fate/Hero points, they are pooled for the group and a point must be given by a gamer to another gamer.

Characters should be mindful of Family, Honor, Hospitality, and Piety. This is another way to get single use Cool points

The merchant/adventurer or young prince/princess (noble) are staples. Remember The Nights is set in a mercantile culture.

Merchant/adventurers, by sea or land.

Scholar, occult or otherwise

Caravan outrider, usually an ex-soldier

Dancing girl, usually a sneak thief

Professional treasure hunter

Dervish, a sufi monk

Sufi, an Islamic mystic

Young Noble, looking for gold, glory, or to reclaim a birthright.

Alchemist

Summoner

Former Desert Bandit

Retired Thuggee

Kabbalist, any mage cliche can use kabbalism, this is the master class.

Fakir is a tall dark and handsome manly man. He is always on the move. Good with pack animals and horses; not so good with people.

Hook: Bad Case of Wanderlust. Pathological Need for 'Me' Time.

Tale: He grew up fast in the streets and alleys of Baghdad. His survival mentality is built around 'keep moving and trust no one'. Stowed away on a ship and has been moving ever since.

Taciturn Caravan Outrider (4) was an Agile and Cunning Street Urchin (3) and Is now a Well Traveled Dilettante Scholar (2) which allows him Universal Mage Abilities.

[] [] []

Princess Shalimar / Taura

Hook: Price on Her Head. Secret Identity. Compulsive Thief

Tale: She is a gypsy princess who fled her tribe because a traditionally evil uncle usurped power and wants to a) marry her off to some halfwit cousin, b) kill her off so he can take over. She was taken in by a group of traveling gypsies where she learned her trades. She uses her dance and social skills to locate loot and the best means to gain said loot.

Little Nell's Dancing Girl: 'Lithe of limb, light of touch, and fleet of foot.' She is a renowned dancer with the ability to enthrall men as if they had drunk deeply of wine. She is also a gifted thief, pickpocket, con artist, and gambling cheat.

Wily Gypsy Peasant (4) which allows her Universal Mage Abilities, Stunning Gypsy Princess (3), Itinerant Bon Vivant (2).

[] [] []

(yes, Gypsies aren't milieu appropriate; Little Nell didn't understand what a Berber was.)

## Risus of Arabia Magic

In The Nights, powerful sorcerers were trumped by Fate or cunning; and a butcher's daughter was learned in enchantments. Magic is useful, and accessible; but not overwhelming. This magic is more enchantment than spell flinging. For a taste of magic from the Tales read the Three Kalandar Tales, particularly Second Kalandar's Tale.

Magic is a facet of everyday, sidewalk astrologers and geomancers, charms for sale in every market, shops that sell anything a mage would need. Only two restrictions: No mind control spells and no specifically offensive spells. However spells can be used offensively. Most magic falls into the bind, summon, invoke, ward, or banish categories. Other options are a spellflinger conversion list or the Fudge "Four-by-Five" Magic System by Steffan O'Sullivan.

Game changing alchemist/magic objects can be handled like the 'Gizmo' advantage for the Gadgeteer in GURPS Cliffhangers; devices, objects, and equipment are prepared before hand and can fill only five of the ten regular Gear Slots, A set number of rings, vials, flasks, amulets, etc... are not committed before a session, but are committed once they come into play; however the uncommitted slot must be named 'ring, vial, flask, amulet, etc.... One ring/talisman and one necklace/amulet can be 'at the ready' for a PC, each costs a Gear Slot. A necklace can be always 'on', say a ward or light glyph - a ring must be commanded. Charms can provide spell-like abilities and non-cliche skills for a chosen cliche.

Summoner or Alchemist is taken as the cliché - augury and letter magic default as skills in either. Both Summoner and Alchemist clichés can be taken but only one can be double pumped. The division between Summoner and Alchemist was a personal preference; it was done solely to diffuse mage power. Magic for both requires a casting round; being 'combat ready' is tricky for a mage, so it's a good for a mage to have a trick, or two, up his or her sleeve. While mages can have passable to excellent combat skills, mesmerism is a skill at the ready, and a demon/jinn bound to a talisman is good to go.

For game purposes, jinns, as a rule, don't do physical combat. Few are actual mages, they use their innately abilities to perform 'magical' tasks, such as fly, passwall, shape-shift, etc... Higher level jinns can cast spells and enchantments. Demons, due to their less magical nature, are more suited for combat and physical tasks. And no, jinns and demons can't be summoned at the same time. Questing Dice can be tied to the Summoner cliche,

Note: Demons are only vaguely referred to in The Nights; and the souls of the departed are in the hands of Allah, so no séances or ghosts-

like apparitions. Spirits are mentioned in The Night, these are animistic hold-overs from pre-Muslim Arab beliefs.

Alchemy: potions, elixirs, devices, acids, explosives, tear gas, transmuting stuff, animating statues, make and use The Philosopher's Stone, create homunculi and golems, etc...

Sample potions: heroism, speed, strength, healing, flash vial, paralyzation, polymorph, cure disease, regeneration..... As well as powders for illusions and invisibility. As mentioned in The Queen of the Serpents, the herbalism in the Night would be familiar to European apothecaries.

Demons, jinn, golems. etc gain the Sidekick bonus when the creator/caster burns a Lucky Die, It can be used in conjunction with the three dice bonus, or as a stand alone entity with the 3 dice alone. for example: an Alchemist (3) creates a golem, they can act in concert as Golem (3) or if the alchemist burns a bonus die they become Golem (6) to crush enemies and smash doors. Or the golem can be left to solo duties as Golem (3).

Universal Mage Abilities (see Risus Magic by Jason Puckett and S. John Ross)

- Sensing magic items upon seeing or touching them
- Sensing other wizards on sight
- Sensing other wizards nearby, whether or not they're visible ("I feel a disturbance in the Force...")
- Sensing spells cast nearby
- Detecting the nature (necromancy, fire magic, good/evil/hostile/friendly magic) of magic items or spells in the area
- Dispelling other mages' spells \*
- etc.

\* Dispelling an enchantment is a regular theme in The Nights, often involving time, effort, and travel. There is also a tacit 'hands off' agreement among all magic users, both Humans and Jinns. There is a tenuous connection between the caster and the enchantment so he or she knows when it is being tampered with. It also serves as an automatic Lojack for magic objects until the enchantment is cloaked, altered, or broken. Also a door can be given a slight enchantment to act as a silent alarm (a variation of Magic Mouth).

Also:

Augury: Astrology/Geomancy (sand writing, akin to reading tea leaves), ask the oracle simple questions ... (a shameless tool for the GM to use)

Letter Magic. - wards and glyphs, making amulets (protective) and talismans (empowering) to control the elements (not elemental spirits), control the weather, talk to animals, draw magic circles, create illusions, write home for help ... (necessary for making magic objects) Letter magic can be written or chanted (the 'intelligible words' often spoken in The Nights) Letter magic is fundamental to magic in The Nights.

(Note: Enchantment, Illusions, and Shapeshifting are covered by a second tier of Letter Magic difficulty. We still need to suss out a few rules.)

(Note: illusions are just trickery, the sort minor jinn engage in to mislead humans. No mind control involved.)

Wards and glyphs can be traced on walls or doors to make barriers or traps; flash, stun, confuse, enthrall, etc... At higher levels letters can be traced in the air and cast like runes.

(Note: Sleep is milieu passable; Charm, Suggestion, and other mind control spells are not.)

(Note: I don't remember if mesmerism is a part of The Nights; however, jinns could work illusions, mirages, and hallucinations; but not direct mind control, that would preclude free will. Mesmerism was included in the earlier incarnation of this game as a concession to a player who wanted an 'always ready' wammy.)

Universal Mage Abilities can be a skill in an appropriate cliché: a Gypsy Princess, Gypsy Peasant, Occult Scholar, etc... with adjusted TNs.

There is a Spellflinger conversion chart; most 'classic' spells can be replicated with this system – the point is to have a broader use of magic. To cover the biggest bugbear, there are no Magic Missiles, Fireballs, Webs, or the like. Cure Wounds or Cure Disease are handled through other skills.

Augury covers ESP, Clairvoyance ....

Letter Magic covers: Light, Protection from Evil, Hold Portal, Shield (detailed rules), Wizard Lock...

The frequent polymorph spells used in the Nights may be a form of a glamor spell. Anyone with 'some small learning in the arts' can see the polymorphed character's true form.

## Risus of Arabia Bestiary

As for 'ghouls, and ghosties and long-legged beasties, and things that go bump in the night'?

Ghuls seem to be a genus of ogre, ghosts don't exist in this cosmology, references to spirits are most likely animistic spirits, a hold over pagan Arab beliefs. Long-legged beasties and things that go bump in the night are hold overs from the regions rich and varied pagan/heathen pasts. There is also a

strong Greco-Roman theme to the bestiary.

Types of monsters.

Hybrids: Half and halfs like centaurs or Nagas and/or chimeras – beasts of many parts.

Melds: a Moreau-esque manimals, werewolves, lizardmen etc....

BTL: Bigger than life. Large or giant creatures.

There are no undead in The Nights or Egyptian mythology. The mummy's curse was a product Victorian England.

In the first and second incarnation demons were based on the Persian, Hindu, and Egyptian pantheons, demons are minor aspects of the deities, mini avatars. Bear in mind the Cthulhu rule of thumb that the older the deity the more powerful it is.

Nagas

Base Cliché: (3) slithering, listening to reedy music, hypnotizing birds....

Notes: bite, claw, whip with tail.

Can lunge.

Slow reptilian brain.

Tastes the air over short distances, heat sense.

Half man half snake, usually solo.

Anubins.

Base Cliché: (2) running in packs, having a 'Day', using curved bladed weapons.

Notes: Jackelmen as from 'The Mummy Returns'.

Sand Snake: Large snake (4)

Notes: Surprise attack

A really impressive hood.

Ambush hunter

### **General notes on Jinn.**

They were created from smokeless fire (humans were created from clay). They have a parallel society, marry, have families, hold slaves, and have jobs. They can pass for human, have sex with humans, and have the same emotional range as humans; though being created from fire, they are more passionate. Not all jinns are mages, but can perform magic like tasks due to their physical nature. The most common abilities are shapeshifting, illusions, fly, element control, talk to animals, and pass through walls. All are dependent on the jinn's class and power.

Jinn are beings of flame or air that are capable of assuming human or animal form and are said to dwell in all conceivable inanimate objects—stones, trees, ruins—underneath the earth, in the air, and in fire. They possess the bodily needs of human beings and can even be killed, but they are free from all physical restraints. Jinn delight in punishing humans for any harm done them, intentionally or unintentionally, and are said to be responsible for many diseases and all kinds of accidents; however, those human beings knowing the proper magical procedure can exploit the jinn to their advantage.

Treasure

Rings or books or charms related to King Solomon. Or something with a biblical feel.

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## **Evens Up: A New Approach to Risus**

What follows is a new way to play *Risus* using the dice mechanics from *Faery's Tale* (FT), a RPG by Patrick Sweeney and friends. The two games work well together because both use the same core conflict mechanics—the “Unholy Trinity” S. John Ross outlines in his *Risus Companion*: the “single-action contest” (simply called a “contest” in FT), “combat” (referred to as a “duel” in FT), and the “target number roll” (called a “challenge” in FT). The only major difference lies in how the dice are counted.

### **The Basic Rule:**

Unlike in *Risus*, where dice numbers in a roll are added to form a sum, in *Faery's Tale*, **when dice are rolled, each even-numbered result is counted as a “success.”** Odd numbers are discarded. In addition, **sixes always “ace.”** That is, each six not only counts as a success, it is immediately re-rolled, with an even result added to the success total (and continuing to ace as long as a six is rolled—the beloved “exploding dice effect.”)

### **How It Works in Risus:**

- 1) **Single-Action Contests:** Both sides roll the appropriate number of dice for their respective clichés. The side with the most number of successes wins. Ties can either be rerolled or go to the side who rolled the fewest (or most!) dice depending on the group’s preference. (See the “Goliath Rule” in the *Risus Companion*)
- 2) **Combat:** Each round, both sides roll the appropriate number of dice for their respective clichés. The side with the most successes wins, resulting in the loss of one cliché dice (or more, depending on the situation) for the loser. Ties can be handled as above.

This dice mechanic works particularly well for combat, especially as a variant for the “Deadly Combat Rules” also described in the *Risus Companion*. It provides a nice middle ground between the original *Risus* combat rules—which can make even small numerical differences between competing clichés devastating—and the “Best of Set” variant, which minimizes those differences.

The “teaming up” rules can be handled in one of two ways: either all even results count as successes toward the team leader’s total or just sixes, as in the original rules. If just sixes count, allow those sixes to ace as normal. If all evens can contribute, just allow the team leader’s sixes to ace.

(Players should remember that in single-action contests and combat, *opponent’s* dice can ace, as well...)

- 3) **Target Number Roll:** Instead of rolling against a target number, a certain number of successes is required to achieve the desired result using the following difficulty scale:

**Easy: 1 / Tricky: 2 / Hard: 3 / Heroic: 4 / Legendary: 5 / Impossible: 6+**

The process used to determine the difficulty rating in *Risus*—by figuring out how hard the task is in the context of the cliché’s relevance—is still used the same way here, as is the idea that the *degree* of success or failure may affect the overall result. And yes, sixes still ace.

- 4) **Funky Dice:** Funky dice can still be used in this system. Just make sure that **ALL even results of six and higher ace**. Obviously, the odds of acing on a 12 or 20-sided die-roll are pretty good, but that’s what makes them so damn funky.

### ***So Why Bother?***

Of course, there’s nothing wrong with playing *Risus* as-is. It’s a brilliant rules-set that encouraged me to think about RPGs in a totally new way. *Risus* liberated me from a library of stat-filled gaming books and at the same time made them valuable again, since all the cool stuff in those source books can now be expressed as clichés.

So why bother with this method? For me, the FT dice mechanic is clean, simple, and easy. Yes, I know—*Risus* is pretty clean, simple, and easy already, but why not make it even more so? Counting evens is quicker than trying to tally up a lot of individual numbers; thinking of difficulty ratings for challenges in terms of ordinary language tied to a 1-6 scale is easier than trying to pin down a precise target number for a task. Most of all, exploding dice are fun!

Of course, there’s no reason why you have to use this method for all three core conflict mechanics. You could just use it for single-action contests and combat, and stick with the normal target number system. Or even just use it for combat as a substitute for the “Best of Set” option. At the end of the day, a cliché gives you a certain number of dice to roll regardless of how you want to count them.

—D Stahler

# Unearthed Playgrounds

quality RPG supplements for you to play

LARRY  
BULLOCK

## Risus Playgrounds



picture provided with cc license by [Lola TC](#)

### Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear...

Well, not quite. It is time to hang out with your friends on the playground. There's so many fun things to do: play basketball, tag, kick ball; have fun on the swings; talk to your friends about all of the neat things that might happen tomorrow.

If only that bully would leave you alone; and that darn tattletale would quit snooping around; and the adults would just let you be.

Have fun now, you'll be growing up before you know it.

This supplement is largely inspired by [Disney's Recess](#).

### Risus Options

Will you have fun on the playground?

#### Genre

Modern (Kids)

#### Tone

Humorous

### Campaign Options

Hooks & Tales; Pumping Clichés

### Points/Dice

10 Dice

### Description

Take part in the adventures of kids as they try to enjoy their time on the playground.



Risus, The Anything RPG is © S. John Ross and is freely available from the Cumberland Games website at: <http://risus.cumberlandgames.com/>

## Sample Clichés

### Sport

Kick ball, bombardment, it doesn't matter. You're good at all sports.

### Prankster

Practical jokes are your forte.

### Smarty Pants

No one knows more than you (except maybe another Smarty Pants).

### New Kid

You're labeled as "new kid" and can't shake it until another new kid comes along. Most other kids will cut you some slack since you're the new kid.

### Tough Kid

Fear is unknown to you. You laugh in the face of danger.

### Bully

Intimidation is your game. Getting what you want from others is fun, especially if you can make them cry.

### Tattletale

Rules are meant to be followed. You're the first to run to an adult when trouble is about.

### (Specific Playground Equipment) Kid

You rule a specific piece of playground equipment (swings, monkey bars, etc.). No one is better than you on your turf.

### Teacher's Pet

The teachers love you and are always asking for special favors.

### Office Helper

Similar to a teacher's pet, but you hang out in the office.

### Guru Kid

You exude an aura of knowledge and wisdom. Other kids come to you for advice.

### Hustler

You've got your finger on what's hot and are looking to cash in.

### (Game) Champ

No one stands a chance against you in your game (Marbles, Jacks, etc.).

### Kindergardener

Not accepted by older kids (some even fear you). Seen as belonging to a primitive tribe who focusses on candy, being messy, and naps.

### Quiet Kid

Never really says much of anything (but you have to be careful of the quiet ones; who knows what they'll do).

### Popular Kid

Everyone seems to want to be like you. You hang around others like you (all seem to have the same name).

### Big Kid

You tower over the rest of the kids on your grade.

## Special Kid's Rules

### Migrating Clichés

Kid's change a lot, even during a single school year. A kid should be allowed to trade one cliché for another (at equal rank) at the beginning of any new adventure (with GM approval).

Note: This is a full trade, not a lowering of one cliché to get a new one. For example: Petey was the New Kid at school, but someone else moved in so Peter traded in **New Kid** 2 for **Sport** 2.

### Growing Up

Sooner or later, kids start to grow up. They are expected to give up childish things. It is a sad and scary time for a kid. Your parents put new expectations on you. They sign you up for special classes and activities. Many times, they don't even ask for your permission or thoughts. In game terms, more "adult" clichés come with a price. In order to acquire a cliché that the GM deems adult in nature, you must give up some of your childhood clichés. For every rank in an adult cliché you acquire, you must give up 2 ranks in childhood clichés (this can be split between multiple clichés).

When acquiring other adult clichés, a kid is not allowed to give up other adult clichés.

Petey's parents sign him up for a web design. He decides he likes it. To add Web Master: 1 to his clichés, Petey gives up 1 rank from Teachers Pet and 1 rank from Big Kid.

### Dealing with Adults

Adults have strange ways of dealing with children. Adults' cliché rolls are modified based on their relationship to a given kid (the modifier is added/subtracted from the total roll for the cliché).

Relationship	Modifier
Authority Figure (principal, parent)	+2
Teacher	+1
Stranger	0
Relative	-1
Neighbor	-3

Petey is trying to cut through Mrs. Fisher's yard to get to the playground. Mrs. Fisher uses her Nosy Neighbor: (3) cliché and rolls an 8 (this is reduced to a 6 due to her role as neighbor).

## Adventure Ideas

### Teacher's Lounge

Every kids wants to see what's inside the teachers lounge. Will you be able to find your way in?

### King of the Playground

Every playground has a king. The one who defines and upholds the rules. The current king is moving, and it's time to pick a new king.

### Bully Trouble

A bully is tormenting someone in the group. How will you stop it?

### Birthday Party

Your mom wants you to give up your favorite toy (you're too old for it now). What will you do?

### Watch Disney's Recess

For the most part, just watch an episode or two of *Disney's Recess*. You'll come back with a ton of adventure starters. Below are a couple of ideas.

## Sample Character

# RISUS Petey Jones

Smarty Pants: (4) Teachers Pet (3) Sport (2) Big Kid (3)

### Hooks

Petey always wears his lucky blue baseball cap (consider it a proper tool for the Sport cliché).

### Tale

Up until the start of the year, Petey was the new kid at school. Thankfully, someone else has filled that position at school and he can just be Petey.

### Description

Petey is a gangly 4th grader, a bit larger than his friends. His clothes often appear a bit on the small side. He tries to hide his smarty pants nature and has recently taken up sports.



image is from [West Haven Public Schools website](#) (support your schools).



undefined



## Heavy Ordnance Lite

David Masad

Adapted from

[Heavy Ordnance by Christopher Blankley](#)

and from

[Risus: The Anything RPG by S. John Ross](#)

*In the fourth grade, Mrs. Watkins gave me a D in Mathematics.*

*I was not a happy camper.*

*Now she's a bloodthirsty demon from the seventh plane of hell,  
And I have a Mini gun with 2000 rounds of HESH ammo.*

*Mrs. Watkins,*

*Class is back in session.*

### PRELUDE

You had always known that School was hell, but now-a-days your sure of it. A runaway nuclear reaction in the cafeteria meat loaf had blasted portions of your Elementary School into the nether regions of hell; and all of your teachers have been possessed by brain hungry demons. Now there's just you, the stockpile of armaments from the local National Guard base, and two years of DOOM experience between the safety of home, and eternal oblivion. Good thing your mother packed you a lunch, you're going to need it.

### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Heavy Ordnance Lite. Heavy Ordnance is a satirical Roleplaying Game where the players play prepubescent school children with large military surplus weaponry. A nasty accident, involving some weapons grade plutonium and the cafeteria meat loaf, has blasted portions of your hometown into the many levels of hell; and all citizens the elder side of puberty have been turned into brain sucking monsters. Luckily, your Elementary School was built next door to the local National Guard base, and you and the rest of your fifth grade class have armed themselves. Now all you have to do is figure out which end of the bazooka is the business end, before the Principle smashes down the door and snacks on your entrails.

### THE SYSTEM

Heavy Ordnance Lite is a simplification of the original Heavy Ordnance rules. Heavy Ordnance was powered by the Reflex Roleplaying System, which is a great system, though a bit complex for the humorous atmosphere of Heavy Ordnance. Heavy Ordnance Lite is powered by Risus: The Anything RPG by S. John Ross, a freeware roleplaying game designed for humorous and comic games. The Risus rules are explained here in terms of the Heavy Ordnance setting. To use Risus with other settings, you should read the Risus Core Rules, available on the Risus Homepage.

### COPYRIGHT ISSUES

Sorry I have to stick this in, but it's neccessary:

Despite the fact that my name is stuck on top of this document, I actually wrote very little of it. The rules are taken word-for-word the original Risus

rules (with Bully replacing Barbarian, and other changes to bring them into the Heavy Ordnance context), and the setting section and sample adventure are taken word-for-word from the original Heavy Ordnance game (with some typos and grammar errors corrected). All I've done is mesh the two systems together.

## CHARACTER CREATION

*"Work hard, rock hard, eat hard, sleep hard, grow big, wear glasses if you need 'em"*

- the Webb Wilder Credo

Like in any roleplaying game, the most important parts of Heavy Ordnance Lite are the characters. Characters are defined by Clichés (sometimes several of them). Clichés are a shorthand which describe what a character knows how to do. The "character classes" of the Neolithic Period of RPGs were Clichés: Fighter and Magic-User, Space Marine and Star Merchant. As the characters of Heavy Ordnance are children - children with military-grade weapons, but children nonetheless - you should choose your Clichés appropriately. Which Clichés are permitted are up to the GM.

Clichés are defined in terms of Dice (by which we mean the ordinary six-sided kind you can scavenge from your old Yahtzee set). This is the number of dice that you roll whenever your skill as a Bully, Young Model, or William Shatner Impersonator (for instance) is challenged. See "Game System," below. Three dice is professional. Six dice is mastery. One die is a putz.

Characters are created by naming and describing them, and listing their Clichés. When designing your character, you have 10 dice with which to define his Clichés (a Normal Schmoe would be built on anywhere from 3 to 5 dice). A character may have any number or combination of Clichés, but more than 10 different Clichés would be odd, considering the number of dice you get. Characters shouldn't begin their career with more than 4 dice in anything, but just because you're creating a character today doesn't mean that he's beginning his career! The GM will tell you if he's requiring "beginners" for the game. It's not our business.

### **SOME SAMPLE CLICHÉS, PLUS DESCRIPTIONS**

- **Gun Fetishist** - You've always loved firearms. Lots of firearms. You own a complete run of Guns&Ammo, and have memorized the statistics of weapons you've only dreamed of owning. Now that you have them, you want to use them. Saving the world is only an excuse to shoot stuff. Demons, cars, walls, thin air - doesn't matter.
- **Bully Fodder** - You were always the smallest kid on the block, and got beaten up more times than you can count. But now you have a LAW launcher, so everyone else better watch out. Your turn of speed and knowledge of hiding places gained running from bullies is more important now than ever.
- **Nerd** - Never the most popular kid in the class, you were nevertheless a straight A student. Its hard for you to take a bazooka to the teachers who used to be your allies, but it's either them or you. Your hours of playing Doom and Shadowrun have given you a knowledge of strategy and tactics that is coming in handy now.
- **Young Gadgeteer** - The neighbors always complained about the noise your lab in the garage caused. They went first. Then the science teacher who didn't accept your flamethrower as a valid submission to the science fair. Your knowledge of science allows you to build your own weapons, as well as improve those of others, and your list of which chemicals NOT to mix has a whole new use...
- **Eagle Scout** - Nature has always been a second home to you, and now with your parents as slobbering demons it's the only home you have left. Your skills in tracking and survival make you the perfect covert operative of this war, and your talent with a knife has a whole new calling.
- **Juvenile Delinquent** - Always in trouble, you know you can't get into much more. Your daring has given you experience in Breaking & Entering, carjacking, and other fields that other kids only dream of. Now there's nobody to stop you, and you can do whatever you want. What you want, however, is to get away from the brain-eating thing your social worker has become (you always thought she was a bit weird).

These are just examples to get you started - players should feel free to make up their own Clichés (subject to GM approval). In particular, Note that the GM will require the "fine tuning" of any Cliché that he considers too broad.

The last important thing to do when creating a Heavy Ordnance character, is to determine his age. This is important since none of the characters will be over 13. You are free to choose whatever age you wish. It's good to be older, 'cause you're bigger, and you can pick on character's who are smaller than you. But remember: The older your character is, the closer to puberty he is; and the close to puberty one is, the closer to being a brain sucking demon one is. If you plan to use a character for very long, A nice comfortable single digit age may be more your style.

Sample Character:

### **Daniel "Nose" Rosen**

**Age: 11**

***Wannabe Survivalist (4)******Card Shark (3)******Kickball Player (2)******Poet (1)***

Daniel "Nose" Rosen knows what he wants to be when he grows up - he's going to have a big, self-supporting farm, with a nuclear fallout shelter, and lots of guns. Especially guns. Lots of those. In order to finance his dream, Nose has begun teaching his classmates poker, and then cheating horribly to win their lunch money. He spends his spare time playing kickball, and while he isn't very good at it he still plays every day. He is also trying to learn to write love poems, so that he can impress Veronica, an 11th grader from the high school who he is sure he is in love with.

**ADULTS AND DEMONS**

Adult characters are built the same as children, but with appropriate Clichés. The Demons themselves have no statistics, as they have no body. However, Demons can possess adults - their only method of influencing the physical world. A Demon-poessed adult gains +1 die in all Clichés, plus the Cliché ***Demon Possessed*** which can be used in combat (claws, etc.). The higher a character's ***Demon Possessed*** is, the bigger, badder, Demon they are. Alternatively, GM's may wish to have them only as ***Demon Possessed Adult***.

**GAME SYSTEM**

Whenever anybody wants to do something, and nobody is actively trying to stop him, AND the GM doesn't think that success would be automatic, the player rolls dice. If the total rolled beats (equals or exceeds) the Target Number the GM sets, success! If not, failure!

Target numbers follow this scale:

- 5:** A cinch. A snap. A challenge for a Schmuck. Routine for a pro.
- 10:** A challenge for a Professional.
- 15:** An Heroic challenge. For really inventive or tricky stunts.
- 20:** A challenge for a Master. Nearly superhuman difficulty.
- 30:** You've GOT to be Kidding. Actual superhuman difficulty.

**PROPER TOOLS**

*"So Tick, can you destroy the earth with your super powers?"*

*"E-Gad! I hope not! That's where I keep all my stuff!"*

-*Tick & Interviewer; The Tick.*

Every character is assumed to be equipped with the Tools of His Trade (at least the portable ones). In Heavy Ordnance, this means that all characters are assumed to have a pistol or rifle, a ***Young Gadgeteer*** has his chemistry set, etc.

If, through the course of an adventure, a character LOSES any of these vital totems, his Cliché operates on half the normal number of dice (or not at all, if the GM rules that the equipment was REQUIRED) until they are replaced.

An ***Action Hero (5)***, for instance, can fight without his sword as an ***Action Hero (3)***, but a ***Young Gadgeteer*** can't make bombs (well... big one anyway) without his chemistry set. If the ***Young Gadgeteer*** manages to find another set to play with besides the kind he's used to, he can operate at half-dice.

**HEAVY WEAPONS**

As the name suggests, heavy weapons play a large part in a Heavy Ordnance game. All characters are armed with surplus military weapons stolen from the nearby Nation Guard base, and a rifle or pistol (at least) are assumed to be Tools of the Trade. However, certain weapons may add significantly to the characters' basic firepower. These weapons will either give a bonus to the character's Cliche, or else they will have Cliches of their own.

Many weapons will have very limited ammunition, which should be kept track of. While assault rifles, pistols, etc. are assumed to have practically unlimited ammunition, grenade launchers, LAW's, and similar will probably have no more than a handful of shots. The GM should make sure to carefully record the amount the players have left.

Finally, many weapons may be unfamiliar to the characters - while they all know what a bazooka looks like, when they actually get one they may discover that they have no idea how to shoot it. If the GM decides that there is a significant chance of the characters not knowing how to use a weapon, a Familiarity Roll may be required - a player rolls their appropriate Cliche (***Gun Fetishist*** or the like) against a target number the GM decides. If they succeed, they can use the weapon. If not, not. A character may attempt another familiarity roll once per hour, until they succeed.

**Sample Weapons**

**LAW** - The Light Antitank Weapon is a one-use disposable rocket launcher that adds 3 dice to the character's Cliche.

**Frag Grenade** - The fragmentation grenade is an extremely deadly weapon. During combat, a character may declare that they are using a grenade. They then make a roll against a target number set by the GM. If they succeed, all human sized enemies involved in the fight are immediately defeated. Frag grenades shouldn't have much influence on Tankbots, Great Cthulhu, and other such powerful foes.

**Explosive Ammunition** - A magazine of explosive ammunition allows characters to double-pump their Cliche for one round of combat. If their Cliche is already double-pumpable, it allows them to *quadruple-pump* it - raise it by 4 for every point spent.

**Smart Gun** - The Smart Gun replaces the character's Cliche during combat - i.e. they temporarily gain the Cliche **Smart Gun** (with an amount of dice determined by the GM). However, when **Smart gun** is worn down to zero the character may still use other appropriate Cliches. **Smart Gun** does not replenish - once its dice are lost, they are gone for good.

**Heavy Machinegun** - The heavy machinegun is a fixed weapon that characters may find as part of a defensive array, mounted on a vehicle, or on its own. While fighting in its vicinity, characters may declare that they are using it. When used, the heavy machinegun Teams Up with the character using it. The heavy machinegun's rating is decided by the GM, and it *can* be the Team Leader.

## VEHICLES

Throughout Hometown, many vehicles have been left unattended - vehicles that the characters can comandeer and drive. Characters should be able to drive most vehicles without much of a problem. If the GM believes the characters may not be able to drive a given vehicle (especially true with tanks, helicopters and other exotic vehicles) a Familiarity Roll (see above) may be required. For most difficult maneuvers, characters will roll their appropriate vehicle-operation Cliche. Some vehicles, however, may either add or subtract dice from the roll. For example, a pickup truck will be curbersome to drive (-1d on every roll), while a sports car is built for difficult maneuvers (+1d on every roll). Players in vehicles may use them in combat, attempting to run over or crash into the enemies. Vehicles may also have weapons mounted on them. A character may not drive and use a weapon at the same time

## THE COMBAT SYSTEM

*"This sucks, lets go kill something."*

*"Ha, yeah. Killing is cool."*

-Bevis & Butthead, Bevis & Butthead.

``Combat'' in this game is defined as any contest in which opponents jockey for position, utilize attacks, bring defenses to bear, and try to wear down their foes to achieve victory. Either literally or metaphorically! Some examples of combat include:

**ARGUMENTS:** People using whatever verbal weapons they have at hand to make their points. Truth is the first casualty.

**HORSE-RACING:** People on horses running around and around a dirty track, trying to get nowhere first.

**DOGFIGHTS:** People in airplanes or spaceships flying around and trying to blow each other out of the sky.

**ASTRAL/PSYCHIC DUELS:** Mystics/psionics looking bored or asleep, but trying to rip one another's egos apart in the Otherworld.

**WIZARD'S DUELS:** Sorcerers using strange magics and trying to outdo the other.

**DUELING BANJOS:** Banjo players using strange melodies and trying to outdo the other.

**SEDUCTION ATTEMPTS:** One (or more) characters trying to score with one (or more) other character(s) who is(are) trying to resist.

**COURTROOM ANTICS:** Prosecution vs. Defense. The goal is victory. Justice is incidental.

**ACTUAL PHYSICAL COMBAT:** People trying to injure or kill each other.

In Heavy Ordnance, physical combat will probably be the most common form of combat by far.

The GM decides when a combat has begun. At that point, go around the table in rounds, and let each combatant make an attack in turn. What constitutes an ``attack'' depends on the sort of combat, but it should ALWAYS be roleplayed (if dialogue is involved) or described in entertaining detail (if it's physical and/or dangerous and/or normally requires contraceptives).

Attacks require rolls against character Clichés. The GM must, at the outset of combat, determine what TYPE of Clichés are appropriate for the fight. In a physical fight, Clichés like **Bully**, **Gun Fetishist**, and **Karate Kid**, are appropriate. Clichés like Hairdresser and Latin Lover are not (but may still be used; see next section).

An attack must be directed at a foe. Both parties in the attack (attacker and defender) roll against their chosen Cliché. Low roll loses. Specifically, the low roller loses one of his Cliché dice for the remainder of the fight - he's been weakened, worn down, or otherwise pushed one step towards defeat. In future rounds, he'll be rolling lower numbers.

Eventually, one side will be left standing, and another will be left without dice. At this point, the winners usually decide the fate of the losers. In a physical fight, the losers might be killed (or mercifully spared). In an argument, the loser is left grumbling, unable to find a reply. In a race, the loser gets a faceful of the winner's dust.

You needn't use the same Cliché every round. If a **Bully/Kid Superhero** wants to lop heads one round, and swing on chandeliers the next, that's groovy, too. However, anytime a character has a Cliché worn down to zero dice in combat, he has lost, even if he has other appropriate Clichés left to play with.

Dice lost in combat are regained when the combat ends, at a "healing" rate determined by the GM. If the combat was in vehicles (cars, pickups, giant robots) then the vehicles themselves are likely damaged, too, and must be repaired.

### INAPPROPRIATE CLICHÉS

As stated above, the GM determines what sort of Clichés are appropriate for any given combat. An **INAPPROPRIATE Cliché** is anything that's left . . . In a physical fight, Hairdresser is inappropriate. In a Wizard's duel, Barbarian is inappropriate.

Inappropriate Clichés may be used to make attacks, **PROVIDED THE PLAYER ROLEPLAYS OR DESCRIBES IT IN A REALLY, REALLY, REALLY ENTERTAINING MANNER**. Furthermore, the ``attack'' must be plausible within the context of the combat, and the genre and tone that the GM has set for the game. This option is more valuable in silly games than in dead-serious ones.

All combat rules apply normally, with one exception: If an inappropriate Cliché wins a combat round versus an appropriate one, the ``appropriate'' player loses THREE dice, rather than one, from his Cliché! The ``inappropriate'' player takes no such risk, and loses only the normal one die if he loses the round.

Thus, a skilled hairdresser is dangerous when cornered and attacked unfairly. Beware.

### TEAMING UP

Two or more characters may decide to form a **TEAM** in combat. For the duration of the team (usually the entire combat), they fight as a single unit, and are attacked as a single foe. There are two kinds of teams: Player-Character teams and NPC teams ("Grunt Squads.")

**Grunt-Squads:** This is just special effects. When you want the heroes to be attacked by a horde of 700 rat-skeletons inside the lair of the *Wicked Demon Necromancer (5)*, but don't feel like keeping track of 700 little skeletal sets of dice, just declare that they're a team, fighting as *Skeletal Rat-Horde(7)*. Mechanically, the Rat-Horde is the same as any other single foe - except it has more dice! Grunt-Squads can have any level of cliché the GM feels is appropriate. Grunt-Squads stick together as a team until they're defeated, at which point many survivors will scatter (though at least one will always remain to suffer whatever fate the victor decides).

**Player-Character Teams:** When PCs (or PCs and their NPC allies) form a team, the "Team Leader" is defined by the highest-ranking Cliché in the team (a title that must be designated if there is a tie). Everybody rolls dice, but the Team Leader's dice all count. Other Team Members contribute only their sixes (if the Funky Dice option is used, Team Members may contribute their single highest die-roll above six, or their sixes, their choice). Team members who roll nothing above five don't contribute anything to the Team Leader's total for that roll.

Clichés joined in a team need not be identical, but they all must be equally appropriate or inappropriate. This means five Martial Artists could band together in physical fight with no problem. It also means that a Hairdresser, a Parakeet Trainer, and a Career Counselor could team up in a physical fight if they have a REALLY good description of how they'll use their skills in concert to take out the Vikings!

Whenever a team loses a round of combat, a single team-member's dice is reduced by one (or three!) as per the normal combat rules. Any team member may "step forward" and voluntarily take this personal "damage" to his dice. If this happens, the noble volunteer is reduced by twice the normal amount (either two dice or six!), and the team leader gets to roll twice as many dice on his next attack, a temporary boost as the team avenges their heroic comrade. If no volunteer steps forward, then each member must roll against the Cliché they're using as part of the team: Low-roll takes the (undoubled) hit, and there is no "vengeance" bonus.

**Disbanding:** A team may voluntarily disband at any time between die-rolls. This reduces the Cliché each team-member was using in the team by one, instantly (not a permanent reduction - treat it just like "damage" taken from losing a round of combat). Disbanded team-members may freely form new teams, provided the disbanding "damage" doesn't take them out of the fight. Individuals may also "drop out" of a team, but this reduces them to zero dice immediately as they scamper for the rear. Their fates rest on the mercy of whoever wins the fight!

**Lost Leader:** If the team leader ever leaves the team for any reason (either by dropping out or by having his personal dice reduced to zero), every member of the team immediately takes one die of "damage" as if the team had disbanded (since, without a leader, they've done exactly that). They may immediately opt to reform as a new team (with a new leader) however, and if the old leader was removed by volunteering for personal damage, the new team leader gets the double-roll vengeance bonus to avenge his predecessor!

### CONFLICTS THAT AREN'T COMBAT

Many conflicts that arise in the game cannot be defined as ``combat;'' they're over too quickly, defined by a single action. A classic pistol-duel isn't combat - the two duelists simply turn and fire, and then it's all over. Two characters diving to grab the same gun from the floor isn't combat. Two cooks preparing chili for a cookoff isn't combat; there's no ``wearing down of the foe" and no jockeying for position.

Such ``single-action conflicts" are settled with a single roll against appropriate Clichés (or inappropriate Clichés, with good roleplaying). High roll wins.

### WHEN SOMEBODY CAN'T PARTICIPATE

It will often occur that characters will find themselves involved in a Combat or quicker conflict where they simply have no applicable Clichés, even by stretching the imagination. Or maybe ONE character will have an appropriate Cliché, while the others feel left out. An example might be a pie-eating contest. One character was wise (or foolish) enough to take ``Disgusting Glutton(2)" as a Cliché. The other characters are astronauts or accountants, neither of which traditionally engorge themselves on pie.

In situations like this, give everybody two free dice to play with, for the duration of the conflict. This INCLUDES characters who already HAVE appropriate Clichés. In the example above, the astronauts and accountants would get Pie-Eating(2), while the Disgusting Glutton would be temporarily increased to Disgusting Glutton(4). The Glutton, naturally, still has the winning edge, but anyone can TRY to eat lots of pie. This ``temporary promotion" applies only in opposed conflicts, not in challenges based on Target Numbers.

### CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

*"Conjugate?! But I've never even kissed a girl!"*

-Yacko, *Animaniacs*.

At the end of each adventure, each player should roll against every Cliché that was used significantly during the game (using their current number of dice). If the dice land showing only even numbers, this indicates an increase by one die for that Cliché. Thus, advancement slows down as you go. No Cliché may go higher than Cliché(6), although if Pumping is allowed (see below), they can be pumped past (6).

Anytime you do something really, really, really spectacularly entertaining that wows the whole table, the GM may rule that you may roll instantly (in the middle of the game!) for possible improvement, in addition to the roll at the end of the adventure.

**Adding New Clichés:** There may come a time when a character has grown and matured enough to justify adding an entirely new Cliché to his character sheet. If the player and GM agree this is the case, and agree on what the new Cliché is, the player rolls for Character Advancement as usual, but any of the new dice earned may be put toward the new Cliché instead of the ones that earned them. This can also be applied to "in-game" improvements, if the situation warrants it!

### **ADVANCED OPTION: HOOKS and TALES**

Normally, a character is created using 10 dice. With this Advanced Option, players can bargain for extra beginning dice by giving their character a Hook and/or a Tale.

A Hook is some significant character flaw - an obsession, a weakness, a sworn vow, a permanently crippling injury - that the GM agrees is so juicy that he can use it to make the character's life more interesting (which usually means less pleasant). A character with a Hook gets an extra die to play with.

A Tale is a written "biography" of the character describing his life before the events of the game begin. The Tale needn't be long (two or three pages is usually just fine); it just needs to tell the reader where the character is coming from, what he likes and dislikes, how he became who he is, what his motives are. Some Tales are best written from the player's omniscient perspective; others are more fun if written as excerpts from the character's own diary. A character with a Tale provided before gameplay begins gets an extra die to play with.

### **ADVANCED OPTION II: PUMPING CLICHÉS**

In an emergency, any character may pump his Clichés. If the Ninja(3) comes face to face with a Monster(6), it might be necessary.

When a Cliché is pumped, it receives a temporary boost in dice. This boost lasts for a single round of combat, or a single significant roll otherwise. However, after that round or roll is resolved, the character loses a number of dice equal to the number he gave himself in the pump. This is treated like "injury" to the Clichés sustained in combat, and must "heal" in the same fashion.

**Example:** Rudolph the Ninja has come face to face with a Monster, who attacks him. Rudy doesn't have much of a chance against such a powerful foe, so he opts for a tricky tactic: Since the Monster is attacking physically, Rudolph decides his first-round response will use his

*skills as as a Cajun Chef(3) - a decidedly Inappropriate choice! He also opts to pump it by two dice up to five . . . He's REALLY putting his all into his cooking for this fight.*

*So, the first round happens. The Monster rolls six dice, and the Ninja (quickly whipping up a tempting Gumbo spiked with Ninja sleeping drug and offering it to the monster) rolls five dice.*

*If the Ninja loses, then he is instantly defeated. His Cajun Chef Clichés drops by two to Cajun Chef(1) just for the pump, plus another die for losing the round. The Monster decides to eat Rudolph instead of the Gumbo.*

*If the Ninja WINS, however, the Monster(6) is dropped to Monster(3), and his Cajun Chef(3) drops to Cajun Chef(1). In Rudolph's responding attack, he'll will switch back to ordinary Ninja tactics - and be on equal footing with the sleepy Monster!*

A risky maneuver, but worth it.

Pumped Clichés are legal in any situation except single-action conflicts.

### **ADVANCED OPTION III: DOUBLE-PUMPS**

If this option is used, characters may be created with double-pump Clichés. These Clichés, when pumped, give you TWO dice in the pumped roll for every die you'll lose at the end of it. Thus, a Sorcerer(5) could be a Sorcerer(11) for a single combat round, at a cost of three dice. This option is appropriate for any Clichés based on supernatural powers, such as wizards, telepaths, and humanoid-torch style superheroes. They're also appropriate for any other Clichés the GM approves them for. Double-pump Clichés cost twice as many starting dice to buy. Hard [square brackets] indicate a double-pump Clichés. If the GM considers any clichés to be too universally powerful, he may REQUIRE that it be purchased in this way, to insure some sort of balance. Overall, double-pump dice are less useful than ordinary dice at the beginning, but since they improve at the same rate as ordinary dice, they are a good "investment." Double-pump clichés must be purchased at character creation.

### **ADVANCED OPTION IV: FUNKY DICE**

Okay, this is the LAST advanced option.

This option is for people who have lots of polyhedral dice and want to use them. Funky dice represent a character's raw ability (rather than skill). Thus, with this option, adults are built with 10d8, as they are stronger and more experienced. Adults possessed by Demons simply have their Clichés bumped up one level, from d8's to d10's so the **Teacher (3d8)** becomes **Teacher (3d10)**. Possessed adults still gain the **Demon Possessed** Clichés. GM's who want a more lethal game may give the Demons d12's, d20's, or even (evil snicker) d30's.

## **The World of Heavy Ordnance**

**Note on Setting:** Heavy Ordnance is a game of satire. The idea is for a group of people who went (or go) to the same school, to base their Heavy Ordnance game around that school, and those teachers. Of course, if you are all adults and from different spots on the globe, then your not going to have much of a common reference. Heavy Ordnance can be still played however, just with a little less cutting wit. So in a effort to give everyone a common reference, let me propose: Hometown Elementary School. A school in everyone's hometown. We've all been there, we can all see it in the back of our mind. All discussions in this text will refer to Hometown Elementary. If you wish to run this game in reference to a particular school in your past, all the better.

## **BIG SLOBBERING NASTIES FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF CREATION**

(Report by C.B. Peewadle of Hometown Elementary School, to all the nations of the world.)

**To:** All the leaders of the Free World.

**From:** All those fighting the combined forces of evil.

**Re:** HEEEEELLLLPPPPPPP!!!!!!

Some kind of inter-dimensional phenomena triggered by a small nuclear explosion has occurred in Hometown. Large portions of our town have been overlapped by the inter-dimensional space commonly referred to as Hell. All citizens of the town over the age of 13 have been possessed by evil brain-eating demons. The remaining populace has armed itself, but our numbers are few. We are in desperate need of reinforcements and weapons. To whoever receives this message, please send help quickly!

My friends, and myself were in class when the accident happened. There was a bright flash, as the cafeteria building was engulfed in a mushroom cloud. While this occurrence is neither unusual nor worrisome at our school, the sight of our teacher, Mr. Rank, sprouting claws and fangs is. We were fortunate enough to be able to bludgeon Mr. Rank into unconsciousness with a National Geographic Globe before he was able to crack open our skulls, and dine on our gray matter. Many other students were not so lucky, falling prey to their various instructors.

My class and myself escaped the school via the playground, and took shelter in the wood that lay behind the school's property. We were very fortunate to find the nearby National Guard base entirely abandoned. The soldiers were probably out on the town looking for brains to eat. We armed ourselves and quickly mounted an assault on our school building. While this first assault met with limited success (and heavy casualties), further expeditions have resulted in better results.

We have been unable to determine the source of the demons, or why they have only possessed the adult community. No one has an idea of how our town can be returned to normal, and we have resigned ourselves to simply exterminating the possessed people. Once again, please send all the help that you can. We are in dire need of assistance.

### **THE FIRST GAME OF HEAVY ORDNANCE, AND BEYOND**

The first few games of any Heavy Ordnance campaign that you play will probably go the same way: After everyone have made a character, and familiarized themselves with the rules, The game will begin with the players all sitting in class. There is a bright flash, and an explosion from the direction of the cafeteria building, and all the students will rush to the window. While all the students are staring at the mushroom cloud, the teacher, (enter name here), will begin to transform. The GM will give the players a graphic description of the teacher's newly possessed form, and the teacher will start munching on the nearest NPC student. This is where play will begin, with the players having to subdue their teacher with only the classroom as a weapon.

After this is achieved, one way or another, the players will make their escape. After a little roleplaying, they will discover that the National Guard base, that was conveniently built next to the Elementary School, is strangely uninhabited. The players will arm themselves, and reenter their school building. From here on all games will diverge, as the players deploy their heavy ordnance, and generally blast big holes in school. Oh, what fun and mayhem the players will have!

The rest of the game will, of course, be up to the GM. As he throws one interesting possessed teacher at the players after another. Either the players will clean out the school, or die trying. But what then? What will the players do next as they stand above the rubble of their old school, victory beaming across their faces? They have a whole town to clean out, all they've done is made themselves a base of operations; and the rest of the town will be more densely populated with brain-sucking demons (after all, there are not a lot of adults at an Elementary School). The players will have to build a strategy. A game of Heavy Ordnance could go on for ever and ever and ever...

Of course, a game of Heavy Ordnance gets old pretty quick. After you've blown up your third Assistant Principle with a LAW rocket, the thrill subsides. The GM of a Heavy Ordnance game must be sensitive to this, and know when his players are tired of just plain killing. Believe it or not, but there is the opportunity for some kind of plot in Heavy Ordnance. Its not all blood and guns (yeah, sure, right, whatever...). Here's a quick over view of the setting, and some plot ideas. You'll have do some work, but a game of Heavy Ordnance could be quite enriching. (chuckle)

### **THE WHOLE SORTA GENERAL MISHMASH...THING**

*"I'm pretty cool, but I can't change the future."*  
- Butthead, Beavis and Butthead.

Contrary to the players first impressions (or second impressions for that matter), Hometown has not fallen into the depths hell. This is not something that you should tell the players right off. In fact, this isn't something that you should tell the players at all. Let them believe that their teachers have been possessed by the forces of Satan, not that they can really tell the difference.

Yes, Hometown has not become inter-dimensionally meshed with the nether world, and the creatures that are possessing the adult population of the town are not demons in the strictest sense of the term. What has actually happen is far more interesting, and far harder to deal with. Let me explain:

The nuclear accident in the cafeteria not only ripped a hole in space, but also in time. In fact, the rip spread so far that it expanded passed the history of mankind. While this had no effect in the past (dinosaurs can't quite wrap their heads around temporal mechanics), it had grave implications in the future.

In the distant future, mankind has suffered through a terrible nuclear/biogenic war. Virtually all of mankind had been obliterated, and the survivors of the war found that they had to adapt to a world very different from the one they had lived in before. New environmental forces came to bare on the human race, and a evolutionary race for dominance began. The eventual victor in this race was a creature perfectly suited to a world left by a nuclear/biogenic war, something that you or I could only describe as a demon.

These 'demons' were a totally new form of life. They existed without a body, possessing other life forms to pursue their goals. They did not reproduce, but consumed the genetic data of other life forms and applied it to their own. Once one host died, the demon took the genetic data that it had consumed with that host, and moved to another. This next host would transform into a copy of the former host, and go about stealing more genetic data. Once this host died, the cycle would continue. And continue, and continue.

This combination of predator/parasite was perfectly matched to the hostile environment of the war torn world, and the demons made short work of the remaining human population (who had reverted to hunting and gathering). But once they had consumed all of the remaining life on earth, they found themselves without hosts. They became trapped in their transfer states of nothingness, unable to continue their vile mission of destruction. For centuries they remained this way, floating. That is, until the tear in space/time.

Apart from being blood thirsty murderers, the demons were also highly intelligent. They realized that this space/time fissure was their opportunity to find an unlimited source of new hosts. All of time was within their grasp, and all they had to do was enter the rip in time. As they went through, they found that they could only travel to the nexus of the fissure (Hometown USA) but this was enough for starters: Thousands of victims, all within a small area.

They set the brighter members of their numbers onto the task of navigating the time rift to any place in space and time, while the rest began to feast. They quickly either possessed or dispatched most of the adult population of Hometown, but for some reason, unknown to any of the demons, they're unable to possess any of the pre-adolescents in the town. They were able to destroy most of the individuals in the early hours of the invasion, but some grouped together and formed a resistance. While this is little more than an annoyance to the demons, it is worrisome that they are unable to use their powers on a section of the population. But after they have learned to navigate the temporal rift, they plan to look into it thoroughly. That you can be sure of.

### **BIG GUNS! BIG @&%\$ING GUNS!**

So what does this temporal rift mean for the players? And what about these 'demons'. Well, basically it means that the players have two roads they can follow when they finally get around to wanting to get rid of the invasion (if they ever get around to it). They can either try and plug the space/time fissure, or they can find out what makes them immune to the demons possession. Neither will assure them victory over the demons (after all, if you close the rift won't the demons still be in our time), but it will give the players something to do other than blast the crap out of innocent walls.

I won't even pretend to suggest how the players will achieve either of the above, but I will say that it better not be easy. Something like closing the time rift should be the culmination of an entire campaign. Don't let the players have anything for free. After all, the whole town is out to eat their brains...

And just in case you missed it: When the players blast one of the possessed adults, they are not destroying the demon. The demon can simply move to another host if the one he is in dies. Even though big guns are pretty much the corner stone of the game, they aren't going to do the players any good in the long run. Eventually one of the demons will take the players by surprise, or sneak through overlapping arcs of fire. Eventually they will have to do something else other than shoot, even if its just rolling over dead.

### **SO WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO? I DON'T KNOW, WHAT DO YOU...**

*"The only solution to a zany scheme, is an even zanier scheme!"  
 "Why does it have to be Zany?"  
 -Homer & The Nerds, The Simpsons.*

Of course, a torrent of roleplaying ideas has washed over you while you've been reading this. All you have to do is sit down with your players and let it all go...right? Well, if this isn't true, here's a few ideas that you're welcome to build off:

What if these demons can possess other things beside humans (No, not a dog you idiot. Watch out! That poodle's got six inch fangs!)? Maybe one of the demons has taken control of a computer, and found it advantageous for its purposes. Maybe its become some kind of super brain killing machine that can control other machines over a distance (Maximum Overdrive anyone?). Yeah, and maybe its learned how to make organic computers that it can be implanted into people's brains and it takes control of the one... Well, you get the idea.

What if the demons have learned how to bring things through the temporal rift? What if, during their early experiments, they bring dinosaurs through into the city. If nothing else, it would be interesting for the players to shoot at something different for awhile. This might be a good way for the players to learn that they are dealing with a time/space rift, and not simply an incursion of Satan. Maybe the demons bring through some marauding Pirates, or some space age killer droid. The possibilities are endless.

What if the army figures out what's going on and sends in a task force? You know, tanks, helicopters, marines, etc. Of course, all the soldiers would become possessed by the demons, but wouldn't it be fun to have the players fighting heavily armed bad guys for awhile? Maybe the players can get their hands on some of the cool hardware. (Picture it: 11 year olds in a Commando... "Don't worry man, I've been playing Maximum Overkill since it came out!")

There are probably an infinite number of clever plots you could create around the temporal rift. For instance: Why was the National Guard base built next door to an Elementary School? Maybe one of the players goes back in time and convinces the National Guard to build it there, knowing its future usefulness. Maybe the players will go back in time to try and stop the nuclear explosion in the cafeteria, only to learn that it was caused by a time traveling demon. Things could get very complicated, and great fun. Don't over do it though. The point where one of the players turns out to be the other gunman at the grassy knoll, things have gone a little too far.

One thing to keep in mind when creating plots for Heavy Ordnance is that it is, all in all, a game of satire. If you can use the game to take a poke at some one or some institution, go for it. Though if you can't work it in, don't feel too bad. There should be plenty going on to keep your players busy.

One fault of Heavy Ordnance is that there is very little opportunity for any kind of actual Roleplaying. Virtually all characters that the players encounter (other than the other players) will be out to eat their brains. If you're like me, this will probably come as a great relief; but if you are an actual Roleplayer, this might not be the game for you. If your clever, you could probably whip something up, but don't count on it. There's very little roleplaying involved in a demon ripping off your head and drooling down your neck.

### **PHYSIC DEMONIC**

What does a demon look like? How tall are they? Do they have arms? Faces? Well, when it comes to the physical appearance of demons, there are no hard and fast rules. Demons, by their very nature, modify their physical appearance every time they jump into a new body. Characteristics of the old human will always show through after then transformation. The extent of mutation also varies per case. Some demons become almost totally bestial when they transform, other might almost pass for human on a rough day.

### **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

Here are some options for expansion of your Heavy Ordnance campaign

### **OPERATION HOMECOMING QUEEN**

The images taken by spy satellite of prepubescent kids doing battle with otherworldly abominations was enough to convince the Top Brass that something needed to be done. A combined task force composed of the Marine Corps, the Air Force and the Army advanced into Hometown one early morning, with orders to discover the source of the infestation and remove it, as well as to cover up all evidence of the events. Within hours, the entire Task Force has been possessed by Demons, and the surviving kids are left facing an enemy that's well-trained, heavily-armed, and out for blood. Fortunately, the CIA has realized what is going on, and has begun dropping crates fulls of weapons to the freedom fighters of Hometown, in hopes that they will be able to defeat the mysterious incursion.

### **COMRADES-IN-ARMS**

The Demons have not ravaged *all* of their world - a few pockets of resistance still remain, composed of groups of individuals who have figured out how to block the Demons from possessing them. When these groups discover the Rift, they send their best fighters to explore. How will these warriors from the future react to their brethren from the past? What new weapons and knowledge will they bring with them? Will they even join the children, or will they be a side on their own, fighting Demon and human alike?

### **KIDS IN BLACK**

The Dimensional Rift has been closed, but the Demons remain in our world. They have learned much, and they no longer visibly modify their hosts' bodies. Spreading throughout the nation, the Demons hope to take control of the world through covert machinations rather than outright violence, and they must be stopped! The government has established the secret Section 23 to counter them. As the Demons have the ability to possess any adult, Section 23's field agents must all be children. Led by the veterans of the Battle Of Hometown, the brave boys and girls of Section 23 hunt the down the Demons wherever they are and do their best to destroy them, using advanced and unstable experimental weapons.

Alternatively, Section 23 may not be officially sanctioned. It might be a loose organization of children who survived the Hometown Massacre working on their own to convert others to their cause and stop the Demons, secretly backed by government and military officials who know the truth

### **SAMPLE ADVENTURE: STUPID IS AS STUPID DOES...**

*"Ooo, floor pie!"*  
-Homer, *The Simpsons*.

**Stupid is as Stupid Does...** is an short, low level adventure for the Heavy Ordnance Roleplaying Game. This adventure will serve as a good break for a Heavy Ordnance group that has shot one to many demons for it to be fun anymore. Of course, the players will have to shoot plenty of demons in **Stupid is as Stupid Does...**, but hopefully they will have a reason for do it.

## The Story So Far...

The meat loaf has hit the fan. The world has ended, at least in the vicinity of Hometown USA, and the players are among the few people still to be in their right mind. The players have guns, big ones, and have used them to clear out their school of everyone of the demonic persuasion. Hometown Elementary has become an island in a sea of destruction. A haven for anyone who is still human. But this is not enough; the hordes of evil are pounding in the doors. The players must take the battle to the enemy, or drown under the tide of destruction.

Reports from children that have managed to make it all the way from downtown Hometown indicate that demonic activity is far greater there. The leaders of the Hometown Liberation Front and Bake Sale Society (HLFBSS) has decided that an expeditionary force must be sent downtown to evaluate the threat, and create as much havoc as possible. As always, the players have been nominated for the job.

The players, dubbed the Downtown Expeditionary Force (DEF), are to take the newly equipped Urban Assault Vehicle (UAV) downtown, scope out the demonic forces there, and return with as few casualties as possible. If the players succeed, there will be medals and danishes all round. If they fail, this will look grave for the noble HLFBSS.

## The Briefing.

A few days before the actually expedition, all the member of the DEF (the players) are collected in Hometown Elementary's Gym to receive their briefing from Colonel Chalky White. The Colonel is of the ripe old age of 13, and commands the respect of everyone at Hometown Elementary. Once everyone has seated themselves quietly upon the bleachers, the Colonel steps up onto the platform beside the school band.

"My fellow humans," He begins. The band suddenly erupts in a few rousing seconds of **Tequila** before the Colonel waves them to be quiet. "Not yet you idiots!"

"Sorry," First Kazoo replies. "we thought you were done..." The Colonel looks angrily at the band, then continues his speech.

"My fellow humans, It is my great honor to send you forth upon this your most glorious of missions." Once again, the band starts up with **Tequila**. The Colonel quiets them with and angry look.

"Sorry, we thought you were..." The Kazoo man says softly. The Colonel, trying to look dignified, returns his attention to the players.

"Though what you are about to do is dangerous. Though what you are about to do will almost certainly get you killed. Do no look upon it as suicide. No sir. For what you do, you do for the greater good of humanity, and the betterment to all. So when that evil demon is sucking out your brain, you can say to yourself: Sure, it hurts, but its a **good** kind of hurt." **Tequila** erupts once again from the band, this time as if they mean to continue. The Colonel loses his cool, and throws his notes at the first Kazoo.

"What, what?" The Kazoo man says as the band grinds to a halt.

"Stop! That!" The Colonel says as if he is having an embolism. The Colonel tries to regain his composure, and turns back to the players. The first seven notes of **Tequila** burst from the band in rapid succession. The Colonel looks like he's going to feed first Kazoo his instrument.

"Sorry. Slipped." First Kazoo tries to look at something else. The Colonel buries his face in his hands. His will broken.

"Oh, just go kick some ass..." He says to the players, and steps off the platform. The Colonel makes it halfway across the gym before he turns around and yells: "Now you idiots! You can play now!" The look at each other with surprise and start up playing.

The players are played out of the gymnasium with a rousing chorus of... Yes, you guessed it: **Tequila**. Bam dududu-dududa.

## This, this is my BOOM stick!!!

Those players who have brought their characters over from a different Heavy Ordnance game will already have some equipment; but for brand new characters, a trip to the armory will be in order.

The Armoror is a little hesitant to give the players any quality equipment (not expecting the player to come back), so the stuff below is all he will part with:

- 2 LAW's.
- 5 fragmentation grenades.
- 4 M16's. w/ 12 clips
- 2 .45 Autos. w/4 clips
- 1 Ingram M10 w/5 clips
- 3 3 point bullet proof vests (altered to fit a 10 year old).

The players will have to pester the Armoror to get any more equipment out of him. Unless the players are very persuasive, the Armoror will not budge.

### **A visit to the Bus Barn.**

On the day of the expedition, the players report bright and early (at least 10ish) to the Bus Barn behind the school, where the UAV is stored. The UAV, as you might have guessed, is a big yellow school bus with a few optional extras. The windows have been covered with steel plates, a hole has been cut in the roof and a M60 has been mounted by it, a plate of spikes has been added to the front of the bus, and the letters DEF and the HLFBSS emblem (a muffin with a sword through it) has been painted on the side. The players will meet Q-Ball, the HLFBSS local technical genius. He will give them the tour of the UAV, pointing out the useful bits, and asks them to please bring the thing back in one piece. The players can load their equipment aboard, and get under way.

Players who look around the bus will find a milk crate of molotov cocktails under one of the benches. There are gun slits cut into the steel covering the windows that will allow the players to shoot out.

### **Bye-bye Boys, Have Fun Storming the Castle!**

As the players drive the UAV out of the Bus Barn and by the front of the school, they will see that everyone has come out to wish them on their way. The band is there playing, of course, **Tequila**, and everyone else is weaving happily. (Any player that can land a stun grenade in the band at this point get a hero point on the spot.) The bookies have the players odds of survival at even odds...

As the UAV rounds the corner, the happy waving crowd turns in to a weepy mourning one. The bookies move their decimal place on their tally boards, and turn the odds of the players survival to 1000 to 1.

### **Hi Ho, Hi Ho, its off to war we go...**

Its a ten minute drive to downtown Hometown, down a twisting badly kept road. The bus is equipped with an 8-track player to help the trip go quickly. Unfortunately, the only cassette on the bus is **The Greatest Hits of the BeeGees**. So as the players jive on down to **When the Lights Went Out in Massachusetts** the UAV works it's way down to the downtown.

The players are almost halfway to downtown Hometown when they run into and obstacle. As the players round a corner, they see that a tree has fallen across the road, blocking their path. Whoever is driving the UAV will have to make a quick decision: Will they try and ram the tree, or will they stop the bus. As you have probably guessed (and hopefully, so have the players), this is an ambush. Sitting in the branches of the trees lining the road are four demons, just waiting for the bus to roll by.

If the driver is smart enough to ram the tree, he must make a Dex-Drive roll versus 7. Any successes will mean that the UAV has broken through the tree. The demons will try to drop down upon the moving bus, and each demon will have to make a Agil-Gym roll versus 6 plus the number of successes the driver got on his drive roll (So if the driver got 3 success on his drive roll, the demons would have to roll against 9). The stats for the average demon are given above.

If the driver stops the bus, the demons will drop down almost immediately. They don't have to make any roll to drop down onto a stopped bus. They will start tearing at the UAV to try and get at the players inside. The UAV doesn't have enough momentum to break through the tree from a sitting start, so the players will be sitting ducks inside the bus.

If the players stopped the bus or not, hopefully they will be able to deal with the demons and move on to the next part of the adventure.

### **Downtown, Where the Cabs don't stop...**

*"Slow Down!"  
"Why? Everybody else is Russian around here!"  
-Yacko & Rasputin, Animantics.*

If the players manage to make it through the ambush, the UAV will roll onto the streets of downtown Hometown. The town doesn't seem to be the site of the end of the world. The houses seem in perfect condition. The lawns are all mowed, and the streets are free of burning wrecks. In fact, the city seems just like it always did, except for the fact that no one is around.

Downtown is totally quiet. Nothing seems to be moving. No pets, no birds, no people. If it wasn't for the players, the city would be dead. The players can drive around for as long as they want, marveling at the peace. They can even get out and check out the houses if they want. Everything seems normal. The houses are tidy, and their doors are locked. It seems like everyone has just gotten up and gone on vacation. Everyone, at the same time...

Eventually the players will roll the UAV down Main Street. As they pass the city hall they will encounter their first sign of life. In the loosest sense of the word:

As the players roll down Main Street, a vehicle will make a left onto Main from Pine. The vehicle, which seems to be some futuristic sort of tank, will head straight for the UAV. Coming towards them at about 10 mph. If the players stop and reverse, the tank will speed up to try and catch them. Once the tank gets within twenty yards to the UAV it will suddenly stop.

At first the players might think that the tank has thrown its track, as the tank leans uncomfortably to one side. But as the tracks disappear into tank, and the whole things begins to transform, the players may thing twice.

The Tank quickly transforms into a giant Robot. The tank barrel mounted on its right forearm. The Tankbot stands up, and levels the barrel at the UAV. Any intelligent player will be pissing themselves at this point; but luckily for the players , the Tankbot is having a little trouble adjusting to the Midwestern climate, and couldn't hit the broad side of a barn. The shell will explode a good 20 feet away from the UAV, incinerating a perfectly innocent park bench.

What the players do from here is totally up to them. The Tankbot is unable to hit the UAV with its cannon, but if it can get hold of it, it will try and punch the UAV into oblivion. The players can easily run from the Tankbot, but while they're in the UAV they won't be able to shake it. Weapons will have little effect against the Tankbot, and a LAW rocket will only knock it on its ass. Eventually they players will have to abandon the UAV and let the Tankbot have its fun with it. The Tankbot will proceed to smash the UAV into a pile of twisted metal, then wander off down the streets of downtown.

Players may quickly conclude that they are in **way** over their heads, and have more than enough information already to deliver a concise report back to the Colonel (They've got **really really BIG** robots! What else do you want to know?"). The only question will become: How to get home?

If the players don't conclude this, and want to wander around for a bit longer, let them go right ahead. Throw in the occasional demon, and bring back Tankbot now and again. They'll sooner or later run out of ammo and want to go home.

Getting home, of course, is going to be tough. There are plenty of cars around, but there's one problem: No gas. Really, every gas tank in every car in town is totally dry. None of the cars will go. The players may think of draining the fuel out of the UAV, but their are two problems with this: 1. The UAV uses diesel. 2. The players will have to siphon the diesel out. Whatever the players conclude, they are going to have to go searching for something. Be it gas, a truck that uses diesel, siphoning equipment, or a ray of hope.

One of the players may realize (and feel free to point this out if they don't) that there may still be some pockets of human resistance left downtown. If there is, they may have what they players are looking for, and they might help the players get back to Hometown Elementary. Unless the players have a better idea, this may be their best bet for survival.

Of course, the most intelligent place to start looking for survivors will be at the nearest school. Just like the players, if any children survived, they are probably holding up there. There are a few schools downtown, but the nearest to the players (wherever they are) is the Arnold Buckweed Junior High.

If the players decided to go looking for what they need in the downtown stores, they will come up empty. All gas, everywhere, is dry. Siphoning equipment and a diesel powered truck won't be to hard to find, but as soon as the players return to the UAV, they will find that its tanks have already been drained. There are no signs of how this happened or who did this. The fuel just seems to have vanished.

## **Arnold Buckweed Junior High.**

*"Now I know hell."  
-Author, First day of Junior High.*

Eventually they players will end up at the Junior High. There only hope will be in finding other human resistors to the demon invasion. On approaching the school, they players will see no signs of life.

The inside of the school looks like a battlefield. Corridors have been blockaded with desks and chairs, claw marks can be seen in the walls and floors, and classroom doors have been ripped clean of their hinges. Still, there are no signs of life, and the only mark of human habitation is the occasional bloodstain. As they players wander around the destruction, any hope of finding a pocket of human resistance will drain from them.

Unfortunately, the first life the players will encounter will not be human. In the library the players will encounter a rather runtish demon that seems to be shelving books. The demon has glasses perched over its bug-like eyes, and moves about the shelves of books in a busy fashion. The demon is the twisted remains of the old librarian, and some regressive gene has kept it in the library even after the mutation. The librarian is very protective of his

books, and will attack the players as soon as they enter the library. Even though he is a runtish demon, he may still be a handful for unsuspecting players:

### **Librarian Demon**

***Fanatically Protective Librarian (4)***

***Demon Possessed (3)***

The Librarian will fight to the death, and will try with all his might to protect his books. The players should be able to quickly dispatch this demon, but the sound of any gunfire will bring three more demons running from down the hall. These three demons are of the full grown 'average' type, and will dispatch the players with extreme prejudice. They players will have a few moment to prepare for this assault, and dig themselves in behind the book shelves. The demons will have to come down the hall and cross the open reading area before they hit the players. With a few overlapping arcs of fire, the players should be able to cut the demons down like corn.

If the players take down the demons, they will probably venture down the corridor from which the demons emerged. At the end of the corridor they will find the science labs for the Junior High. Going inside, the players will see what the demons were working on:

The laboratory seems to be in full operation. Bunsen burners are burning, beakers are bubbling, and computers are computing. On the lab benches are about dozen large specimen jars, each containing a human baby. The babies are in the various stages of gestation. Anywhere from 3 to 9 months along. Anyone who takes a closer look at the babies will see that they are in fact alive inside the jars, breathing and growing.

What is going on here? Though the players may never know the whole story, they can probably guess most of it. The demons are doing experiments into the reasons why prepubescent children are not effected by their powers of possession. Even though they do not yet know the reason why this is the case, they have managed to genetically engineer a human child that is not immune to their power. The babies in the jars are the product of this experiment. Human children that can be possessed by demons.

Any player who has ever seen Aliens probably won't go anywhere near the jars, no less disturb them. But in this case, it doesn't really matter. Once the players have had plenty of time to look around the lab, and have jumped to some conclusions to the origins of the babies, a couple of the babies in the jars will start to kick and shake. After a few moments of this, their jars will crack and then explode. Smart players will quickly turn their weapons on the rest of the babies in the jars.

Two of the demons the players slew in the library have jumped into the bodies of the babies. They have broken out of the jars and hidden under the lab benches. They both will quickly mutate into tiny versions of the demons the players killed in the library. Being of such a small size, these mini demons are very, very, fast. They will scamper around the lab floor, moving from bench to bench, probably scaring the players half to death. Shooting at the mini demons will have little effect other than to destroy the scenery. Players that don't run for their lives from the laboratory will be slowly picked at by the demons. They will charge, strike once, then run for cover. A few tries at this, and the players will be badly injured.

Those that run, will be chased by the mini demons, out into the library, and into the Gymnasium beyond. In here, the players will be in better shape. The mini demons have nothing to hide under, and it will be harder for them to attack in the open. The players won't be able to hit the demons with their guns, but things will be looking up.

Just as the players are getting frustrated, the fire exit of the Gym is suddenly smashed in. A ride-on lawnmower, blades down, comes screaming into the gym. It does a wide loop across the floor and catches the mini demons in its blades. A red spray washes from the back of the lawnmower, and it screeches to a halt. The driver, a chubby dull looking man, climbs off the mower and giggles.

"Only way to get them suckers." He says.

### **Bob the Custodian**

The man, the players will find out, is Bob the Custodian. He has been the custodian of Arnold Buckweed Junior High for over ten years. He is happy to seen the players, and willing to answer any questions that they might have.

Of course, the first question on every players mind will be: "Why the hell aren't you a brain sucking demon?" Well, Bob has no idea, but the players may be able to hazard a guess:

Bob is, to be politically correct, intellectually challenged. Or, to be more realistic, dumb as a post. The players will quite quickly assume that this is the reason for Bob's freedom from the demon menace. Whatever the reason, Bob is a God send for the players. He not only has gasoline, but he also has a truck around the back of the Junior High; and he is only to happy to drive the players wherever they want to go.

Bob is genuinely interested in what they players are up to, and is curious about their weaponry. He is not completely aware of what has happened around him, and hasn't made the connection between everyone disappearing and the demonic hordes that he's been fighting. He has survived through a combination of brute force, and good luck; using his gardening implements as weapons.

If asked about the demons, Bob will have one piece of important information. He will tell the players that after the initial wave of demons destroyed the Junior High, they all seemed to abandon the place and head off to the High School at the center of town. Ever since, Bob has only ever encountered the occasional demon. All the rest seem to be holding up inside the High School building.

## **Tankbot Was A Steel Driving Man.**

Of course, a pleasant scene of human interaction, such as that between the players and Bob, has to be broken by violence (action genre motto). And who else can bring such a thing to reality but- Yes you guessed it... The Master of Disaster... The Mean, Green, Fighting Machine... Tankbot!!! (Yeah. Tankbot, Tankbot, He's our man! If he can't kill it, no one can!)

The wall of the gymnasium is blown in by a blast from Tankbot's cannon. He smashes the rest of the wall down as he swaggers into the gym. Tankbot has gotten a little more used to the Midwestern Climate now, so he's shooting straight once again. He will level his cannon, and incinerate one of the basketball hoops.

The players will have to be creative in dealing with Tankbot. Their weapons will have little or no effect on him.

Hiding inside the Junior High will be an ineffective tactic with Tankbot. He will smash down walls and roofs at will to get at the players. It won't take much damage by Tankbot before the Junior High collapses in on itself.

The players best bet is to stick with Bob, and use his knowledge of the local terrain to their advantage. His lawnmower is fast enough to shake off Tankbot's aim most of the time, so they should be able to move around without getting blasted.

Though the players may come up with their own plan for defeating Tankbot. Below is what Bob will come up with after a little time (okay, a lot of time):

Like all sports fields at Junior High Schools, the football field at Arnold Buckweed Junior High is a swamp. One corner of it is more rice paddy than grass field; and no matter what time of the year it is, it is always under water. On top of this, Bob will switch on the field's sprinkler system (proper use of school funds) and drench the rest of the field. He will ask the players to lure Tankbot out into the field, and try and get him into the deep end. When Tankbot is up to his knees in mud, he will use his lawnmower and 100 yards of unbreakable garden hose to trip Tankbot. Once in the mud, Tankbot will be unable to pull himself out, and all of his trying will just dig him deeper.

Of course, if the players get a better idea, let them go through with it. Tankbot is a tough nut to crack, and brute force won't bring him down.

## **Hail the Conquering Heros...**

*"I just love it when a plan comes together."*

*-Hannibal, A- Team.*

Once Tankbot is defeated (if Tankbot is defeated), the players will probably want to head back home. Arnold Buckweed Junior High is a pile of rubble by the time Tankbot is finished with it, so Bob will be happy to go with the players. He will drive them home in his pickup, and stay at Hometown Elementary to help the players out.

The players will return to a warm reception. Just the fact that they're alive will be a cause for rejoicing. The Colonel will be interested to hear their report, and everyone will be fascinated by the existence of Bob. Q-ball will be disappointed about the destruction of the UAV, but will be interested in the existence of Tankbot. He will start right away on a weapon that can be used against it. If asked, Bob will be happy to say with the HLFBSS and help out in any fashion that he can. The HLFBSS scientist, at least would like to take a look at him.

Is this the end of the DEF? Is it's mission complete? Of course not! This is but the first day in long campaign for freedom. Many question remain to be answered: Why is Bob unaffected by the demons? How can this fact be used to HLFBSS's advantage? What about Tankbot? Where did he come from? Is he a vicious killing machine? Or is he just misunderstood? What of the demon bread babies? What will they grow up to be like? Will the demon scientists find away to leap into the bodies of the players? What's going on at the High School? And what the hell happened to all of the God damn gasoline? Did the demons steal it? What are they using it for? Many questions remain to be answered, and only the players can ask the questions.

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## ILLUMINATI FOR RISUS

a campaign setting for [Risus: The Anything RPG](#)

created by David Masad

### INTRODUCTION

I have always loved conspiracy theories, especially ones about the Illuminati. The concept of numerous 'illuminated' conspiracies fighting amongst themselves, as popularized in the ILLUMINATUS! trilogy by Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson and in the Illuminati and INWO card games by [Steve Jackson Games](#) has everything needed for a good RPG campaign. To the best of my knowledge (apologies etc. if I'm wrong) this is the first such campaign for Risus (You can get Risus itself [Here](#)). This is the first time I'm trying to write something for Risus, to please forgive anything in it that sucks.

### CHARACTERS

Characters in Illuminati should be built with 10 dice, plus dice for Hooks & Tales (which should be mandatory). Pumping and Double-Pumping should also be allowed. Funky Dice are not recommended (but hey, it's your game).

Characters can be many things - an enforcer for the Society Of Assassins, a police detective tracking a mysterious cult, or a journalist investigating hints of a strange conspiracy.

Some Sample Cliches:

- *Anarchist* (writing long papers, public speaking, sitting in prison)
- *Other Kind Of Anarchist* (making bombs, throwing bombs, fighting police)
- *Archeologist* (finding ancient tombs, translating ancient scrolls, being cursed)
- *Cultist* (chanting, reading strange languages, knowing about Great Old Ones)
- *Detective* (deducing, knowing about forensics, interrogating people)
- *Discordian Deacon* (not praying to Eris, arguing philosophy, casting Turkey Curse)
- *DOJ Agent* (getting classified information, deleting damaging files, investigating corrupt politicians)
- *Hacker* (breaking into government computers, running from police, selling information)
- *Librarian* (knowing about weird stuff, finding obscure books, knowing foreign languages)
- *Man In Black* (driving in black cars, wearing sunglasses, intimidating people)
- *Paranoid* (knowing conspiracy theories, barricading house, dodging pursuit)
- *Police Officer* (using tear gas, eating doughnuts, arresting the wrong people)
- *Psychic* (moving things without touching them, reading minds, being locked up in government research centers)
- *Underground Journalist* (smoking pot, getting arrested, writing long and ignored articles)

### SPECIAL ACTIONS

Characters will undoubtedly want to perform special moves and actions during the course of an adventure. In general, whether they can or not is up to the GM. If the campaign is being played in a setting in which magic is allowed, characters should be allowed to cast spells. If not, not. The GM should make sure all the players understand the setting before play begins. Note that all characters are assumed to be Illuminated (whatever that means), and with above average abilities. Thus, players in a Call Of Cthulhu campaign should be able to cast spells (once they learn how), and characters in a Matrix campaign should be able to do all the cool running-up-walls moves. Whether a special action requires a specific Cliche or not is up to the GM. A good idea is to require one specific Cliche in order to carry out any special actions (i.e. Unplugged for a Matrix campaign, Blessed for a religious campaign, etc.)

### SAMPLE SETTINGS

The basic concept of the conspiracy campaign can have many different styles of settings. Here are some samples to get you started. Take as many as you want, and combine them for your own personal conspiracy campaign.

### **Call Of Cthulhu**

Strange cults and the policemen struggling to surpass them. Students of ancient lore rushing to prevent the spawn of Cthulhu and a mortal woman being born. An ancient island harboring untold riches...and untellable horrors. Secret societies loyal to rival Great Old Ones fighting for souls to sacrifice to their masters. The stories of H. P. Lovecraft at their finest.

### **Order Vs. Chaos**

The Discordians trying to topple the governments of the world and set the people free. The Illuminati trying to stop them and enslave the people. Or are they...

### **Atlantis**

The ancient sunken continent of Atlantis is the resting place of riches beyond imagination. Agents of two (or more) secret societies are attempting to capture them for their own ends.

### **The Manchurian Candidates**

Brainwashed assassins trying to free themselves from the shadowy masters who control their minds. But first they must discover who these masters are...

### **The Matrix Has You...**

Reality is not what it seems to be. The human forces of freedom face off against the machines with cool combat moves and ass-kicking special effects.

### **Aliens Ate The Second Amendment!**

Aliens from outer space have already taken control of the government, and are using it to prepare the ground for an all-out invasion. They must be stopped!

### **Ave, Lucifer, Morituri Te Salutant..**

A cult of satanists is attempting to bring about armageddon. Only the brave emissaries of the one true church can stop them and prevent the end the world. But are the satanists the evil ones?

### **Banana Republic**

In a remote, resource rich third world country the president has just died, and the agents of numerous conspiracies and governments intrigue and scheme to get their ally "elected" as the next president.

### **They Came From Outer Space**

We are not alone in the universe. The aliens have found us, and they are already here. Two rival extraterrestrial races wage a secret war here on earth with one another and with Majestic 12, the human organization dedicated to keeping their presence secret and driving them off.

### **High Tech Trouble**

Conspiracies face off using weapons and equipment that are more advanced by decades compared to today's current technology. What moral issues face agents using this new technology, and what happens if some of it is accidentally discovered?

### **Spy Vs. Spy**

'Intelligence assets' of rival countries compete for information and influence on neutral territory. Blackmail, extortion, theft and assassination are all acceptable tactics.

Alternatively, agents with diplomatic immunity stationed in a foreign capital play a delicate game of cat and mouse with the local counterintelligence department, attempting to get as much information as possible without getting caught.

### **Corporate Wars**

Multinational megacorporations wage clandestine wars using hired guns. There are no set territories, and no rules of engagement. However, caution must be used in order to hide the illegal activities from the authorities.

### **Magic Powers**

Conspiracies battle each other using spells and enchantments learned from ancient tomes. But how safe is the magic, and how much do those who use it truly understand it...

### **Psyclone**

Some humans are born with bizarre psionic talents. Forced to keep their powers secret from the rest of the world, they band together and attempt to use their powers to gain dominion over the less advanced majority of the human race. But some regular humans will stop at nothing to stop the psychic takeover, and are aided by Talented individuals who wish for the old and new humans to coexist peacefully.

### **The Adventures Of Harold Porter**

Under our very noses exists a parallel society composed of witches, wizards, warlocks, and other miscellaneous magic users who have placed themselves apart from the rest of the world in order to hide their magical gift. But their magical world is, as our own, full of conflict, treachery and strife.

**Illuminati: New World Order**

Multiple conspiracies battle to dominate the world by taking control of real organizations, and using them as pawns and tools in a proxy war between them. Based on the Steve Jackson card game.

**ILLUMINATUS!**

A combination of all of the above settings, and more! The craziest (and most fun) setting of all. Inspired by the Illuminatus! trilogy.

Does this rock? Does it suck? Do you know how to make it better? Send comments, complaints, flames (well no, not flames please) to [Dpaymas@Yahoo.com](mailto:Dpaymas@Yahoo.com)  
ICQ: 53914418

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# The Matrix

A campaign for [Risus: The Anything RPG](#)

Created by David Masad

## INTRODUCTION

First of all, this document is recommended only for people who have seen the movie The Matrix and understand the plot. While a brief background description is given, it is not enough to play a full campaign. The Matrix's bizarre and paranoid plot (not to mention the badass moves) lend themselves perfectly to an RPG - in fact, two have been made already, and you can find links to them at the bottom of the page.

## BACKGROUND

The year is circa 2200, but nearly nobody knows it. During a brutal war between humanity and the race of intelligent machines it spawned, the forces of humanity used an unknown method to scorch the skies, severely limiting the amount of sunlight that reached the earth. Sunlight was then the machines' main source of power, and it was believed that they would not survive without it. In order to remain operational, the machines took billions of human beings and placed them in special vats where the heat and bio-electric energy produced by the human body could be harnessed and used as a power source. The minds of these humans were plugged into what is called The Matrix - a giant interactive simulation of life as it was towards the end of the 20th century. Humans are grown in crops, and spend every moment from 'birth' to death not knowing the truth about the world.

At some point, a man was born within The Matrix; a unique individual, who had the power to alter and change The Matrix as he pleased. It was he who discovered the truth, and for the first time in generations unplugged people from The Matrix. Thus began The Resistance.

Today the majority of humanity is still unaware of its state of bondage, but a growing number are free and fighting back. Some of the free individuals live in Zion - the last (or first) human city. The rest live aboard ships, traveling underground and hacking into The Matrix, going inside it and continuing the fight to free humanity. These 'Unplugged' men and women know that The Matrix is not reality, and use this knowledge to perform superhuman feats while within it. Against them stand Agents, computer artificial intelligences that inhabit The Matrix and are charged with protecting it. Agents too can bend the rules of The Matrix to their limits, and they can do so much better than the humans. Only The One has any chance in a fight against an Agent. To the rest they are undefeatable, and the only way to survive an encounter with one is to run.

## CHARACTERS

Characters are built with the standard Risus rules, with all options enabled except Funky Dice. Characters will probably be either Resistance fighters or Agents. While the style of play significantly differs between the classes, the two have comparable abilities and the rules given here cover both of them pretty well.

There are two Special Cliches that allow characters to perform superhuman feats: *Unplugged* for humans, and *Agent* for machines. All characters should have one of these Cliches (but not both - duh). These Cliches may not be purchased with double-pump.

Besides Cliches that describe the character's profession (Hacker, Accountant, etc.) characters should have Skill Cliches - treated like Cliches, but limited to proficiency in something specific. For example, instead of *Soldier*, a Cliche that would allow a character to skillfully use a multitude of different firearms, a character has to take Skill Cliches for the specific types of guns they know how to use.

Some example Skill Cliches:

- *Ju Jitsu*
- *Helicopter Pilot*
- *Pistol*
- *Stealth*
- *Shotgun*

Skill Cliches allow more variety in character creation. Skill Cliches cost *half* the cost of regular Cliches, and can be purchased double-pumpable. Skill Cliches represent not only the character's proficiency in a specific field, but also the quality of the equipment they are using for it. Thus, a character who is lowered to 0 dice in their *Submachine Gun* Skill Cliche hasn't forgotten how to use an Uzi - they have run out of ammo, their weapon has

jammed, etc. Certain items can also give bonuses to Cliches and Skill Cliches.

Note: Only PC's are required to use Skill Cliches. NPC's can, for simplicity's sake, have Cliches such as **Soldier**, **Cop**, etc.

## USING SPECIAL CLICHES AND TEMPORARY SKILL CLICHES

The Special Cliches (**Unplugged** and **Agent**) have a number of uses. They provide the dice for any rolls that involve performing superhuman feats, such as running up a wall, jumping a two block gap, bending a spoon with will alone, etc. They can also be rolled in any combat round - they are always appropriate. However, they cannot win a combat round. A higher roll than the opponent simply means the character avoids damage.

The Special Cliches can also be used to boost other Skill Cliches: the character pumps a Skill Cliche normally, but loses the dice from the Special Cliche instead of the pumped Skill Cliche itself. However, for every one die added to the Skill Cliche by the pump, subtract *two* dice from the Special Cliche. The character must choose whether to pump the Skill Cliche normally or through their Special Cliche before rolling the dice. A character may not combine regular pumping and pumping with the Special Cliche.

Finally, Special Cliches also act as a pool from which characters can take dice and use them to give themselves temporary Skill Cliches. If a character encounters a situation in which they require a Skill Cliche that they do not possess, they can take dice from their Special Cliche and use them to give themselves temporary Skill Cliches. The rate is one die in a Skill Cliche for every die subtracted from the Special Cliche. The temporary Skill Cliche does not recover and is lost once reaching zero. The Special Cliche only recovers once the temporary Skill Cliche has been reduced to zero.

Example:

*Tensor, a Resistance fighter with **Unplugged** (6), is going up against three Swat Cops (3). Tensor pumps his **Submachine Gun** (2) up by two dice, and hoses the Swat team. Two of the cops drop dead, but a third remains unharmed. The cop then fires his pistol. Tensor uses his **Unplugged** to run up the wall and dodge the bullets. Tensor is now out of ammo for his SMG (the Skill Cliche has dropped to 0 from the pump) and is too far away to attempt to enter in unarmed combat with the cop. He chooses to give himself a temporary Skill Cliche **Pistol** (3). His **Unplugged** is reduced by 3. Grabbing a pistol dropped by one of the fallen cops, Tensor lets loose at the cop and nails him. As combat is now over, Tensor loses his **Pistol** Cliche, and **Unplugged** recovers back to 6 dice.*

## RUNNING A MATRIX ADVENTURE

A Matrix campaign can be played either as the humans or as the machines. While both sides are close in their abilities, the style of the adventures differ significantly.

Resistance adventures are mostly raid-esque: go in, do something, get out before the Agents get there. The end of the adventure tends to be a race to get to the exit before the Agents get there. Stealth and secrecy are as important for characters as combat skills.

Agent adventures tend toward the investigative: Agents are stronger than the humans in a straight fight, but they have to find them first. Once the Resistance fighters are found, the game becomes a race to catch them before they can exit The Matrix and return to reality. Cliches involved with investigation, law enforcement, surveillance and similar are advised.

Both sides should be given access to any equipment they want, but should remember that the larger and more elaborate the request, the more likely the other side are to notice. A shotgun can be brought into The Matrix secretly by the Resistance, but a nuclear device would likely draw every Agent within miles. Similarly, for Agents to drive a tank through downtown LA would both give away their location to all the Resistance fighters in the region, as well as destabilizing the regular 'plugged' humans' view of reality, making them easier to free. GM discretion is advised.

## OTHER MATRIX RPG'S

A Matrix RPG based on the D6 System was written by Michael Lynes and can be found [here](#).

A card-based Matrix RPG was created by Chris 'Aranthis' Parlevliet and can be found [here](#).

Check them both out.

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## Troubleshooter

A campaign for *Risus: The Anything RPG*

Created by David Masad

*You've got it, I want it.  
My little troubleshooter*  
- Judas Priest, Troubleshooter

### **BACKGROUND**

*This is the way the world ends  
Not with a bang but with a whimper.*

-T. S. Eliot, The Hollow Men

The year is 2007. The world is as it is today, but darker. Violence, corruption and disease are rampant. Nearly a decade of increasingly violent protests have led the governments of the world to give greater power to their law enforcement agencies and giving police officers greater discretion with the use of lethal force. In the United States the FBI has begun a policy of infiltration of groups labeled as subversive unmatched since the days of J. Edgar Hoover, and many European law enforcement agencies are conducting similar operations in their own countries. The drug trade is more lucrative than ever, with producers and traffickers alike making millions of dollars every month. In response, more multinational drug enforcement agencies have been formed, agencies operating almost above the law in pursuit of baron and junkie alike. A reduction of the anti-monopoly laws has allowed the growth of large multinational corporations as never before, and a series of lawsuits have established their right to equip and train their security personnel as they see fit, even giving them legal enforcement powers under certain conditions - creating armies of paramilitary troops loyal to the corporations who operate many times as a law unto themselves. Africa's situation is worse than ever, with millions dying from AIDS, and millions more from the endless civil wars, fueled by corporations sending mercenaries and supplies to one side or another in return for favored status after the war. The United Nations are powerlessly gridlocked on most all issues, barring them from providing much needed aid to the starving, dying populace. The Balkan states have once again erupted into conflict, and this time the world has chosen not to intervene. Terrorist activities are common as never before, with dozens killed weekly in the name of greed, religion, politics, and even the environment. Computers are close to reaching Moore's Limit and broadband internet connections are standard, with the IT industry waiting for the next inevitable breakthrough. Doomsday cults rise and fall, insane prophets predict the end of the world and mass suicides abound. The world stands on the brink of chaos, seeming ready to plunge into the abyss at a moment's notice.

### **THE COMPANY**

*He who is skillful in winning against  
the enemy does not wrestle with him*

-Lao Tzu

The Company is best described in the words of its founder: "The client gives us a problem, and money. We make them both go away.". Indeed, it is to the Company that politicians, corporate executives and private individuals turn to when they have a problem that they cannot solve by conventional means. Whether this problem is an embarrassing photograph, a troublesome rival or a vanishing package, the Company can solve it.

The Company's delicate relationship with many of the world's most powerful nations allows it to operate in total secrecy. Outside of the Company itself, only a handful of people even know of its existence. And yet, it is a powerful force in the world of today, unscrupulously serving both its clients and itself.

The Company's elite field agents are the Troubleshooters, expert operatives sent to carry out missions for the Company. Troubleshooters' talents are varied, ranging from urban assault to hacking. All Troubleshooters are trained to make sure they have a basic familiarity with firearms, vehicles and electronic systems, but they arrive with their own specialties. When they are recruited, their identities are permanently erased - as far as the system is

concerned, they never even existed. Troubleshooters have no permanent groups - the Company assembles a different teams for every mission, choosing the Troubleshooters whose talents and abilities are required. Troubleshooters receive no fixed salaries. During missions, they have access to the Company's bank accounts to pay their expenses, and between missions the Company provides them with luxurious residences, a large amount of money and a false identity to use.

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## THE MISSION

### The Client

*I got a name and I got a number;*

*I got a line on you*

-Genesis, Just A Job To Do

The Company's clients tend to be people who both have the types of problems the Company specializes in dealing with and the funds to pay for it to be solved. The Company itself is rarely contacted directly by potential clients. Rather, the client is approached by someone - usually a Company agent - who 'has a friend who has a friend who might know someone who can help you', or similar story. This phase must be conducted delicately, as usually the very existence of the problem is not common knowledge. If the potential client shows interest, the agent who initiated the contact will act as a mediator between them and the Company, making sure the individual is interested and has the money to pay. Once this is established, the exact terms are negotiated and agreed upon. Once the initial payment has been made, the Troubleshooters are deployed.

### The Team

*Their shoulders held the sky suspended;*

*They stood, and earth's foundations stay;*

*What God abandoned, these defended,*

*And saved the sum of things for pay.*

-A. E. Houseman, Epitaph On An Army Of Mercenaries

Rarely will the Company send a single Troubleshooter on a mission alone. Usually a team will be sent, the members' skills working in concert to achieve the objectives. While some missions may require special teams, most missions will use the same basic team structure: 3-6 Troubleshooters with at least one military specialist, one hacker or security expert and one intelligence operative. The military specialist deals with whatever combat situations arise during the mission; the hacker or security expert deal with whatever electronic surveillance systems and intrusion countermeasures are encountered, as well as provide much of the raw data; finally, the intelligence operative takes care of most of the logistical elements, gathers much of the information and analyzes the available data and determines the best course of action. While this largely depends on the nature of the mission, the intelligence operative will tend to be the mission commander.

### Investigation and Intelligence

*You had something to hide*

*Should have hidden it, shouldn't you?*

-Depeche Mode, The Policy Of Truth

I&I missions focus on gathering information and tend to resemble a regular detective story. The information being tracked might be anything from the password of a mainframe system to the defense secrets of a third-world nation. As someone was willing to pay a large amount of money in order to obtain the information, it is probable that at least equal efforts have been made to conceal it. Thus, while the I&I team is primarily composed of investigators and spies a number of military specialists are usually attached as well.

### Extraction

*They were the ones you called when you needed something*

*transferred from points A to B, or to the bottom of the C.*

-Terry Pratchett, Hogfather

Extraction is the general name given by the Company to both theft and kidnapping, depending on what is to be extracted. Extraction missions are often preceded by I&I missions aimed at discovering where the target is and what opposition is expected. Commonly, the preliminary I&I is conducted by a different team than the one doing the extraction itself. A team conducting an extraction of an object will usually be composed chiefly of security and intelligence experts, with a number of military specialists attached in case anything should go wrong. When extracting a person about half the security experts will be replaced with military personnel, as the chances of combat rise significantly.

### Assassination

*You know your place in the sky,*

*You hold your course*

*And your aim*

-Victor Hugo, Les Miserables

Assassination missions are unique among all the Company's missions because they alone *require* violence. Assassinations have been carried out by the Company against politicians, corporate executives, celebrities, scientists, and more. While no fixed team makeup exists for assassination missions, a Troubleshooter who was professional contract killers before their recruitment will usually both lead the team and carry out the hit itself.

### **Political Activities**

*He must not flinch from being blamed for vices  
that are necessary for safeguarding the state*

-Machiavelli, The Prince

Political Activities, in Company lingo, refers to operations directed at producing a certain political effect. The most expensive and difficult type of operation, a PA op can take over a year to complete successfully. After Cleanups, PA operations are the most likely to be ordered internally, by the Company itself, rather than by an outside client.

### **Cleanup**

*I am just a figment of your imagination*

-Tommy Lee Jones, Men In black

'Cleanup' is the Company phrase meaning cover-up. Cleanups are sometimes commissioned by outside clients, but most commonly they are ordered from within the Company to remove all evidence of a mission - especially a failed one. Cleanups can involve anything from stealing a security video to killing the guard who saw it. Unlike all other types of missions, cleanups are always carried out by one of the number of permanent teams of Cleaners - Troubleshooters specializing in evidence elimination.

### **Gear And Equipment**

*Arch-anarch, chief builder,*

*Prince and evangelist,*

*I am the Will of God:*

*I am the Sword.*

-W. E. Henley, The Song Of The Sword

During missions the team will undoubtedly require certain tools, many of which are not widely available. Every Troubleshooter is equipped with a basic kit consisting of a Beretta 9mm pistol, a laptop computer with access to the Company databases, and a satellite-based telephone with a secure connection. Besides this basic kit, most existing equipment can be requisitioned from Company satellite offices around the world. Basic firearms - including military ones - are made available by request. Transportation depends on the situation - most teams will be given access to one or two ground vehicles, but use of Company jets and helicopters is strictly limited, and only Troubleshooters with a justifiable need are given access to them. The Company operates only a small research branch, instead using equipment designed by the world's militaries and intelligence services. However, a small number of tools have been developed by the Company itself, and are issued to Troubleshooters in the field:

**Omni-ID:** Essentially a small, programmable LCD screen the size of a standard ID, the Omni-ID can be set to display any ID required. While not accurate enough to fool a computer, the Omni-ID is priceless when trying to fast-talk a guard or similar.

**White Noise Projector:** A handheld tubular device, the White Noise Projector fills the air in a 1.5 meter radius with white noise, making eavesdropping impossible. Anyone standing within the circle can hear normally, but anyone outside the circle cannot hear any noise coming from within it.

**Unikey:** The Unikey is a non-reusable strip of plastic that, when inserted into a lock, hardens into the shape of the key needed to open it, acting as a universal skeleton key.

**Bodybag:** Nicknamed the bodybag, this plastic container act as a complete shock-absorber: it fits one person with minimal gear and can be dropped from nearly any height, preventing any harm to the occupant. Used primarily for insertion into difficult or dangerous terrain, the bodybag is faster, safer and less detectable than a standard parachute.

### **THE CHARACTERS**

*How often at this desk I sat into the depth of night and  
looked for you until over these books and papers you  
appeared to me, my melancholy friend.*

-Goethe, Faust

Characters are built with the standard Risus rules, with all options enabled except Funky Dice. As Troubleshooters are far better trained, better equipped and more experienced than the average person, the Cliche **Troubleshooter** allows the character to perform nearly superhuman feats. **Troubleshooter** may not be purchased with double-pump.

Besides Cliches that describe the character's profession (Hacker, Accountant, etc.) characters should have Skill Cliches - treated like Cliches, but limited to proficiency in something specific. For example, instead of Soldier, a Cliche that would allow a character to skillfully use a multitude of different firearms, a character has to take Skill Cliches for the specific types of guns they know how to use.

Some example Skill Cliches:

- *Ju Jitsu*
- *Helicopter Pilot*
- *Pistol*
- *Stealth*
- *Shotgun*

Skill Cliches allow more variety in character creation. Skill Cliches cost *half* the cost of regular Cliches, and can be purchased double-pumpable. Skill Cliches represent not only the character's proficiency in a specific field, but also the quality of the equipment they are using for it. Thus, a character who is lowered to 0 dice in their **Submachine Gun** Skill Cliche hasn't forgotten how to use an Uzi - they have run out of ammo, their weapon has jammed, etc. Certain items can also give bonuses to Cliches and Skill Cliches.

Note: Only PC's are required to use Skill Cliches. NPC's can, for simplicity's sake, have Cliches such as **Soldier**, **Cop**, etc.

### Using The Troubleshooter Cliche

The **Troubleshooter** Cliche can be used to boost other Skill Cliches: the character pumps a Skill Cliche normally, but loses the dice from **Troubleshooter** instead of the pumped Skill Cliche itself. However, for every one die added to the Skill Cliche by the pump, subtract two dice from **Troubleshooter**. The character must choose whether to pump the Skill Cliche normally or through **Troubleshooter** before rolling the dice. A character may not combine regular pumping and pumping with **Troubleshooter**.

Finally, **Troubleshooter** also acts as a pool from which characters can take dice and use them to give themselves temporary Skill Cliches. If a character encounters a situation in which they require a Skill Cliche that they do not possess, they can take dice from their **Troubleshooter** Cliche and use them to give themselves temporary Skill Cliches. The rate is one die in a Skill Cliche for every die subtracted from the Special Cliche. The temporary Skill Cliche does not recover and is lost once reaching zero. The Special Cliche only recovers once the temporary Skill Cliche has been reduced to zero.

Does this rock? Does it suck? Do you know how to make it better? Send comments, complaints, flames (well no, not flames please) to  
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undefined

# Risus: The Wargame

A Modification of [Risus: The Anything RPG](#)

Created by David Masad

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Risus: the Wargame. R:tW is a wargame based on Risus: The Anything RPG by S. John Ross. Risus is an RPG Lite, meant for playing when nobody wants to bother with complex rules. Similarly, R:tW is meant for late-night wargaming, when everyone's too tired to try to handle exact details. R:tW also offers the opportunity to wargame scenarios no other wargame even comes close to covering (Invasion Of The Novelists, anyone?). These rules are meant for people who already know the Risus rules, so if you don't be sure to get them [here](#). Like regular Risus, R:tW is meant to be as generalized as possible. Thus, these rules will use abstract numbers for all ratings. It is up to you to map these numbers to hexes, inches, squares, or whatever you happen to be using. Many rules might not be appropriate for certain settings and you should feel free to modify them to suite your needs.

Units in Risus: the Wargame are essentially identical to regular Risus characters, except that they are also represented on the board (or table, or screen, or whatever) by a figure (or chit, or model, or whatever). Like Risus characters, R:tW units have Cliches that define who they are, what they can do, etc. For more information on units, see Creating Units later in the text.

## GAME SEQUENCE

Every turn of Risus: the Wargame proceeds in the same sequence. When playing with more than two players, modify accordingly.

- 1) Initiative Rolls
- 2) Movement Phase
- 3) Combat Phase
- 4) Final Phase

### INITIATIVE

Both players roll their leader unit's leadership Cliche. Highest roll wins and gains the initiative for that round. If a player has no leader units the other player automatically gains the initiative.

### MOVEMENT

The player who lost the initiative roll moves first. Then the player who won it.

### COMBAT

The player who won the initiative roll attacks first. Once all their attacks are complete, the next player attacks.

### FINAL PHASE

This is when reinforcements come in, etc.

## MOVEMENT

Units can generally move as far as their Cliche rating. If a unit has more than one Cliche, it is up to the player which Cliche the unit uses. Note that this is important, as it defines *how* the unit is moving, which in turn effects other things. For example: A Biker Marine squad with **Badass Bikers** (2) and **Jumptroopers** (3) would be able to move 2 by bikes or 3 by jetpacks. However, moving by jetpacks makes them vulnerable to attack by the enemy's **Antiaircraft Gun** (4). Terrain considerations are left up to the players, and depend on the setting and scenario. Units are considered to have a line of sight of 180 degrees in front of them (or similar, if you are using hexes, squares, etc.), and can change their facing for free, but not more times per turn than their Cliche rating.

## COMBAT

After the movement phase comes combat. To fight, two units must be in range of each other. For easy reference, range will usually be equal to the unit's rating in the Cliche it is using for combat. In some cases - a medieval setting, artillery, etc. units will have different range. Like much else, this is up to the players. Units must also be capable of attacking one another - in the previous example, the antiaircraft gun could only attack the Biker Marines if they had moved using their jetpack. Similarly, a **medieval swordsman (3)** would never be able to attack an **X-Wing (1)**. Of course, if you want to play a totally bizarre game - which is highly encouraged - then the swordsman *would* be able to defeat the X-Wing. It's all up to you.

Combat is exactly as it is in regular Risus. If the attacking unit is out of the defender's range they cannot fight back - a defender's victory on a roll only means no damage was done. In such a case (in order to prevent the attacker from automatically destroying the defender) if the defender wins three rolls in a row, or five altogether, that battle ends.

Once a unit is reduced to 0 dice in the Cliche they were using they are defeated and removed from the game.

Players wishing to avoid having to write anything down during the game can assume that a unit damaged (but not destroyed) in combat heals (all its Cliches return to normal) after the combat ends. Otherwise, lost Cliche dice are recorded and only heal if the unit reaches a medic unit or suchlike.

Teaming Up is allowed if all units on the team can attack the target.

Inappropriate Cliches may or may not be used, depending on the type of game you want to play.

Pumping - as it is in Risus - is optional.

## CREATING UNITS

When preparing a setting or campaign for Risus: the Wargame one of the first things you will do is create the units. Units are created in much the same way as characters are in Risus. Be sure to choose Cliches appropriate for the setting, and for wargaming in general, though if you want to play a really bizarre and twisted game feel free to pit hairdressers against space marines (though the 202 Geezer Division *was* a crucial factor in the Normandy landing during WW2). Hooks may be allowed, but they should fit the setting and have a real effect on gameplay. Tales are clearly inappropriate. Double-Pumping should depend on the campaign and on what the players want (of course, Pumping must be allowed for double-pumping to be possible). Funky dice should only be used in a cross-genre setting, or when units vastly differing in abilities are used - a **Longbowman (3)** should not be stronger than a **Machine Gunner (2)**, and a **Stormtrooper (3)** should not be able to take on a **Y-Wing (3)**. Of course, if that's the game you want to play - and you should - feel free.

**Optional Rule: Aspect Cliches** - Aspect Cliches allow you to improve only one aspect of a unit (move, range, attack) when a unit's capabilities are uneven. Aspect Cliches only cost *half* the cost of regular Cliches, rounded up. For example, a Howitzer unit might have **Howitzer (3), Long Range (6)**. **Long Range** would be an aspect Cliche, improving only the range - the attack strength or move remain the same - and would only cost 3 dice.

Before every game, the players should determine the amount of points they have to spend on units and decide on any limits (i.e. - no units worth over 20 points). Then they should either choose units from an existing collection (such as one attached to the scenario) and/or create their own, within the limits of the setting. Every player should have at least one Leader unit - a unit with a leadership Cliche (**Marine Commander, Best-Selling Novelist**).

Does this rock? Does it suck? Do you know how to make it better? Send comments, complaints, flames (well no, not flames please) to

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COOKIE:

Mutant Animal of Super-Human Size and Strength (4), Acid-Spitting Hyrax (3), Heavy Metal Lead Singer (2), Shinto Priest (1)

VERN:

Super-Strong Anthropomorphic Wallaby (4), Hard-Rock Guitarist (3), Luchadore (2), Psychic Empath (1)

ALDEBARAN:

Scavenger (4), Roady (3), Tough Mudder (2), Earth-That-Was Sports Nut (1)

THE MAX:

Pyrokinetic (4), Anthropomorphic Mutant Leopard Gecko (3), Jazz-Trained Death Metal Bassist (2), Bad-ass Band Chick (1)

INIGO:

Hyper-Intelligent Mutant Capybara (4), Math-Metal Drummer (3), Gadgeteer (2), Recreational Sharp-Shooter (1)

# **Risus: DiaboloPuer**

A supplement to Risus for playing in the Hellboy universe by Gabriel Carlson

**FIRST OFF:** Wow, thanks for reading this bit. I just wanna get it out there that I reference material that is copyrighted to other people in this document (most notably *Risus* to S. John Ross and *Hellboy* to Mike Mignola, and their related terms and trademarks). I also borrow from other Risus supplements and the "Hellboy Sourcebook and Roleplaying Game." No reference or reproduction in this document of that material is intended as a challenge to such copyrights. I riff because I admire.

## **THE GOOD STUFF:**

So maybe, like me, you've seen the *Hellboy* movies and read the comic books and think they're all pretty keen. And maybe, like me, you're a fan of RPGs and Risus in particular. And maybe, just maybe, like me, you've wanted to play a game in the dark, sinister, classical and sarcastic world of Hellboy and the B.P.R.D. Well my friends, here's my take on how that might go.

This Risus supplement is written with the characters being B.P.R.D. agents in mind, a kind of "B-Team" to the big-leaguers chronicled in the *Hellboy* and *B.P.R.D.* main fiction lines. Also, while it caters more to the feel of the comics I don't think there's any reason that you couldn't run a more movie-inspired game with these guidelines.

**Character Creation:** 9 dice, max. Cliché (4). The idea is to create a character that would be brought in on a B.P.R.D. investigation, whether they're a full-time agent, a part-time consultant, or an investigative reporter that just won't be left behind.

- While psychics are relatively common in the B.P.R.D. and most field agents have a smattering of occult/magical knowledge, the B.P.R.D. has no known accomplished ritual magicians or sorcerers on staff. Magic is regarded as fickle and dangerous, and such agents would be regarded suspiciously by the Bureau as well as their team-mates (assuming they were ever allowed out of their cell).
- Also precognitive psychics are too valuable to risk in the field, so precognitive field agents just aren't. Bureau policy. You know how it is.

**Options:** Hooks & Tales, Pumping, Double-Pumping, Funky Dice (in extra-funky situations)

- B.P.R.D. field agents often have something special about them. Hellboy, Abe Sapien and Johann Krauss aren't the only 'freakshow' agents, but they are extreme examples. To that end characters should be allowed to take one minor paranormal Cliché at regular cost, something like 'Human Metal Detector,' 'Sputtering Pyrokinetic,' 'Ghost-Whisperer' or the like. Powerful paranormal Clichés, things like 'Unsettling Telepath' or 'Thing from Myth and Legend,' should only be allowed as Double-Pump Clichés.

## **A Few Words on Bonus Dice Gear:**

- For the most part bonus-die equipment will be magical items; things like talismans, reliquaries, empowered/consecrated weapons and blessed buttons. These items each have a history and a story all their own. The majority of these items will add dice situationally rather than adding dice to an appropriate Cliché, such as 'against Giurescu vampires,' 'against Chinese sorcerers,' and 'against the demon Ualac.' Most such items will only be worth +1; they'll grant an edge but they won't be an auto-win. Powerful items should be more broadly useful ('against any vampires +1')

before they give a bigger bonus ('against Giurescu vampires +2'). 'Saint Angskar's Consecrated White Ash Stake (+2 against any vampire)' would be a mighty, mighty weapon.

- Super-technology is the other source of bonus-die equipment in Hellboy. It strikes a tone that ranges from being very pulpy, classic sci-fi/steampunk (robot war-suits with a cockpit, wind-shield and leather upholstery), to being downright macabre (clockwork zombies and trans-spatial radios powered by the preserved heads of psychics). Super-tech is more likely to add to appropriate Clichés rather than be situational ('Ray Gun +1 against Giurescu vampires?'), but is also much less common. In fact most super-tech belongs to crazy Nazi scientists. Go figure.
- ALL pieces of bonus-die equipment should be plot devices rather than rewards (but it's always fun when that distinction is fuzzy). Anything discovered or confiscated on a field mission becomes Bureau property.

#### **Other Options:**

- Options from the Ritus Companion: Lucky Shots (not available at character creation, see 'Advancement' below), Questing Dice, Boxcars & Breakthroughs
- Last-Ditch Effort: You only lose a combat if you have zero dice in the Cliché that you rolled after a combat roll that you lose. If you pump a Cliché to zero but win the roll you could still be in the fight, you just can't use that Cliché anymore.
- Every Bit Helps: When in a Team, team members besides the Leader add their highest die rolled and any 'copies' to the Leader's roll, not just 6's. Don't re-roll Boxcars, just add all those 6's to the Leader's total.

*Example: Mark McGrady is in a squad of B.P.R.D. agents led by Abe Sapien. The squad is ambushed by a bunch of frog-men and have to blast their way to safety. They're fighting as a Team with Abe as Leader. McGrady rolls 'Grisled B.P.R.D. Trooper (3)' to help out the team and gets 1, 2, 4; he adds the 4 to Abe's roll. Next round he rolls 5, 5, 6; he adds the 6 to Abe's roll. Next round he burns a Lucky Shot (see below) and rolls 1, 3, 3, 3; he adds all three 3's to Abe's roll.*

- Advancement: Whenever the GM feels it's appropriate (namely at the ends of sessions and stories), he/she/it will award Lucky Shots. These are an accumulating pool, not one-shot dice. In addition to the usual uses of Lucky Shots players can trade them in, permanently reducing their character's pool of them, to add dice to Clichés and even start new ones: 3/1 to add to or start a regular Cliché, 4/1 for Double-Pump Clichés. You can also trade in 3 Lucky Shots to get 5 Questing Dice.

**Sample Clichés:** These are intended as 'somewhere to start,' and should be padded with details appropriately. An asterisk (\*) denotes a Cliché that may require being taken as a Double-Pump Cliché, depending on how it's padded.

- B.P.R.D. Field Investigator: investigating strange occurrences, getting snuck up on by monsters and Nazis, thwarting monsters and Nazis, making snappy one-liners.
- B.P.R.D. Field Psychic: getting impressions, images and ideas about strange occurrences from objects, people's minds or the aether, making sour yet snappy one-liners about being psychic.
- B.P.R.D. Pointman: getting snuck up on by monsters and Nazis, shooting, slicing, beating, burning, cross-sectioning, eviscerating, maiming, decapitating and otherwise hurting/killing monsters, making snappy one-liners in the heat of battle.
- B.P.R.D. Trooper: getting snuck up on by monsters and Nazis, shooting at monsters and Nazis, being a rank-and-file soldier in a not-so rank-and-file world, making snappy one-liners about being a rank-and-file soldier in a not-so rank-and-file world, being the butt of your superiors' snappy one-liners.

- Medium: exuding ectoplasm, contacting the deceased, giving spirits form and voice, astrally projecting yourself and meeting other astral projections, being spooky, making snappy one-liners about being incorporeal and/or spooky.
- (Minor) Mythical Being\*: having cool but not overwhelming supernatural powers (Your Mythology May Vary), being stronger/tougher/smarter/X-er than most humans, griping about making concessions to 'modern living,' making snappy one-liners about the modern world and/or being mythical.
- Occultist: identifying elements of mythology, folklore and religious apocrypha, having books (somewhere around here...) that explain just how bad the situation is, getting snuck up on by monsters, bumbling through minor mystical rites in the nick of time (if the stars are right), making snappy one-liners about the dire implications of something occult.
- Psychokinetic\*: making things move or not move with your mind, making snappy one-liners without using your hands.
- Pyrokinetic\*: setting things on fire without a match, lighter, spark, gas stove or flame-thrower, making snappy one-liners about being a force of destruction.
- Recovered/Abandoned Experiment\*: having strange abilities and even powers above and beyond human beings, being stronger/tougher/smarter/X-er than most humans, having little idea how or why you are the way you are, making snappy one-liners about having a dubious past and/or being an experiment.
- Ritual Magician\*: identifying strange herbs, stones, carvings, languages, chants and other ritual components, drawing and using circles of power, identifying entities of power such as gods and demons and the roles references to them play in ritual magic, creating minor single-use talismans, conducting magical rituals requiring props, incantations and sanctified space (possibly in the nude), conning affluent elderly couples, making snappy one-liners about how involved and difficult ritual magic can be.
- Sorcerer\*: casting curses and counter-curses, commanding elemental forces, shape-changing (either yourself or other people), communing with other-worldly beings, scrying (seeing the past, present and future), and being sinister/spooky. (Note the lack of snappy one-liners...)
- Telepath\*: reading and sensing minds, reading thoughts and emotions, communicating telepathically, creeping people out by knowing things you shouldn't, making snappy one-liners without speaking out loud.
- (Animal) Person\*: being tougher than your average human, having super-, para-, or extra-human abilities based on your 'patron' animal, having baser instincts AND abstract thoughts, making snappy one-liners about being part animal.
- (Field) Expert: offering insight relating to your field, doing research relating to your field, being attacked/kidnapped by monsters, their human allies and Nazis, making snappy one-liners relating to your field.

### **Sample Hooks:**

- Code of Conduct or Mystical Compulsion/Prohibition: The character must or must not do something, either because they have taken a vow or made a promise of some kind, or they are under a geas or other mystical compulsion. For example he/she/it might not be able to attack an unarmed man, kill, eat meat, see someone wearing their coat inside-out, touch magic or own property, or maybe they must accept hospitality, must dance to live music or must help damsels in distress. This would also include the more traditional vows of chastity, silence, poverty, and the like.
- Curiosity: The character cannot help but open drawers, explore unknown areas, fiddle with knobs and push buttons. If curiosity killed the cat, you must have a death-wish.

- Social Stigma: It ain't easy being green. Or red. Or a witch. Remember that while the paranormal exists in the world of Hellboy, most people never encounter it and may not know how to deal with being confronted with it. The character is either treated as less than a person or approached with fear and suspicion, or perhaps both are the case. Maybe the character is obviously not *homo sapiens*, or something about them just screams 'wrong.' This Hook could also apply to characters that suffer more mundane stigmas based on creed, ethnicity or skin color for example. 'Monstrous' characters without this Hook don't find their appearance or physicality to be a hindrance; for whatever reason they are treated like anyone else.
- Phobia: The character has an overwhelming, crippling fear of some rather common object, creature, or circumstance, such as spiders, snakes, the dark, heights, closed spaces, water, etc.
- Power Loss/Drawback: The character loses access to a paranormal Cliché under certain circumstances (other than a lack of Tools of the Trade), such as during the New Moon or while standing in a stranger's home. Alternately a paranormal Cliché always has some adverse side effect to its use, such as Liz Sherman's largely uncontrolled Pyrokinesis, a sorcerer whose spells age him a year and a day, or a telepath who makes anyone they contact mentally's nose bleed.
- Superstitious: The character is VERY superstitious. They believe there are omens all around them and will act a certain way because of them. They may not go outdoors on a cloudless day because it is a bad omen, or they may leave half of each meal behind for the spirit world (dangerous when there are monsters hunting you). Whether or not these superstitions have any paranormal relevance is up to the GM.

**Sample Characters:**

- Elizabeth Montgomery: B.P.R.D. Field Medic (3), Former ER Doctor (2), English Cat-Lady Living in NYC (2), Finesse-less Psychokinetic [2], Hook: Hypocratic Pacifist, Tale: TBD.
- Joshua Steinbeck: Heck of a Guy (4), Qabbalah Scholar (3), Jewish B.P.R.D. Field Investigator (2), Recreational Boxer (1), Tale: TBD
- Imani Wakuhota: Cheetah-Woman (4), Inexperienced B.P.R.D. Pointwoman (3), Survivor of Some of the Worst that Humanity Has to Offer (2), Kenyan National (1), Quest: Grudge against poachers (x5), Hook: Monstrous Appearance, Tail: TBD.
- William Clarence: Gruff B.P.R.D. Field Investigator (4), Fit for his Age Thrill-Seeker (3), Former Anthropologist (3), Reluctant but Respectable Bureaucrat (1), Hook: Curious, Tale: TBD

# SON OF RISUS (Version 1.1)

by J. Scott Pittman

The Basic System is a complete Role Playing Game meant to be as simple as possible, while allowing for any type of Setting with only minimal work. It is a modified version of RISUS: The Anything RPG, by S. John Ross. Much of the writing here comes straight from that work.

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## CHARACTER CREATION!

Characters are defined by Clichés (sometimes several of them). Clichés are a shorthand which describe what a character knows how to do. The ``character classes'' of the Neolithic Period of RPGs were Clichés: Fighter and Magic-User, Space Marine and Star Merchant. You can take Clichés like that, or choose a more contemporary one, such as Biker, Spy, Computer Nerd, Supermodel, or William Shatner (formerly an actor - now just a Cliché). Which Clichés are permitted are up to the GM.

Clichés are defined in terms of Dice (by which we mean the ordinary six-sided kind you can scavenge from your old Yahtzee set). This is the number of dice that you roll whenever your skill as a Fighter, Supermodel, or William Shatner (for instance) is challenged. See ``Game System," below. Three dice is professional. Six dice is mastery. One die is a beginner.

Characters are created by naming and describing them, and listing their Clichés. When designing your character, you have 10 dice with which to define his Clichés [60 points, each dice having a cost of 6 points] (a Normal Schmoe would be built on anywhere from 3 to 5 dice). A straightforward medieval fighter character might look like Grolfnar (see below).

A player can earn extra dice if he comes up with a Hook or Tale (1 dice for each). A Hook is a disadvantage of some type that the GM can use to make life tough for the character. A Tale is a good write-up of the character's background and general perspective.

Sometimes, such as when the GM is converting characters from other systems, or when the GM is running a superhero campaign, he may allow characters to begin with more dice than 10. It's up to the GM.

### Grolfnar Vainsson the Viking

Description: Tall, blond, and grinning. Likes to drink and fight and drink and chase Viking women and fight and sail the high seas and raid. Wants to write great sagas about himself.

Clichés: Viking (4), Womanizer (2), Gambler (3), Poet (1)

Hook: Grolfnar is afraid of sorcerers and magical spells.

A character may have any number or combination of Clichés. Characters sometimes shouldn't begin their career with more than 4 dice in anything, but just because you're creating a character today doesn't mean that he's beginning his career! The GM will tell you if he's requiring ``beginners" for the game. It's not our business.

Optional Rule: Clichés are categorized into three types: Combat, Useful and Background. A character cannot have (at character creation) more than half of his Clichés combat-related.

For example, a Knight may pick Knight (4), Patron [the king] (4), Riches (1), Noble (1).

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## **SOME SAMPLE CLICHÉS (AND WHAT THEY'RE GOOD FOR)**

### **Physical Combat**

Soldier, Military Officer, Guard, Cop, Bouncer, Government Agent, etc.; these types of "warrior" clichés include one of the following fighting skills as they are more interesting than just the skill, but a player can choose just to pick a "combat skill" if he likes. Note that this does not include Multi-attack, Locked, Heavy Weapons or Heavy Armor - these have to be picked separately.

Martial Artist

Brawler

Sword-Swinger

Knives (includes throwing)

Exotic Weapons (nun chucks, throwing stars, and yes, knives)

Gunslinger (fast-drawing, aim)

Multi-Attack

Locked (18 points for 1 dice)

Heavy Weapons

Heavy Armor

### **Mystical Combat**

Magic (see magical tables); these magical abilities always have a Power Supply

Limited Magic (one type of magical ability without a need for a Power Supply)

### **Mental Combat**

Psionics (Mind Control, Mind Reading, Mind Altering, resisting mental attacks)

Strong Willpower (Basically Psionics with a very precise specialty - may re-roll any rolled 1. This "power" is common for normal humans)

### **Useful Clichés**

Astronaut

Computer Expert, Hacker or Geek

Fighter Pilot

Hot-Rodder

Gadgeteer (see Gimmick Power notes)

Mad Scientist or Genius

Olympic Athlete

Outdoorsman

Vampire

Rich

Politician (speaking, working the system)

Diplomat (making deals, bartering for peace)

Historian

Occult Investigator  
Psychiatrist or Criminologist  
Professor (pick type)  
Lawyer  
Doctor  
Technician  
Mechanic  
Genetic Research Scientist  
Forensics Expert  
Writer  
Rescue Worker  
Language Expert  
Businessman  
Master of Disguise  
Thief (breaking and entering, pickpocket)  
Assassin or Spy (poisons, traps, lip reading)  
Escape Artist  
Scout

Special Clichés  
Luck/Auto-Defenses  
Power Reserve  
Heavy Weapons  
Heavy Armor

Background and Personality Clichés  
Leader (share your dice!)  
Bimbo (seducing men)  
Con Artist (fooling people)  
Gambler (bluffing, gaming)  
Geezer (lots of experience)  
Kid (use as Luck)  
Smooth Operator (seducing women)  
Magician (sleight of hand)  
Really, Really Good Looking  
Really, Really Cultured (better than you, anyway)  
Idol of Millions (having fans)  
Contacts (finding out stuff)  
Reputation (add to other rolls, such as politician, diplomat, etc)

Super-Powers  
Animal Controlling  
Armored  
Beastly  
Brick  
Climbing  
Clone-Making  
Cosmically-Aware  
Costume Powers

Danger-Sensing  
Detection and Sensing Powers  
Dimension-Traveling  
Disease-Causing  
Energy Blasting  
Escape Planning  
Fire-Covered  
Flying  
Force-Field Wielding  
Freak, Monster or Thing  
Gadgets  
Giant  
Great Willpower  
Growing  
Gun-Slinging  
Immortal  
Insect-Controlling  
Immortal  
Intangible  
Invent Anything  
Invisible  
Invulnerable  
Leaping  
Mental-Power Wielding  
Plant-Controlling  
Power-Stealing  
Reflecting Power  
Regenerating  
Robot, Android or Cyborg  
Shape-Changing  
Shape of Energy  
Shape of Gas  
Shape of Fire  
Shape of Stone or Earth  
Shape of Water  
Shrinking  
Sticking/Trapping  
Stretching  
Super-Equipment  
Super-Running  
Super-Sight  
Super-Speed  
Super-Stealthy  
Swimming  
Telekinesis  
Teleporting  
Time-Traveling  
Undead  
Weather-Controlling

Web-Firing  
X-Resistant  
X-Controlling and Creating  
X-Speaking

### Magical Powers (see Appendix 3)

These are just examples to get you started - players should feel free to make up their own Clichés (subject to GM approval). In particular, Note that the GM will require the "fine tuning" of any Cliché that he considers too broad. If the game is about sorcerers (for example), then "sorcerer" becomes too all-encompassing for the game, and Clichés like necromancer, mentalist, fire-wizard and wise woman are more the order of the day.

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## THE GAME SYSTEM

Whenever anybody wants to do something, and nobody is actively trying to stop him, AND the GM doesn't think that success would be automatic, the player rolls dice. If the total rolled beats (equals or exceeds) the Target Number the GM sets, success! If not, failure!

Target numbers follow this scale:

3-5: A snap. A challenge for a Schmuck. Routine for a pro.

6-10: A challenge for a Professional.

11-15: An Heroic challenge. For really inventive or tricky stunts.

18-20: A challenge for a Master. Nearly superhuman difficulty.

21-30: You've GOT to be Kidding. Actual superhuman difficulty.

This can be subjective, and anybody can try anything: Crossing a chasm by swinging on a rope, vine or something similar would be child's play (automatic success!) for a Swashbuckler or a Lord of the Jungle, easy (Difficulty 5) for a Pulp Archaeologist, and challenging but definitely doable (Difficulty 10) for a Gymnast, Barbarian, or Thief. Even a Wheelchair-Bound Eccentric Occultist could try it (Difficulty 15, but the wheelchair is lost unless the roll beats a 30)!

### The Rule of Six (Maximum Roll Bonus Dice)

If all of the dice a player rolls come up as 6 (he rolls the maximum he could have with his dice), he may roll another dice. If this dice also rolls a six, he may roll another die, and so on. If using Funky Dice, the player must roll the highest number on that type of dice, with all of his dice, to roll another die of his Clichés type. This is harder to do, of course, but these characters are rolling dice that can land big numbers anyway - what are they complaining about?

This rule allows characters with feeble dice totals to have a chance, no matter how slim, to succeed at tasks and compete (by sheer luck) with their foes. Combat can be a tricky and unpredictable thing.

### Proper Tools

Every character is assumed to be equipped with the Tools of His Trade (at least the portable ones). Warriors are wearing armor and wielding good weapons. Cowboys have leather chaps, lasso, a couple of pearl-handled six-guns and some chaw. Netrunners have an expensive jack-in laptop and funny clothes.

If a character LOSES any of these vital totems, his Cliché operates on half the normal number of dice (or not at all, if the GM rules that the equipment was REQUIRED) until they are replaced. A Barbarian(5), for instance, can fight without his sword as a Barbarian(3), but a Netrunner can't run the net without his cyberdeck. If the Netrunner manages to find another computer to play with besides the kind he's used to, he can operate at half-dice.

In addition, characters can buy/find/build Special Equipment as well. See Special Equipment.

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## THE COMBAT SYSTEM

``Combat'' in this game is defined as any contest in which opponents jockey for position, utilize attacks, bring defenses to bear, and try to wear down their foes to achieve victory. Either literally or metaphorically! Some examples of combat include:

**ARGUMENTS:** People using whatever verbal weapons they have at hand to make their points. Truth is the first casualty.

**HORSE-RACING:** People on horses running around and around a dirty track, trying to get nowhere first.

**DOGFIGHTS:** People in airplanes or spaceships flying around and trying to blow each other out of the sky.

**ASTRAL/PSYCHIC DUELS:** Mystics/psionics looking bored or asleep, but trying to rip one another's egos apart in the Otherworld.

**WIZARD'S DUELS:** Sorcerers using strange magics and trying to outdo the other.

**DUELING BANJOS:** Banjo players using strange melodies and trying to outdo the other.

**SEDUCTION ATTEMPTS:** One (or more) characters trying to score with one (or more) other character(s) who is(are) trying to resist.

**COURTROOM ANTICS:** Prosecution vs. Defense. The goal is victory. Justice is incidental.

**ACTUAL PHYSICAL COMBAT:** People trying to injure or kill each other.

The GM decides when a combat has begun. At that point, go around the table in rounds, and let each combatant make an attack in turn. What constitutes an ``attack'' depends on the sort of combat, but it should ALWAYS be roleplayed (if dialogue is involved) or described in entertaining detail (if it's physical and/or dangerous and/or normally requires contraceptives).

Attacks require rolls against character Clichés. The GM must, at the outset of combat, determine what TYPE of Clichés are appropriate for the fight. In a physical fight, Clichés like Viking, Barbarian, Soldier, Swashbuckler, and Novelist are appropriate. Clichés like Hairdresser and Latin Lover are not (but may still be used; see next section).

### First Actions

Each turn, the players and the GM choose what Clichés they are going to use to attack. Each player rolls this Cliché. The highest roll goes first, and then turns rotate around the table to the right, until all players and the GM have taken their actions.

Optional Rule: Players and the GM go in order of highest to lowest roll. This takes longer, but most players prefer this type of system.

### Attacks and Defenses

An attack must be directed at a foe. The attacker rolls his chosen Cliché. The defender chooses a Cliché to defend with (the GM has to agree that the Cliché can be used to defend). If the defender rolls lower, he loses and receives damage (see Effects of Combat). You needn't use the same Cliché every round. If a Viking/Swashbuckler wants to lop heads one round, and swing on chandeliers the next, that's groovy, too. You can choose to attack with one Cliché and defend with another.

## PUSH POINTS

Push Points can be used to make extra dice rolls (or more exp at the end of the game). Each Push Point spent equals 1 more dice to roll on a defensive action. These dice must be spent by the end of the game, even if used for experience (see Character Advancment).

Push points used must be declared before rolling, but more than one dice can be used.

A typical NPC will have Push points equal to his highest Cliché rating.

Push Points are only gained by role-playing well, and are awarded by the GM for exceptional acting on the player's part or coming up with good ideas. In general, they should be hard to earn.

## Effects of Combat

The low roller loses one of his Cliché dice for the remainder of the fight for each 5 points he loses the roll by - he's been weakened, worn down, or otherwise pushed towards defeat. In future rounds, he'll be rolling lower numbers.

Eventually, one side will be left standing, and another will be left without dice. At this point, the winners usually decide the fate of the losers. In a physical fight or magical duel, the losers might be killed (or mercifully spared). In Courtroom Antics, the loser gets sentenced by the judge, or fails to prosecute. In a Seduction, the loser gets either a cold shower or a warm evening, depending on who wins.

However, anytime a character has a Cliché worn down to zero dice in combat, he has lost, even if he has other appropriate Clichés left to play with.

Dice lost in combat are regained when the combat ends, at a "healing" rate determined by the GM. If the combat was in vehicles (space fighters, mecha, wooden sailing ships) then the vehicles themselves are likely damaged, too, and must be repaired.

**Note on Magic Clichés:** A sword-slinger might be able to defend himself against some types of magic, and not against others, depending on how the mage attacks, for example. Why attack with a sword of light you create when you can just throw a bolt of lightning?

The answer is that if a character uses magic to simulate physical combat (a magic shield and spear made of fire, for example), he may use the Cliché to defend against physical attacks. If he uses the Cliché to attack in a way that a physical combatant cannot defend against, he loses this bonus when attacked himself the same turn, and must use another Cliché to defend.

## TEAMING UP

Two or more characters may decide to form a TEAM in combat. For the duration of the team (usually the entire combat), they fight as a single unit, and are attacked as a single foe. There are two kinds of teams: Player-Character teams and NPC teams ("Grunt Squads.")

**Grunt-Squads:** This is just special effects. When you want the heroes to be attacked by a horde of 700 rat-skeletons inside the lair of the Wicked Necromancer(5), but don't feel like keeping track of 700 little skeletal sets of dice, just declare that they're a team, fighting as Skeletal Rat-Horde(7). Mechanically, the Rat-Horde is the same as any other single foe - except it has more dice! Grunt-Squads can have any level of cliché the GM feels is appropriate. Grunt-Squads stick together as a team until they're defeated, at which point many survivors will scatter (though at least one will always remain to suffer whatever fate the victor decides).

**Player-Character Teams:** When PCs (or PCs and their NPC allies) form a team, the Team Leader is defined by the highest-ranking Cliché in the team (a title that must be designated if there is a tie). Everybody rolls dice, but the Team Leaders dice all count. Other Team Members contribute only their sixes (if the Funky Dice option is used, Team Members may contribute their single highest die-roll above six, or their sixes, their choice). Team members who roll nothing above five don't contribute anything to the Team Leaders total for that roll.

Clichés joined in a team need not be identical, but they all must be equally appropriate. This means five Vikings could band together in physical fight with no problem. It also means that a Hairdresser, a Parakeet Trainer, and a Career Counselor could team up in a physical fight if they have a REALLY good description of how they'll use their skills in concert to take out the Vikings!

### CONFLICTS THAT AREN'T COMBAT

Many conflicts that arise in the game cannot be defined as ``combat;'' they're over too quickly, defined by a single action. A classic pistol-duel isn't combat - the two duelists simply turn and fire, and then it's all over. Two characters diving to grab the same gun from the floor isn't combat. Two cooks preparing chili for a cookoff isn't combat; there's no ``wearing down of the foe'' and no jockeying for position.

Such ``single-action conflicts'' are settled with a single roll against appropriate Clichés (or inappropriate Clichés, with good roleplaying). High roll wins.

### WHEN SOMEBODY CAN'T PARTICIPATE

It will often occur that characters will find themselves involved in a Combat or quicker conflict where they simply have no applicable Clichés, even by stretching the imagination. Or maybe ONE character will have an appropriate Cliché, while the others feel left out. An example might be a pie-eating contest. One character was wise (or foolish) enough to take ``Disgusting Glutton(2)'' as a Cliché. The other characters are astronauts or accountants, neither of which traditionally engorge themselves on pie.

In situations like this, give everybody two free dice to play with, for the duration of the conflict. This INCLUDES characters who already HAVE appropriate Clichés. In the example above, the astronauts and accountants would get Pie-Eating(2), while the Disgusting Glutton would be temporarily increased to Disgusting Glutton(4). The Glutton, naturally, still has the winning edge, but anyone can TRY to eat lots of pie. This ``temporary promotion'' applies only in opposed conflicts, not in challenges based on Target Numbers.

### AREA EFFECTS

Sometimes a character wants to attack multiple foes at the same time, such as when a character uses a grenade or a magical fireball. In this case, the character must have a Heavy Weapon Cliché (see Heavy Weapon Clichés).

If the player figures out a nifty way to avoid having the proper Cliche (such as finding a grenade or stick of dynamite) he can operate as if he had a Heavy Weapon, with the usual "when someone can't participate" 2 dice.

### MULTIPLE ATTACKS

Charaters can attack more than one opponent by dividing their dice up as they see fit. A Martial Artist (5) could attack 2 characters with Martial Artist (3) and Martial Artist (2), for example.

### A WORD OR TWO ABOUT SCALE

No standard time or distance scale is provided for Risus; it really depends on what kind of action is happening. However, the GM should try to stay consistent within a single conflict. In a physical fight, each round represents a few seconds. In a long-term fight between a married couple, each round might

represent an entire Day (Day one: Husband ``accidentally'' burns wife's favorite dress in the oven, Wife ``accidentally'' feeds Drano to Husband's prize goldfish, and so on until there is a victor).

## USING MINIATURES

Sooner or later someone is going to want to know where everyone is and how far everyone can move. Miniatures are a cool way to do this.

If you want to use miniatures, each character can move up to 6 "steps" (inches, squares, or whatever you are using to determine one "step" of movement) and then attack. Once you decide to attack, you can no longer move. This might be more if the character has a super-power. Note that characters with a Multiple Attack Cliche that applies to some type of physical combat (Sword-Slinger, Martial Artist) can attack as many times as allowed, but once they stop movement must attack characters adjacent to them, unless throwing items as well.

Characters that are firing weapon (with Multi-Attacks or not) can fire while on the move, but operate at -1 dice per attack.

There are no rules for "facing". Characters are assumed to be aware of their surroundings unless someone sneaks up on them. The GM decides when it is realistic to be able to sneak up on someone.

Characters that are encumbered (carrying up to 50% more items than normally allowed, round down) are at -1 movement. Those that are 51-100% over are at 1/2 normal movement.

For example, a character with Big Strong Guy (2) can normally carry 12 items and move 6 paces. If he carries 13-18 items, he moves at 5 paces. If he carries 19-24 items, he moves 3 paces.

Each space, square, step or whatever represents about a yard (that's 3 feet, folks).

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## CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

At the end of each adventure, each player adds 1 experience to each Cliché that he used. When he has as many experience points as the Cliché's maximum roll, he can add another dice to the total. His experience total for that Cliché then drops to zero again, and the process starts again.

For example, if a Cliché has 1 dice, 6 experience points will raise it by 1 dice. Then it becomes a 2 dice Cliché, and the player must earn 12 new experience points to raise it to a third dice. Any leftover Push Points can be used to add 1 additional experience to a Cliché (1 Push Point bonus maximum for each Cliché per adventure).

**Adding New Clichés and Specialties:** A player may add a new Cliché to his sheet, at 0 dice, if he likes. He may then begin adding experience into that Cliché. Once he has as many experience points in the new Cliché as he has in Clichés with dice, he can add 1 dice to the new Cliché. Only Push Points can be used to add experience to a "0 Cliché" until the Cliché gains a dice.

For example, a character has 4 Clichés. The player can add a new Cliché at (0). When he earns 4 experience from Push Points in the Cliché, he gains a dice in the Cliché and can earn normal experience in it thereafter. His next Cliché at (0) would require 5 experience earned with leftover Push Points, and so on.

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## EQUIPMENT RULES

## GENERAL EQUIPMENT LIMITS

Players can carry 10 items. The GM can rule that the character is required to have certain items to perform his Clichés.

Five items that don't weigh a lot and are quite small can be grouped into 1 item. For example, a character could have a watch, communicator and ring as 1 item.

Characters with Clichés that represent strength in general (Big Strong Guy, for example) allow a character to carry more items before being encumbered. In general, characters can carry 1 more item per each 6 points of dice. A character with Big Strong Guy (1d6) could carry 1 more item. A character with Big Strong Guy (2d20) could carry 6 more items.

Characters who carry more than their maximum amount of equipment are at half their normal dice (when rolling dice is necessary) when attempting to do things that a weighted-down character would have a problem doing. Running, jumping over things, climbing another rolls will be more difficult. This does not affect Who Goes First rolls and normal attacks.

The GM decides when a character could simply not carry anything else. In general, this should be double his normal amount of items (normal characters could carry up to 20 items, for example, but would be encumbered). However, there will be exceptions, of course.

## POWERFUL EQUIPMENT

Powerful items that allow a character to perform a combat-related Cliché even better than normal (magic swords, automatic weapons, etc.) are not Clichés, but can allow a player to re-roll as many dice as the weapon's bonus. The player always has the option of not re-rolling or stopping at any time he wants before he re-rolls his maximum times. He can even re-roll the same die over and over again if he likes (for example, if he has only two dice to roll but has a +3 weapon). The player must use the new roll, even if it is lower than what he rolled before.

For example, a Throm the Sailor (4) might have a magic sword +2. He still rolls 4 dice, but can re-roll two dice. He rolls, and gets a 1,3,5,6 (total 15). He re-rolls the 1 and 3 and rolls a 4 and a 1. His new roll is 1,4,5,6 (total 16).

If players decide that the special equipment has become part of the very definition of their character (think Thor and his hammer, or King Anther and his sword), they can take Unique Equipment Clichés. For example, a character might have Smuggler (5) and Magic Sword (3), simulating the magic sword. The sword is now a Unique Equipment Cliché.

As a normal Cliché, it now has its own dice total. Not only does it allow the normal "re-roll bonus", but it also has a dice total that the character can fall back on, like a Luck Cliché.

The limitations to Special Item Clichés are that the items can be used for defense only (if designed for combat, such as swords and shields) - attacking with an item must be done with another Cliché (but remember, because they have the item they can re-roll dice). In addition, if the item is being used for defense and the total dice reaches 0, the item is destroyed, and the character loses the Cliché. However, they are not defeated until another Cliché reaches 0. Of course, another obvious limitation is the Cliché cannot be used without the Special Equipment itself!

A character with Heavy Armor rolls his dice to reduce his opponent's roll (instead of increasing his own). For each dice he has, he can choose to re-roll an opponent's dice, attempting to make the result lower. He must take the new roll (unless he has enough dice to re-roll that die again!). Like Heavy Weapons, the GM can require players to take this Cliché. Typical suits of Heavy Armor range from +1 to +4 levels.

Note that if both the attacker and defender both can change the rolls of a single pool of dice, the attacker re-rolls dice first, then the defender second.

+1: Minor Magical Item, Big Pistol, Standard Sci-Fi Blaster  
Chain Mail, Bulletproof Vest

- +2: Sci-fi Heavy Blaster  
Plate Mail, Riot Gear
  - +3: Heavy Repeating Blaster, Machine Gun, Shotgun  
Full Plate, Heavy Space Marine Armor
  - +4: Unique Magical Weapon, Lightsaber, Grenades, Bazooka  
Power Armor
- 

## APPENDIX 1: SPECIAL CLICHÉS

### BURNABLE CLICHÉS

A Burnable Cliché is one that can be lowered (also known as 'burning'), usually to provide bonuses to the character or as "fuel" for powers. Expendable Clichés cannot be Specialized, but are instead defined when the Cliché is chosen. For example, a vampire could have a Blood Cliché that could be used to power his vampiric powers or to raise his physical attacks/defenses for a single turn.

#### Auto-Loss Clichés

An Auto-Loss Cliché is one that decreases automatically every time it is used. For example, the Minor Gadgets Cliché loses one die each time it is used. Once the Cliché is used up, the character is "out" until it is refueled in some fashion (in this case, the character has to "load up" again at the Batcave or whatever).

Often, the Auto-Loss Cliché is a Locked Cliché as well, but not always.

#### Luck Clichés

Luck allows a character to take dice caused to a Cliché off of the Luck Cliché instead. Luck, unlike many Clichés, may reach 0 without the character being defeated. Luck, however, cannot be used to attack, so it has its limitations. Luck can never exceed 6 dice for normal characters.

#### Power Supply Clichés

Power Supply Clichés indicate a Cliché that might run out of energy when using it. Magic and Psionics are the most common examples. When the Cliché is used, the wizard or psychic loses one die (and only one die) from the pool if a 6 (or more than one 6) is rolled. Thus, a wizard can use a few dice of the Cliché and may not lose levels, but if he uses all of his dice in using his energies very quickly. Thus, it is good for mages to have more than one type of magical Cliché than to just have "magic".

#### Heavy Weapon Clichés

Heavy weapons are often carried by the over-equipped character. They do provide a heavier punch than normal, but are expended quickly (i.e., missile launchers and grenades). The Clichés actually double their dice level when rolled. The Cliché can only be used a number of times equal to half the Cliché rating (round up). Almost always in the case of non-player characters or purchased equipment, this is a 2d6 Cliché (4d6, can be used once), and makes a medium explosion (if not using miniatures, it catches as many characters as the Cliché has rolled dice, or four opponents). Characters can go as high as 6d6 (12 dice, can be used 3 times, affects 12 opponents!). If being attacked with explosives, it might be a good time to use some Push Points for defense...

Other characters can borrow some of the Cliché from the character that has it, but he loses one use. If the character that borrowed a grenade, mine, bazooka or the like does not have a Heavy Weapon Cliché, he rolls 2 dice (4d6, can be used once), as per the normal When Someone Can't Participate rules.

The drawback is that the Cliché has a limited number of uses, and cannot be used for defense. If characters are constantly trying to get an advantage by making themselves uber-powerful using grenades and missile launchers, the GM can require them to purchase the Cliché with experience. This includes characters that keep borrowing grenades! Once they have purchased a 4d6 Cliché they can continue adding experience points to the Cliché. If being forced to purchase the Cliché, the GM can keep 1 Push Point per game session to add to the Cliché until it reaches 4d6 (which will equal a LOT of Push Points over time!).

Characters that use Heavy Weapons only in special cases (i.e., VERY rarely) or that are in the process of being forced to purchase the Cliché roll as if they had a 4d6 Heavy Weapon.

Note that this is a Locked Cliché, meaning that for each use the player still rolls the normal maximum for the Cliché.

Characters that borrow

#### Heavy Armor Clichés (Special Equipment)

A character with Heavy Armor rolls his dice to reduce his opponent's roll. For each die he has, he can choose to re-roll an opponent's dice, attempting to make the result lower. He must take the new roll (unless he has enough dice to re-roll that die again!). Typical suits of Heavy Armor range from +1 to +4 levels.

#### SPECIAL EQUIPMENT CLICHÉS

See Equipment Rules

#### DEPLETING CLICHÉS

Depleting Clichés start at a certain level and go down by one die if a roll is ever failed when they must be checked. If the Cliché goes to zero dice, then something calamitous happens to the character (he dies / goes insane / vanishes - leaves the game, basically). Depleting Clichés do not 'heal' the same way as ordinary Clichés; the reduction is (more or less) permanent, and may only be restorable through Character Advancement or other means (like an epic quest of some sort).

An example of a Depleting Cliché would be Sanity in a horror game. Sanity must be checked whenever a character sees something horrible or mind-shatteringly incomprehensible; failure would mean his Sanity drops by one die (or even more, for something particularly horrifying or bizarre) until the character goes completely insane.

#### SPECIALTIES

Players can gain a Specialty to a Cliché if they like (this requires the loss of 1 die at character creation, but can be purchased later with experience). A Specialty allows a player to re-roll any "1" when performing a very specialized action with a Cliché. If the player is not using that Cliché, he cannot use the Specialty. Specialties have to be described in at least two ways.

For example, a character might have the Cowboy Cliché. He might have a Specialty of firing two silver pistols. The cowboy must fire two pistols and they have to be silver as well. This must be interesting and add flavor to the character, and the Game Master is free to not allow any Cliché that seems to just be an abuse of the rule.

If a character is Specialized and can re-roll dice, he re-rolls his 1s first then re-rolls using special equipment, if he desires.

#### CAPTURE, STUN AND KNOCKOUT CLICHÉS

Once in a while, players will want to have a cliché that specializes in, or use a normal one, to create an effect that instantly defeats an opponent. Of course, any combat roll will hopefully defeat your enemy instead of wounding him, but these attacks are meant to be one-roll defeats. Examples include mind control, gas grenades, throwing nets to entangle an opponent, and the like.

The obvious bonus to such attacks is that they defeat in a single roll. The large drawback, in RISUS terms, is that such a roll, if it fails, does nothing to decrease the opponent's die total. Many Clichés are possible to defend against such attacks - gas masks for Soldiers against gas attacks, Strong Willpower clichés against mental attacks, Acrobatics against nets and grenades, Magic Resistance against magical attacks, and the like.

#### NOTE: Capture, Stun and Knockout Clichés in a Cinematic Campaign:

If a player or a "main character" (one that the GM decides is important to the overall story) comes up with a good way to defend himself, even without a Cliché, the defender may roll an amount of dice equal to the Capture, Stun or Knockout attack.

### MULTI-ATTACK CLICHÉS

Some player-designed characters and non-player characters are meant to make multiple attacks. They wield two pistols, two swords, are master martial artists, or whatever. Normally in the game, if a character wants to do this, they can split their dice into separate attacks. A Barbarian (5) could split his dice into two attacks in one turn, each being 3 and 2, for example.

Some characters are known for their multiple attack abilities, so much as it is part of their normal routine. This is simulated by the Multi-attack Cliché.

A multi-attack Cliché is not useful in itself. It cannot be used to attack by itself or used to defend against attacks. However, it can be combined with another Cliché when the character makes more than one attack and must split his dice pool. Note that the Multi-Attack Cliché cannot be used unless the character is actually aiming attacks at multiple characters. Once combined and split, the attack cannot exceed the Cliché it was combined with.

Multi-Attack Clichés must be associated with a particular type of attack. These are normally Brawling, Martial Artist, Sharpshooter, Swordslinger, etc. The GM can allow other types if he wishes.

Multi-Attacks cannot be combined with Heavy Weapons (these are already explosive-type attacks that attack more than one character). It can be combined with other types of attacks, including those that are Specialized.

For example, a Pete the Pirate has Pirate (3) and Multi-Attack (4). When facing a single opponent, he rolls 3 dice, as usual. When facing 2 opponents he could combine the Clichés together and split them, making two attacks at 3 dice and 3 dice (the total was seven, but remember that the combined and split dice can't exceed the Cliché that Multi-Attack was combined with). When facing three opponents, he could combine and split his attacks into dice equaling 3, 2, and 2.

### LOCKED CLICHÉS

Locked Clichés don't change even if the character loses dice. He can still lose dice in the Cliché and be defeated, but always rolls the normal maximum amount of dice.

These Clichés can be used to simulate very powerful characters, and should be rare. If the GM decides that a player-character can purchase a Locked Cliché, the Cliché costs 3 dice for 1 dice of the Cliché (or 18 points per dice, if you are using creation points).

For example, Jackie Mann is one of the best martial artists in the world. He has Martial Artist (6, locked). He takes 2 dice of damage. He is closer to being defeated (his true total now is 4 dice), but keeps rolling 6 dice. If his true dice total reaches 0, he will still be defeated.

Characters still roll lower amount of dice if they choose to make multiple attacks.

If declaring a Locked Cliché at character creation, the player must pay double the normal point total for the Cliché.

### REGENERATION CLICHÉS

Regeneration is a special Cliché that allows other Clichés to gain back dice. If a character is still missing dice at the end of the turn, he can roll his Regeneration Cliché. For each 6 he rolls, he may add 1 dice back to the lowest Cliché that has lost dice. Regeneration itself cannot be used to attack or defend a character, but instead allows other Clichés to be more effective.

Note that Regeneration can only be used to give dice back to physical-based Clichés, not Clichés such as Psychic or Politician.

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## APPENDIX 2: SUPER CLICHES

### Animal-Controlling

(Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: With summoned animals

Physical Defense?: With summoned animals

Good For: Calling animals to do your bidding, getting nearby animals to do what you want, making PETA really, really mad.

The summoned creatures have generic Clichés appropriate to their type. A rhinoceros summoned with 4 dice can attack and defend only, while a snake has poison venom as well.

### Armored (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Smacking your foes around, taking a hit, making it hard on yourself to go to the bathroom.

This is the standard super-suit of armor. For a bigger, tougher suit, the character might also have Heavy Armor and Heavy Weapon Clichés.

### Beastly (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Locked Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: No

Good For: Going by instinct, seeing through disguises by smell alone, tracking.

This Cliché is assumed to be included with such Clichés like Wolf, Blood Hound, Shark, and the like. However, sometimes super-hero characters have this Clichés as well. Most of the time such characters also have small signs that give this away, such as too much hair or sharper teeth than normal.

### Brick

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

**Good For:** Lifting, throwing, causing earthquakes by punching the ground, ripping through walls, bending steel, shrugging off getting hit by cars, carrying more junk.

Sometimes the Brick changes from a weaker form. If this is a controlled change, there is no bonus to this Cliché. If the Cliché has a limitation of some kind (it is also an Energy Reserve Cliché or cannot be controlled), the Cliché is considered to be Specialized, making the Brick even tougher!

**Climbing** (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: No

**Good For:** Climbing up walls and stuff, grabbing onto something while falling, hiding on the ceiling.

Slippery surfaces might increase the difficulty.

**Clone-Making** (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Special

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: No

**Good For:** Making copies of yourself, playing chess when there's no one else around, being a one-man basketball team.

Each dice in this Cliché allows the character to make more copies of himself. The maximum copies equal the maximum total of the dice (one dice equals 6 clones, 2 dice equals 12 clones, etc.). A character could have this Cliché specialized in creating only one clone, if he liked.

When one clone is defeated, the original character takes a die of damage to this Cliché. If the Cliché reaches 0, he passes out and all of the clones disappear. If the character is specialized in making only one clone, that clone does not affect the original if defeated.

**Cosmically-Aware**

(Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: No

**Good For:** Sensing when the universe is in danger. The less dangerous for the universe, the higher the difficulty to detect.

**Costume Powers**

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: No

**Good For:** Flashy effects, using flame powers without becoming naked, winning fashion awards.

This Cliché gives you the ability to have the costume do something out of the ordinary for each die placed into it. Possibilities include being immune to the hero's powers, instantly changing back and forth to normal clothing to the hero's suit, being 1-dice resistant to certain attacks, and the like.

**Danger-Sensing** (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: No (see below)

**Good For:** Rolling so the character won't be surprised, getting out of the way before a car hits you, getting out of the room before the bomb goes off

#### Detection and Sense Powers

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

**Good For:** Detecting something. Your choice. Common Detection powers include detecting magic and life.

#### Dimension-Traveling

(Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: Yes (blinking out of existence and back again)

**Good For:** Traveling to other dimensions, seeking out the gods, discovering where lost socks go.

If you want an attack to instantly defeat your opponent (i.e., zapping him into another dimension), you must take this Cliché as a Capture/Stun/Knockout Cliché. However, if you do this, you cannot use the power as a defensive power (you'll have to buy it again!)

#### Disease-Causing (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Special

Physical Defense?: No

**Good For:** Giving people diseases, making people sick, making people go to the hospital - you get the idea.

This special Cliché allows you to roll to hit your opponent with a disease - spores and the like spread out and cover your foe. Like capture/stun/knockout Clichés, if you roll higher you win, and the opponent has a disease unless he has some way to counter the sickness.

Sometimes this Cliché is a touch-only power. If so, you can attack with another Cliché. If successful with that one, you cause damage as usual and can roll your Disease-Causing Cliché to cause a illness in your opponent.

A sickness is not meant to instantly kill an opponent. In the case of this power, the opponent must re-roll any 6s until he heals (which takes about a week with rest and care) or regenerates, if he has that power.

#### Energy-Blasting (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Locked Cliché.

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Possible (blasting slow-moving missile attacks out of the air and the like. Normally not possible to defend against melee attacks).

**Good For:** Attacking at a distance, blasting peoples weapons out of their hands, blasting things thrown at you.

As a limitation the Cliché can be a Power Supply Cliché as well. If the player chooses to do this the power becomes a Locked Cliché.

The Zapping Guy Cliché cannot normally be used for defense.

#### Escape Planning (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Locked Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: No, but allows possible escape

Good For: Always having a planned escape that's one step ahead of the heroes, getting away, being known as a reoccurring villain.

The GM sets the difficulty based on the slickness of the hero's planning, and how well they stuck to their plan. If the villain succeeds in his roll, and an escape is possible, then he gets away clean, even if the heroes chase him. This often leaves the heroes thinking the villain has died, even though he has not.

What if the heroes catch this character? He might have a planned way to escape prison, the villain was just a hologram or robot, or someone else steps in to rescue him (all planned ahead, of course).

Fire-Covered (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché (except as mentioned below).

Physical Attacks?: Yes (extra attacks, see below)

Physical Defense?: Only against fire

Good For: Being resistant to flames, catching things on fire. Roasting marshmallows. Note that the character cannot blast a foe at a distance without Energy-Blasting and cannot fly without Flying. On-Fire Guy/Gal gets to make a free attack when someone attacks him hand-to-hand.

If On-Fire guy is attacked by a cold or water attack, it is considered Specialized against him while he has this power activated.

Flying (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Possible, but can damage self as well

Physical Defense?: No

Good For: Getting places quickly, getting away from those silly ground-based foes, and handy for not being killed when falling from places!

Force-Field Wielding

(Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Possible

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Protecting those in the field from outside damage, lifting equal to the power of the field (although attempting to fly with a field is extremely slow compared to the actual Flying power. Force fields can be used in a tricky fashion to make battering rams or capture people inside the bubbles.

There are other types of fields available as well, including those resistant to magic and psychic powers.

In general, a Force Field can surround as many people as dice in the Cliché.

Freak, Monster or Thing

Type: Standard

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Looking bizarre, scaring normal people, being dangerous when angry.

This Cliché normally comes with claws, strength, acrobatics or something else to make it dangerous enough in combat (describe when picking).

Gadgets

Type: Auto-Loss Cliché. See below.

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Possible

Good For: Pulling shark-repellent out of your belt in the desert, being glad you happened to bring device #235, having a parachute on even though you weren't going flying.

Minor, one-type use devices cause a loss of one level. Gadgets always roll 3 dice. The number of dice you have in Gadgets determine how many gadgets you have.

Giant

Type: Standard (the guy might not get smaller as he is knocked around, but he will get weaker)

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Making people look up to you, always being tall enough to ride the rides, being taller than the rides, carrying more stuff.

Great Willpower

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: Yes, against mental powers

Good For: Fairly specific, but at the same time might not be assumed with a Cliché like Hero. Many heroes have this Cliché, however.

Great Willpower acts as a shield against mental attacks, and acts as a Specialized mental power (re-roll any 1 on a dice). Those with Mental Powers have Great Willpower "built in" to their Cliche, but it is not specialized.

Growing (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché (the guy does not get smaller until he is defeated, then he turns into normal size, depending on the description of how the power works)

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Turning into a giant, carrying more stuff, turning back to normal size again. Usually these heroes have Cool Costume that makes it immune to ripping into a billion pieces when this power is activated!

Gun-slinging (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: No

Good For: Quick-drawing, blasting foes, looking really cool afterwards.

These characters often have the Multi-Attack Cliché as well. Allows characters to fight at a distance.

Immortal

Type: Standard

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: Only against aging

Good For: Living forever, knowing history better than most people (after all, you were there), resisting the effects of age.

Really, a character only needs 1 dice in the Cliché to live forever (or a really, really long time if you prefer). More dice than this increase the resistance to aging from weird types of age-causing attacks.

This doesn't mean the character can't be killed, just that he won't die of age or suffers ill effects from age during the games you play.

### Insect-Controlling

(Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?:

Physical Defense?:

Good For: Summoning insects, controlling insects, being really creepy.

The summoned creatures have generic Clichés appropriate to their type. A swarm of dragonflies with 4 dice can attack and defend only, while a swarm of spiders has poison venom as well.

Notes on Summoning)

Creatures summoned will last for 1 battle or scene (guard the camp for the night) and have a cliché equal to the dice spent. The character can break the dice into more than one creature.

For example, a fire-magic using wizard (5) could summon a great fire demon (5) or two fire demons (2 dice and 3 dice). The summoned creatures have a generic cliché (fire demons can fight, resist fire and spit fire with the dice they have).

### Intangible (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Locked, Power Supply (requires effort)

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: Yes (see below)

Good For: Walking through walls, having stuff pass right through you.

Note that intangible is intangible - you cannot be physically hurt while this power is on. The dice total is how quick you can activate the power. If you attack, you can't use this power.

Notes: Power Supply can be removed for ethereal bodies and ghosts and such, but the Cliché costs double in that case.

### Invent Anything

Type: Special Cliché.

Physical Attacks?: possible, with gadgets created

Physical Defense?: possible, with gadgets created

Good For: Inventing cool gadgets, looking like a real geek, being the guy everyone comes to for cool stuff.

You have to pay for any equipment that doesn't do the same thing as normal equipment for the Setting with your Character Improvement. You can't have any new inventions until that one is paid off. Difficulty equals dice of the invention x6, -6. A flight ring (4) would have a difficulty of (4x6=24, 24-6=18) 18. If the character has the proper Cliche and the device is simple (no moving parts and easy to build with normal human hands) then the difficulty is halved.

The GM decides on how long the powered equipment takes to build. Normally, this requires 7 days with the proper lab and testing facilities, for each dice or bonus of abilities. Without the necessary parts and lab, the time is x10 (include the modifiers below as well). If the device is made of complex machinery, double the time. If it is extremely complex, multiply the time by 6.

Example #1: A character wants to forge a sword (+4). This is a simple device, so it requires (7 days x 4) = 28 days.

Example #2: A character wants to build a Race Car (5). This is a complex device. He has a garage and all the necessary parts. This requires (7 days x 5 = 35; 35 x 2 = 70) 70 days.

Example #3: A character wants to build a radio (6), but is trapped on a desert island. The GM requires a roll against his Genius at 30. If successful, the character can build the radio out of coconuts and sand

in (6 [days] x 10 [no lab] = 60 days; the device is extremely complex, so multiply the result by 6 = 360) a little over a year. Too bad he didn't try to just fix the hole in the boat.

So what good is this power? Put simply, you can gain other powers before having to pay for them!

#### Invisible (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard (as he is wounded, he begins to bleed, make mistakes, make noise, etc. Also see below.

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Being the perfect spy, disappearing when in danger, sneaking into the girl's locker room.

If Invisible Guy rolls higher, he can then choose another Cliché to roll damage with, such as Big Goon or Martial Artist. The second roll is compared to the first (and should-be only) roll made by the opponent. If that roll is double what the opponent rolled, the Invisible character causes an additional die loss, unless the opponent has some type of resistance to damage.

Invisible characters can be spotted by observant heroes. Some types, at the GM's discretion, may roll their Clichés to sense the invisible character, such as Spy, Scout, Wolf, and the like.

#### Invulnerable (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Locked (see below)

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Not dying from most attacks, getting wailed on and getting back up, surviving explosions. It is assumed that this type of character is immune to other types of attacks as well, including loss of air, poisons, disease, and the like.

The character cannot be killed (unless his Hook says otherwise). He might be knocked out by enough damage, however. The character will ignore any attack that causes damage less than the total his Invulnerable dice can roll - even if using another Cliché to defend himself! For example, a character with Invulnerable (4) has to be hit with an attack for over a roll of 24 before losing a dice in the Cliché he is defending himself with.

Okay, the character can be killed if he takes damage and the roll exceeds double his Invulnerability score. To be killed, the character above would have to take damage from an attack, have the Cliché reduced to 0 dice, and the opposing roll exceed 48. Even then, the GM can allow rolls or decide that the character was just knocked unconscious, depending on the situation.

#### Leaping (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Possible, but might hurt self as well

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Leaping from building to building, leaping to get out of the way (also known as dodging), leaping over dangerous pits. If using miniatures, the leap has a difficulty equal to its Basic Rating x3. So, leaping 10 feet has a difficulty of 3, while leaping 150 feet has a difficulty of 15, and leaping 1/2 a mile has a difficulty of 30!

For more about Basic Ratings, see the Conversion appendix at the end of this document.

#### Mental-Power Wielding

(Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes, (kind of)

Physical Defense?: No

**Good For:** Reading minds, mind control, planting suggestions, erasing memories, attacking someone to make their head explode.

Note that mental attacks can be either like a capture/stun/knockout power (you either take over their minds or you don't), or like a standard attack. The thought here is that if they are physically strong, they will be more ready to deal with a mental attack, but if they are wounded the mind will likewise be weakened from fatigue and shock.

### Plant-Controlling

(Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

**Type:** Standard Cliché

**Physical Attacks?:** Yes, with the plants

**Physical Defense?:** Yes, commanding the plants to protect you

**Good For:** Making plants grow, placing plants under your control, hugging trees

### Power-Stealing (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

**Type:** Capture/Stun/Knockout Cliché

**Physical Attacks?:** Special

**Physical Defense?:** No

**Good For:** You have to touch your opponent for this power to work, using a Cliché like Martial Artist or Brawling. After a successful attack, you can roll your Power-Stealing to see if you also steal a dice of one of your opponent's Power Clichés. Prolonged exposure can allow you to steal all of his dice (to a maximum power of your own dice level). While this is pretty cool and all, you lose 1 dice in stolen powers from each stolen Cliché per day (if you want to say that some of the powers were permanent you'll have to buy em' like everyone else).

### Reflecting Power

**Type:** Standard Cliché

**Physical Attacks?:** No

**Physical Defense?:** Yes

**Good For:** If hit by an attack (your opponent rolls higher than you), you can still roll your Reflecting Power to attempt to reflect the attack back at your attacker. If you roll higher than the initial attack that hit you, the attack is deflected. If you roll 10 or more, your attack reflects where you want it as if you made an attack with that power yourself (using the same total that hit you in the first place).

### Regenerating (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

**Type:** Regeneration Cliché

**Physical Attacks?:** No

**Physical Defense?:** No

**Good For:** Healing quickly, looking really tough, growing back lost limbs. This works exactly as the normal Regeneration Cliché.

## ROBOT/ANDROID/CYBORG

**Type:** Standard Cliché

**Physical Attacks?:** Yes

**Physical Defense?:** Yes

**Good For:** Fighting with your robotic body, being able to be repaired instead of taking all that time to heal, eating electricity instead of having to hunt.

Robots and androids are immune to disease and poisons, but can become confused over human emotions. Cyborgs don't have immunities but can interact well with others.

### Shape Changing (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard or Specialized

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Gaining abilities by morphing into something else, disguising yourself, never needing a Halloween costume.

A character with this power can Specialize by declaring that he can only turn into animals, the appearances of other people, or some other limited shape. It is entirely up to the player to determine if the character can turn into partial forms (just the animal claws, for example). The GM can require rolls for partial shapeshifting.

### Shape of Energy

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Being highly resistant to damage, looking really intimidating, being a walking alternative energy source, traveling down telephone lines.

You are a being made of energy, at least part of the time. Opponents using standard attacks only roll half their normal dice, but some attacks will still roll normally against you (water attacks, wind attacks).

Anyone attacking you hand-to-hand, or with an object that conducts your type of energy, is subject to a free attack from this Cliché.

### Shape of Gas

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Being highly resistant to damage, looking really intimidating, being a walking alternative energy source, hovering.

You are a being made of gas, at least part of the time. Opponents using standard attacks only roll half their normal dice. However, wind attacks roll as if they were Specialized.

### Shape of Fire

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Being highly resistant to damage, looking really intimidating, being a walking oven.

You are a being made of fire, at least part of the time. Opponents using standard attacks only roll half their normal dice, but some attacks will still roll normally against you (water attacks, wind attacks).

Anyone attacking you hand-to-hand is subject to a free attack from this Cliché.

### Shape of Stone or Earth

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Being very strong (see Brick), Carrying more junk

### Shape of Water

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Being highly resistant to damage, swimming really fast, "breathing" underwater, being invisible underwater, and being a walking aquarium.

You are a being made of water, at least part of the time. Opponents using standard attacks only roll half their normal dice. However, earth-based attacks that would be very absorbent (sand, kitty litter) roll as if they were Specialized.

Shrinking (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché (He may not get any larger, but the more beat up he becomes, the slower this guy gets)

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: Yes (harder to hit)

Good For: Becoming smaller, being really hard to hit, getting into tiny places that others cannot.

If the character can't turn this power off, it's a limitation and the character receives a free dice in the power in return.

Sticking/Trapping

(Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Capture Cliché.

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: No

Good For: Trapping your opponent in slime, ice, ropes, or something else. Like all

Capture/Stun/Knockout Clichés, you get one roll. If the roll fails, nothing happens.

Opponents that are trapped can try to get free each turn by trying to roll over the number that trapped them in the first place. On the second attempt, they get +1 to the roll, and then +2, then +3, etc., until they escape.

Stretching (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Locked Cliché.

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes (against physical blows - energy attacks cannot be defended against)

Good For: Making your form long enough to grab foes at a distance or stretch across buildings, absorbing blows with your rubbery body, wrapping around foes (similar to sticking/trapping), taking strange forms.

Strong (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Like the Brick, but the character isn't necessarily all muscle and brawn. Carrying more Junk.

Super-Equipment

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Possible

Physical Defense?: Possible

Good For: This Cliché simply represents special equipment that could be a Cliché by itself. A good example might be Knight (3) that also has a magical sword (another Cliché). The Knight could choose Super-Equipment (Magical Sword) (3) as another Cliché. The GM decides what type of Cliché the

super-equipment is. For example, a huge suit of magical armor might be a Heavy Armor Cliché, while a ring with magical powers might be a type of Magic Cliché. Super-equipment is counted as Special Equipment, allowing characters to roll over dice. Each piece of equipment counts toward the amount the character can carry.

For more information see SPECIAL EQUIPMENT in the equipment rules.

#### Super-Running (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Possible, but can damage self as well

Physical Defense?: Yes (dodging)

Good For: Running super-fast, getting to your meeting on time, creating whirlwinds, dodging. The character adds his normal amount of steps with the super-running amount (encumberance still modifies the movement, however).

See the conversion charts at the end of this document. Match the number of dice with the added distance. These characters are very, very fast.

#### Super-Sight

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: No

Good For: Looking at things far away, microscopic vision, x-ray vision, infravision and the like. For each d6 in the Cliché, the player can pick one type of special sight, or the player can pick only one type of sight and Specialize.

#### Super-Speed

Type: Multi-Attack Cliché

Physical Attacks?:

Physical Defense?:

Good For: Multi-Attack Cliché - must be combined with another Cliché like Brawling or Fast Hero to be really effective. Also see Super-Running. The character can also do other things faster than normal as well, at the GM discretion.

This Cliche does not allow characters to run faster, only to do normal things faster (type on a keyboard, do their taxes, and, oh yeah, beat the crud out of folks).

#### Super-Stealthy (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: No

Good For: Not being seen, hiding in shadows, following people without being noticed. Certain Clichés can roll against this at full dice, such as Rouge, Spy and the like.

#### Swimming (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: Only Underwater

Good For: Moving as easily in the water as you do on land, swimming really fast, breathing water.

#### Telekinesis Wielding

(Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes (pushing people into things)

Physical Defense?: No

Good For: Lifting things at a distance, keeping large objects from falling on your friends

Teleporting (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No (see below)

Physical Defense?: Yes (blinking here and there)

Good For: Blinking from here to there with no need of travel, bringing your friends with you, teleporting bombs into space.

If you want an attack to instantly defeat your opponent (i.e., teleporting him into space or above a volcano somewhere), you must take this Cliché as a Capture/Stun/Knockout Cliché. However, if you do this, you cannot use the power as a defensive power (you'll have to buy it again!)

Time-Traveling (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: Yes (blinking ahead, after the attack took place)

Good For: Going back in time to stop a horrible event, going forward in time, knowing how time travel works in your universe.

GM WARNING: This power is a headache!

If you want an attack to instantly defeat your opponent (i.e., zapping him into the past or distant future), you must take this Cliché as a Capture/Stun/Knockout Cliché. However, if you do this, you cannot use the power as a defensive power (you'll have to buy it again!)

Undead (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard or Specialized

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Not bleeding to death (you're already dead!), not being affected by spells that steal souls, machines that detect living beings, etc. Mindless Undead are immune to mental attacks as well, but it's not to fun role-playing one. You don't necessarily look undead, unless you want that particular Hook.

Weather-Controlling

(Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes (wind blasts, lightning bolts)

Physical Defense?: Possible (winds blasting back arrows and other debris, winds keeping melee opponents from getting close, blowing fire away, etc.). It would be stretching it a bit to have the power protect from lasers, radiation and the like.

Good For: Making winds where you want them, calling lightning, summoning and dispersing weather.

Web-Firing (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: No

Good For: Capturing opponents, knocking weapons out of their hands, swinging from building to building. Can just as easily be a whip, grappling hook, and the like.

### X-Resistant (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Locked (see below)

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Never getting killed by a particular substance (can still get knocked down or knocked out or just knocked silly, though).

The character will ignore any attack that causes damage less than the total his Resistant dice can roll - even if using another Cliché to defend himself! For example, a character with Fire-Resistant (4) has to be hit with an attack for over a roll of 24 before losing a dice in the Cliché he is defending himself with. He can still roll another Cliche to dodge, parry and the like, but if he rolls less, he still gets to use his 24 Resistance.

Okay, the character can be killed if he takes damage and the roll exceeds double his Resistant score. To be killed, the character above would have to take damage from fire, have the Cliché reduced to 0 dice, and the opposing roll exceed 48. Even then, the GM can allow rolls or decide that the character was just knocked unconscious, depending on the situation.

Many type of Clichés already have resistances built in, but if you want to be resistant to something that doesn't really fit the Clichés you had in mind (a Big Game Hunter who is immune to radiation, for example), be our guest and pick this one.

You have to specify the Cliche when it is chosen. Common examples include Resistance to Fire, Magic, Acid, Cold, Lightning, Radiation, Pressure, Space, Mental Powers, and Kenetic Damage (things that hit you such as baseball bats, bullets and the like).

Note that this Power is not the same as having Heavy Armor, which allows you to attempt to lower your opponent's roll. Instead, the charcter is truely resistant. A character could be resistant to attacks and wear armor as well!

### X-Controlling and Creating

(Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: Yes

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: Depends...

The "X" in X-Controlling stands for one type of energy or matter that you decide upon. The character might be able to control magnetic forces, electricity, cold, light, darkness, etc.

This Cliché gives the hero the ability to produce the desired energy, and then to control it. Standard "control" includes making shapes and attacks, but other effects are possible. Use your imagination!

The larger an area the character tries to affect, the higher the difficulty.

If you like, use the magic rules provided below to judge what a character can and cannot do with dice of a X-Controlling Cliche.

### X-Speaking (Hero, Villain, Monster, etc)

Type: Standard Cliché

Physical Attacks?: No

Physical Defense?: Yes

Good For: You can communicate with anything! You may specialize in something strange like plants, animals, computers, etc.

Notes: How Big or Small?

Just how big or small can a charter get with powers that allow him to change his size? They can add a number of feet equal to half the maximum possible roll of the character to their normal height. A character that is 6' with Growth (4) can add 12 feet to his normal height (making him 18 feet tall), and he could lift about 400 lbs without rolling. Note that characters usually can grow as strong as their Growth power (just like they are a Brick).

Characters with Shrinking are assumed to be able to shrink to half their size for each level: 3 ft for the first dice, 1 1/2 ft. for the second, 9 inches for the third, 4 1/2 inches for the fourth, 2.25" for the fifth, 1 inch for the sixth, etc.

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## APPENDIX 3: MAGIC

### Magic Fields of Study

Each field has 1-5 levels. Note that depending on the level, a caster can cause certain effects. For example, a character with Gates (3) can locate gates, see through gates, and close gates, but can not open or create gates himself.

#### Arcane

- 1-Walking around without being noticed,
- 2-remove minor effect (shadow or fingerprints)
- 3-destory all records for the last day (paperwork, pictures will come up missing, etc)
- 4-remove all evidence that the character was at a location (even people will forget he had been there)
- 5-walk around unnoticed even with others about as long as you dont attack

#### Beastmaster

- 1-Calming animals down,
- 2-talking with animals,
- 3-calling and
- 4-controlling animals,
- 5-possess animals

#### Animal

- 1-Super-senses,
- 2-growing claws,
- 3-partly become an animal,
- 4-becoming an animal
- 5-permanently become an animal

#### Druid

- 1-seek/identify plants,
- 2-plant growth and control,
- 3-move through forest without threat from plants (thorns, tripping over vines, quicksand), hide path, speak with plants,
- 4-summon treant,
- 5-body of plant

## Air

- 1-purify air,
- 2-wind jet attacks,
- 3-whirlwinds,
- 4-body of air,
- 5-summoning air elementals

## Earth

- 1-shape earth,
- 2-walk through earth/stone,
- 3-complete stone control (create stone wall, swords of stone, create/hurl stones, etc.),
- 4-flesh to stone,
- 5-summon earth elemental

## Electricity

- 1-resist lightning,
- 2-shocking touch,
- 3-lightning control (whip or wall of lightning, cage of lightning, etc),
- 5- body of lightning

## Fire

- 1-create fire,
- 2-protection from fire,
- 3-fire control (walls of fire, fireball, flame arrows),
- 4- body of flame,
- 5-summon fire elemental

## Water

- 1-create water,
- 2-breathe water,
- 3-walk on water,
- 4-body of water,
- 5-summon water elemental

## Blessings

- 1-detect magic,
- 2-enchant objects,
- 4-permanent enchantment,
- 5-destroy enchantment

Burdens (giving items names, passwords)

## Fate

- 1-cause luck,
- 2-cause bad luck,
- 3-remove curse,
- 5-give curse)

## Gates

- 1-locate gate,

2-see through gate,  
3-close gate,  
4-open gate,  
5-create gate

Healing  
1-lend health,  
2-heal,  
3-regenerate,  
4-cure,  
5-resurrect)

Hourglass  
1-feel young,  
2-reduce aging,  
3-cause aging,  
4-stop aging,  
5-immortality

Illusion (detect illusion, dispel illusion)

Light  
1-light,  
2-continual light,  
3-flash,  
4-invisibility, see invisible,  
5-sunlight, sunbolt

Mind  
1-hide thoughts, sense life  
2-mind-reading, sense emotion,  
3-mind-search,  
4-suggestion,  
5-enslave mind)

Movement  
1-haste,  
2-telekinesis, slow fall,  
3-flight, wall walker,  
4-teleport,  
5-ethereal body

Necromancy  
1-see own death, sense spirits,  
2-speak with the dead,  
3-turn undead,  
4-animation,  
5-control undead

## Protection

- 1-sense danger or foes,
- 2-armor,
- 3-counter spell or dispel magic,
- 4-magic resistance,
- 5-immunity

## Senses (increased senses)

### Shadow and Darkness

- 1-see in the dark,
- 2-hide in shadow, cover self with shadows,
- 3-create and shape darkness,
- 4-shadow teleportation,
- 5-body of shadow

### Sound

- 1-silence,
- 2-create sounds,
- 3-increase hearing,
- 4-message,
- 5-hear what happened in the past at a particular area

### Speech

- 1-sense emotion,
- 2-borrow language,
- 3-know all languages,
- 4-message,
- 5-telepathy

### Spell master

- 1-hold spell,
- 2-cause and effect,
- 3-boost spell,
- 4-mutable spell,
- 5-permanent spell

## Summoner (summoning creatures and things)

### Sustenance

- 1-seek and test food,
- 2-purify food,
- 3-create food,
- 4-go without food,
- 5-cause good crops

### Truth

- 1-sense lie,
- 2-compel truth from subject,
- 3-sense half-truth (when someone tells the truth, but only part of it),

4-cause the subject to tell the entire truth as he knows it,  
5-know truth-even if the subject thinks he is telling the truth but isn't

#### Wards

1-conceal information about self or others in area,  
2-protection from scrying or set magical alarm,  
3-counter spell and dispel magic,  
4-catch spell (contest to catch and save the attack of another mage),  
5-return magic (contest to send the rolled attack back at the caster - if the contest fails, the caster rolls his defense -1 dice!)

#### Weather

1-warm or cool,  
2-summon weather,  
3-control weather,  
4-lightning,  
5-tornado

#### Notes on Casting Spells

##### Cost of Casting Spells

The mage draws from his available energy and must make a roll equal to the dice of his spell cliché. If all the dice roll even, the caster loses one dice. When he runs out of dice, he loses the ability to cast spells. Mages can restore 1 dice of power by studying, meditating or whatever for 2 hours per dice.

##### Cause and Effect

Some spells can be cast to be held until a future time. The spell is cast at normal rate and dice, but until the spell is used the caster is considered 1 dice less in spell casting ability.

For example, a character has Magic: Movement (5) and casts a 5 dice cause and Effect spell that will cause a Teleport spell to take him away if he ever is reduced to 0 dice in a cliché (allowing him to escape a defeat that will kill him). However, until that happens, the character has Magic: Movement (4). He can still teleport, but cannot make his body ethereal.

Cause and Effect requires at least Magic: Spell Master (2).

##### Body Of)

Earth - good for physical combat against those resistant to magic.

Plant - each level used acts as armor

Air - you cant be hurt by normal (non-magical) attacks, but you cant use any attacks (including magic) while air. You may fly.

Electricity - enemies making physical attacks are attacked by your Electricity cliché as an extra attack you cant take dice loss from, enemies making purely physical attacks use one dice (but may still Push).

Fire - see electricity

Water- as Air, but you cant fly. However, you are invisible in water and can move at incredible speed while swimming.

Shadow- as Air, but you cant fly. However, you are invisible in shadows.

#### NOTES ON MAGIC AND CASTING SPELLS

##### Summoning)

Characters that can summon creatures summon the appropriate type (undead for necromancers, earth elementals for earth wizards, etc).

Creatures summoned will last for 1 battle or scene (guard the camp for the night) and have a cliché equal to the wizard's dice spent. The wizard can break the dice into more than one creature.

For example, a fire-magic using wizard (5) could summon a great fire demon (5) or two fire demons (2 dice and 3 dice). The summoned creatures have a generic cliché (fire demons can fight, resist (armor against) fire and spit fire with the dice they have).

#### Enchanting)

A character can enchant a weapon or armor if he has the proper cliché. He reduces his magic cliché by 2 dice for each +1 the weapon would then possess. The weapon or armor then becomes Special Equipment. However, the mage loses the dice from his cliché until the item is either destroyed or he wishes the enchantment away.

#### Permanent Spells)

Enchantments, summoning, armor spells and the like can be made permanent if the caster has the proper cliché. However, the caster must give up 2 magic dice from any of his magic clichés permanently for each dice that he uses to power the spell. For example, a wizard with spell master (6) makes a permanent +3 special weapon (wow!) - however, he loses 6 dice forever from his magical clichés (ouch).

#### "Contingency" Spells...

Spells that are cast that require "until something happens" are possible, but this requires an immediate loss of Cliché.

For example, a character with Protection Spells (4) decides to cast an Armor spell that will protect him against foes (Heavy Armor 4). This will last until it is used, allowing the mage to have time to cast other spells when the time comes. Because the spell is cast to be used later, the mage's Protection Spells immediately drops to 3. When the mage regains his spell dice, he loses these "saved" spells, which must be cast again.

---

## APPENDIX 4: FUNKY DICE LEVELS

In superhero campaigns the GM might allow super-levels of dice. Instead of having hundreds of little dice, he can allow the use of Funky Dice, like 8-sided dice, 12-sided dice and the like.

Each dice above 6 has a dice total. These totals should be used in place of the normal 6-sided dice.

If the GM is using a point-based system for character creation, the dice cost the same as their maximum roll. 5d10 costs 50 points, for example. The level must be purchased as noted here. A character could not have 3d10, for example.

1d6

2d6

3d6

4d6

5d6

6d6

5d8  
6d8  
5d10  
6d10  
7d10  
6d12  
8d10  
7d12  
9d10  
8d12  
10d10  
9d12  
11d10  
10d12

---

## APPENDIX 5: CONVERSIONS

Okay, it's a good idea to have a chart that might tell you what's what in some cases. Note that the following chart by no means should limit the GM to certain numbers.

Basic Level 1: poor, Risus 2d6, 8 seconds, 10 feet, 100 pounds, walking speed, toughness of wood, standard weapons

Basic Level 2: poor to typical, Risus 3d6, 16 seconds, 20 feet, 200 lbs., speed of an olympic swimmer, standard weapons

Basic Level 3: Typical, Risus 4d6, 32 seconds, 40 feet, 400 pounds, running speed, toughness of thick ice or soft metals, maximum dice of standard weapons

Basic Level 4: Good, Risus 5d6, 1 minute, 80 feet, 750 lbs., speed of a bicycle, toughness of brick, heavy weapons

Basic Level 5: Risus 6d6, 2 minutes, 150 feet, 1500 lbs (maximum ideal human strength), Speed of a horse, heavy weapons

Basic Level 6: Excellent, Risus 5d8, 4 minutes, 100 yards, 1.5 tons, capable of bending steel, speed of a Jeep, toughness of concrete and bulletproof glass, assault rifles and blaster rifles

Basic Level 7: Risus 6d8, 8 minutes, 200 yards, 3.25 tons, speed of a sports car, light powered armor, normally the maximum damage for very good heavy weapons

Basic Level 8: Risus 5d10, 16 minutes, 1/8 of a mile, 6.5 tons, fastest boat

Basic Level 9: Remarkable, Risus 6d10, 32 minutes, 1/4 mile, 13 tons (strength capable of smashing concrete), airline speed, toughness of steel, heavy powered armor

Basic Level 10: Ritus 7d10, 1 hour, 1/2 mile, 26 tons

Basic Level 11: Incredible/Amazing, 6d12, 2 hours, 1 mile, 52 tons (strength capable of ripping through steel), speed of jet plane or bullet, strength of solid stone. maximum dice of flamethrowers or LAW rockets

Basic Level 12: Monstrous! Ritus 8d10, 4 hours, 2 miles, 104 tons, toughness of diamond, maximum dice for heavy artillery

Basic Level 13: Unearthly! Ritus 7d12, 8 hours, 4 miles, 208 tons. Strength of Admantium, Maximum dice for super artillery

Basic Level 14: 9d10, 16 hours, 8 miles, 375 tons, able to throw a car 1/2 mile, speed of the space shuttle

Basic Level 15: 8d12, 1 day, 16 miles, 750 tons, speed of a comet

Basic Level 16: 10d10, 2 days, 30 miles, 1500 tons

Basic Level 17: 9d12, 4 days, 60 miles, 3125 tons (not really stoppable at this point)

Basic Level 18: 11d10, 1 week, 125 miles, 12,500 tons

Basic level 19: 10d12, 2 weeks, 250 miles, 25,000 tons

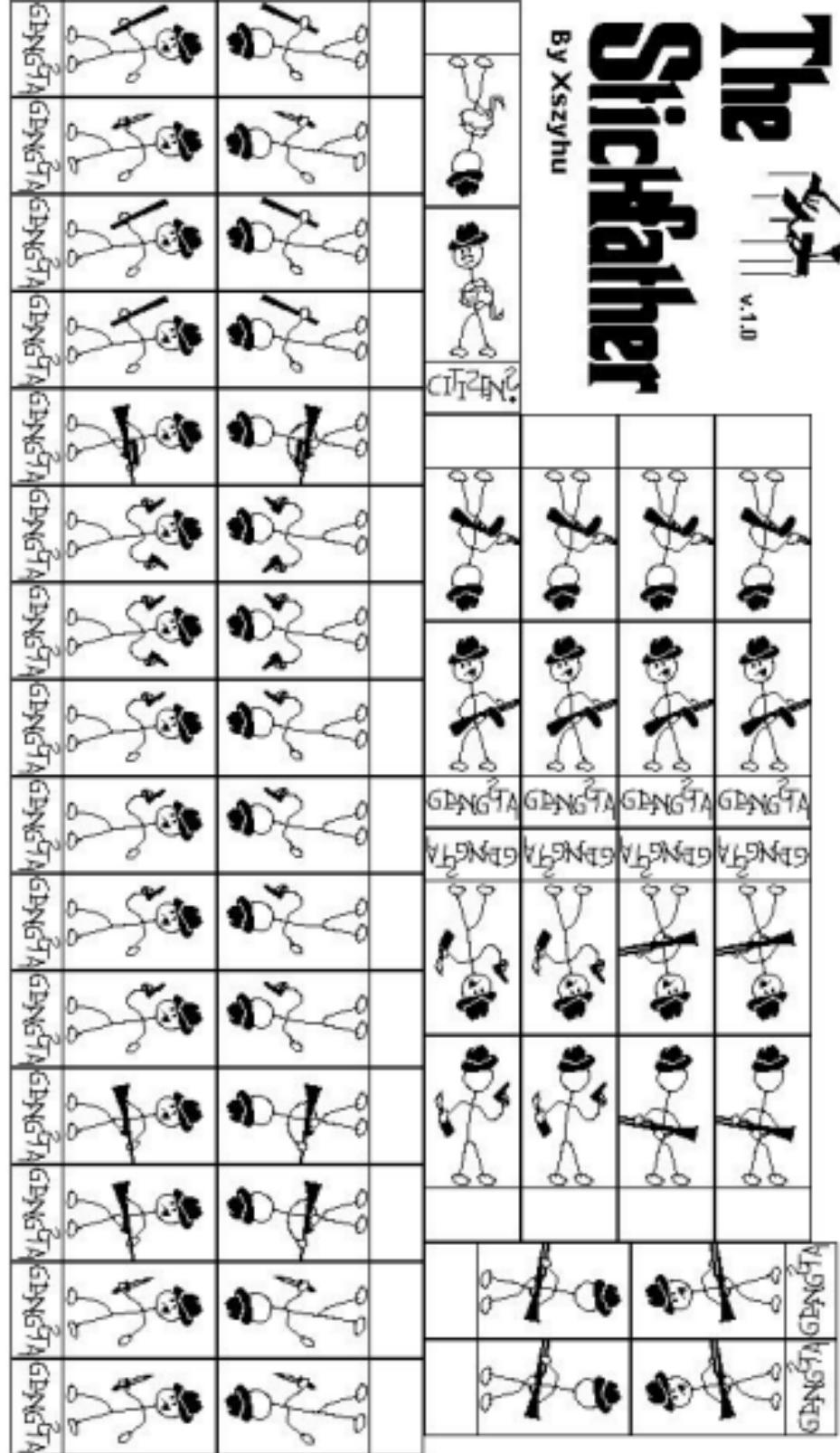
Basic Level 29: Light Speed

# The

# Sickfather

By Xsyhu

v.1.0

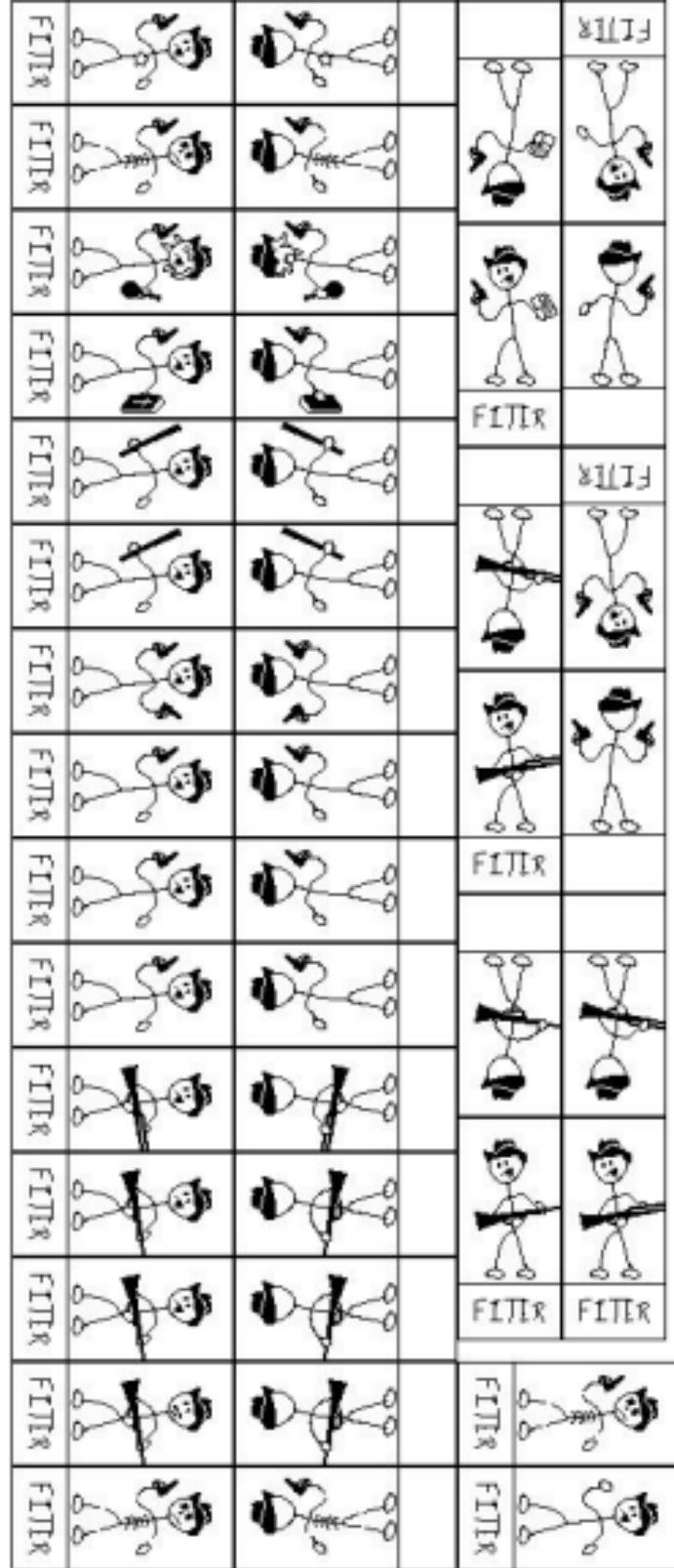


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# STICK-MAN POSSE

v 1.0

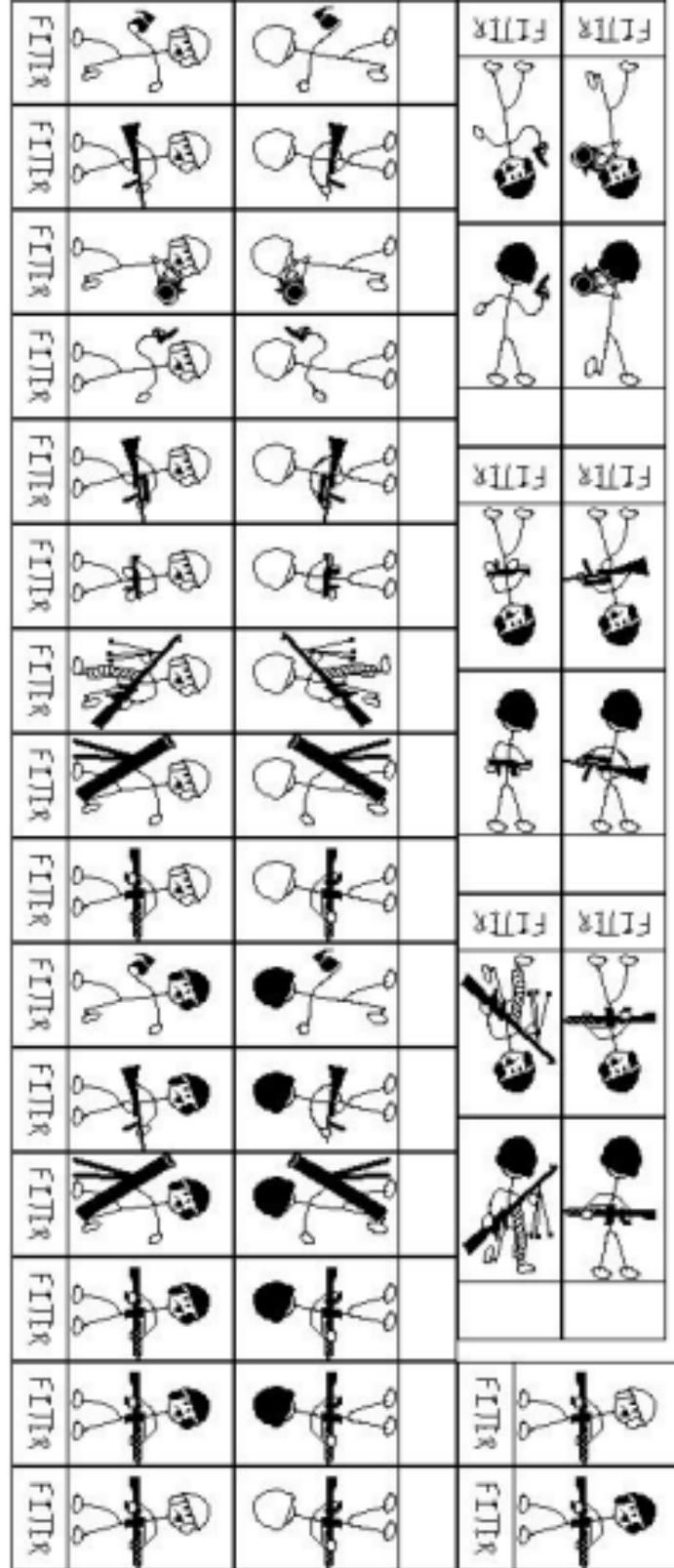
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# STICK-MAN ARMY

By Xszyhu



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# WARRIORS

A campaign setting for *Risus: The Anything RPG*

Created by Samuel “Grail” Barry

Adapted from the books written by Erin Hunter

**Genre:** Modern Animal Folklore (can work with any)

**Tone:** Serious

**Campaign Options:** Hooks and Tales; Pumping Clichés; Lucky Shots; Questing Dice; Starting Dice: 10

**Description:** The world of WARRIORS is set in a modern world where the main characters are portrayed by cats. These cats reside in Clans and must struggle for survival in a world ruled by “Twolegs” (humans). The setting is roughly Native-American based using slightly anthropomorphic (humanized) domestic cats.

## What is Risus?

Risus: The Anything RPG is a free roleplaying game created by S. John Ross and can be found here: <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm> Check it out!! ‘Cause free RPGs are rockin’ cool!!

## Credit Where It’s Due

This setting was created using the guidelines found in Larry Bullock’s Risus GM Guide which can be found here: <http://risusiverse.wetpaint.com/page/Rule+Elucidation>

This setting is based on the WARRIORS series of books written by Erin Hunter. In NO WAY do I mean to impugn upon any copyrights held by said author or their publishers. Please do not sue me.

To my own love of all things Kittypet.

And finally, my daughter Karma, who introduced me to the world of the Clans.

## **Author's Note**

Admittedly, I decided to make this campaign for two reasons: 1) I love modern folklore and anthropomorphic animals; 2) My gaming group consists mostly of my own children. This campaign is based on a series of books, written by Erin Hunter, titled *Warriors*. The story begins in book 1, *Warriors: Into the Wild*. While it is not necessary that players read the entire series, it is recommended that they at least read the first book.

## **Character Creation**

Characters are created using the standard rules from *Risus: The Anything RPG*. Hooks and Tales are mandatory; even if the tale isn't that long it is still required, and may be added to as the character improves. Pumping Clichés are allowed (and will be used often---I guarantee it). Lucky Shots and Questing Dice are advanced options detailed in the *Risus Companion* (not required for play). The gist of Lucky Shots is that for every cliché die you give up, you are given 3 Lucky Shots - dice that can be added to any cliché roll at any time. Questing Dice are pretty much the same thing, but you get 5 Questing Dice for every cliché die you give up. Questing Dice must be tied to some specific personal aspect of your character ,e.g., a personal grudge, a personality flaw, a firm personal belief, or a lifetime goal. Both Lucky Shots and Questing Dice are a use once/adventure type of thing (just check them off your list as you use them up, they won't be refreshed until the next adventure). All player characters begin as either an apprentice (warrior or medicine cat) or as a kittypet. Note: All characters for WARRIORS are domestic cats. Not pampered housecats, but feral wildcats. Therefore, it should be noted that most characters will have the following traits: Extremely Agile, Excellent Senses - Night-vision/Hearing/Smell, and Natural Weapons - Claws/Fangs; these traits should be treated as Tools of the Trade for all

clichés except Kittypet (unless the character has the Hook: Former Kittypet).

### **Sample Character**

Fireheart

ThunderClan Warrior (3), Former Kittypet (2), Hunter of Mice (3), Touched by StarClan [1]

Lucky Shots [] [] []

Questing Dice (fulfill the role of "Prophesized Hero of ThunderClan") [] [] [] [] [] []

Hooks: Fireheart's past (being a kittypet) hinders his credibility with other Clan cats. He isn't taken seriously and is often ridiculed.

Tale: Fireheart used to be a housecat named "Rusty." After he accidentally stumbles into ThunderClan territory, the Clan Leader, Bluestar, wishes to bring him into ThunderClan as a warrior apprentice. "Rusty's" ginger-red coat earns him the name Firepaw, and he is believed to be the one who can save ThunderClan.

"Only fire can save our clan." - StarClan (as prophesized by Spottedleaf, Medicine Cat of ThunderClan)

### **Clichés used in WARRIORS**

Many clichés in WARRIORS will have a Clan attachment, e.g., ThunderClan Warrior, ShadowClan Medicine Cat, WindClan Warrior Apprentice, etc. The Clans themselves will be covered later on. For now, choose an appropriate cliché and then add the Clan attachment later. Remember, all starting player characters must have either the apprentice or kittypet cliché.

- *Kittypet (being pampered by Humans, eating dry/wet cat food not even fit for a mouse, going to the Vet, becoming fat and lazy)*
- *Clan Apprentice\* (being young and inexperienced, going through training)*

\*must choose either Warrior or Medicine Cat

- *Clan Warrior* (*hunting for the Clan, protecting Clan territory, knowing/following the Warrior Code, training apprentices*)
- *Clan Medicine Cat\** (*knowing herbs, healing wounds, being mystical and wise*)
  - \*requires the special cliché - *Touched by StarClan*
- *Clan Leader\** (*being mystical and wise, ruling over the Clan, knowing/following the Warrior Code, being fair, honorable, and just*)
  - \*requires the special cliché - *Blessed by StarClan*
- *Clan Deputy* (*being honorable, leading when the Clan Leader is away, overseeing Clan Warriors, knowing/following the Warrior Code, being very brave*)
- *Clan Queen* (*nursing kits, expecting kits, helping to raise Clan kits, being a protective mom*)
- *Clan Elder* (*having lots of battle scars, being old and venerable, reminiscing/telling old stories*)

## **Special Clichés**

As mentioned, there are two special clichés used in WARRIORS. These clichés follow the Advanced Option III: Double-Pump rules from *Risus*.

- *Touched by StarClan* (*having prophetic dreams, interpreting the will StarClan, having Sixth-Sense*)

This cliché is required for anyone wishing to be either a Medicine Cat or Medicine Cat Apprentice. A minimum of 1 die in this cliché is required for an Apprentice. To be a Medicine cat requires a minimum of 4 dice in this cliché.

- *Blessed by StarClan* (*having nine lives, being bonded to StarClan, knowing the secrets of the Moonstone, aging slowly*) [] [] [] [] [] [] [] []

Only a character with Clan Leader (see Becoming Clan Leader) may take this cliché. After a

character gains the Clan Leader cliché, they must then go on a quest to the Moonstone. After the quest they are then required to make an advancement roll in their Clan Leader cliché. If that roll succeeds, then they are granted the Blessed by StarClan cliché for free with 2 dice in the cliché. Otherwise, they must purchase the cliché as per the normal Adding New Clichés rule under Character Advancement located on pg. 4 of *Risus*. Blessed by StarClan has some special rules: The cliché begins with 9 slots added to it, much like Lucky Shots or Questing Dice with a few exceptions. First, these slots may never be used as bonus dice. Whenever one of the character's clichés is reduced to 0, you must cross out one of the nine slots under Blessed by StarClan; all of that character's clichés are then returned to their full value. Finally, when there are no more slots available, the next time one of that character's clichés would be reduced to 0, that character dies and joins StarClan and may no longer be played.

## Suggested Hooks for WARRIORS

These are just a few to get you started. Players should be encouraged to come up with more Hooks on their own. With GM approval, of course.

- **Former Kittypet** - This Hook is only available to characters with 2 or fewer dice in their Kittypet cliché. The character is un-trusted and ridiculed by some members of the Clan. Even after the character has proven themselves, there will always be those who hold the fact that they were once a kittypet over them.
- **Rogue/Loner** - The character has been kicked out of their Clan or never had a Clan to begin with. Either way, the character is usually only trusted by one individual from a Clan, and only trusted by others when that Clan member speaks on their behalf. Even then, they are never fully trusted by all.
- **Injured/Permanently Scarred** - The character has an injury, most likely from combat, that

has never fully healed properly. While still an active member of their Clan, the injury acts up every once in a while, causing problems for the character.

- **Traitor** - The character has forsaken the Warrior Code. Thus, the character looks out only for themselves, is power hungry, and will stop at nothing to get what he/she wants. These characters have their own "Code of Honor," twisted though it may be. Understand that the character will be suspected of being a traitor by one or more members of the Clan.
- **Code of Honor** - The character follows the Warrior Code blindly and without deviation. To them any act done outside the Code is one act too many.
- **Weak Willed** - The character is easily browbeaten into submission, can be convinced of almost anything, and is unable to keep a secret for very long---no matter what its nature.
- **Blabber Mouth** - The character talks too much. Even when they shouldn't, they are usually speaking, making some comment or talking about nothing at all.
- **Coward** - The character is generally not the first one into battle, and has a tendency to fear that which they do not understand.
- **Opportunistic** - This goes hand-in-hand with the coward. The character takes advantage of situations. For example, taking credit for winning a battle if the *real* hero has died in combat (who's going to argue if they never saw the whole thing?).

## Becoming a Clan Leader

In order to become a Clan Leader, a player must follow these steps. 1) A character must have 6 dice in their Warrior cliché, 2) A character needs to obtain and have 6 dice in the Clan Deputy cliché, 3) The current Clan Leader must either die, step down, or be kicked out of the Clan, 4) The next time that character may advance, they may roll against their Clan Deputy, if they succeed, their Clan Deputy changes to Clan Leader; at which point they may then attempt to gain

Blessed by StarClan as mentioned above.

## **The WARRIOR Clans**

In the books, there are four distinct Clans; ThunderClan (forest cats), WindClan (plains/moors cats), RiverClan (water/fisher cats), and ShadowClan (junkyard cats). There are clear territories and hunting grounds for each Clan. This document will touch briefly on the world of the Clans as they are presented in the books. Being that the books progress, so too do the Clans. As has been previously mentioned, this setting may be used in any genre or other setting. For example: Let's say that our story takes place in a city (the name is unimportant since the cats would give it their own name). Then the Clans located there might be called TunnelClan (sewer cats), DarkClan (alley cats), SkyClan (roof cats), and NatureClan (park cats). The changing of the Clans should be left up to the GM based on whatever genre/setting they wish to use; be it fantasy, cartoon/anime, modern, or post-apocalyptic. The one Clan that remains a constant is StarClan. It is the sacred resting place of all Warriors, and is located in the night sky in what is called Silverpelt. It is StarClan that guides all other Clans through their Medicine Cats. There are 3 Ancient Clans from which all other Clans are descended; those Clans are TigerClan (the night hunters), LionClan (lovers of the Sun and its warmth), and LeopardClan (the swift runners). It is from these Clans that all other cats owe their current skills as hunters and warriors.

## **The Warrior Code**

- The Clan comes first
- The Clan is always fed first
- Protect Clan borders from intruders
- A warrior is brave and never thinks of himself before the Clan
- Fight to defend territory, hunting grounds and protect the Clan; never to kill or for revenge

## The World of WARRIORS

Within the books there are a few places of interest. These places will be briefly covered here as it is assumed that players will already be familiar with the area. Again, GMs are encouraged to create their own settings and timelines.

- **Twoleg Place** - This is the land of the Twolegs (humans) and kittypets. Most warriors will not venture here unless it cannot be helped.
- **Treecut Place** - Again, this is a place for Twolegs. Where they cut down the very trees they plant using loud, foul smelling monsters (chainsaws).
- **ThunderClan Camp** - Located near the center of ThunderClan territory. It is hidden within a clearing in the woods.
- **RiverClan Camp** - Located just on the other side of the river within RiverClan territory.
- **WindClan Camp** - Located up on the moors within WindClan territory. (currently controlled by ShadowClan after the brutal defeat of WindClan over hunting rights.)
- **ShadowClan Camp** - Located across the Thunderpath (road/highway) and just East of the Carrionplace (junkyard) within ShadowClan territory.
- **Fourtrees** - The gathering place of all Clan Leaders under a banner of peace during the time of the full moon.
- **Highstones** - The sacred place of Mothermouth, the cave where the Moonstone resides.

Note: The seasons among the Clans are - Newleaf (spring), Greenleaf (summer), Leaf-fall (autumn), and Leaf-bare (winter)

## Threats and Dangers

- **Thunderpath Monster** - A large foul smelling beast which travels along the Thunderpath.  
Clichés: Large Fast Moving Monster With Night Eyes (5)

- **Pack of Rats** - Rodents which hide out in barns and washed out gullies. They are vicious in large groups and will even attempt to take down a small group of warriors by swarming them in the hundreds. Clichés: Rat (3), Hungry Vicious Swarm of Rats (10)
- **Fox** - Another cunning rodent that is an equal match for any warrior. "*Looks like a dog. Thinks like a cat.*" - *Graypaw*. Clichés: Clever Hunter (4), Sneaky (6)
- **Dog** - The enemy of all cats everywhere. Clichés: Vicious (4), Big and Stupid (3)
- **Twoleg** - Not so much an enemy as a nuisance. Clichés: Average Human (4), Destroyer of the Environment (6)

## **Adventure Hooks**

- **The Hunting Test** - The apprentice characters must pass this test by catching as much prey as possible within their assigned areas.
- **Defend the Border** - Cats from another Clan are daring to hunt with the characters' Clan territory. They must be taught a lesson in respect and the Warrior Code.

**The Rare Herb** - Some members of the Clan have taken ill. The Clan Medicine Cat sends the characters out to find more herbs to treat the illness.

# ARK II IN THE LAND OF THE LOST

## INTRODUCTION

In the world of the 25th Century, only a handful of scientists remain -- those who have vowed to rebuild what has been destroyed. Their achievement: the Ark II, a mobile storehouse of scientific knowledge crewed by highly-trained young people. Their mission: to explore Altrusia -- the mysterious "Land of the Lost" beyond the dimensional portal -- and bring the hope of a new future to humanity.

## LOCATIONS

01	Natural Cave
02	Pylon
03	Builder's Temple
04	Lost City
05	Devil's Cauldron
06	Library of Skulls
07	Tar Pit
08	Misty Marsh
09	Land's Heart
10	The Hole of No Return
11	Bottomless Pit
12	Stone Bridge

## CLICHÉS

01	Youthful (roll again)
02	Human, Modern
03	Human, Near Future
04	Human, Steam Age
05	Human, Iron Age
06	Human, Ice Age
07	Human, Psionic
08	Human, War Lord
09	Human, Cryogenically-Frozen
10	Chimpanzee, Talking
11	Pakuni, Baseline
12	Pakuni, Builder-Uplifted
13	Sleestak, Baseline
14	Sleestah, Throwback
15	Altrusian
16	Zarn
17	Android
18	Robo-Dinosaur
19	Future/Alternate-Version Character
20	Elderly (roll again)

## CREW ROLES

01	Captain
02	Science
03	Medical
04	Linguist
05	Engineer
06	Navigator
07	Biology
08	Security

## MacGuffins / Etc

01	Cannon
02	Light Crystals
03	Dinosaurs
04	Crystal Matrix Table
05	Starship
06	Skylons
07	Jet Jumper
08	Ark Roamer
09	Poison Gas
10	Artificial Intelligence
11	Tank
12	Hot Air Balloon

## Risus: The Anything RPG

This resource was created for Risus: The Anything RPG by S. John Ross (available from <http://risus.cumberlandgames.com/> for free) as part of the Risus One Page Challenge (see <http://risusiverse.wetpaint.com/page/One+Page+Challenge> for details.) "Ark II in the Land of the Lost" was written by Roger Carbol (with more gaming stuff at <http://stirgessuck.wordpress.com/> if you like) who tastes a whole lot like lobster, but then again, not like lobster, if you know what I mean.

# BE GOOD FOR GOODNESS SAKE!

By Hank Harwell

A Ranger Co. X Holiday One Page Adventure for Risus: The Anything RPG

## Background:

New Braunfels was established in the Texas Hill Country near San Antonio in 1845 by German immigrants. Just ten years ago (1850), it had grown to the point where it was the fourth largest city in Texas (following Galveston, San Antonio, and Houston).

Just after October, children have been mysteriously disappearing from the city.

The PC's are Rangers from a highly covert company (Known as the 'Executive Company,' or 'Company X' and reporting only to the Governor) and have been assigned to investigate the disappearances and if possible locate the children alive.

## Character Creation

Characters are created using the standard 10-dice method. Any Western-oriented clichés and backgrounds are available, subject to GM whim.

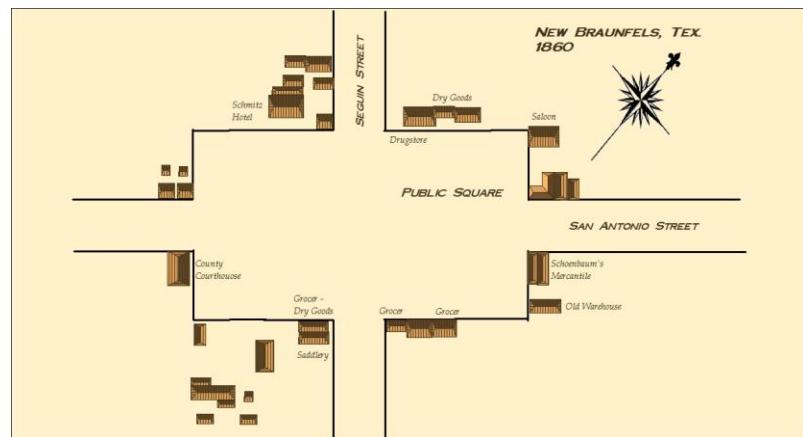
### New Braunfels, Texas

As noted in the introduction, New Braunfels is largely an immigrant city, populated by German settlers. The map indicates the main square of town and many notable structures.

The adventure can be played using one of two options:

#### Option A

Jakob Schonebaum is a local shopkeeper. He has had a problem with unruly children stealing candy and generally causing mischief. As he is an older bachelor, he has little to no patience with such misbehavior. On Halloween, a number of children played "tricks" on him (soaping his store windows, etc.) because he refused to give them any "treats" when they came calling. He has resorted to conjuring a Krampus to visit New



Braunfels from its usual hunting grounds and kidnap the unruly children until they learn their lesson. Unfortunately, it has gotten out of hand and now other children from the community are disappearing as well.

Schonebaum will use his occult studies to hinder the Rangers once he is aware that they are on his trail. Should the Krampus be neutralized, the old shopkeeper will attempt to cast a type of sleep spell on them and escape.

#### Jakob Schoenbaum

Cliches	Dice	What It's Good For
Cantankerous Shopkeeper	(3)	Stocking shelves, cheating scales,
Grumpy Old Geezer	(3)	"Get off my lawn!"
Old World Occult Practitioner	[2]	Summoning mythical seasonal beasties, casting odd spells

#### Krampus



Cliches	Dice	What It's Good For
Germanic Winter Beastie (4)		Kidnapping naughty children before Christmas, terrorizing them

#### Option B (the Scooby Doo Option)

Schoenbaum dresses up like the Krampus and is himself kidnapping children using ether ordered for the town dentist. He takes them to an old warehouse near his shop, where he keeps them in a hidden basement and terrorizes them in his Krampus costume (by beating them with birch twigs) 'until they learn their lesson.' He actually plans on releasing them after Christmas.

Should the PC's locate the children held in pens in the basement of the old warehouse, Schoenbaum, dressed as the Krampus will attack them and will attempt to render them unconscious, and then move the children to another location.

#### Jakob Schoenbaum

Cliches	Dice	What It's Good For
Grumpy Old Geezer	(4)	"Get off my lawn!"
Cantankerous Shopkeeper	(3)	Stocking shelves, cheating scales,
Pathological Costumed Kidnapper	(3)	Dressing up in costume, spiriting off children, using ether

#### Rumors:

- 1 Maybe the kids all ran away;
- 2 The little brother of a girl who is missing claims he saw a large hairy beast carry her off;
- 3 A band of gypsies was seen in the area - maybe they carried them off;
- 4 They may have been playing too close to the river, fell in and were swept away
- 5 Many of the missing kids have been seen hanging around Schoenbaum's Mercantile
- 6 The neighboring Indian tribes are restless - their medicine men talk of a dark creature coming from across the waters
- 7 The local dentist is complaining that his orders of ether have been coming up short.

# Brave The Impossible

An 8 Page World inspired by H.G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*  
by Brent Wolke

In the late 1800s the Martian civilization invaded Earth with their various fighting machines and biological weapons of war, the vast majority of them succumbed to the common germs of the Earth, died, and left behind their advanced technology - the tripods with heat rays, flying machines, and other devices.

All around the world, the leading scientists reverse engineered the Martian technology and unlocked the secret of their power: atom-smashing, thermoelectric engine-batteries, powered by the Sun's cosmic rays. A by-product of the engine is steam (which the Martians infused with toxins and particulates harmful to humans to create the black smoke).

Time passed, and Earth got back to its business as usual; politics and war and exploration and adventures from the streets of London or Moscow to the dark heart of Africa or the gold fields of North America, not to mention the daily ebb and flow of ordinary life - now with amazing machines to aid and assist. Societies abound, some secret, some not, ready to use this new technology to further their agendas.

Regardless of humanities individual pursuits, everyone has an eye trained on the heavens and the red planet next door. Will the Martians invade again, and when? And what of the evidence the Martians also invaded Venus?

There is even some talk of building naval vessels to take humanity to the Moon, and then eventually taking the fight to Mars. Rumors persist...not all Martians, nor their beasts of war, died. Some are said to be in hiding, waiting for the next invasion...

Such is life in the late 1800s.

# CHARACTER CREATION

Characters are built using 10 dice, with Hooks and Tales encouraged. If the Risus Companion is being used, Lucky Shots, and Sidekicks and Shield Mates are also allowed. Double-Pump clichés are not allowed (but see Tools of the Trade). Questing Dice are replaced by Society Dice (see sidebar, page 4).

Characters could be anything from a wealthy Governess or British lord, to a destitute drifter in the deserts of North America, to a warlord in China, or even savvy merchant in the streets of Cairo. The Game Master will inform you which locale the adventures will take place in, and what Clichés are appropriate.

Bear in mind though, this is not a setting for the passive or the cautious...this is a world fit for the adventurous, those who are willing to brave the impossible. The Martian technology has unleashed human potential and the world changes daily. Those who stand idly by will be swept aside in the course of human events, and those who rush forward into action will be long remembered, even if their lives are cut short.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

The height of technology is still steam and black powder because comparably speaking, it is the cheapest and most available to mass produce. One should expect to find in most circumstances that the world is largely as it historically should be. Yet governments, corporations, and private individuals work to uncover all the secrets of Martian Technology, and those with means produce marvelous (and often deadly) devices in bulk.

To the average individual, all the Martian technology is well out of their means, but our heroes are not average individuals. It is assumed that when there is cause, a Martian technology device will have replaced a 'common-place' Tool of the Trade, which gives them an edge over others who must toil without.

As such, when all other things being equal, and when appropriate, a person equipped with Martian technology gains a bonus of a +1 per die in the cliche.

Example: Two individuals with Soldier (3) are engaged in a fire fight. If both have rifles, both roll their standard three dice. Similarly, if both were equipped with Martian sun-rifles, they would roll their standard three dice. However, if one was equipped with a regular rifle, and the other a Martian rifle, then the soldier with the Martian rifle would roll 3 dice plus 3.

### Example Clichés

While such professions as Lawyers or Factory Workers are certainly plausible, they make for poor adventurers. The following is a list of adventuring Clichés to inspire. You may round out your character with mundane professional choices if you must.

**Aeronaut:** Piloting aerovessels; Performing evasive maneuvers; Aerial dog-fighting; Aero-navigation; Barnstorming; Bombing runs; Being a dashing hero.

**Atomologist:** Reverse engineering Martian technology; Inventing, building, maintaining and repairing new Martian technology based devices and vehicles; Being something of a mad scientist.

**Bellwether:** Knowing all the right people and being part of the in-crowd; Being a leader of trends and fashions; Having people fall over themselves to curry your favor; Having people actually owe you favors; Being the go-to for opinions and advice.

**Big Game Hunter:** Hunting, tracking, shooting, skinning, and facing down the largest animals on earth and those Martian beasts of war left behind. Having native contacts in every God-forsaken corner of the planet.

**Brass:** Piloting ships, boats, and submersibles, especially Martian technology based; Sea-going navigation; Weather forecasting; Organizing broadsides and other naval based battle maneuvers; Friends in every port.

**Cabbie:** Piloting ground based Martian tech vehicles; Dodging traffic; Knowing short cuts; Offensive and Defensive driving; Racing.

**Company Man:** Being the mouth-piece and representative of a Joint-Stock Company; Having near unlimited resources and being able to request equipment and men to accomplish tasks; Having a certain legal authority to negotiate binding deals.

**Espionage Agent:** Being a master of disguise and imitating others; Being stealthy, sneaky, and unseen; Breaking and entering; Killing silently; Sudden appearances and disappearances; Blending in to crowds; Tailing others.

**Finder of Lost Things:** Knowing many, many languages; Knowing and Being able to move through foreign cultures as if a native; Knowing the secrets of lost civilizations; Finding lost civilizations; Sword swinging, pistol shooting, brawling tough guy; Digging; Climbing; Running.

**Foreign Affairs Agent:** Diplomatic and etiquette skills; Friends and enemies in every government across the globe; Diplomatic immunity; Having leverage on those in power; Moving at ease through governments and with those in power.

**Fortune Seeker:** Professional gambler; Cheating without being caught; Having a pistol handy when you do get caught; Bluffing; Reading people; Having many people owe you money.

**Hatchet-man:** Drowning, stabbing, clubbing, shooting, beating and otherwise killing people; Strong armed robbery; Burglary; Knowing the best dives to hide out in; Knowing criminal contacts and the word on the street; Intimidating thug.

**Malefactor:** Organizing and maintaining a ring of criminals; Forging, defrauding, black mailing, kidnapping, human trafficking, contract killing, bookmaking and generally being a 'higher class' of 'low class'.

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**Man About Town:** Being recognized as a person of refinement and good character; Always welcomed; Knowing the 'right' sort of people; Being capable with a sword cane; Having a disposable, but not outrageous, income; Playboy; Charming.

**Maxim:** Shooting, shooting, shooting; Trick shots; Impossible shots; Knowing how to shoot pretty much anything; Keeping your powder dry; Dueling; Gunslinging

**Militant Missionary:** Taking the word to the street, or the jungle, or the desert; Standing firm on faith in the face of poverty, cannibals, and cataclysm; Deep well of fortitude and determination; Ever optimistic; Kicking ass in the name of the Lord.

**Mystic Eye:** Esoteric and mysterious knowledge; Occult savvy; Being so wise and inscrutable to as be sometimes unintelligible and confusing, but still earning respect;

Knowing how to hypnotize, or cause trances; Herbalism

**Pathfinder:** Knowing the lay of the land; Navigating by landmarks and the stars; Finding food, water, and shelter; Tracking, Trapping, and Hunting; Sensing when being followed by wild animals.

**Patron:** Being someone with incredible amounts of wealth; Being always deferred to; Demanding and receiving the best treatment; Having an assortment of flunkies and hired help at your beck and call.

**Private Inquiry Specialist:** Finding and interpreting clues; Making amazing leaps of logic; Having a near encyclopedic knowledge of little known facts that become relevant every so often; Handy in a fight; Being legally allowed to investigate crimes and carry a weapon; Sneaky; Criminally skilled.

**Saw-Bones:** Patching up hurt or treating what ails; Surgeon, bed-side confidant, and druggist; Knowing folk remedies when medicine is unavailable; Being respected, but also feared; Amputating a leg in record time

**Soldier-of-Duty:** Loyal to country; Brave; Knowing how to fight in bloody battle with sword, dagger, rifle or pistol; Firing artillery; Fighting on horseback; Basic survival skills including first aid; Following orders.

**Soldier-of-Fortune:** Loyal to the highest bidder; Cocky; Knowing how to fight in bloody battle with sword, dagger, rifle or pistol; Firing artillery; Fighting on horseback; Basic survival skills including first aid; Disobeying orders.

**Statesman:** Being a person of immense power within a government; Being able to influence or craft policy or laws of the land; Being the mouth-piece for an entire country when traveling; Having no wants; Having immunity from harm from most governments.

**Way of the Blade:** Slashing, stabbing, hacking; Being a fierce warrior of melee weapons; Building weapons; Improvising weapons; Throwing weapons; War cry.

As always, these are mere examples, and are not meant to be encyclopaedic.

Part of the enjoyment of any setting is immersion and part of immersion is the language used to describe. Do not take a cliche called 'thief' when a cliche called 'Rogue Gentleman of the Night' has more flavor and life, as well as conveying personality about the character, and the setting within which he adventures.

Additionally, and perhaps more significantly, the important effect of Martian Technology, rule-wise, is that anyone equipped with such gear is now allowed to Double-Pump ANY Cliché provided the gear is of actual use to the cliché and situation in question.

In effect, the character super-charges the atomic engines which tends to burn them out - or at the very least overheat them - to the point they require some time to cool down before being of any real use again.

## ABERRATIONS IN ATOMOLOGY

Although steam power was well used prior to the invasion, the ability of Earth's scientists to reverse engineer what they could of the Martian atomic engines - and combine them with human steam engines - has given humanity a significant boost in efficient and compact energy production.

Technology has increased significantly, and approaches that of early to mid 1940s, rather than the late 1800s, but always powered by steam-producing atomic engines.

The atomic engines are safe of any radiation dangers, such is there design, but can still explode spectacularly if the core is breached.

The following are examples of specific and non-specific uses of Atomology.

### Aerovessels

Aerovessels tend to come in two types; the winged and the dirigible. Winged aerovessels are patterned after birds, are typically long, and contain wings which 'flap' at great speeds to provide lift, while propellers at the rear provide push and speed. They are quite loud, but can attain speeds approaching 100 mph. The largest aerovessel can carry upwards of 20 passengers and/or cargo.

The dirigible on the other hand is basically a large balloon, not requiring wings, but still equipped with a propeller. They can carry close to 100 passengers and significant cargo, but are substantially slower, approaching 40 mph.

### Amazing Machines of Professor Augustus Rush

An eccentric English professor of atomology, Augustus Rush, continuously turns out vessels using micro-atomological engines of all types for the wealthy of the British Empire. An atomic, silent, phaeton carriage and an atomic penny farthing gained him some notoriety, but perhaps his most famous vessel was the large-scale flying Imperial London Shuttle, an elegant winged vessel that the wealthy rent to take them quickly from the confines of the city to the luxury of country estates. The professor is in continuous demand for his services.

## Carriage

The horse-drawn carriage is still by far the most common land vehicle, but various bulky and noisy horseless carriages, powered by regular steam or atom engines have made their way into the hands of the wealthy or powerful. The most common is the four wheel variety outfitted for between 4 and 6 passengers and/or cargo. An awkward motorized bicycle is a recent invention. Military versions are armored and carry an array of weaponry.

## Clockwork Abstractions

While atomological engines deal mostly with moving vehicles or the famous heat rays, a significant portion of Martian technology involved the actual tripods: Clockwork mechanical marvels.

Humanity has been able to use this technology in aerovessels, carts, and steamships, but has also found its way into all manner of other devices, such as computational machines, telescoping goggles, and even mechanical suits to augment strength or speed...on down to home marvels such as machines that wash dishes and clothing all on their own!

## Eagle Express

The United States Government, in order to more quickly and effectively communicate with the governors of the far west states and territories developed a series of long range aerovessels whose sole mission was to transport letters and small parcels back and forth. Strung along the various routes, posts keep maintained aerovessels waiting. As a flight comes in, the aeronauts and cargo switch vessels and continue the journey, or else fresh aeronauts take the next leg. In this way, no vessel is taxed to the breaking point and aeronauts are kept fresh and alert.

## Emmendorfer Eisenbahnauto

A wealthy Swiss banker, Johann Emmendorfer, personally financed the construction of an atomic light rail system to connect all points in the city of Geneva, Switzerland and around the lake via single carriage buses. As it proved economically viable, the system was expanded to circumnavigate, and crisscross the entire country. The Eisenbahnauto has the advantage over horse drawn and regular steam power by being able to traverse the steep inclines of the Alps with minimal effort. Johann has been approached about exporting this system into neighboring Italy, and Austria-Hungary.

## Heat Rays

Although they have many different names depending on locale (the British call them *Sun Rifles* while the Prussian's call them *Solar Fists*, for example), the so-called Martian heat ray is becoming more and more common among the elite military units of the wealthier nations. A typical set up of a bulky back-mounted Martian Engine allows those soldiers to carry a rifle that fires deadly heat rays. Similar and larger devices are mounted on armored carriages (known as

## Societies, and Society Dice

Players may choose to give their character's membership in one of the many societies flourishing during late 1800s. If chosen, the player may spend only one of their beginning dice in exchange for membership and 5 Society Dice. Society Dice act in all respects as Questing Dice - that is, they can only be used when furthering the cause of the Society and the action in question is relevant. See the Risus Companion for more details.

Listed below are example societies and are left to players and GMs to determine if they are 'good guys' or 'bad guys' and what the true agendas are for each. Players and GMs are encouraged to create more Societies.

### Aerovessel Society of Great Britain

**Base of Operations:** London, England

**Purported Cause:** To advance human understanding of powered flight. To break Earth's gravity with the first extraterrestrial aerovessel. To challenge each other in races and daring feats of flight.

**Rumors:**

- ⦿ The Society has already created a vessel capable of reaching the moon and discovered Martian Outposts.
- ⦿ The Society is recruiting an aerovessel force to act as a flying mercenary army.
- ⦿ The scientific advances of the Society is what triggered the Martian invasion as a First Strike, out of fear.

### Free and Accepted Stoneworkers

**Base of Operations:** None/International

**Purported Cause:** To make good men, better. To discover the architecture of God through science and rituals in their Lodges. To build strong communities by making the individuals stronger.

**Rumors:**

- ⦿ The Stoneworkers are bent on world domination by recruiting the elite, wealthy, and political heads of state.
- ⦿ Strong similarities to the Stoneworkers symbolism and rites were found among the wrecks of the Martian star vessels.
- ⦿ The Stoneworkers are actually a religion that worships an ancient and evil God and work to overthrow good and decent society.

### Geographical Society of the U.S.A.

**Base of Operations:** Washington D.C., USA

**Purported Cause:** To explore the far reaches of the globe, map it and catalog the various cultures, animals, and geography.

**Rumors:**

- ⦿ The Society is actually a front for the U.S. government to spy on other countries.
- ⦿ The Society is actually a front for the U.S. government to try locating downed Martian technology in the remote corners of the Earth before other nations do.
- ⦿ The remaining biological threat to humanity is greater than most know and the society travels to globe on extermination quests.

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### Hermetic Order of the Golden Sunrise

**Base of Operations:** New York City, USA/International  
**Purported Cause:** To further the understanding of the occult, mesmerism, channeling, ghost conjuring, sorcery, and so forth. Note: *There are many during this time which believe these things to be real. It is very popular.*

#### Rumors:

- ⦿ The Order has access to vast resources of magic, much more than anyone realizes.
- ⦿ The Order is nothing more than stage magicians and con men with fancy tricks
- ⦿ The Order is actually using a dark science wholly different than anything known to modern science or even Martian technology.

### The Illuminated (*supposedly defunct*)

**Base of Operations:** Bavaria, Germany/International  
**Purported Cause:** To enlighten humanity through science. To provide a place for free-thinking to challenge the darkness of ignorance, religion, and aristocracy.

#### Rumors:

- ⦿ The Illuminated are still around and are bent on overthrowing governments and religions and installing an Order for a New World.
- ⦿ The Illuminated are still around and are keeping the most powerful of the Martian technology to themselves.
- ⦿ The Illuminated are still around and in fact a sinister organization pulling the strings of the wealthy and world governments.

### International Order of Cryptozoologists

**Base of Operations:** Paris, France  
**Purported Cause:** To catalog the various Martian beasts of war and flora. To hunt them down and exterminate, while also gaining understanding of Martian biology.

#### Rumors:

- ⦿ The Order doesn't kill all the Martian beasts and in fact keeps a special 'zoo' or lab for breeding.
- ⦿ The Order has managed to capture and keep alive actual Martians for interrogation.
- ⦿ The Order has proof that the Martians have visited Earth before under peaceful circumstances and left hidden technology around the globe (under pyramids for example).

### Knights of Magellan

**Base of Operations:** Connecticut, USA/International  
**Purported Cause:** To promote the Roman Catholic religion. To support the Pope in Rome. To aid, via charity and service, the less fortunate.

#### Rumors:

- ⦿ The Knights are actually a volunteer army for the Pope who are waiting for the right time to reclaim the Holy Roman Empire.
- ⦿ The Knights are the sworn enemies of the Stoneworkers and actively work to thrown down that organization.
- ⦿ The Knights are involved politically behind-the-scenes, working to pass favorable laws via bribery or coercion.

Incendiary Carts), aerovessels (known as Firebirds), and armored steam ships (known as Dawn Cruisers).

### San Francisco Pyre Wagons

The city of San Francisco started with a powerful Martian engine, added 4 studded wheels and a massive tank of water. The result was self-powered horseless carriage that could easily climb the steep hills of the city and put out fires with atomic powered water pumps.

### Smokers

The Martian toxic black smoke was nothing more than the steam by product of their engines, infused with poison. It wasn't long before humans were able to replicate it. A common sight among the military aerovessels of the more advanced nations are Smokers: Aerovessels equipped with large cylinders of poison which sweep low over enemy positions on battlefields to lay down a blanket of 'black smoke'. The undersides of Smokers are heavily armored to protect them from rifle shot since they must fly so low to be effective.

### Steam Ships

By the late 1800s, steamships had been fully realized, but with the advent of atom engines, these steamships could attain enormous size for carrying passengers and cargo, or else armored and armed into so-called "battleships", and even carriers of aerovessels for military conflict.

Even transatlantic or transpacific journeys are not the perilous journeys they once were with reliable ships capable of cutting the waves between continents.

### Tempest Guns

An atomologist, by the name of Dr. Richard J. Tempest, specializing in clockwork abstractions discovered a method of building fire arms that are capable of firing bullet after bullet without needing to reload after each shot. Some are capble of rapidly firing by use a sort of conveyor belt of shot and as long as there is shot attached to the belt, the gun can remain shooting. While not very accurate, the hail of shots ensures a certain number will strike true. Larger versions of these guns are mounted on carriages or aerovessels, but there are smaller versions for individual use.

### Vodianoi

Russian military naval engineers were able to create a steam ship that travels *under* the waves at great speed; The Vodianoi. Rather than using screws, it fires a nimbus ray backwards into the water. The resulting explosion of steam is channeled to push the submersible forward.

The Vodianoi has limited means to harm, but the armored roof and raking spikes allows it to ram and sink wooden ships by gutting their hull from below.

Continued on the next page...

# SOURCES OF ADVENTURE

The following are short ideas to get the imagination flowing for the kind of adventures there are to be had while braving the impossible. The characters could find themselves innocent bystanders; hired to help, prevent, or discover; or even be responsible for the following. Have fun!

## Bandits of the Atlantic

Using a combination of aerovessels and operating out of hidden base of operations thought to be an island in the Atlantic, a criminal group known as the Black Wing Boys regularly swoop down on unprotected ocean going vessels to rob it of precious cargo and the possessions of passengers. They have even robbed transatlantic dirigibles. The Black Wing Boys are only violent if they are met with resistance, and they will kill if necessary.

## Empire of the Sun Rifle

Japanese atomologists have made progress in replicating the Martian walking fighting machines, but on two legs, rather than tree. Though there are still some issues, mostly with balance, these Mechanized Humans are proving quite capable and already the Japanese are showing signs of using this new might to influence the region.

## Franco-Prussian Trench Warfare

Far from the quick win the Prussians were hoping for with their superior Martian technology, the French have held their own and the middle of central Europe has turned into an abattoir as each side builds trenches to fight and die for inches of ground at a time; it is a proving ground for the latest in deadly weaponry including reports of experimental flying 'rocket men'. There is some fear that the war could spread to other nations who so far have remained relatively neutral in the conflict, thereby turning the whole thing into the unthinkable...a World War!

## HMS Champion's Discovery

Originally a ship of war, the HMS Champion was retrofitted for marine exploration and it discovered that not all of the Martian spacecraft arrived on land...and it might explain recent disappearances in the Pacific Ocean and the strange lights supposedly seen under the waves of the Indian Ocean. Could it be that the invasion never ceased or that a second one is already under way?

## The London Ripper

In London, a series of gruesome murders has led many to believe that a Martian still lives hidden in the area and is preying on commoners by eating their organs and drinking their blood, leaving behind horribly mutilated corpses.

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## Marsicrucians

**Base of Operations:** None/International

**Purported Cause:** To understand the esoteric and occult-like mysteries of the universe by studying the culture of the Martians, their language, their philosophy...everything left behind.

**Rumors:**

- ⦿ Marsicrucians are filled with traitors to humanity who actively aided the Martians during the invasion.
- ⦿ They actually have a significant understanding of Martians and know when the next invasion will come. They are behind-the-scenes, preparing the defenses.
- ⦿ They are still in contact with the Martians and are working to undermine humanity for the next invasion.

## International Society for Atomology

**Base of Operations:** Moscow, Russia/International

**Purported Cause:** To have a better understanding of Martian technology. To advance technologies. To promote the technology as a means to solve the worlds ills.

**Rumors:**

- ⦿ The Society are actually communists trying to level the playing field of society by promoting state controlled technological resources.
- ⦿ The Society are actually merciless capitalists who want to gain the technological advantage and extort huge sums of money from nations desperate for an edge.
- ⦿ The Society is in possession of a super weapon some are calling an 'atomic bomb' that explodes continuously for days on end and are extorting nations for money, lest the society uses it.

## Mayhem Club

**Base of Operations:** None/International

**Purported Cause:** To provide wealthy and elite men a raucous place to dine, drink, gamble, make connections, and engage the society of loose woman.

**Rumors:**

- ⦿ The Club is just a cover for the powerful to discuss how they are dividing the world up into private empires.
- ⦿ The Club engages in the kidnapping of women and children for slavery around the world.
- ⦿ The Club is a cover for a group of stalwart men who are seeking the betterment of society by thwarting those identified as dangers to the world.

## Native Sons of the Golden East

**Base of Operations:** California, USA

**Purported Cause:** To promote the contributions of, aid and assist, those native born Californians of Oriental (especially Chinese) descent. To highlight all the hard work they did in helping the Western Movement of the U.S..

**Rumors:**

- ⦿ The Sons are actually a criminal organization that has control over all crime west of the Rockies.
- ⦿ The Sons are spies for China (or another country) looking to undermine Western Nations so that the Orient can match and pass-up the industrial might of the West.
- ⦿ The Sons are actually earnest diplomats trying to keep the peace between various nations of the Orient.

Continued on the next page...

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### Pax Utopian Society

**Base of Operations:** None/International

**Purported Cause:** To reject technological innovation lest it causes the Martians to re-invade. To return society back to a peaceful agrarian structure under God and total equality of man.

#### Rumors:

- ⦿ The Utopians are quite militant and send saboteurs out to bring down factories and kill scientists.
- ⦿ The Utopians are convincing the world's leading scientists, thinkers, and inventors to leave corrupt society and join a hidden community to restart civilization.
- ⦿ The Utopians are helping to hide and keep alive peaceful Martian colonists on Earth and are looking for ways to bring more to Earth.

### Royal Academy

**Base of Operations:** London, England

**Purported Cause:** To further human understanding of science, industry, and philosophy. To challenge one another to break new ground, present papers, and to roll back the mysticism and occult views of science.

#### Rumors:

- ⦿ The Academy is working on a chemical technology in order to replace the 'foreign' science of Atomology.
- ⦿ The Academy are the ones who figured out how to kill the Martians and are working on similar weapons some are calling "Biological Warfare"
- ⦿ The Academy actively hunts down and murders Martian Collaborators.

### Royal Society of Natural History

**Base of Operations:** London, England/International

**Purported Cause:** To further the collections and understanding of natural history, including not just the current natural world, but the ancient world of the dinosaurs.

#### Rumors:

- ⦿ The Society has discovered skeletons and artifacts to suggest that humanity may actually be descendants of Martian colonists from thousands of years ago.
- ⦿ The Society has discovered skeletons and artifacts to suggest another alien race - possibly Venusians - have visited Earth in the past.
- ⦿ The Society has found ancient cities and artifacts to suggest that humanity was once the slaves of the Martians, but a rebellion forced the Martians to leave Earth.

### Final Notes

The thing to remember about societies is that when a player chooses to make his character a part of one, it becomes the job of the GM to incorporate the society into adventures to make it relevant. It need not be the focus of an adventure, but it certainly could be.

Giving a character a specific side-quest is a great way to incorporate the society, and so are unexpected allies or enemies, occasional bonus gear, and so forth.

### Mountains of Insanity

Brave explorers of that southern frozen continent, Antarctica, have claimed to have found fossils and spotted tall impenetrable mountains with what looks like a city filled with strange, alien architecture. Is this some sign of a previous Martian invasion or a current outpost? Is it the ruins of a lost civilization filled with treasures and/or dangers?

### Sonoma Aero Club

Operating out of the California wine country, the Sonoma Aero Club use a collection of aerovessels of unorthodox design to patrol the skies over Northern California to enforce their own brand of frontier justice, but sometimes the definition of justice becomes a little hazy, leading to conflict with authorities. More intriguing is that they claim to be flying under the power of something other than Martian engines...something they call AG (Anti-Gravity) Gas.

### The South Will Rise Again!

Though the War between the States in America is over and the last of the Union armored carriages roll out of the South, a constant rumor persists that a secret society called The Squires of the Golden Circle are amassing a private collection of their own armored carriages and aerovessels to make a strike at the heart of the Union... Washington D.C.!

### To The Moon, Alek!

A prominent Russian atomologist, Aleksey Soumarokov has gone missing in St. Petersburg shortly after announcing he has discovered a means to replicate the Martian spacecraft and was planning a trip to the moon. Did he go? Was he kidnapped or murdered? Is he hiding and looking for traveling companions?

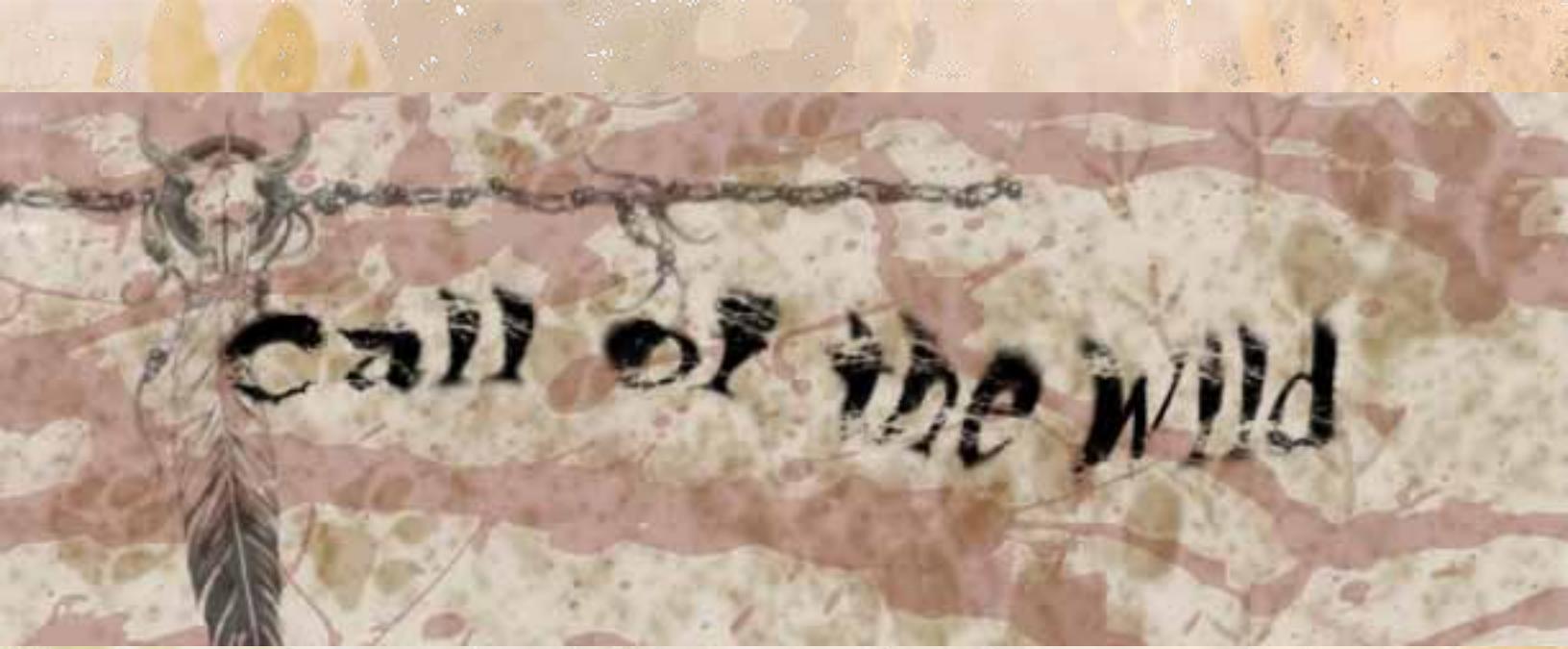
### Wild World

Due to the remoteness of regions in South America and Africa, it is unknown what became of the Invaders in those areas leaving big question marks for scientists and daring adventurers. The few to make inroads into these jungle wilds claim to not only have found strange Martian towers, but lost cities of humanity filled with treasure and...unsettling images...

## Victorian Era

One final note: Game play takes place in the late 1800s, during the Victorian Era. No one book, especially not one self-limited to 8 pages would be able to adequately cover the cultures, traditions, societal, and political structure of this time period. Please, avail yourself of the library and/or internet to gain even a modicum of feel for this exciting time period.





# Call of the Wild

An 8 Page World  
by Brent Wolke

*"Gather around and I'll tell you a tale of how the Shadow has come to pass..."*

*In ages long ago, men lived in cities of stone and metal, the ruins of which are scattered about the land. They raced about in metal wyrms and beetles. Oh yes, by all accounts they were the masters of the world, but a great unnamed calamity befell them and they fled the cities for the wilds to escape. The calamity followed and struck them down where they hid. The only ones to survive were those who embraced the Call of the Wild, and became part beast as well as man. Thus were the great tribes born; Bear, Crow, Deer, Horse, Owl, Rat, Snake, Whale, and Wolf. A great many lesser tribes also came to be. With the Call, the Calamity was stayed.*

*The tribes thus took up what has become their ancestral lands, and though we build villages, the working of stone and metal is forbade less the calamity come again. Battles are fought among tribes over resources, and raids occur in lean years, and tribes manipulate others for their own benefit, but all in all, things were considerably safe and peaceful.*

*In time, the Rats moved back into the cities where they took up metal and stone again, against the laws of nature. The Snakes and Owls sought a greater understanding of the world beyond the Call, and severed their ties to the Forces of Nature. In their ignorance they unleashed the Shadow. Though the Snakes repented for their crimes and now seek to undo the damage they have caused as a Banisher of the Shadow, the Owls insist they can use this power for good, and still Forsake the Call of the Wild. Be weary of the Rats and Snakes, but never trust an Owl.*

*The Shadow, as you know, is an evil spirit from another world, who enters this world through the birth of living things. It hides in the flesh until such time as it is ready to strike, then erupts as a malignant monster, hideous to behold. We are protected to some degree by our ritual, the Call of the Wild, which reveals the Shadow at birth, but among the lesser creatures, base animals, the Shadow gains strength, and so the forests and plains and mountains and swamps and seas become more and more dangerous year after year. As Resources dwindle, the tribe's raid more often, the conflicts grow, and soon, it may very well end that we must forsake the wild, returning to the civilization of stone and metal to gain power enough to defeat the shadow."*

Call of the Wild is a role-playing setting for use with **S. John Ross' Risus: The Anything RPG**. Fear not, for it is free, and readily available at <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>, along with the *Risus Companion*, which is not free, but you'll want it anyway 'cause it is loaded with goodies. So go spend some money at his website and tell him hello from me. Thanks!

# THE GREAT TRIBES

## BEAR TRIBE

**Appearance:** The Bears are a large people averaging well over 6 feet in height. They are marked by shaggy heads of hair and men have huge beards. They have sharp teeth and their fingers are more like claws.

**Culture:** They are quick to anger and slow to be placated. They seldom build villages, as they prefer small family groups or solitary existence and usually make their homes in cave complexes. While not adverse to society, they will often avoid travelers passing through their land unless a threat is seen, in which case, the strangers will be with overwhelming (and if necessary, violent) force.

**Homeland:** Their traditional lands are in the Western Mountains, but can be found in any mountainous region.

**Allies:** Ram and Wolverine Tribes

**Cliché Modifier:** Huge, strong, and muscular; Able to withstand a great deal of punishment; Keen sense of smell; Able to deal damage with tooth and claw; Temperamental



## CROW TRIBE

**Appearance:** The people of the Crow tend to be small and slight of build, with black hair, pointed noses and round yellow eyes.

**Culture:** The Crows value intelligence, cunning, tricks, and planning, disliking rash or spontaneous actions. Crow families build permanent homes, but as a society they build no villages of any kind. They have frequent gatherings, celebrations, and community discussions, but as soon as it is over, they move on, leaving no trace that anything took place on the spot.

**Homeland:** Their ancestral homelands exist within the Southern Forests, but being drawn by the wind, a certain segment of the Crows give up their ordered life, and tend towards a nomadic way of being, wandering where the wind takes them. As a result, they can be found nearly everywhere.

**Allies:** Raven and Beaver Tribes

**Cliché Modifier:** Small and agile; Highly intelligent and cunning; Tricky; Cautious

## Character Creation

Humanity gave up the ways of civilization and embraced an animalistic, primitive way of life known as the Call of the Wild. The Call is a force of nature working through the greater spirits of animals. As humanity embraced the call, they physically changed to a greater resemblance of an animal, and through these changes, they became the tribes.

The tribes act as separate races, and though one can produce children between tribes, the child is not guaranteed to follow either parent. A child is always handed over, at the earliest convenience, to the care of the tribe to whom the child was embraced.

Characters are built using 10 dice, with Hooks and Tales encouraged. If the Risus Companion is being used, Lucky Shots, Questing Dice, and Sidekicks and Shield Mates (usually animals) are also allowed. Double-pump clichés are allowed under certain circumstances, explained elsewhere. All characters must be from a Tribe, the major ones being described here. If a player wishes to portray another lesser Tribe, the GM and player must work together to determine specifics. Being a member of a tribe grants a Cliché modifier that is added to a character's primary Cliché.

### *Example Clichés*

The Clichés offered below are meant to stir the imagination and give a sample of what is possible. It is not an exhaustive list.

**Builder:** Erecting structures and building shelters made of wood, bone, rocks, and animal parts; Creating ice-hut.

**Caretaker:** Tending to the care, feeding, and nursing of children, elderly, or even other adults; Creating clothing from cloth and plants.

**Carver:** Creating practical or decorative items out of wood and bone.

**Cooker:** Knowing the best way to prepare and serve a multitude of animals and plants for consumption.

**Dancer:** Performing ritual dances for entertainment, ceremonies, courtship, and animal spirit worship.

**Fisherman:** Baiting and catching fish of all types. Specialties can be taken in fresh or salt water fishing.

**Gatherer:** Identifying plants, herbs, fruits, seeds, and nuts and knowing their uses, which are edible, which are poison, and so forth.

**Grower:** Being able to plant, raise, and harvest plants for consumption.

**Healer:** Using natural remedies of animal and/or plant base to cure illness; Knowing how to set broken bones and stop bleeding.

**Herder:** Knowing how manage a herd of animals for human use and keep them in health.

**Hunter:** Being able to use stealth to sneak up on animals; Tracking animals; Knowing how to fight and kill animals with spears.

**Leader:** Asserting authority; Having a right to rule; Being recog-

nized as ‘the law’ within their domain.

**Musician:** Playing music

**Nomad:** Knowing how to live on-the-go; Finding food and water on-the-move; Quickly erecting and dismantling camps; Following wild animal herds.

**Pathfinder:** Surviving in extreme conditions; Trail blazing; Finder of water and food; Identifying dangerous areas or conditions; Navigating by the stars.

**River-man:** Being able to sail, row, or pole canoes, rafts, and even raft-like barges on rivers and lakes.

**Sea-man:** Being able to sail or row boats and other vessels out at sea; Navigating by the stars.

**Shepherd:** Providing counsel and wisdom; Administering religious rites of the animal-spirits such as the taking of mates.

**Skinner:** Removing and tanning animal skins; Creating clothing from the skins of animals.

**Storyteller:** Passing down oral traditions; Entertaining others through tales and narratives; Acting.

**Thrower:** Using an atlatl; Throwing javelins; Throwing rocks; Throwing bolas

**Warden:** Fighting defensively; Protecting others; Guarding tribal territory.

**Warrior:** Knowing how to fight with spear, axe, and club against other humans; Avoiding injury.

### Forces of Nature

Some people are more attuned to the Call of the Wild and can summon from deep within their animal spirit, abilities beyond anything a human can accomplish, sometimes bordering on the super natural. These people are known as Forces of Nature. They are very specific to each tribe and must be taken as a Double-pump Cliché.

Additionally, when a character Double-pumps, an actual physical transformation occurs that transcends anything remotely human. The bonus dice and the transformation lasts as long as the conflict or scene occurs, and not just a specific round of dice rolling. However, at the end of conflict, the character returns to his or her normal form, and loses the appropriate amount of dice because of the double-pump, and cannot regain those dice for a number of days equal to the dice used because of the taxing nature of the transformation.

**Feral Rager** (Bear): Transforming into a monstrous 9ft tall half-human, half-bear; Withstanding an enormous amount of harm; Dealing a massive amount of damage via ravenous fangs and claws;

**Forest Mystic** (Deer): Transforming into a man-sized half-man, half-deer; Becoming incredibly beautiful; Traveling through woods without leaving tracks; Being unseen by others in forests; Communication with animals; Summoning animals to aid and assist; Leaping great distances

## DEER TRIBE

**Appearance:** Deer are of average height and build but are quick and elegant, a beautiful people with soft, brown eyes, and hair, with large pointed ears. Men have small horns, no more than an inch long.

**Culture:** The people of the Deer live in many, small, elegant villages, often secluded among dells and along river banks. They are a peaceful people and rarely take up arms, but can be surprisingly fierce when forced. It is quite an honor among other tribes to be able to take a Deer mate and many pursue it. Since many can trace family to the Deer Tribe, it is typically seen as poor taste to show aggression against the quiet people.

**Homeland:** The Deer tribe lives among the Western Forests, and though extremely social and hospitable to visitors, they rarely venture out of their homelands.

**Allies:** Eagle and Badger Tribes, though they generally have good relations with everyone.

**Cliché Modifier:** Beautiful; Graceful; Quick; Beguiling.



## HORSE TRIBE

**Appearance:** Second only in height to the Bears and Whales, the Horse Tribe are a tall muscular people with long faces, long hair, and a certain nobility of spirit in their stature.

**Culture:** The Horse Tribe is entirely nomadic, building no permanent settlements of any kind. They follow the food and make temporary encampments with tents, though dotted across the land are certain points where resources are plentiful, and where the Horse Tribe visits often. They are far from pacifists, but do try to settle most conflicts amiably before resorting to violence, and are often called upon to be arbiters or judges in conflicts between other tribes.

**Homeland:** The great Central Plains is the home to the Horse Tribe, though they claim that any place flat, where the horizon beckons, is their home too.

**Allies:** The Buffalo Tribe

**Cliché Modifier:** Great endurance; Fast of foot; Strong; Regal Bearing

## OWL TRIBE

**Appearance:** The Owl Tribe is marked by their short, stocky frames, large, fierce eyes, and sharp nailed fingers.

**Culture:** The sagacious Owls were once the most respected of people, but their continued involvement in Forsaking the Call of the Wild, even after unleashing the Shadow, has marked them for shame and they are unwelcome everywhere. This generally suits the Owls just fine as they prefer their own company. Yet, their many villages are not unhappy places, and if not for the stigma attached to them, they would not have cause for conflict among the other tribes.

**Homeland:** The Owls call the Eastern Forests their home, and if they are to be found anywhere else, it is in hiding.

**Allies:** None

**Cliché Modifier:** Keen eye sight; Wise; Enigmatic; Unwelcomed



## RAT TRIBE

**Appearance:** The Rat people are short, with ragged hair. They have beady eyes and long noses and large front teeth.

**Culture:** The Rats are an unsavory people being scavengers who will make off with anything not tied down but are never-the-less a clever group and useful even outside their tribe. Their villages, built within the ruins of the old stone and metal cities are a maze of tunnels and warrens, and it would be best not to visit unless one has a guide. Their celebrations are legendary for the wild antics and sometimes pyrotechnics. The Rats have been able to learn from ancient human ways of stone and metal working, and have built primitive fire arms and steam powered vehicles. For this reason also, they are distrusted by the other tribes.

**Homeland:** It is unknown where the traditional Rat homelands were located, for they have long lived among the ruins of the ancient cities as far back as anyone can remember.

**Allies:** The Rats have no allies.

**Cliché Modifier:** Sneaky; Stealthy; Clever.

**Leviathan (Whale):** Transforming into a monstrous 10ft long half-human, half-whale; Breathing underwater; Fast Swimmer; Withstanding an enormous amount of harm; Dealing massive damage via an enormous toothed maw; Dealing damage through a massive tail slam.

**Long Strider (Horse):** Transforming into a 7ft tall half-human, half-horse; Running for days on end without need for rest or food; Being immensely strong; Danger sense.

**Spirit Hunter (Wolf):** Transforming into a man-sized, half-human, half-wolf; Biting with sharp fangs; Raking with sharp claws; Tracking by scent for days on end; Fast runner; Causing fear

**Tree Topper (Crow):** Transforming into a man-sized, half-human, half-crow; Flying by way of wings; Sharp talons on feet capable of inflicting nasty injuries; Incredible eye-sight.

### Forsaking the Call

When the tribes of Snake and Owl began to pursue a power other than nature as a means to better understand the Call, they didn't quite succeed. What they did do was open this world to the Shadow. In that instant, the Snakes and the Owls ties to the Forces of Nature were severed. So while these tribes are still embraced by the Call of the Wild, they can never again call to the greater animal spirits.

Yet, they gained something else, a vast and deep understanding of the elemental forces at work in the world, beyond beast and man: The land they walk on, the air they breath, the fire that falls from the sky and the water which gives life. The Snakes repented for unleashing the Shadow and use their knowledge to combat it instead.

The following two Clichés are available for Snake and Owl tribes only, and must be taken as a Double-Pump Cliché. Like Forces of Nature though, the lost dice due to a Double-Pump are regained after a number of days equal to the dice used because of the strain it places on the Banisher and Forsaker.

**Banisher (Snake):** Cause harm to the Shadow afflicted by touch; Drive the shadow from a body by touch; Sense the Shadow's presence; Rebuke the Shadow

**Forsaker (Owl):** Sculpt stone by hand; Cause burns by touch; Electrify by touch; Vaporize water by touch; Create water from hands; Create flames from hands; Heal wounds by touch; Withstand cold and fire without harm; Break objects by touch; Fuse objects (including living things!) by touch; Turn skin to rock to withstand injury.

### The Working of Stone and Steel

The people of the Rat, like those of Owl and Snake, have lost their connection to the Forces of Nature, and did so because they gave up the wilds in favor of working stone and steel in the ruins of ancient man.

The great artisans of the Rats have been able to crudely reconstruct the metal wyrms and beetles that run on steam, or else produce primitive fire arms. The more eccentric inventors have been able to produce bizarre, wondrous and sometimes dangerous contraptions, such as flame throwers, flying machines, and telescopes.

The following Cliché is limited to the Rat Tribe only, and is taken as a normal Cliché. However, any character with this Cliché may then gain Bonus Gear Dice on a 1 to 3 ratio. That is, for every die sacrificed, the character gains 3 dice in Bonus Gear for this Cliché only, and must represent the various inventions of the character.

**Artisan (Rat):** Building and repairing steampunk powered technology; Building and repairing primitive fire arms; Building and repairing primitive flying machines; Building and repairing other primitive devices; Stone Masonry

## The Call of the World

The following sheds some light on the larger culture of the Tribes, Geography, and the world in general.

### Encampments

At the edge of territories between tribes, when the stars reach certain points in the sky, the tribes form encampments where the tribes mix in great celebrations. News, rumors, craft goods, and foods are traded, while many others look to renew or forge alliances and still others look for mates within and without their own tribe. The exceptions are the Owls and Rats. The Owls still come to the traditional meeting points every year, but it is a lonely, quiet festival, for no other tribe pays a visit to these encampments. As for the Rats, they hold no encampments of their own, but small clans or families show up to everyone's encampments on a regular basis.

In lean years or when recent raids have been particularly brutal, the encampments are also a place to seek help or air grievances. If a season has been particularly hard, sometimes the encampment will be called off completely.

Once a year, each tribe hosts a Grand Encampment in which all tribes send delegations to represent interests. Even the Rats and Owls send delegations though they host no Grand Encampment of their own.

### Naming

Each person is given a personal name by their parents, and these names tend to be traditional names from ages ago (see side bar) followed by the Family name which is usually descriptive of where the family lives, followed by the Clan name which is usually descriptive of the region the clan resides in, followed by the Tribe name.

## SNAKE TRIBE

**Appearance:** The Snakes are easily identifiable by their long bodies and limbs, absence of all hair (even among the women), expressionless eyes, forked tongue, and long fangs

**Culture:** They are a generally mirthless people and most others feel uncomfortable around them. They, along with the Owls are responsible for the Shadow, but their attempts to repair the situation have earned them a modicum of tolerance, and while others treat the Snakes with some distrust, they Snakes for their part fully accept this attitude as their shame to bear. The Snakes make their villages on raised platforms and huts above the water, on top of low hills, or else in low, strong branches of trees.

**Homeland:** The Snakes call the great southern swamps their homeland.

**Allies:** Salamander and Egret tribes

**Cliché Modifier:** Lithe; Extremely flexible; Deep puncture bite attack; Protected Eyes.



## WHALE TRIBE

**Appearance:** The people of the Whale are equally huge and strong as the Bear tribe, but are smooth skinned with little hair. They have large mouths and wide blocky teeth.

**Culture:** They are a ponderous people, typically slow to take umbrage, but once motivated they are like an unstoppable tidal wave. They build quaint little coastal villages, but having little land of their own they have no hesitations about raiding coastal communities of other tribes when their own resources dwindle. A wanderlust strikes the Whale people perhaps stronger than any other tribe except the horses, and so it's not uncommon to find a Whale exploring some far off place.

**Homeland:** Their homeland is all the sea, but especially the Northwestern Islands.

**Allies:** Dolphin and Seal Tribes

**Cliché Modifier:** Huge and strong; Relentless; Ponderous; Able to withstand a great deal of punishment; Great swimmers; Wanderlust.

# WOLF TRIBE

**Appearance:** The Wolves are of average height and build, but are marked by long canine teeth, thick heads of hair, and pointed ears.

**Culture:** Few people are any fiercer or of greater warrior spirit than the Wolves. This tribe is among the most feared, for they rarely ally, and are highly territorial. Their raids are frightening quick and overwhelming, ferocious and without mercy. Yet, Wolves are immensely loyal, and a Wolf friend is a life time friend. Their villages are functional, but very warm and loving among families, a stark contrast with how they treat outsiders.

**Homeland:** Their ancestral home land is the Northern Forests.

**Allies:** The Wolves actively resist making alliances with anyone, but have on occasion worked together with the Coyote Tribe.

**Cliché Modifier:** Great sense of smell; Inherent ability to track by scent; Dealing damage with a bite; Mistrustful of others; Fighting spirit; Loyal.



## Example Names

### MALE

Adrik  
Borya  
Cheslav  
Dima  
Edik  
Fedor  
Gavrel  
Hedeon  
Iov  
Jurg  
Konstantine  
Luka  
Maxim  
Nicolai  
Oleg  
Pavlya  
Rurik  
Sergei  
Tosya  
Uriah  
Vanya  
Yura  
Zhenya

### FEMALE

Alasa  
Biana  
Caterina  
Daria  
Elacha  
Feia  
Galya  
Helena  
Iaroia  
Jelena  
Karinna  
Liska  
Mara  
Natasia  
Okulina  
Pasha  
Raina  
Sabina  
Tatjana  
Varya  
Wissa  
Yulia  
Zhona

*Example: Alek Brookside of the Green Glen Deer. Alek (personal name) Brookside (Family name) of the Green Glens (Clan name) Deer (Tribe Name).*

*Example: Vera Frostwood of the Tundra Wolves . Vera (personal name) Frostwood (Family name) of the Tundra (Clan name) Wolves (Tribe Name).*

## Rumors & Legends

### Bat Tribe

In the beginning, it is said, a tribe of men embraced by the Bat existed in the Eastern Mountains, but they were a terrible people, cursed by a lust for the blood of the other tribes. Stories say the other tribes banded together and drove the Bats to extinction. No proof has ever been found to say the Bats ever existed as a tribe, but they make for good camp fire stories and to keep misbehaving children under control.

### Stone World

Legend says that the world is round like a river stone and that man was not limited to this one land, but existed on many. They were separated by the vast gulfs of the oceans, and when the Calamity came, men were cut off from each other. Relics of ancient civilization are occasionally found which seem to indicate the truth of this. Yet, if true, are those other lands free of the Shadow's presence or are they plagued as well? What tribes exist? What other animals were embraced? Unfortunately, no sailing vessel is strong enough to survive long ocean voyages to determine the truth of this matter.

### Tree Tribe

Rumors have circulated almost from the start that a tribe of men exist which did not embrace animals, but the plants of the earth. Invariably when a gathering of many clans meet, rumors are traded of sightings or encounters with this Tree Tribe, but no proof exists. If there is a Tree Tribe, then they are extremely reclusive and have done well to keep themselves nothing more than rumor for centuries.

### Tribes of the Deep

Despite the best efforts of the Whale Tribe (or the Dolphin and Seals), no proof has ever been discovered of the long suspected Tribes of the Deep; those tribes of men who embraced the true water breathers of the seas and settled in the darkness below the waves.

## Tribe Hierarchy

Though it may seem as though Tribes exist internally in harmony, such is not the case. A Tribe, at it's base, is comprised of hundreds of Families. Each Family consists anywhere from two to

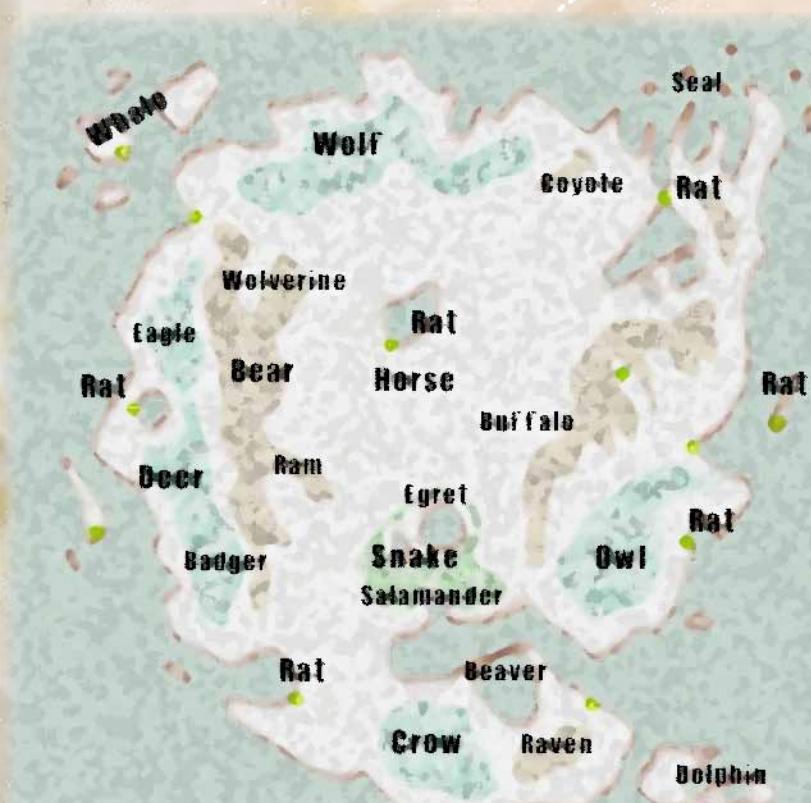
a dozen or more individuals. Each Family allies itself with a Clan. There are anywhere from a half-dozen to a dozen Clans per Tribe. Families may feud with one another and Clans may feud as well. Regardless of internal strife, a Tribe presents a united front against other Tribes.

All told, each major Tribe has a population between 2,500 and 30,000 members, with the Whales having the lowest numbers, and the Rats having the greatest numbers. The lesser Tribes have about half to one-quarter the population of the major tribes. The total population of all Tribes across the land is around 300,000.

### The Shadow

The Shadow is so named because when a living thing is born with it inside, it does manifest itself as a sinister and dark mockery of the true form. The body is elongated and stretched. The afflicted might have more or less eyes, limbs, horns, or tails. Some have been born with two heads. It is always obvious what the original creature was supposed to be, but the twisted form of the Shadow afflicted is a hideous abomination which rages and murders without mercy or need.

Members of the tribes are rarely afflicted by the Shadow, but when a new born tribe member is, it's obvious from birth (and is mercifully killed), whereas with lesser animals, it may take some time before Shadow erupts from the flesh. In this way, the wilds have grown dangerous.



## BEHIND THE CALL

*Note: This section is for the GM's eyes only.*

The great unnamed calamity of Call of the Wild was biological and nano-tech warfare of the greatest order by a technologically advanced society. Tailor made genetic plagues swept the planet killing every one, even those who attempted to leave civilization behind. Soon there were no sides, as humanity as a whole faced extinction.

Humanity was forced to use genetic splicing nano cellular reprogramming to add animal DNA to their own, creating composite creatures immune to the viral plagues. Over time as civilization was forgotten, myths rose to explain the different tribes and Forces of Nature.

The whole of the world was affected, and many more continents exist for adventure and exploration, with different tribes of animals.

Nano-tech allowed the Snakes and Owls to intuitively attempt something they thought was magic, but in actuality, what they did was create a new virus that triggers massive and sudden spontaneous evolution - what the tribes call, The Shadow - and it will eventually take over the world. Salvation lies in understanding the technology hidden in the ancient ruins which could provide immunity or a means to combat it.

Adventuring in Call of the Wild need never touch upon this background, and could focus solely on inter-tribal conflicts and survival while delving fully into and making the animal theme a driving force of adventure. Adventures could also revolve around coming to understand the history of the world and attempting to relearn the ancient secrets of men to stop the Shadow.

One final note: Nothing above has to be true. Nothing will change about the game world if you, as GM, decide to give actual magical and/or spiritual forces at work. Above all, enjoy, and play how you want.

**Personal Name**  
**Family Name**  
**Clan Name**  
**Tribe Name**

**Cliches**

**Lucky Shots**

**Questing Dice**

**Tools of The Trade**

**Sketch**

**Tale**

**Hook**

**Personal Name**  
**Family Name**  
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**Cliches**

**Lucky Shots**

**Questing Dice**

**Tools of The Trade**

**Sketch**

**Tale**

**Hook**

## **Collaborative Cthulhu Risus**

By Manu Saxena

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The main Risus site is here:

<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

You can get the basic Risus rules by S. John Ross for free from this link:

<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/downloads.htm>

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OK friends here's a truly insane version of Cthulhu Risus (appropriate, eh? Heh heh) that's no-prep and even more collaborative than usual. I've playtested it once with good success. Please let me know if you give it a try or if you have any feedback!

**(1) Setting:** Where and when? Decide as a group when and where you'd like the story to take place: ancient times, Roman empire, dark ages, 19th century, the 20's, 30's, present day, a sci-fi future, etc. in America, Europe, Japan, or elsewhere. Don't be constrained by gaming tradition - make your own setting! You could decide to set the game in a 5th century viking village, for example. Also, decide who's going to be the GM.

### **(2) CharGen**

Come up with a name and a description, and then pick your clichés. Any profession or typical Cthulhu trope is appropriate (see end of document for examples). You have 10 points to

spend on clichés for your character, with a max of 4 in any one. You may get an extra point to spend on clichés by taking one point of insanity (describe the phobia or quirk and its history). Finally, describe your character's relationships to the other player characters.

After you've picked your clichés, look them over with the following tips in mind:

- At least one cliché should be your main profession, e.g. doctor, archaeologist, occultist, Sufi mystic, FBI agent, etc.
- One cliché **must be** investigative in nature, i.e. something that helps you find, analyze, or interpret clues. This can be a cliché that is helpful for perceiving or noticing things (i.e., to do the job of spot hidden in CoC), but also something like historian, occultist, or even geologist can be considered investigative.
- It will also be helpful to have at least one cliché that's primarily physically oriented (bodybuilder, wrestler, pro sprinter, etc.), for combat and other such events;
- And it's advisable to have one cliché that's primarily mentally or spiritually oriented (psychologist, theologian, spiritual guide, yoga instructor, zen meditator, etc.) for sanity checks and the like.
- And yes, one particular cliché can fill two of these roles [e.g., bodybuilder (4) can be a profession and a physical cliché] but any more than that and you're probably being too much of a munchkin :-)

### **Example:**

**Name:** Sally Simpson

**Description:** Sally is one of the best private eyes in her area.

She disdains traditional garb for black clothes and a motorcycle, and specializes in weird cases no one else wants.

**Clichés:**

Cute and Perky Private Investigator Extraordinaire (4)  
 Svelte and Agile Kickboxing Contender (3)  
 Amateur but Passionate Chess Player (2)  
 Reluctant Student of the Occult (1)

### **Cliché Adjectives and How to Use Them**

We all know that it's a good idea to add a bit of quirkiness or personality to your cliché description [e.g. "Ornery old doctor (4)" instead of just "doctor (4)"], but CCR has some rules for how to use these game mechanically (see the "rolling dice" section below). Basically, they let you reroll or add a die.

Hey munchkins: each cliché should only be a sentence long, and please keep your sentences smaller than the typical paragraph :-)

**Clichés that allow you to use spells or supernatural powers** (such as sorcerer or psychic) *cost double*, are indicated by brackets [ ], and allow you to *double-pump* (see below).

Example with Sally:

Cute and perky Private Investigator Extraordinaire (2)  
 Svelte and Agile Kickboxing Contender (2)  
 Subtle and Inconspicuous Psychic Mind Reader [3]

**Relationships:** finally, describe your character's relationship to each of the other PCs. Relationship in this context is almost anything, including just "I think she's a jerk".

**(3) Set the Climax:** one by one, everyone adds a detail about what their character is seeing, doing, or otherwise experiencing at the start of the game's climax (think of the start of the movie *The Usual Suspects*). These should be things you think would be cool or fun to have happen. Keep going around the table adding details until satisfied. The GM or a

volunteer note-taker should record all these so that they're readily available. Note that this is setting up the *start* of the climax, not its result.

Examples: "I've got my hands up, and a cloaked figure is pointing a gun at me", "I see a car hurtling off a pier towards a giant octopus", "A fire burns around me as I'm crawling towards a bound and gagged figure", and so on.

**(4) Opening Scene:** Rewind back to the opening scene. Establish how the characters get together. Are they an old team of investigators? Do they happen to be all taking the same subway train together when something strange happens? Or do they all start off separately with their own opening scenes, only getting together as the game progresses? Decide as a group on how the opening scene begins. Based on the climax you're headed towards, the GM decides what kind of opposition or challenge to add. Then go ahead and play!

### **(5) And Onwards:**

In CCR, the responsibility for getting to the climax is not just the GM's, it's shared. So instead of the GM making clues and the players rolling dice to see if they find the clue as happens in other games, in CCR *players use their investigative clichés to add clues*. Pick a clue that you think is interesting or fun, that other players can riff off of, and that is at least tangentially related to the climax. There is no strict definition of 'clue': it can be almost anything from finding a physical item, some event occurring ("you get a phone call", "there's a knock on the door, it's a police officer", etc.), to someone remembering something.

For example, suppose you know that in the climax there'll be a cloaked figure, a bound person, and a pier. You can add the clue, "Jackie comes over; she's worried about Mary, who didn't

show up for her lunch date." Another player might then add, "Jackie mentions seeing a curious cloaked figure around town." And so on.

So, when wanting to add a clue, roll your investigative cliché, and the result is as follows:

### Roll

1-3: Go ahead and add your clue, but the GM is required to add something bad happening. This can be connected to the clue itself ("as you take the old tome from the shelf, a trapdoor opens") or (at least apparently) unrelated ("as you examine the strange sculpture, John becomes aware that someone is pressing the muzzle of a gun into his back").

4-6: Add your clue, nothing special happens.

7: Add your clue, and get one bonus die. This die must be attached to one particular cliché, and is used up after one roll. You can decide what the nature of the bonus die is: an extra bullet, an insight into a person's nature, etc. You can wait to decide until you use the bonus die (but must assign it to a cliché right away).

8: as 7, but get two such bonus dice.

9: as 7, but the bonus die is general, i.e. it can be used on any roll.

10: as 9, but get two such dice.

11-14: choose any of the above, or find a +1 bonus item (or a spell or other special magic thingy).

15+: as above, but the bonus item is +2.

The GM will of course play all NPCs and throw in obstacles and challenges, including but certainly not limited to cultists, completely insane antagonists (human and otherwise), and tentacled horrors from beyond who will attempt to beat, capture, dismember, ingest, and generally be unpleasant to the characters, as well as other sentient life (especially cute cuddly animals). What fun! :-)

### Rolling Dice & Rules Stuff

**Roll a number of dice equal to the value of the cliché most applicable to the action you're trying to do.** The value of the roll equals the highest die rolled, plus any multiples of the high die if present. Ex. 6,5,5 = 6; 4,4,1 = 8; 5,4,4,2 = 5.

**If your roll is equal to or greater than the target number (rolled or assigned by the GM), you succeed,** otherwise you fail. *Every 5 points above the TN is an additional degree of success.* Note: investigative rolls are an exception, obviously.

**A fumble** happens when you get a failure, and where your failing roll has nothing higher than a 2 (or 1 if rolling only a single die).

If none of your clichés are appropriate, roll just one die (which loses on a tie, i.e. you'll need to beat the TN, not just equal it).

### How to get more dice on a roll:

**Use an adjective:** a cliché adjective can be used to add a die to a roll or reroll a die once a session (and only when you're using the cliché the adjective describes). Bring the adjective into your narration to show how it makes a difference in the context. You can use a max of 3 adjectives per cliché per session.

Example: A cultist is trying to grab Sally, the *Young, Svelte, and Agile Kickboxing Contender* (3). The cultist gets a 5, and Sally rolls a 4, 3, 3. Her player says, "but Sally is agile, and twists out of the way!" She checks off agile on her character sheet, and decides to reroll the 4; it comes up a 2, which means she now has 3, 3, 2, for a total of 6 from the multiple of the high die. Her player says she twists out of the way and trips the cultist.

Another example: Boney Coy, *Ornery Ugly Old Codger of a Doctor* (2) is trying to revive the cultist his friends have captured so that he can be interrogated. The cultist has 7 wounds, and the doctor gets a 3, 3. His player says, "but Old Boney is so experienced he knows how to handle this!", checks off 'old' on the character sheet, and chooses to add a die to the roll, as rerolling one die can't help. Luckily, the new die also comes up a 3, giving him a total of 9, so he wakes up the cultist.

**In addition**, if you have a *double-pump cliché*, two adjectives (of the three that can be used to reroll or add a die) per cliché may be used once per session to choose to take any multiple rolled instead of the high die.

Example: Sally, *Subtle and Inconspicuous Psychic Mind Reader* [3], is trying to read the mind of a Cultist (1). The cultist gets a 6 to resist, and Sally rolls a 5, 4, 4. Her player says, "but Sally is subtle, and sneaks in when he's distracted" (checks off 'subtle'), and chooses to take the multiple of 4 as her result, getting a total of 8. She successfully reads the cultist's mind.

**Use a relationship:** Each relationship can be invoked to reroll one die, once per session. Narrate the relationship's influence on the outcome.

**Push your cliché:** take a point of fatigue for each additional die you want to add to the roll, or reroll one die. If you're using a double-push cliché, you get two dice to add or reroll for every fatigue.

**Team up:** appoint a point PC; everyone in the team rolls; dice that match the point PC's high die get added in; but if losing, everyone in the team takes a hit (or one PC can volunteer to take 2 hits).

**Get an extra bonus die** for especially apropos, entertaining, or tactical actions, or using a *bonus item*.

**Combat:** Roll dice as above. Winner successfully defends and does damage to the loser.

#### **Wounds:**

Write your cliché and its value followed by a number of boxes equal to your cliché's value, and then a damage track, like this:

My Cool Cliché (4) [] [] [] (3) (2) (1) Out

if you lose a round of combat you take one point of *fatigue* per degree of success of the opponent for less lethal attacks (indicate fatigue with one stroke per box, like: [/]), or one *wound* per degree of success for lethal attacks (indicate a wound with one X per box, like: [X]).

These are to the cliché being used. Once your cliché has taken damage (either fatigue, wounds, or both) equal to its value, subsequent damage lowers the cliché value (until healed).

Example: Sally using kickboxer (3) is in a fight and takes one wound and two fatigue. Her track looks like this:

Kickboxer (3) [X] [/] [/] (2) (1) Out

The next hit she takes will bring kickboxer (3) down to kickboxer (2).

Fatigue recovers quickly (usually right after the scene, or sometimes within the scene), while wounds stay until healed.

### **Sanity Checks:**

Roll dice as above; *the GM adds a # of dice = any insanity points you already have to the opposing roll*. If you succeed, you may be horrified but you have control of yourself. **If you failed by:**

**1 degree of success (<=5 points):** you *Flee*. Run, screaming away from the terror for 1-6 rounds. You can defend yourself if necessary, but not attack or do anything else useful. +1 insanity point.

**2 degrees of success (<=10):** you *Freeze* in place for 1d6 rounds. You can defend yourself, but not attack or flee. You can move if another person leads you. +1 insanity point.

**3 degrees of success (<=15):** you have a *Catatonic Break* for 1-6 rounds, plus a phobia when recovered. Will not move or react no matter what, but can come out of it in half the time at the cost of an additional insanity pt. +1 insanity pt.

**4 degrees of success (>15):** you have a *Complete Psychotic Break* for 1-6 rounds, plus a phobia or other illness when recovered. Basically act crazy under GM's direction while psychotic. +2 insanity points.

The following clichés are just examples to get you started - players should feel free to make up their own Clichés (subject to GM approval). In particular, Note that the GM will require the "fine tuning" of any Cliché that he considers too broad.

### **SOME SAMPLE CTHULHU CLICHÉS (AND WHAT THEY'RE GOOD FOR)**

**Antiquarian** (knows history, art, and lots about old things)

**Athlete** (working out, staying healthy, annoying others by jogging)

**Biker** (Riding Harley, brawling, being Invisible to other motorists)

**Bimbo** (Available in both genders. Distracting, teasing, *not* teasing...)

**Bodybuilder** (being strong, being muscled, being Governor)

**Book Dealer** (having a lot of books, knowing about books)

**Computer Geek** (Hacking, programming, fumbling over introductions)

**Con Artist** (Convincing other people to give you money, evading cops)

**FBI Agent** (intimidating, shooting, having

inside knowledge)

**Gambler** (Betting, cheating, winning, running very fast)

**Gangster** (Shooting, speaking with an accent, intimidation)

**Geezer** (Wheezin', cursin', bitter reminiscin', failin' to understand kids, knowing local history)

**Hairdresser** (Dressing hair. If anything.)

**Journalist** (being nosey, persuasive, writing, having sources)

**Latin Lover** (Seducing, loving, running from irate husbands)

**Librarian** (knowing books, able to get to rare books)

**Linguist** (knowing another language)

**Mad Cultist** (Raving, world-domination, sacrificing people, cackling)

**Martial Artist** (Fancy hand-to-hand combat, out-of-synch speech)

**Magician** (Palming things, sawing ladies in half, public speaking)

**Mechanic** (knowing cars, fixing cars)

**Medical Doctor** (diagnose diseases, patch up wounds, give big bills)

**Novelist** (Drinking, brawling, cut-rate world traveling, introspection, writing)

**Occultist** (knowing about weird and occult things, recognizing Mythos texts and creatures)

**Olympic Athlete** (Running, swimming, jumping, skiing, javelin-tossing)

**Outdoorsman** (Following tracks, building shelters, finding wild food)

**Parapsychologist** (doing research, knowing about psychic phenomena)

**Pastor or Priest** (praying, sermonizing, performing liturgies)

**Pilot** (flying planes or helicopters)

**Policeman** (Eating donuts, writing tickets, arresting people)

**Police Detective** (noticing clues, doing research, shooting)

**Private Investigator** (following people, doing research, noticing clues)

**Professor** (knows a lot about their specialty, doing research)

**Psychologist** (knows a lot about people, can treat insanity)

**Race Car Driver** (driving real fast, looking good on TV)

**Soldier** (Shooting, hiding, partying, catching venereal diseases)

**Sorcerer** (Casting spells, looking)

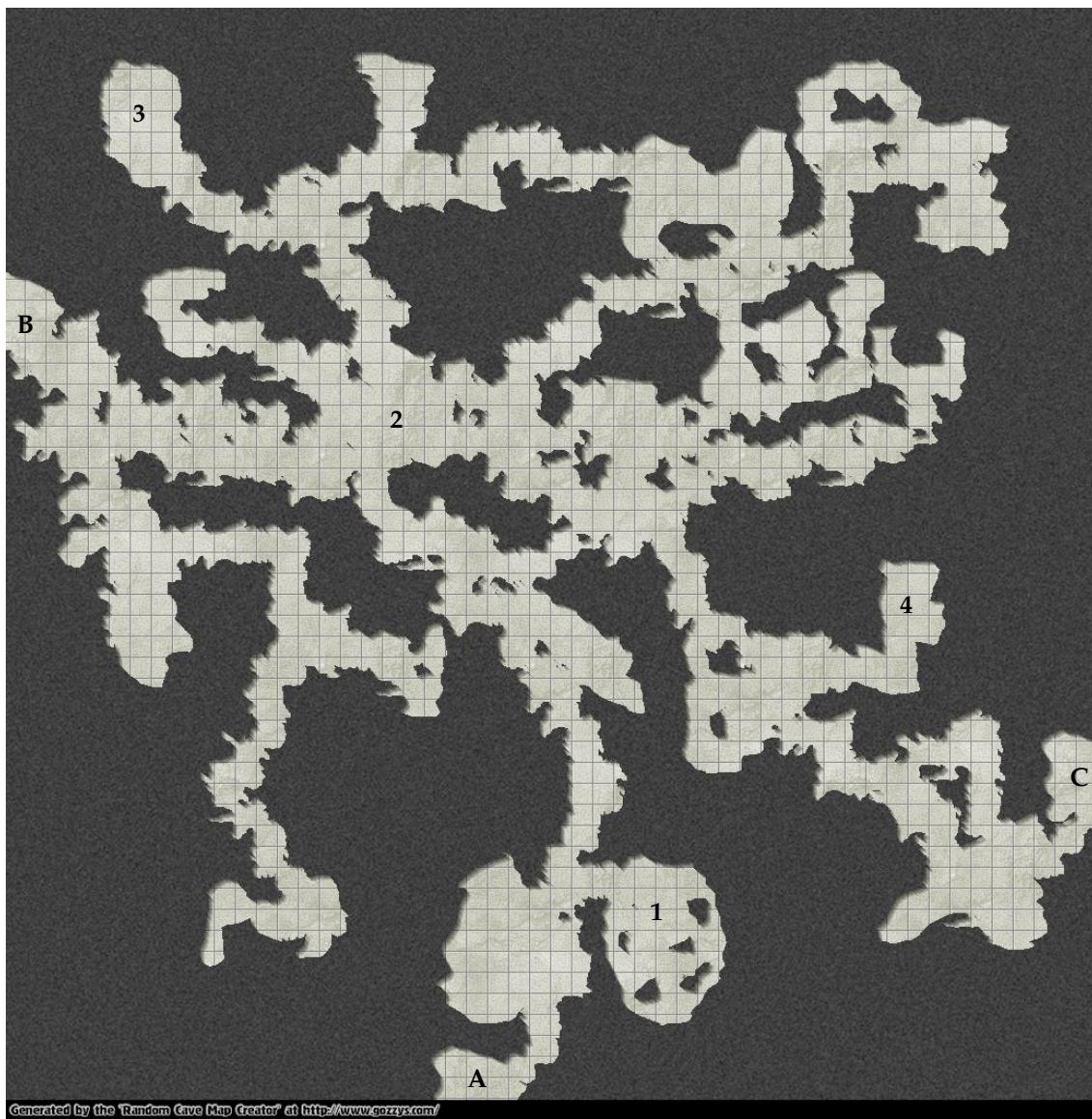
mysterious)

**Special Forces** (Following orders, looking stern, following orders)

**Student** (learning things, partying, mooching off others)

**Thief** (Sneakin' around gaining access and objects they shouldn't have)

**Writer** (doing research, knowing about their latest topic, communicating, writing)



Generated by the Random Cave Map Creator at <http://www.gozzys.com/>

Map generated randomly at <http://www.gozzys.com/>

*A note on entrances and Exits: The PCs will be entering the caves from the south (A). There are 2 additional means of entering/leaving the caves (B and C). The PCs will need to find their way through to another exit.*

#### Random Encounters and Mood

While exploring the caves, the PCs will hear strange howling noises every so often. Just what is causing the noise is undeterminable. The noise is meant as an aid to help build tension. Follow the noise with a chance for a random encounter, but not every occurrence of the noise should coincide with an attack (feel free to use the **Common Foes** listed or come up with your own).

The PCs should also be worried about their pursuers. They should hear occasional noises from their vastly superior enemies. Who or what these enemies are should reflect your current campaign.

#### 1. Abandoned Goblin Lair

This cave was obviously once the home to some sort of humanoid, most likely goblins. There are a few

rags and scraps left behind. It looks like they left in a hurry. There is one goblin skeleton stuck to a wall with a spear.

#### 2. The Crossroads

It should be obvious to the players that there has been a lot of traffic in this area, mostly moving along the east-west route. They will hear a lot of activity to the West (from area B). Perhaps the dark forces have reinforcements coming from that way.

#### 3. Troll Lair

A particularly nasty cave troll (5) calls this portion of the cave system home. He makes a living killing wanderers along the crossroads (area 2). He isn't stupid and prefers to attack stragglers and small groups (if he is hungry enough). He can be found anywhere throughout the caves. If the PCs find his lair, and he hasn't attacked them before now, he will here. Trolls have a habit of growing bits back (if he beats a TN of 8 on a round he doesn't attack, he can recover 1 die).

**Do you dare enter the Howling Caves?**

**Genre**

Fantasy

**Tone**

Serious

**Campaign Options**

Hooks and Tales, Pumping,  
Double Pumping

**Description**

Pursued by dark forces, the players are forced to enter the Howling Caves. Will they evade their pursuers? Will they find their way to safety? What lurks within the caves?

#### General Cave Notes

The caves need to come across as very spooky. There is a random howling noise that is hard to describe. A friendly local from the last village the PCs passed through warned them that they were being driven towards these caves. However, the dark forces seemed to be closing in on them before they could get too many details. Their local contact described the caves as having been abandoned by goblins many years ago. Something strange drove them away. Local legend has it that the howling noises are the tormented lost souls of some of the goblins. However, they have a chance of escape in the caves.

#### 4. Strange Obelisk

A strange obelisk has been carved in the middle of this cave. There are strange writings on it that the PCs do not understand. Maybe they should copy it down.

#### Common Random Foes

**Random Bat Horde (3)** - if the bats cause more than 1 die of damage, the PCs will lose their source of illumination.

**Giant Multi-legged Insect (3)** - crawls through bat droppings eating the dead. Can climb walls. Slightly poisonous bite will infect PCs (-1 to die rolls per die lost against them for a short term)

**Cave Bear (4)** - this guy hangs around area C. He will fiercely defend his territory.

**Mushroom Men (2)** - small fungoids who might trip the PCs as they try to run away. However, they will try to lure the party towards the troll.



## An 8 Page World by Brent Wolke

### INTRODUCTION

On a world much like Earth called Korsuth, humanity broke the secret of imbuing machines with their own intelligence and emotions, creating not an artificial intelligence, but an actual intelligence. While created to serve humanity, those in charge were fearful of a race of sentient machines and so never shared the secret of how the process worked to create more thinking robots, nor the location of manufacture. Despite this, robots were treated more or less as equals among men.

With the machines at their side, humanity was able to colonize the moons, putting permanent settlements on the Arest, and outposts on Unaro, and even putting robotic installations out as far as an asteroid belt. Millions of sentient machines existed among the humans for hundreds of years.

Unfortunately, as all living creatures have their time to exist, they must also pass into extinction. Humanity, already showing signs of decreased fertility, finally came to the point where no more human children were born, and the last generation of man came to pass. A select group of people numbering nearly 100,000 were chosen for genetic health, intelligence, and education, and were frozen in cryo-storage, while the machines were tasked to find a cure or some other answer to bring humanity back into the light of the sun.

Not all has gone well. More than 300 years

have passed since the last human walked on Korsuth, and the robots are no closer to solving the problem. In the meantime, a form of robotic civilization arose with its own separate nations and factions, and much of the world has returned to the wild with such vast expanses unpopulated by man or machine. Tragically, with no way to replicate themselves, the robots are also dying off as accident, violence, or malfunction dwindles their numbers. The robots are staring down the same failed path that humanity recently trod.

Stepping out into this violent and uncertain world are robots who are finding new purpose from that which they were created originally to do. Most continue in their roles, but some have given up the old ways and seek the answers to the salvation of the two races. Some work to find a cure for humanity, and some search out for the way to create more like themselves. Others wander the planet looking for enlightenment the way the humans of old would often do. All this is to say nothing of those robots who have taken sides in the new nations and continue to fight and defend and engage in conflict over resources or perceived insults. The robots are not much different from humans who gave them life...

This is the future imperfect, where technology is both failing and the only source of survival.

Future Imperfect is a role-playing setting for use with **S. John Ross' Risus: The Anything RPG**. Fear not, for it is free, and readily available at <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>, along with the *Risus Companion*, which is not free, but you'll want it anyway 'cause it is loaded with goodies. So go spend some money at his website and tell him hello from me. Thanks!

## CHARACTER CREATION

In Future Imperfect, the Players take on the roles of sentient machines more than 300 years old who are finding a new way of life, new purposes, and possibly the salvation of two species of life.

The sentient machines were universally built to a humanoid form (a head, two arms and two legs), although variations exist, and were generally human sized, give or take a few feet in either direction. Non-sentient robots also exist, but they were built as ‘dumb’ labor.

Use the following information in helping to create these sentient machine characters.

- Characters are built using Funky Dice with the standard 60 points for Clichés. Hooks and Tales are allowed and encouraged for an additional 6 points each. Double Pump Clichés are not allowed. If the Risus Companion is being used, Lucky Shots, Questing Dice, and Sidekicks and Shield Mates are also allowed.
- The largest Cliché must represent the physical form of the robot as form followed function, and as such is known as the Form Cliché. A droid can have only one. One can almost say that among the robots, the various forms were separate races among themselves. The near human size and quality of a droid designed to be a nanny for children, is very different from those behemoth giants built as war machines. See Setting Rules below.
- All remaining Clichés are the programming the droid required to do it’s job or has since picked up, or even personal interests the droid has acquired. All droids must have at least one Cliché known as the Function Cliché and must be related to it’s original function as a droid. Together, the Form and Function Clichés create a complete picture of the droids origins.

*Example: The droid DR-BBNR has Soothing Medical Bot (3d6) (Form Cliché), and Advanced Surgery Techniques (3d8) (Function Cliché).*

- Although all bots have official designations, and one of hundreds similarly built, most bots were given names by the humans who created them. Most have simple designations or one syllable names, but Nanny Bots and Personal Assistant Bots were usually give full, if not cutesy, names.

## Examples of bots to help build a Form Cliché

**Agricultural Bot:** Can be either small or large depending on what task they had been given, but are generally durable, protected against the elements (especially dust and mud), and equipped with various tools for handling and retrieving food such as shears, or extending limbs to pick fruit from a tree.

**Athletic Bot:** Very durable with a sensitive gyroscope to keep balance, these robots were designed as personal trainers for human athletes, or else to actually perform in certain sporting events. Their size, strength and agility vary greatly.

**Forestry Bot:** Similar in most respects to an Agriculture Bot, Forestry Bots are extremely well protected against the elements (second only to a Military Bot), and are equipped with tools to manage forests and wild life, such as chain saws and tranquilizer darts.

**Industrial Bot:** Where ever there was a hazardous condition for humans to work in, you can be sure an Industrial Bot was created for it. Being immensely durable, usually tolerant of extreme temperatures and protected against caustic chemicals, industrial bots vary the most in shape and size among droids and are equipped with whatever tools were needed for their tasks.

**Medical Bot:** These droids were universally built light and delicate with long thin limbs and fingers and a comforting look; all the better to put sick people at ease and perform invasive surgeries. They are equipped with a vast array of medical tools.

**Military Bot:** These bots came in all shapes and sizes depending on their assigned tasks, but were all generally well armored, protected against the elements, heavily armed with an array of weapons, and menacing.

**“Nanny” Bot:** These bots were built to have the greatest similar appearance to humans in order to perform tasks with heavy human social interaction. They came equipped with warm, life-like synthetic skin, hair and eyes.

**Office Bot:** Built roughly to human form, but with no attempt at making them look human, these robots were created to simply perform simple office tasks which still required sentience to make decisions.

**Personal Assistant Bot:** Existing somewhere between a “Nanny” Bot and an Office Bot, these droids performed functions similar to a secretary, maid, chauffeur, butler, or similar service to the wealthy.

**Security Bot:** These bots served as bouncers, body guards, actual security detail, or even police. They were all generally durable and equipped with non-lethal weapons such as stun batons, tasers and so forth. They were built to look impressive and commanding, but not necessarily threatening.

**Tech Bot:** The brother to the Industrial Bot and Medical Bot, Tech Bots come in a variety of shapes and sizes, usually on the smaller end, and are equipped with a variety of tools to perform repairs on electronics, machines, or even other robots.

## Robots, Bots, Droids?

Although their technical name is Actual Intelligence Machines (or AIMs), common use among humans at the time and the robots still today have them called a number of other names, such as Bot and Droid,

# SETTING RISUS

## COMBAT

When a robot is engaged in any physical conflict and loses dice, the player may choose to remove lost dice from the Form Cliché (if they weren't already using it) which represents actual physical damage to the structure of the robot.

Lost dice to the Form Cliché cannot be recovered without access to a mechanical shop, working tools, and a droid with the know-how to make those repairs. A droid with zero dice in their Form Cliché is essentially destroyed and dead, but can be brought back to "life" so long as any other Cliché still has dice left.

## REPAIR

Assuming proper gear for repairing a droid is on hand, the repairing bot rolls his appropriate Cliché against the damaged droids full (not harmed) Form Cliché. Every success repairs one lost die and takes 1 day of work.

If substandard gear for repairs are only available, the GM may assign penalties to the fixing droids roll as he sees fit.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Unless otherwise noted, one can assume all the Tools of the Trade are built in equipment, either obviously connected or hidden behind panels. As such, droids cannot have these intrinsic pieces of equipment removed without first dismantling the robot. All gear is assumed to run on the robots internal power source, except for weapons which expend actual ammunition and need to be resupplied on occasion; GM's call

## UPGRADES

Robots do not advance their Form Cliché per the normal Risus rules. Instead they must be upgraded. Make the normal rolls at the end of every game session. If successful, the next time the droid enters 'civilization', it learns the local whereabouts of an appropriate upgrade to Form and must spend 1 day in repairs for every die in the Form Cliché, including the new one just received to make the increase.

Every Function Cliché may increase as normal, and the droid may even add new functions. These are learning, sentient machines after all.

## Function Clichés

Function Clichés represent knowledge, not physical form, so cannot add physical qualities to the droid. They can, however, reinforce the physical form. Example: *Military Tank-Bot with a Huge Arsenal* (4d10) (Form Cliché) takes a Function Cliché of *Ridiculously Redundant Weapon Controls* (3d8), thus allowing the droid to keep on fighting using the Function Cliché even if the Form Cliché has been reduced to one die.

As mentioned elsewhere, every droid must have at least one cliché related to their original function. The trick to original Function Clichés is in making something possibly irrelevant, relevant, by careful selection (examples given below). The remaining Clichés can be anything the droid has since picked up or pursued.

**Agricultural Bot:** *Ranch Management* – Knowing how to raise, manage, and cull cattle herds; Veterinary medicine techniques; Minor combat techniques (to fend off predators); Tracking; Land Navigation

**Athletic Bot:** *Hockey Player* – Knowing the rules of hockey; Knowing how to move on ice; Knowing how to use one's mass as a battering ram; Brawling; Hitting things with sticks; Knowing how to put one through the five hole.

**Forestry Bot:** *Jungle Conservation* – Recognizing flora and fauna; Spotting dangerous terrain; Knowing how to traverse dangerous or difficult terrain; Land navigation; Wildlife management.

**Industrial Bot:** *Demolition* – Knowing how to weaken structural integrity; Understanding material strengths and weaknesses; Spotting and avoiding dangerous structural conditions; Hitting things really hard.

**Medical Bot:** *Psychologist* – Understanding motivations; Being able to tell when someone is lying; Manipulating others emotions; Planting suggestions; Providing therapy; Calming a dangerous situation

**Military Bot:** *Sniper* – Shooting, shooting, and more shooting; Deadly accuracy; Knowing the weak spots of targets; Being stealthy and unobserved; Military tactics; Basic melee combat knowledge; Ambush tactics.

**"Nanny" Bot:** *College Professor* – Having an immense amount of knowledge of human history, mathematics, linguistics, geography, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, pretty much everything; Being pedantic

**Office Bot:** *Computer Hacker* – Breaking into secure computer systems; Covering your electronic tracks; Taking over remote computer systems; Reprogramming dumb-bots; Data pillaging; Destroying computer systems

**Personal Assistant Bot:** *Security Chauffeur* – Defensive and offensive driving; Stunt driving; Knowing the best short cuts; Ramming for effect; Losing tails; Keeping passengers unharmed from external attacks

**Security Bot:** *Body Guard* – Defensive tactics; Spotting suspicious activity; Spotting traps; Shooting; Advanced melee combat; Shielding others from being hurt; Intervening; Being menacing

**Tech Bot:** *Weapon Smith* – Building weapon systems; Inventing new weapon systems; Jury-Rigging temporary weapon systems; Repairing and cleaning weapons; Improving weapons; Dismantling weapon systems

# TECHOLOGY

The following is provided to give players and GMs a primer on the state of technology in Future Imperfect.

## COMMUNICATION

All droids were equipped with the ability to vocalize in some manner, even if only from an electronic speaker, and the majority of droids use this to communicate with each other, especially strangers.

Most droids are also equipped with transceivers and receivers and can privately or publicly broadcast their ‘voice’ to others within range (typically miles unless the droid was some form of communication robot) like a radio transmission.

Curiously though, droids which have spent a great deal of time (months) with another begin to (what the humans called) Attune. Each droid can privately ‘speak’ to the Attuned over any distance – even between planets - without any apparent use of technology. Droids have no explanation for how this works, and humans when they were around seemed just as surprised.

## PARTICLE FLAYERS

The most advanced weapons use ambient particles in the atmosphere. They are drawn into a coil and expelled at tremendous force in a continuous beam for as long as the trigger is depressed or the energy source holds out. These particles cause microscopic explosions on impact, and to the average eye it appears a target hit by a particle accelerator begins to turn to dust.

## SCREAMERS

An extremely rare weapon of the resource wars, a Screamer caused neurological damage to human targets by targeting the nervous system, and was so named because of the effect it had on humans. It has no effect on dumb-bots or other electrical devices. Droids, despite not having any organic tissue, suffer temporary loss of awareness (they lose their next possible action) while they have memory flashbacks or hallucinations when struck by a Screamer. They are not harmed otherwise.

## STORM GUNS

While technology has advanced at an outstanding pace, fire arms are still fairly basic in that they hurl ammunition at an enemy. The most common method is an electromagnetic rail accelerator that ‘pushes’ bullets out of the barrel with a resulting crack of lightning. The

ammunition itself can vary greatly from hard-foam for crowd control, explosive rounds, armor piercing needles, or just a common metal slug.

## TITAN PROJECTORS

Titan projectors are short range electro magnetic fields with a pool of titanium molecules which can be ejected from the device and manipulated into fixed shapes such as shields or blades. Since the pool is usually far smaller compared to the size of the field, the appearance of a titan projector appears as a hazy blue glow in the rough shape of the blade or shield. When the field comes into contact with an outside force or object, the pool is instantly hardened into a molecular blade upon the point of interaction, or when used in defense, an instant shield upon the point of impact. Titan projectors can be turned off when not in use. The practical size and use of a titan projector limits them at this point to hand-held weapons and shields.

## TRANSPORTATION

Wheeled and tracked vehicles were still commonplace in the wilds or remote places of Earth, but within cities, antigravity engines made floating cars a reality. Large aerial transports (Carriers they are called) that have more in common with zeppelins than jets were, and in some places still are, the fastest method of travel. Bullet trains are another method of rapid transport with most continents being crisscrossed with their tracks. Ocean going vessels are still typically huge and serve primarily for hauling cargo.

Between Korsuth and the moons, rockets using ion particle engines are the main method of getting from point A to point B, with a trip from Korsuth to the Asteroid Belt taking a couple of months of travel.

### SAMPLE CHARACTER

#### XG-38r “Gee”

**Form Cliché:** Hulking Military Droid (3d10)

**Function Cliché:** Redundant Weapon Controls (3d6), Military Protocols and Strategies (2d6), Philosopher (2d6)

**Tools of the Trade:** Particle Flayer, Storm Gun, Plasma Flame Projector, Explosive Cell Launcher, Titan Blade Projector, A Book About Socrates

**Tale:** Gee was a top of the line infantry-tank and saw action in the final resource wars before humanity vanished. He struggles to find his place in the world now that the wars are over and his purpose seems to have come to an end.

**Hook:** Gee is ever mindful of finding a new purpose and usually attempts to disarm a conflict through discourse before resorting to violence.



## WORLD MAP INDEX

The following is intended to give the players and GMs an overview of the various places in the world and what adventuring possibilities exist in those locations.

### ARCHIPELAGO

The many island chains of the Archipelago are home to only a handful of droids, and only marginally more dumb-bots. This relative privacy and peace though is exactly what appeals to many droids who are looking for someplace to conduct research, pursue their own affairs, or just retire from the rest of civilization.

### AREST

The large moon is positively teeming with robotic life of the uncontrolled dumb-bot variety. When humanity started to colonize this planet, they constructed large scale manufacturing facilities to produce dumb-bots to aid in the heavy labor of building structures. Humanity faded, but the robots kept working, building cities for ghosts. The hundred or so sentient droids on

Arest keep mostly to themselves, rarely talking to others. Rumors persist that the droids keep to themselves because they discovered something on the moon and are either guarding it, or protecting everyone else from it...whatever it is.

### ASTEROID BELT

Scattered throughout the belt beyond the moons are small self-sustaining outposts, small research stations, manned by a handful of droids each. With no way to return to Earth, and no other tasks to occupy them, they continue their original purpose of monitoring signals from probes sent to the outer planets. Recently, these outposts, one by one, have shutdown without warning with no further communications. It is unknown what is quieting these lonely and far off droids.

### ERASUA

Due to human religious laws of this region which banned droids, it never saw any droid use, and even today there is a certain stigma among droids which makes them uneasy about traveling in the area. As such, there are no droids residing in Erasua...only those passing through or looking for something. Still, rumors persist

of a large droid community in hiding. Since humans are no longer around to enforce the laws, it is curious why droids should remain so, but perhaps it has to do with those droids who frequently go missing in the area...

Dumb-bots are plentiful in the capital cities, but otherwise the region is remarkably devoid of activity.

## GYPTER

Outside of a few hundred droids located in the south, and a few dozen within the north, the continent of Gypter has returned to its wild origins, devoid of any sign of civilization as jungles, sands, and grass lands have taken back nearly everything. Persistent rumors among robots place several droid mercenary units hidden within the jungles who await further orders.

## KORSUTH ORBIT

There is no more than handful of droids stationed in satellites orbiting Korsuth. However, several of those satellites are weapons platforms that could rain destruction down on the planet if the droids were so inclined. Many factions on Korsuth have made offers of alliance with these droids, but so far, none have accepted.

## NORTH MORRAKOR

North Morrakor, especially the former United Colonies is heavily populated with droids of all kinds, even dumb-bots. Even the so called barren expanses of the plains, mountains, and eastern deserts are populated with droids. Badika has a large number of droids, but Ixil (outside of Ixil City) is mostly overrun with dumb-bots. North Morrakor has close to one million droids.

Similar to Valkanor, the North Morrakorian droids have formed many social, political, and military associations, even secret ones, all focused and pursuing their own agendas (though typically they get along much better than their Valkanorian counterparts), and it's not all that uncommon to find a Byzantine web of alliances and enemies among those associations. Navigating that web can be treacherous, and many a droid has found themselves in a dire situation through no real fault of their own.

## SIAN

At one time it was joked that Sian contained more droids than humans, and while obviously not the case, it should give evidence to the sheer amount of droids (nearing 2 million) inhabiting this region, primarily in Iokko and Eastern Kiana.

Iokko, especially the city Okyt, is largely intact as the droids have spent considerable effort in keeping up appearances. Okyt has also become the robot paradise where only the most strong or well connected may enter to obtain the very best in spare parts, information, or make alliances. It is even said there is a gladiatorial arena where enslaved droids are forced to fight for the amusement of others.

Kiana has reverted to the days of warring nations, as military droids have created factions, states, clans, and all other manner of inclusive groups, all entangled in precarious alliances or bitter battles. Sides switch constantly. Droids must be very careful when traveling here, for if not attacked, they may be forcibly drafted into a fighting force.

## SOUTH MORRAKOR

The south Morrakor continent saw enormous action during the resource wars. The oil and minerals hidden in the mountains, and the timber of the jungles, coupled with open space to provide food for the worlds hungry masses were in high demand...and paled in comparison for the demand for the massive bio-sphere which provided medical breakthroughs. As a result, this continent remains devastated, and a lot of civil and military hardware was left behind.

It is dangerous place to visit for any droid, for many military dumb-bots are still on the prowl for intruders. Still many come to South Morrakor hoping to reclaim those rare resources or hardware. The few thousand droids on the continent clinging to the ruins of the larger coastal cities, can sometimes be convinced or paid to provide professional guidance through the dangerous territory in search of those lost resources.

## TARKADIA

There are only a handful of droids at the South Pole, spread out between various arctic research bases. They remain in solitude for their own reasons, but many have speculated that the humans in cold sleep are located on the frozen continent and those droids are in fact guards.

## USTERLAND

Like most technologically developed countries, this one has had its fair share of droids, mostly concentrated on the East Coast with some on the West Coast, all totalling nearly 2000 sentient droids. The large interior desert remains largely devoid of robotic life except for the few ecological bots or a lone drifter following

in the footsteps of humanity; on a spiritual journey of self-discovery to determine if droids have souls.

## UNARO

Korsuth's smallest and closest moon is actually, for the most part uninhabited. Most bases were destroyed in the resource wars, and the functioning few are manned by dumb-bots who shoot at everyone who cannot provide proper authorization (and no one has that).

The only base operated by droids is Titan Center, a neutral, heavily armed base which ensures peaceful travel between Korsuth, Arrest, and the Asteroid Belt.

## VALKANOR

The 300,000 or so droids in the many former countries of Valkanor have given way to thousands of different droid associations claiming membership anywhere from a handful of droids to hundreds. Each association has its own agenda with clearly marked territories and domains and can get rather violent about any transgressions. Rarely do they work in friendly association, and when they do, it rarely lasts. Many of these associations have cells located on other continents, most notably North Morrakor.

The agendas of these associations are the source of many discussions across the world, because nearly every lunatic idea has droid supporters.

## CREDIT WHERE CREDIT IS DUE

I am indebted to the following droids for their playtest:

- Colin "Psy-325 Philomon" Amato
- Adam "Ak-Ak 001011101" Boring
- Becky "Sally Guns" Boring
- Ken "DDS 32/4 'Doc Lockjaw'" MacLennan
- Rachel "Tennis Pro 2400 - Cindy" Steussy

## *The Secret Behind Future Imperfect*

*Note: If you are a player, please do not read further.*

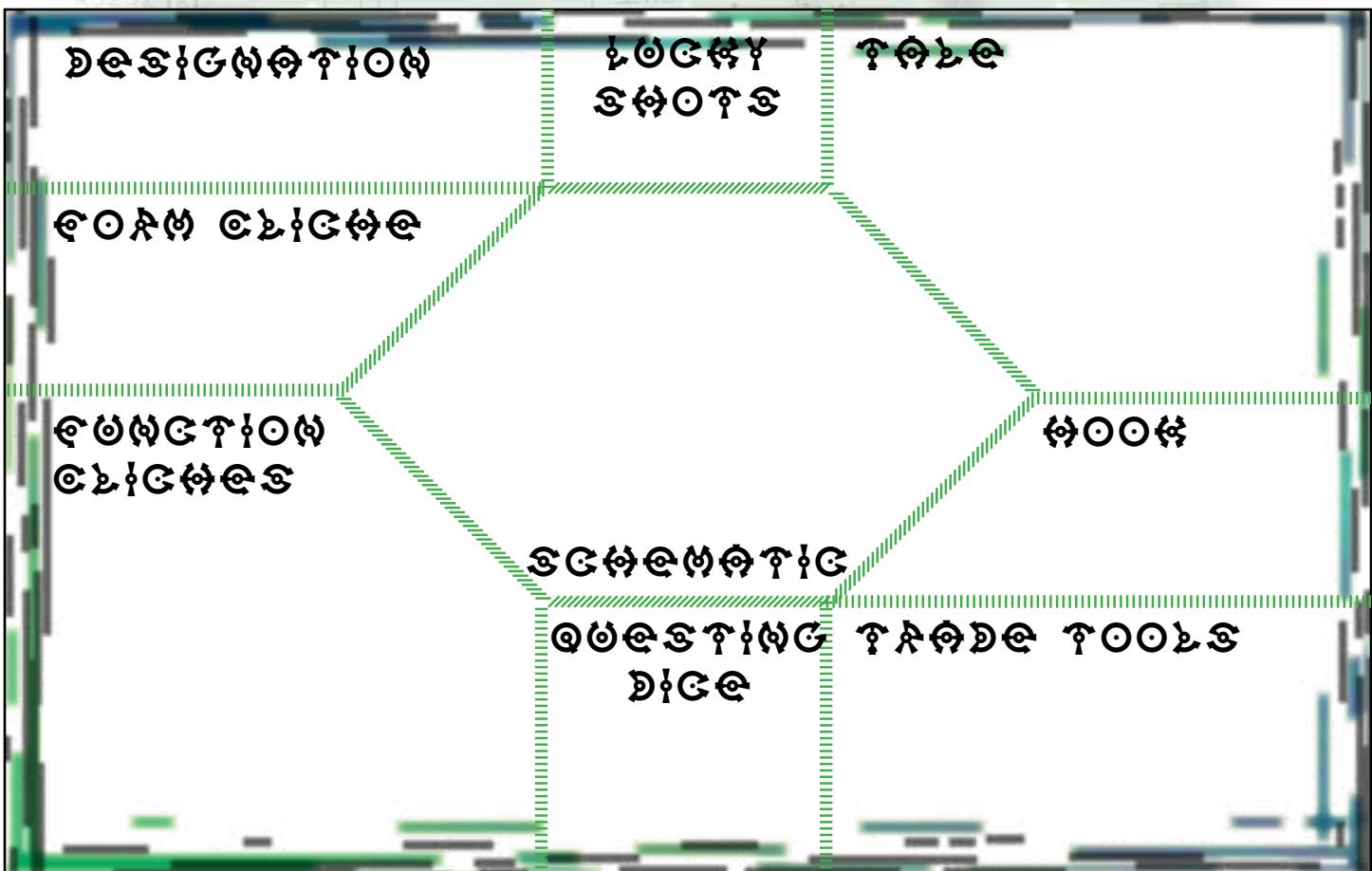
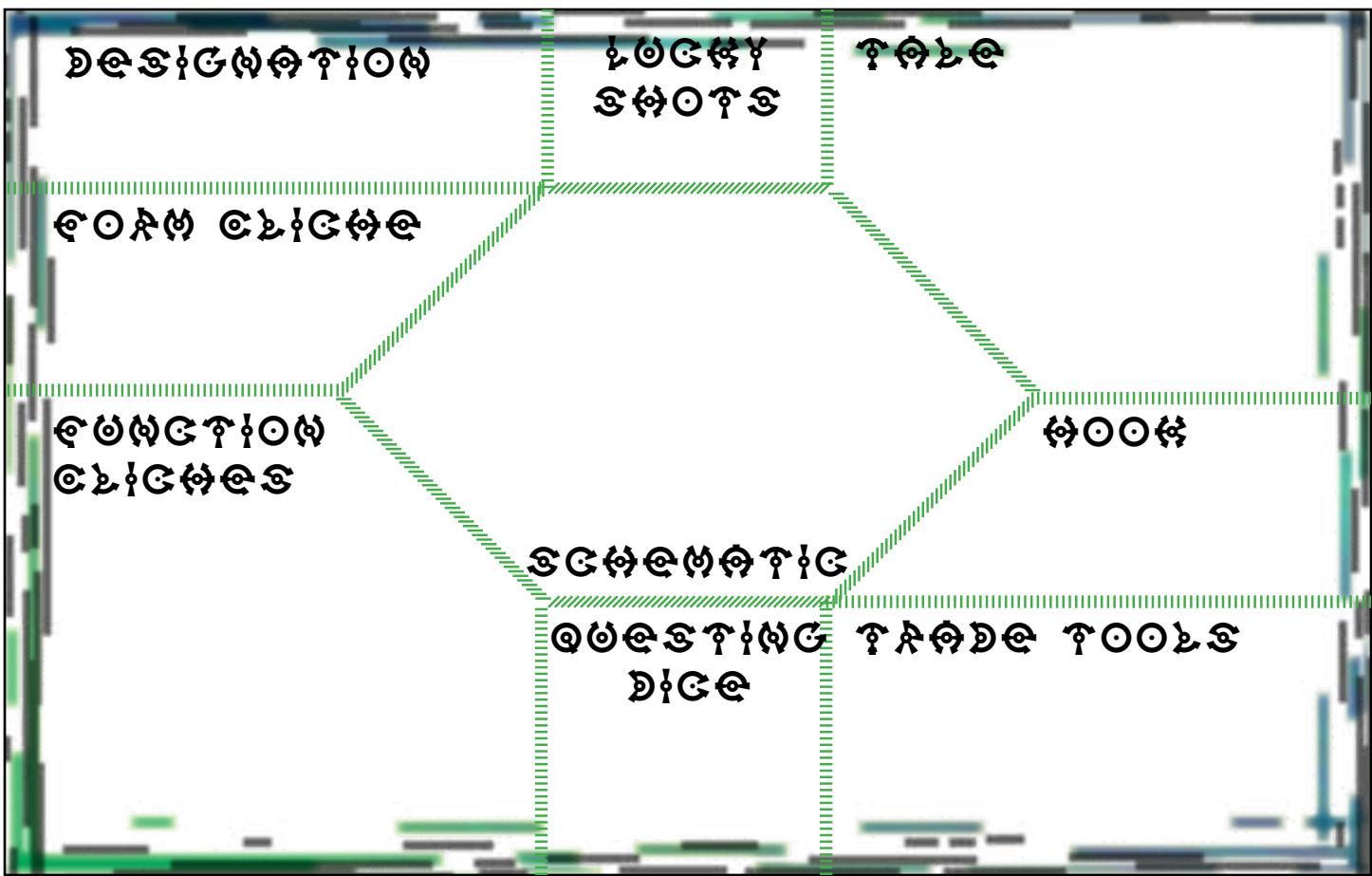
The reason no more humans are born, the source of the droid intelligence, and even the similarity of Korsuth to Earth, has the same root issue. Humans were able to trap the human soul of a person who just died and house that spirit in an electronic matrix. That soul gave real sentience to the droid. However, as the souls were trapped, they could no longer return to the spiritual source, the Great Wheel of Reincarnation. Like a mill wheel that does not turn with a dried up stream, the river of souls returning from Earth dried to a trickle and could no longer turn the Great Wheel.

As a result, souls could not return to Earth: Babies were born dead, and eventually humans could no longer even conceive. This happened once before, and resulted in the reincarnation of the entire planet Earth into Korsuth.

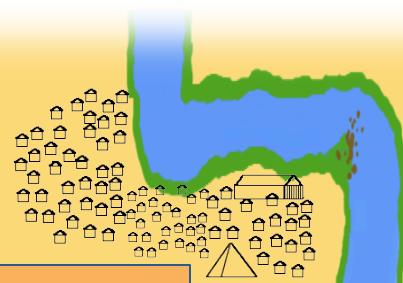
In order for both humanity and the droids to thrive again, to avoid the reincarnation of existence once more, the droids must give up their immortality, set limits to their age, and let their souls return to the Wheel in due course.

Ideally, a series of adventures in Future Imperfect should consist lots of situations that test what it means to be human. Humor, anger, heroics, compassion, fear, and ambition are excellent themes to focus on. Whether the issue of reincarnation ever comes to light or not depends on the focus of your adventures. A game played for action and adventure in the war zones of Kiana may barely touch upon it or even not at all, while introspection may be the central focus of droids isolated on Arrest.

Finally, the locations presented in the world guide drop hints at many adventure possibilities without explanation. This is deliberate to let you, the game master, change or add to this world to make of it whatever you wish.



# Get My Damn OBELISK!



Pirate Attack!

Pharaoh is irate. A strange and mysterious howling has terrified the quarry workers, who have abandoned the effort to carve a new, prized obelisk. The new monument must be positioned before the festival, or the gods will be displeased. Since the workers are too terrified to return, the players have been enlisted to retrieve the enormous chunk of rock.

The obelisk is located at a quarry up the river. It has been carved and finished, but the workers ran away before it could be loaded onto the barge and sent downstream to the Pharaoh's temple.

## To the Quarry!

The voyage upstream is uneventful, and the PCs arrive at the docks. Immediately, they can see the obelisk, a bunch of engineering equipment to load it onto the barge (ropes, pulleys, cranes, carts), and can hear the terrifying howling that scared everyone away.

## The Howling

In the final days of obelisk-carving, the workers awoke the anguished spirit of someone who perished in the quarry long ago. Each time anyone hears this howling, they must roll a 10 with a skill, or flip out and panic – and suffer a one die penalty to that skill in the next encounter.

## Random Encounters

The quarry is no longer a safe place. Roll a die for monsters whenever the PCs enter an area. On a one or two, roll again on the table below. Use any number of wolves or scorpions as is appropriate to the party or your own TPK ambitions.

1,2) **Howling** (See above)

3,4) **Quarry Wolves** – Wolf (3)

5) **Giant Scorpions**– Scorpion (1)

6) **Banshee** (see above)

## Vengeful Spirit

The PCs can destroy the spirit, if they have ghostbusting skills and/or magic weapons. Normal weapons won't harm it. It will howl, throw stuff, and strike with a chilling touch.

**Banshee** – Vengeful Ghost (6); Terrifying Poltergeist (5)

Players can also appease the spirit by gathering the pieces of its skeleton (as marked on the map) and giving it a proper burial. If they can do this, the Banshee will rest, and the howling will stop.

A: Skull, B: Leg, C: Torso & arm, D: Leg & Pelvis, E: Arm.

## Load 'er up!

Are the PCs super strong? Do they have magic? Can they figure out how to use the engineering equipment to load the obelisk onto the barge? They'll have to work as a team to do it. Multiple tries are allowed, as long as the obelisk isn't destroyed.

Skill Roll is at least...  
30: It's on the barge!  
25: Dinged it.  
20: Dropped it  
15: Dropped it on someone.  
Rolling less than 15 means that they have somehow dropped it in the river. Pharaoh's gonna be pissed.

Also, if the group has not successfully dealt with the Banshee yet, it will appear while they are in the process of loading the obelisk onto the barge. Of course.

## Think That's All?

Once the PCs manage to get the obelisk onto the barge, they have to navigate safely back downstream. Some challenges will make this interesting.

**Rapids:** Navigation skill will be needed or the barge may crash and the obelisk will sink into the river. D'oh!

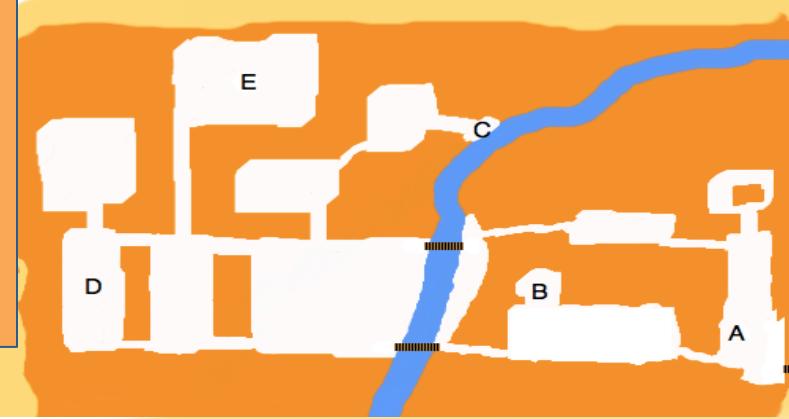
Navigation test: 10

**Pirates:** Of course, these opportunists want to capture the barge and claim the glory of retrieving the obelisk themselves.

**Pirates** (3)

## Winning!

Pharaoh will be happy to get his obelisk, but somewhat less happy if it's seriously dinged up and/or wet. He'll be especially glad if the Banshee has been dealt with, allowing his workers to return.



Rapids!

# The haunting of the abandoned amusement park

A one page Risus adventure by Dan Suptic ©2011

## Overview

The PCs are a group of crime solving teens who hear about a recently abandoned amusement park that has become haunted. Locals hear weird howling from the park and see odd lights at night. They go to check it out and are subjected to alien, unearthly horrors, their sanity is tested to the limits and for some, their lives are violently ended. Characters are built on 10 dice, hooks and tales allowed, pumping allowed but no other advanced options are used. Two extra rules are in place and are as follows:

**Fright Checks** – When PCs face frightening things, or a Hook related phobia, they roll a fright check. They roll their highest Fearless type cliché against a TN (starting TNs listed for the event adding 5 per level of cliché inappropriateness). Failure causes a loss of a die in that cliché – if it falls to zero, that PC is reduced to a panicky incoherent mess, rolling at half dice until the end of the adventure. After failing or passing a roll, that PC need not roll again for the same event.

**Zero Combat Dice** – Anyone losing the last die in a cliché due to combat or violent happenings is dead. Usually messily dead.

## Rumors

If the PCs investigate the town near the abandoned park, they'll learn that the old park crew still hangs out in town. The crew members need some prodding to talk, but they will eventually let the PCs know that one of the members of the crew found a room in the Fun House that didn't exist before. Inside there was an obsidian obelisk covered in violet glowing runes. He thought it was a new attraction for the Fun House, touched it, and felt a sudden outburst of energy. That's when the constant howling and weirdness started, and shortly after the park was abandoned.

## The guy

Further inquiries reveal that the man who touched the obelisk is Saul Chambers, who was an electrician for the park and currently resides in voluntary solitary confinement at the nearby asylum. If visited, he will talk to them with back turned, giving vague, useless answers to the PCs questions. If pressed too hard, he'll turn around and yell in an unrecognizable language, letting the PCs see his eyes have been clawed out by his own fingers. Have all PCs roll a fright check at TN 8. After that, Saul will hand a random PC a small chain with half of a silver ankh on it, muttering "Take the key, get away from me, take the key, get away from me..." again and again.

## The park

The park is empty, and occasionally an eerie howling can be heard from the Fun House. If investigated, the other rides and attractions seem fine at first, but once interacted with, act in odd ways (the carousel starts on its own and goes too fast, the Test your Strength game splashes blood when hit with the hammer, etc). Nothing will be dangerous here, but if anything triggers a PC's phobia, they may need to roll a fright check (start at TN10).

## Fun House

The Fun House emanates a hateful aura, and the weird howling definitely comes from it. There's a sinister clown face on the front, with eyes moving back and forth as the mouth opens and closes to a recorded mechanical "Hah-Hah-Hah!" There is only 1 noticeable entrance – observant characters can see an outline for a secret exit, but it's flush with the wall and cannot be pried open from outside. NOTE – all rooms in the actual Fun House are square, and room F is not technically inside the Fun House – the map has rectangular rooms for GM's ease.

**A: Fun House entrance** – When the PCs approach the entrance, the large clown face falls to the ground. 7 long multi-segmented legs then uncurl from it and it attacks, biting at the PCs with its face. Fright Check TN10 as well, TN 15 for arachnophobes.

*Evil Clown Face Thing – Spidery Monstrosity (4)*

**B: Torture Chamber** – This room is full of realistic torture devices. Occasionally, symbols and runes can be seen at certain angles on the surfaces of the devices. This is a trap – anyone closely investigating must make a Sanity type cliché roll (TN 14) or they will insert themselves into the torture device, losing a die in a random cliché each turn until pulled out. It takes 2 PCs with Strength cliché checks (TN 11) to pull them out.

**C: Mirror Maze** – This is a Maze of Mirrors, with standard distorting mirrors found in mundane fun houses. Once a ways into the maze (which seems WAY too big for the building it's in), distorted reflections of the party come out of the mirrors and attack. Watching a distorted duplicate of yourself come out of a mirror to kill you is a fright check TN 12. They each have 1 combat cliché equal to the corresponding PC's best combat cliché. If a PC is killed, their reflection double dies instantly.

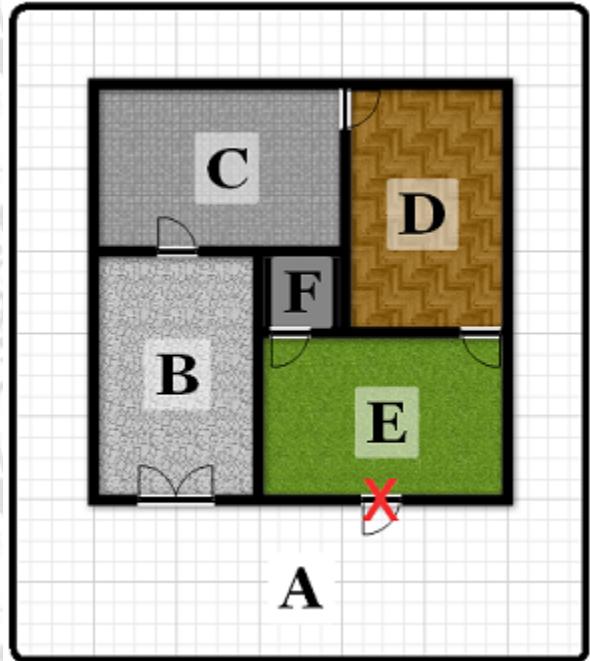
**D: Disorientation** – This room features desks and chairs attached to the walls and ceiling, made to warp the visitor's perceptions of up and down. Gravity in this room is equally warped – PCs need Dexterity type cliché rolls (TN8) to navigate. Failing a roll means no progress and a die of cliché damage. It takes 3 rolls to get to the next door.

**E: Freaky Animals** – Fake animals are kept in glass cages here, such as two headed wolves, cats with scorpion tails, a 6 armed bear and others as odd and implausible. The normal exit door is locked and sealed shut. Aside from the animals, there's a black door (to the F room) that seems to be made from solid obsidian. There's no handle, but there is an indentation shaped like a small ankh. The PC's half ankh fits in perfectly, and on further investigation, the 6 armed bear has the other half hanging around its neck. If the PCs approach the glass, the bear roars mechanically, then comes to life. Breaking the glass and fighting the bear is an option to get the ankh, but clever PCs may find other ways to extract the ankh from the bear. After defeating the bear and inserting the whole ankh, the obsidian door slowly opens to the final chamber.

*6 Armed Bear – Angry Ursine Abomination (5)*

**F: The Room Beyond Time and Space** – This room technically doesn't exist inside the building; it's location is in some local space-time anomaly. The walls are solid glossy black, and are lit by the obsidian obelisk with glowing runes in the center. Once the PCs enter, they are attacked by the guardian here, a giant centipede-like beast with a triangular head full of sharp teeth on each end (Fright Check TN 15). Both heads howl with an unnatural melody as it attempts to bite and shred the PCs with its mouths.

*Obelisk Guardian – Vile Centipede Monster (6)*



## Ending

If the PCs defeat the guardian, the Obelisk itself howls and shatters and the PCs are forcefully ejected from the Fun House (TN 12 Dexterity roll to avoid a die of damage to ALL clichés). The haunting stops and the amusement park can reopen. If the PCs all get killed by the guardian, well, that's also a way to end the adventure. The park remains haunted and the town nearby is abandoned as well, waiting for a new group of adventurers to come investigate.

**The end (?)**



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I\\_Spy\\_\(1965\\_TV\\_series\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Spy_(1965_TV_series))



[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green\\_Acres](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Acres)

## About I Spy Green Acres

In **I Spy Green Acres**, you play the role of secret agents infiltrating a UN created land: Green Acres.

Green Acres was set up to be a zone that owed allegiance to no one country. Everyone was welcome without question. Of course, it soon became a hot bed of intrigue as it was discovered that Green Acres had connections to host countries.

No one who enters Green Acres knows for sure where it is. The UN has been very secretive about its location. The only way into or out of Green Acres is via the railway terminal at Petticoat Junction. When Green Acres first opened its doors, those tired of the political world were flocking to get in. Among the refugees, however, were those who wanted to know the secrets of those choosing to live there (and their contacts back home).

## Character Creation

Characters are created using the standard Risus rules with 10 dice. Feel free to use Hooks & Tales (it might be interesting to know why your character moved to Green Acres).

You are not required to take any particular espionage cliché. However, you will most likely enter into that world whether you want to or not (out of sheer boredom).

You are more than welcome to take any cliché that implies knowledge in mad scientist type roles (a la Frankenstein, Dr Jeckyll, etc.). No one said that you were a good guy in the outside world.

### Smarter Than the Average Pig...

Scientists in Green Acres like to ticker with things "man was not meant to know." With GM approval, you may choose to be an intelligent animal or construct as your character. However, in these cases, cuteness counts for a lot (don't expect the townsfolk to treat a construct very nicely).

## Welcome to Green Acres

You step off of the train into a small terminal called Petticoat Junction. You can tell that the station used to be nice, but it has fallen into disrepair. You are greeted by a fairly attractive young lady who escorts you to Mr. Haney.

Mr. Haney is a sort of traveling salesman who brings items people might be interested in directly to them in the back of his old pickup.

He offers to take the PCs to their new home in Green Acres. HAVE FUN!

## I Spy Green Acres

### Genre

Silly Spies

### Tone

Comedy

### Campaign Options

Hooks and Tales, Pumping

### Description

A supposed political free zone is set up by multiple countries: Green Acres. Of course, since residents still have ties back to their home countries, politics are far from absent, with most countries using Green Acres to spy on each other.

You might find all sorts of interesting people in Green Acres. The newer residents have not yet blended in and appear as "city slickers" since they are usually 10-20 years ahead of the times in Green Acres.

### Location, Location, Location

#### Hooterville

The closest thing to a town in Green Acres. Closer to a village in size, but most services can be found here; usually 20 years behind the times.

#### Petticoat Junction

The only means to get into or out of Green Acres, this once bustling railway station now sees very little traffic. The locals use the old railway water tower for cooling off in the summer heat.

#### Other Small Towns

Pixley, Crabwell Corners, Stankwell Falls.

#### Further Details?

Go to Wikipedia:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hooterville>



# Kaiju Shura

(Monster Fighting)



Rules: Funky Dice, 200 point bye, no double pumps, 4 dice limit d4-30 available.

Destroy buildings and get points, highest point total WINS! Starting position is determined by rolling 2d6, one for latitude and one for longitude. On your turn, move (to the next grid space) or attack. Initiative is determined by rolling lowest cliché.

Hit the TN, destroy the building. TN-1 to TN-5 reduce TN by 5, TN-6 to TN-10 lower TN by 2, miss the TN by more than 10 and lose a die.

Teaming up is allowed, split the points equally. Fighting other Kaiju is allowed, any nearby points are rewarded at 1/2 the value split evenly to all fighting Kaiju from collateral damage. Building(s) are destroyed.

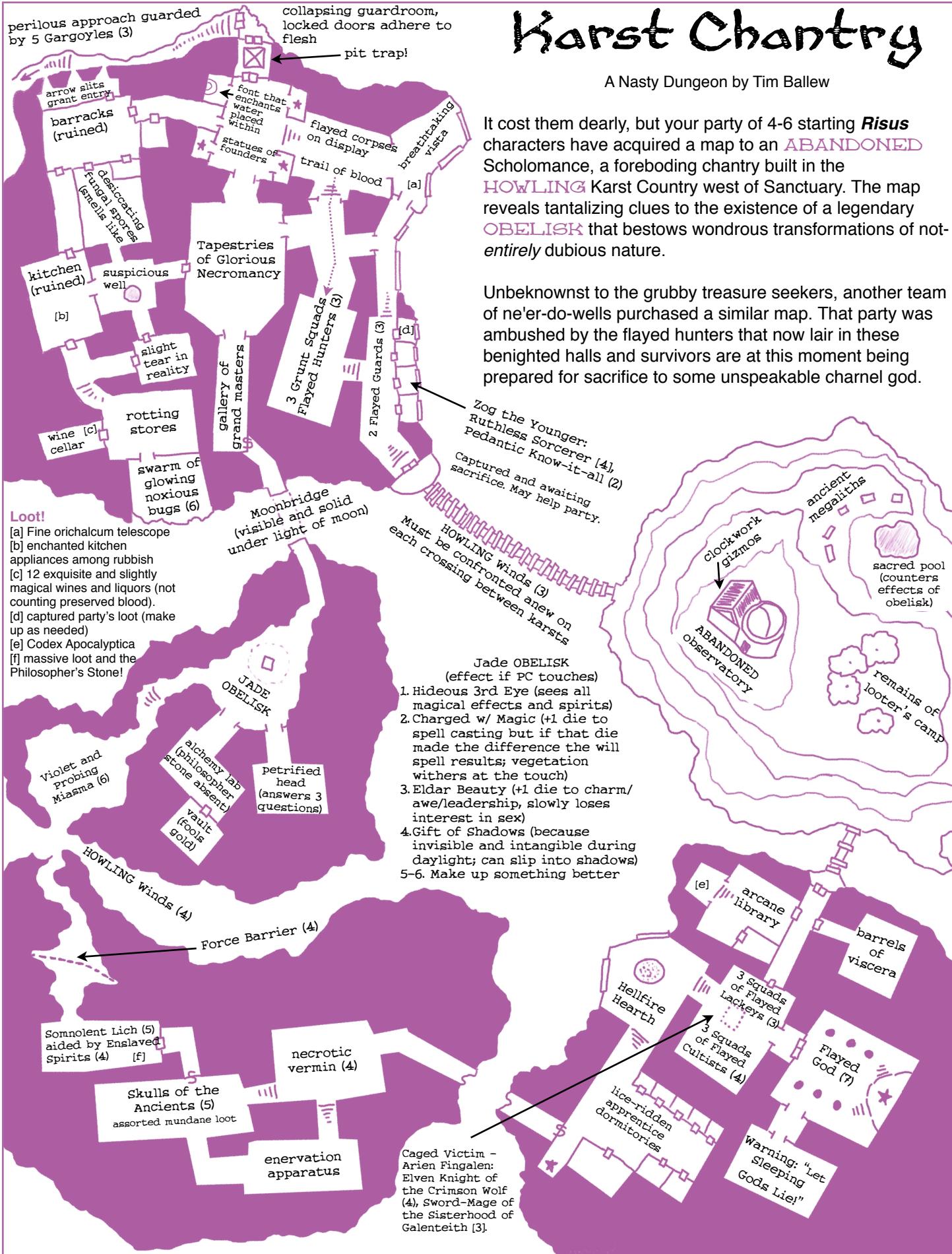
100 BONUS POINTS- If at least 3 of 5 of the pink areas are destroyed by your Kaiju.

# Karst Chantry

A Nasty Dungeon by Tim Ballew

It cost them dearly, but your party of 4-6 starting **Risus** characters have acquired a map to an **ABANDONED** Scholomance, a foreboding chantry built in the **HOWLING** Karst Country west of Sanctuary. The map reveals tantalizing clues to the existence of a legendary **OBELISK** that bestows wondrous transformations of not-*entirely* dubious nature.

Unbeknownst to the grubby treasure seekers, another team of ne'er-do-wells purchased a similar map. That party was ambushed by the flayed hunters that now lair in these benighted halls and survivors are at this moment being prepared for sacrifice to some unspeakable charnel god.



# KINGFISHER DOWN!

*Kingfisher Down!* takes place in the early 1940's as the world is deeply entrenched in WWII. The Allies have made an incredible discovery off the coast of France. An accident has left an experimental Nazi nuclear submarine stranded on a deep water shelf. Time is of the essence and the Allies have called upon a multi-national team of scientists and journalists that happen to be near the crash site. This unlikely group of heroes must rush to the site and use deep water gear to explore the crash and look for the elusive Enigma Machine in the wreckage.

**Rules:** Characters are made using 10 dice, hooks and tales and pumping are allowed. The team should contain any combination of scientists and journalists, as well as one military officer to command the team. The players should feel free to invent cool military gear to use.

**Setup:** The special underwater gear has been air dropped to the site of the wreckage and is waiting on inflatable rafts. It has been determined the wreckage is over 400 meters down. The team must swim down in their special gear, gain access to the sub and explore within. They should gather any valuable intelligence they come across. As they approach the wreckage they will note it rests nose down at roughly a 30 degree angle and has crashed into a cliff wall (**A**).

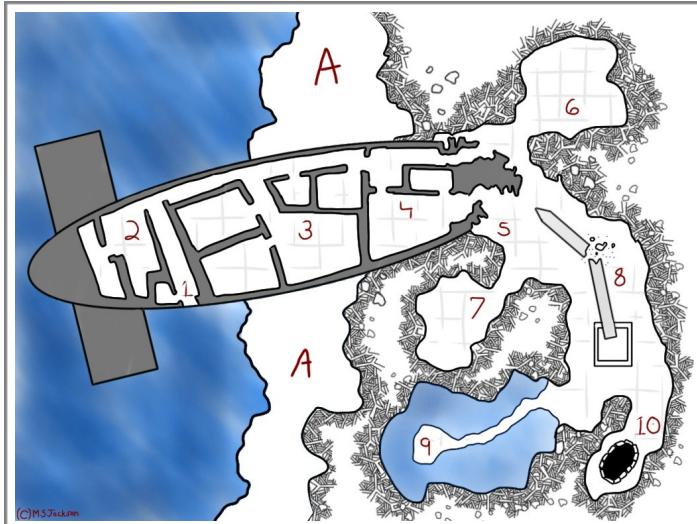
**1. Hatch:** The door must be pried open (TN 10) and as it is opened, a rush of air bubbles will engulf the team as the air remaining inside escapes. As their vision clears they will see the bodies of two Nazi soldiers float past them. They will also notice bubbles of air rush from somewhere deep in the sub and turbulent pockets of air hug the ceilings of the rooms.

**2. Engine Room:** The engine compartment has been breached and radioactive cooling fluid is leaking into the water, floating like an evil black cloud. Anyone touching the fluid must make a check to resist being sick (TN 5).

**3. Bridge:** The room is crowded with dials, knobs and gauges, many now shattered. As they enter the room, they will immediately notice four sickly green glowing jellyfish that immediately swarm the team. After dealing with the jellyfish, the team can scour the room and find numerous papers, maps and code books scattered about the room. **Radioactive Jellyfish (3)x4:** glowing tentacled menace, spitter of inky substance

**4. Air Pocket:** As the team hits this area they will realize the water is being held back by a strong rush of air coming from the hole punctured in the nose of the sub. This room once served as the galley.

**5. Cavern:** As they leave the water, their ears will immediately be overcome by the horrible howling wind



that tears through the cave. It rushes from area 10 and the team must struggle to move against it (TN 10).

**6. Cave:** The few crew that escaped the crash are here, flesh torn from their bodies by their own hands. Driven mad by the howling wind, they opted to end it in a rather gruesome way. Unfortunately, the radiation has twisted the men and they will rise. **Mutant Dead Nazi**

**(3)x3:** radiated and dead Nazi soldier, clawing and biting

**7. Captain Rogardt:** Driven mad by the constant howling, the good captain has become completely mad and will attack the team with his pistol. He is holding a book as the team enters which they will later discover is a German Bible.. He is raving about the 'fish people from the hole' and about his crew coming back from the dead to haunt him. **CPT Rogardt (4):** mad as hell and pissed he will die here, desperately trapped military man who saw things he never should have

**8. Abandoned Temple:** A massive obelisk toppled over ages ago and lies smashed upon the floor. Strange markings cover all the surface, some odd squiggly language that is next to impossible to decipher.

**9. Enigma Machine:** The first mate made it here with the Enigma Machine, trying to save his country's secrets. Unfortunately he found the fish people. He lies half eaten, leaning over the Enigma Machine at the end of the peninsula. The fish men will rise up from the water and attack once the team moves out on to the stretch of land and approach the first mate. **Fish Men (4)x4:** grotesque amphibious monsters from the deep abyss

**10. Howling Portal:** A massive hole rests in the ground and a powerful rush of humid, warm air continually gushes forth. Simply moving around this room requires strong fortitude and skill (TN 15).

**Epilogue:** There is no 'closing' of the portal, the team can grab the Enigma Machine and make a break for the surface. If they choose to stay, every six hours, more Fish Men come forth from the portal to conquer our world. One wonders, where does the portal lead???

# MAXIMUM RISUS FUN

Guy Hoyle © 2011

The MGF Rules System © 1997 Michael O' Brien

Risus: The Anything RPG © 1993-2011

In Risus, players get an extra D6 for providing a Tale or backstory for their character. Often, however, games seem to start out by writing up characters as we are beginning the adventure; many of the players thus don't have a clear idea about their characters' background when we begin gaming, so they don't get that extra die when the scenario begins. After all, asking somebody to write up a few paragraphs of prose at a moment's notice is really a lot like schoolwork, and nobody likes a pop essay. What to do?

I could pass out a boring questionnaire about the character's background, with spaces for the character's family tree, what are his likes and dislikes, his relationship with his parents, etc., etc., ad nauseam, but that's pretty boring. Many years ago, a few regulars on the Glorantha Digest came up with the principle of Maximum Game Fun: "in a nutshell, when writing, thinking, and gaming about Glorantha, you ask yourself, 'now, in this situation what will be the most fun?'... and then you go with it!" This eventually evolved into the even-lighter-than-Risus MGF Rules System, which is not actually what my post is about. I think that many of the principles of MGF can be applied to Risus as an aid in creating great background stories.

The part that interests me about the MGF system is the character generation system, where you basically just describe your character according to the following criteria. Often the hardest part of character design is actually figuring out what character you want to play. This process can help your player decide what he wants to play, and it's fun all by itself. If you haven't already come up with some of this character's clichés, this process should knock a few possibilities loose,

Included as an example is a familiar Viking youth:

## Who Are You?

Grolfnar Vainsson, high-famed sea-reaver, skald, and ravager of women!

## Where Are You From?

Njordling Fjord, where the beer is the best, and the women are better than the beer!

## Why are you here?

Looking for more beer and more women, aye! And to make the songs they'll sing of me to the sons of the sons of my sons!

**List three things your character does better than the average Viking**

- Drink!
- Wench!
- Sing !

**List three things your character does worse than the average Viking**

- Gets seasick
- Loses sword with alarming frequency
- Looking for a meaningless relationship

**List three things everyone knows about you**

- Spends most of his time composing bad poetry
- The wenches laugh at him
- Can't hold his mead

**List three things no one knows about you**

- Secretly the King of Njordling Fjord's daughter, avenging her father's death
- Disguised as a boy to learn Viking skills necessary to avenge her father
- Pretends she's incompetent to allay suspicion about her true identity

**List three things you believe are true**

- This fake beard looks good on me
- I am fated to win back my father's throne
- Freyja herself is my patron

**List three things you want but don't have**

- Vengeance for my father's death
- Private toilet facilities
- That hot Captain Valgrim!

**List three things you have but don't want**

- A bad case of fake beard-itch
- Dad keeps dropping by to ask how the vengeance-thing is going
- Too many wenches trying to seduce me

Don't feel discouraged if you can't think of three examples for each category; this is supposed to be fun, and maybe something else will turn up later. Likewise, if you can think of more than three, the more the merrier! After you have finished working on your character's background, you should then have some good ideas about what his cliches should be.

On the next page is a blank form for copying, filling out, and using how you will. I have made it generic, so it can be used for individuals; that is, you would find three things you do better or worse than others like you (e.g. other thieves, other magicians, other gladiators); but you can use it for parties which share an occupation (all Vikings, all bureaucrats, all Clerics of Thoth, etc.) Customize it in any way that works for your campaign.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, I hang ut on the Risustalk yahoo group. Let me know how this works for you!

Guy Hoyle

**Maximum RISUS Fun**

**Who are you?**

**Where are you from?**

**Why are you here?**

**List three things your character does better than an average** \_\_\_\_\_

**List three things your character does worse than an average** \_\_\_\_\_

**List three things that everyone knows about you**

**List three things that nobody knows about you**

**List three things you believe are true**

**List three things you want but don't have**

**List three things you have but don't want**

# RISUS: No Rest for the Wicked

Name: Priti Agarval

Affiliation: MedNet

Description:

Hook: Owes a Favor (Lagna Asura, a Desi crime

syndicate, arranged for the Agarvals to emigrate  
from Kashmir and for Priti to go to med school)

Lucky Shots: ○

□ □ □

Quest Dice: ● ○

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Quest: Implanted Medical Tech

Cliché: Cybered Medic

Rating: ●●●○

What it's Good For: Accurately diagnosing and  
treating medical emergencies with a quick glance  
and touch of your hand (literally), Having "shiver"  
[secure wireless] access to the MedNet network,  
Being a walking first aid kit

Tools of the Trade: Medic toolkit, Prosthetic hand  
and forearm loaded with sensors and first aid stuff,  
Digital optical input, Wireless neural modem hard-coded  
to the MedNet network, Neural USB jack

Cliché: Student Surgeon

Rating: ●●○

What it's Good For: Having a basic understanding of  
surgical procedure, Knowing specific procedures in  
textbook fashion, Being smug and full of yourself,  
Having access to research libraries, Being good with  
your hands

Tools of the Trade: Subdermal I.D./access chip,  
Whites, E-textbooks on chip, Several half-finished  
research papers

Cliché: 'StimStar Aficionado

Rating: ●●●○

What it's Good For: Knowing who's who in the  
glamorous world of 'StimStars ad all the hot gossip,  
Knowing where they come from and how, Knowing  
about the nitty-gritty of the Sim'Stim industry  
(especially the scandalous)

Tools of the Trade: A massive library of 'Stims and  
gossip rags including more than a few bootlegs and  
pirated/ "paparazzi direct" releases

Cliché: Desi Klub Kid

Rating: ●○

What it's Good For: Dancing your brains out,  
Knowing where ALL the clubs are including the cool  
ones, Being friends with bouncers and bartenders,  
Knowing the Crowds and the K-Rowds, Knowing  
which dealers sell "the good chaat," Having a  
Rakshasi tolerance for drinks and drugs

Tools of the Trade: Money, Multiple forged I.D.s,  
Hot Couture, A pocket full of "dust" [recreational  
drugs], Energy to burn

Tale:

# RISUS: No Rest for the Wicked

Name: Peter "Small Change" Yakatori

Affiliation: "MedNet"

Description:

Hook: Constantly trying to prove himself

Lucky Shots: ● ● ○

□□□ □□□ □□□

Quest Dice: ○

□□□□□

Quest: \_\_\_\_\_

Cliché: EMT in Training

Rating: ●●●○

What it's Good For: Treating those in need of emergency medical care with "gentle" reminders from a senior tech, Knowing the textbook version of being an EMT, Having awkward questions after a call, Being a fresh young face

Tools of the Trade: Medic toolkit, Ambulance, Textbook, Stretcher, Lucky t-shirt, MedNet-linked blue tooth with POV camera

Cliché: Son of a Yakuza Soldier

Rating: ●●●○

What it's Good For: Knowing about people in high and illegal places, Having access to firearms and other implements of harm, Knowing some Karate, Knowing where the Yakuza bar and ramen shops are

Tools of the Trade: Kick-ass cell phone, Your dad's name, Plenty of cash, A "pop gun"

Tale: \_\_\_\_\_

Cliché: Small but Fierce

Rating: ●●●○

What it's Good For: Being short or "petite," Being underestimated, Holding your own

Tools of the Trade: Mean glare, Small stature

Cliché: \_\_\_\_\_

Rating: ○

What it's Good For: \_\_\_\_\_

Tools of the Trade: \_\_\_\_\_

# RISUS: No Rest for the Wicked

Name: Samuel Chase

Affiliation: MedNet

Description:

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Cliché: Ex-Army Medic

Rating: ●●●○

What it's Good For: Keeping your head under pressure, Seeing to the wounded, "I've seen worse," Giving and taking orders, Improvising

Tools of the Trade: Medic toolkit, Ambulance, Stretcher, Leatherman, MedNet-linked blue tooth with POV camera

Cliché: Former Truck Driver

Rating: ●●○

What it's Good For: Driving big vehicles like traffic cops are a fairy tale, Knowing about automobile engines and making them work long enough to get where you're going, Smuggling, Knowing the back roads and all the best truck stops

Tools of the Trade: Trucker's cap, Phone numbers on diner receipts and strip-club napkins, Lucky air freshener

Tale:

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Hook: Street Bushido (Stick to your word, Don't let others suffer needlessly, Only fight The Good Fight)

Lucky Shots: ○



Quest Dice: ● ○  
□□□ □□□

Quest: Street Bushido

Cliché: Old Soldier

Rating: ●●●○

What it's Good For: Having war stories, Being tough, Knowing and dealing with other grognards, Having lots of first-hand experience with combat and tactics

Tools of the Trade: Cybernetic arm, Old service sidearm, Membership at the local VFW, More than a few scars and plated bones

Cliché: Amateur Painter

Rating: ●○

What it's Good For: Knowing about painting, Having artistic friends, Having a living room full of your own artwork

Tools of the Trade: Paints, Brushes, Canvases, Books of art

# RISUS: No Rest for the Wicked

Name: Friedrich Snyder

Affiliation: MedNet

Description:

Hook: Dark Secret

Lucky Shots: ○



Quest Dice: ● ○



Quest: "Ganesh on your Shoulder"

Cliché: Hindu Cowboy

Rating: ●●●○

What it's Good For: Hacking and coding, Knowing data thieves, Skating and breaking EIC, Knowing about computer systems, Knowing about the 'net and the Devas, Knowing how to petition the Devas, Praying, Keeping the fun holidays

Tools of the Trade: Neural USB jack, "Diving board" [laptop with neural interface] with stickers of Hindu gods on it, Incense, Offerings, Mirrored sunglasses

Cliché: Non-Stop Bullshitter

Rating: ●●○

What it's Good For: Talking without cease, Telling stories, Telling jokes that may or may not be appreciated, Making friendly, Not stopping for breath

Tools of the Trade: Sex, Lies, Nixon tapes

Cliché: "Legit" Cybernetics Technician

Rating: ●●●○

What it's Good For: Knowing about cybernetics, Repairing cybernetics, Spotting cybernetics, Knowing good cyrgeons, Knowing black medics, Knowing about the cybernetics black market

Tools of the Trade: Diagnostics console, Tool kit, Workshop, Spare parts, Phone numbers

Cliché: Ex-Convict

Rating: ●○

What it's Good For: Knowing about the prison system, "I bunked with this guy in the can..." Smuggling small objects, Having a good "Don't fuck with me" face, Knowing about being "kinked"

Tools of the Trade: Cigarettes, Shiv

Tale:

# Risus: No Rest for the Wicked

**Name :** Shania Steel

**Affiliation:** Motherfucking MedNet

### Description:

**Hook:** Owned (MedNet picked you up and put you

back together without a contract with them. You're now their indentured muscle.)

Lucky Shots: ● ○



Quest Dice: 0



## Quest:

Cliché: Razorgirl

Rating: ●●●○

What it's Good For: Being unassuming, Being athletic, Being the deadliest person in the room and an all-out bad ass, Hurting people, Knowing a few good cyrgeons, Lookin' good

Tools of the Trade: Retractable blade implants,  
Easily concealed weapons, A killer haircut

Cliché: Former Doll

**Rating:** ●●○

What it's Good For: Knowing about dollhouses,  
Knowing where to find dollhouses (both licensed and  
unlicensed), Knowing people that are or were dolls,  
Being seductive

Tools of the Trade: Neural USB jack, IUD

## Tale:

**Cliché:** Jeet Kun Do Practitioner

Rating: ●●●○

What it's Good For: Kung fu fighting, Knowing a little bit of a lot of martial arts styles, Being unpredictable, Improvising, Going with the flow,  
Quoting Bruce Lee and Spike Spiegel

Tools of the Trade: Brass knuckles, Improvised weapons, A mean "HWA-TAAAHH!"

**Cliché:** SINLess Southern Belle

Rating: ●○

What it's Good For: Being charming, Being colloquial and genial, Being ignored by The System,  
Having a twang, Knowing what chicken-fried steak is

#### Tools of the Trade: Forged I.D.s, Sweet tea

# Mission: Improbable

## Operation: Obelisk Park

During the Cold War, the government hid its experimental weapons labs in the heart of residential zones, so they would be more difficult targets for aerial bombing. Underneath Obelisk Park, a small dog park in the wealthiest neighborhood in the city, was a hidden high-security lab working on bio-toxins that would make enemies go crazy. After the Cold War ended, the lab was closed up and abandoned, its experiments put inside locked vaults. Hardly anyone remembered it was there, until the dogs started howling.

About a week ago, visitors to the park started seeing their dogs act funny. They would get angry, bark and growl, and then break their leashes to run wild. "The pack" is now refusing to leave the park and defending their turf with tooth and claw, howling with rage. Scientists have visited the site and believe that the dogs drank contaminated water that had seeped up from one of the experiments in the lab below.

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to get into the lab and stop the leak without being noticed by the rich, influential, and naïve residents of the neighborhood.

### Character Creation

Standard Risus character creation rules apply. No hooks or tales -- your agents are people of mystery, with nothing to tie them to anyone else and nothing to lose. Pumping clichés is allowed, but no double-pumps.

Characters should be appropriate for the mission team. Some good clichés would be veterinarian, safe cracker, biologist, construction worker, master of disguise, politician, etc.

At least one character, possibly more, should have a cliché like "I planned for that", to represent just how amazing the planning of such a team can be — they can anticipate even the most bizarre plot twists. This cliché can be used to come up with the proper response to an unexpected situation, such as "remembering" to have the right logo painted on the team's van. By its nature, this is always an appropriate cliché.

### Special Rules

To better emulate a certain 60's TV show, the adventure is to be run in two separate phases. During the *planning phase*, the characters are given all the known information about the situation and any maps the GM chooses to draw. They may do research or visit the park to make cliché rolls against target numbers to discover the hidden information about the lab. The players should use this phase to plan "the job" in as much detail as they please.

During the *action phase*, the team puts their plan into action. Any remaining hidden information will come out as the characters encounter it during the job. The GM should make sure that not everything goes off without a hitch, of course. If they made contingency plans or allowed for character communication, they may be able to change their plan on the fly... or not. Proper use of "I planned for that" should be able to handle problems caused by misunderstandings between the GM and players, like "I don't think I said there was a gazebo in the park", as well as minor failures in planning. You can choose to play this phase for laughs (70's style), for serious (90's-00's style), or both (60's style), as fits your group best.

## Information

### Known Information

- The obelisk is an objet d'art, on loan from the Egyptian government. It's been here in this park for decades and you'd better not break it.
- The park is in a very wealthy neighborhood, surrounded on all sides by the big houses of the rich and famous.
- The park is the only bit of public grass in the neighborhood, so everyone walks their dogs there.
- There is a grounds crew that picks up litter and dog droppings at the park every morning.
- The entrance to the lab is via a metal door set into the ground behind the concrete base of the obelisk. The door is **locked** (safe cracker or similar cliché, TN 10).
- Beneath the door, a flat cargo elevator goes down into the lab proper. It's a maze of cubicles, lab tables, empty cages, and locked refrigerators. There is still power and water in the lab.
- Everything in the lab was labeled neatly before it was abandoned. Each refrigerator or box lists its contents on the outside.
- Scientists believe the dogs have ingested "Agent RAB-ID-2000", a pink viscous liquid. How it got through the **locked fridge** (2), the **concrete walls** (3), and up to the park, they don't know.

### Hidden Information

- [TN5] Residents know the schedule of the grounds crew, but not their faces. Any strange workers at the park will be reported to the police within minutes.
- [TN5] There are currently about 20 animals in the **pack of bio-engineered-to-be-angry howling dogs** (4) in the park. Oh yes, they howl. Any overt attacks or attempts to capture the dogs will set up a howling that will alert residents within minutes.
- [TN5] The dogs in the park are people's pets. If they are killed or injured, there will be **lawsuits** (6), screaming residents, and the like.
- [TN10] The leader of the pack is a **Chihuahua** (3) named Teddy, who belongs to the governor of the state.
- [TN10] The park is riddled with small animal holes, like squirrels or rats or moles would dig. Some are hidden.
- [TN15] The RAB-ID-2000 is in a shared locked fridge with the highly explosive "Agent X-BLAM-O". Any violent shaking of the fridge will cause it to explode in a 3-dice attack on everyone nearby.

### The Real Story

Not all of the cages were emptied out properly. A **colony of rats of NIMH** (6) survived and lives in one corner of the lab, where they've dug tunnels out through the walls and up to the park. The rats can walk upright, use tools, speak English, and read, of course. They've read most of the books in the lab, so they have learned about bio-warfare. They got tired of the dogs chasing them, so they have poisoned the doggy water fountains in the park. Unfortunately, they didn't expect this reaction. They've been stuck underground since the pack of dogs formed and are now regretting their decision. Clever players may even discover factions within the rats that might be convinced to try a coup.

**If your team is discovered or sued, the secretary will disavow all knowledge.**

© Michael Friedman, July 19, 2011

Risus: The Anything RPG is by S. John Ross.

<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

# Obelisk: The Howling

## A One Page Adventure for Cthulhu Risus by Manu Saxena

**Setting:** A cruise ship. The characters are all on board the Socratic Cruise Lines' ship *The Elenchi*, happily enjoying life (as either passenger or crew member) when a sudden storm hits. The ship is violently tossed to and fro; everyone holds on for dear life, and then as suddenly as the freakish squall came upon them it's over. As the officers and crew assess the damage, it quickly becomes apparent that some people are missing, and some are dead, killed accidentally during the storm. And then the weirdness begins.

First, the crew (and any perceptive passengers) realize that they are out of sight of land, and have no idea where they are. Communications and electronics seem to be working, but they can't get any signal or satellite link. It's like the rest of the world just *abandoned* the ship.

Second, the dead rise and start trying to kill everyone they can, by weapon or by strangulation or by whatever's convenient, *howling* after every successful kill. The recently killed then rise in turn and join them. This poses something of a problem.

Stats: Walking Dead (1)-(3); special: you need 2 degrees of success to hurt one ("Ya gotta get 'im in the head!"). It's already dead, after all :-)

**Goals:** The PCs need to figure out where they are and how to get back, while surviving the tender ministrations of the homicidal undead.

**What's actually going on:** A group of cultists obtained an evil magical *obelisk* which enabled them to cast a spell transporting them to Kadath, taking the ship with them. They also cast a spell to revive the dead, so that their bodies may serve the Old Ones. They believe that the sacrifice of the rest of the ship in this way will reward them with great power, that they can use to summon Yog Sothoth and rule

the world. When everyone else on board ship is dead, their ritual will be complete.

The PCs will need to figure out how to break the transport spell by reading enough of the Phakotic Manuscripts without losing their sanity. Once they get a hold of the text, anyone reading needs to pass a sanity check each page, starting at a difficulty of 1 die and increasing by one each subsequent page. Every two pages they can check to see if they figured out how to break the spell, the difficulty starts at 8 dice and goes down by one per page read. They will have to obtain the obelisk and successfully cast the counter (using an appropriate magic or occult-related cliché) to reverse the spell and return the *Elenchi* to Earth. The difficulty of the counterspell is 8 dice, but every wound's worth of blood someone donates (voluntarily or...otherwise) yields a 1-die bonus. They will also need to stop the curse of the walking dead, either by the appropriate spell or by burning all dead bodies. A cultist has a copy of the manuscripts, as does an archaeologist on board.

**Clues:** Someone will have heard strange chanting coming from one of the maintenance decks before the storm hit;

During an attack of the Walking Dead, a PC notices that the dead ignore a particular passenger, who seems totally unafraid of them;

A PC sees someone chant, "Ia! Ia! Cthulhu Fhtagn!" as one of the dead reached for them, after which it turned away;

Either a PC with knowledge of the occult or an NPC will recognize the chant above and its context (it will work for them too if they make a magic/occult-related cliché check against the dead when saying it);

One or more PCs come across strange symbols, written in blood, on a wall or door;

Either a PC with archaeology or an NPC with same will recognize the symbols as coming from the Phakotic manuscripts.

Since this adventure takes place in a mythic Greek setting, I recommend using The Mighty Sons of Ritus as a starting place for character creation, modified for the intended theme of the adventure (think raunchy summer movie). Characters are 10 points with a hook and tail, although a detailed back story is not required as this is pretty much a one-shot adventure.

Also, this game is intended to be run as a "PG-13" content adventure at a minimum. R or NC-17 for the comedic value alone is worth it if you are feeling at all adventurous. I also reference some movies that were inspirational to the creation of this adventure.

## Της Θυεστ φορ Τεη Γολδεν Τηονγ

### (The Quest for Teh Golden Thong)

It is very late on an early spring night. There is a slight chill in the spring air wafting through the shuttered windows. You are all drinking in Rydell's Kapeleia in Athens, and have been at it all night. The proprietors, Zuko and his wife Olson have just announced last call when suddenly the small fire flares up as the door opens. An old man walks in, looks around and drops his cloak off his shoulders. He instantly transforms into a healthy, robust young man with long black curly hair. By the gods it is Zeus himself!

"Ho patrons!" He bellows, a quick glance around reveals that you are the only ones still conscious. "I have a task for you. My new girlfriend is nagging me for a valentines day gift, and only one gift will do for a beauty such as she- you must bring me Teh Golden Thong of Aphrodite! If you do me this favor, I will reward you all with some really 'phat lewt', or whatever it is you kids call it these days. Now if you will excuse me, I have business to attend to." And with that, he walks over to Olson and scoops her up over his shoulder and goes into the back room from whence the sounds of lovemaking soon emanate.

Oddly, Zuko seems to have fallen asleep at the bar with a full pitcher of grog by his hand...

#### Adventure Paths

**Temple of Zeus:** The Nice Old Man Running the Temple (4) at the temple in Athens tells the p̄ay that the Market, Temple of Aphrodite, or the Oracle could have leads to TGT, and warn of the Agents of Xerxes (AoX) who are also looking for the golden prize.

**Temple of Aphrodite:** The party will be stopped at the front door by the Hot Priestesses of Aphrodite (Castle Anthrax from the Holy Grail) and will not be allowed to enter. They will be told that the head priestess Neckid Babelus knows of their nefarious plans and will not provide any assistance. If the party is defeated in battle with the HAP, they will be bound and taken to Neckid. If the party is victorious, they will eventually find Neckid in her private chambers. Neckid tell the party that Princess Pe-na-lope knows the location of TGT right away if defeated, or after locking the party in the pleasure dungeon for a period of time until they escape (if they want to anyway)...

#### HPA Grunt Squad:

Hot Priestesses of Aphrodite Grunt Squad (6)

#### Neckid Babealus

Sexy head priestess of Aphrodite (4), Aphrodite Wire-fu Combat Secrets (3), Marriage consular (3)

**The Town Market:** The market is teaming with people animals and all manner of stuff for sale. The party will find after asking around that there is one merchant Raucule (based on Ricky Gervais' character from Stardust) who will tell the party the location of a map in Troy that shows the last known location of TGT, and comment that this was a valuable piece of information because those bloopers wanted it to as the ducks behind the counter and the AoX attack! If the party leaves any AoX alive, they only know that Xerxes is looking for TGT and that he is also working with Minotaur Bob fro the Labyrinth for information as well, and that anyone else looking for TGT was to be payment for the info Minotaur Bob has. If the party is captured, they are brought to the Labyrinth

#### Vanilla AoX Grunt Squad:

Agents of Xerxes Grunt Squad (5)

#### Chocolate AoX Grunt Squad:

Scary Bombs (5), Flashy Swords (3)

#### Neapolitan AoX Grunt Squad:

The IMMORTALS ~ohhhh~ Stabby! Stabby! (7)

**The Oracle:** Will promise to give the information she has to those who seek it, but that there is a price. She them will attempt to use all her powers to capture and enslave the party for 1 year and a day to act as her servants and guards. If defeated she will beg for her life and in return will tell all she knows that there is a map in the gift shop Troy, a Minotaur in the Labyrinth and that there is a Princess Pe-na-lope in Argos that are all rumored to show the last known location of TGT.

#### Alexia the Oracle

Nubile young dancing girl who can tell the future (5), Trapper of men (or women) for her protection (4), Grape stained vintner (2)

**Troy:** There is a map on the wall in the gift shop in the city of Troy that marks Sparta as the last known location of TGT. Oh, but wait, Troy is under siege. Good luck getting in and out.

**The Labyrinth:** Minotaur Bob lives in his labyrinth on the edge of town. It takes a TN(11) to find the center before MB finds the party, and if trying to make a hasty retreat, it will take a TN(15) to escape without incident. Bob will be very friendly, invite the party to discuss TGT over a nice glass of wine, the wine being poisoned TN(13) to stay conscious. If all fall asleep they will wake up in a pot of hot water, if any save he will try and defeat them in combat, and add them to the pot, if defeated he will tell about King Leonidas knowing the location of TGT. If everyone is in the pot, they can attempt to talk their way out (Bob is very lonely and will try and strike up conversational as they are being cooked), or use some other means to escape. As long as he is alive after defeat, he will reveal the King Leo thing and show the party the way out.

#### Minotaur Bob

Lonely half man half bull Monster (5), Ewww Blood, RAWWWWR! (3), Humans for Dinner (2)

**Princess Pe-na-lope** angered Hera and is chained to a rock just outside the city of Argos, waiting for The Kraken to eat her. Pe-na-lope will tell the party that the Oracle has since learned about the location of TGT, but that she doesn't know where it is.

#### Princess Pe-na-lope:

Pretty Princess chained to a rock (4), Tasty treat (3)

#### The Kraken:

Destroyer of cities and all that dwell within (10), Claw-Claw-Bite (4), Tail Slap (3)

**300! King Leonidas of Sparta** needs an assist to keeping Xerxes out of Greece. Leonidas will request that the party guard his flank and that if they succeed, he will reveal the location of TGT. The party will then face an att by the AoX (or feel free to stat up your own 300 inspired grunt squad). If the party fails to defeat the AoX, they will bring them before God King himself! If the party successfully routs the AoX, Leonidas knows Xerxes is looking for TGT too if the party doesn't already know this. And he reveals that the Island of Corfu as the last known location of TGT.

**The Sphinx:** speaks in vague formulaic riddles ("To find what you seek you must seek what you find") knows about Captain Farmer and the Island of Corfu

#### Wes "The Sphinx" Studi

Master of Riddles (4), Formulaic Statements of confusion (3), Eater of the dumb (3)

**The God King Challenge:** Go visit Hannibal the King of Carthage and have him sign an alliance with the Persians. He will provide the part with the mummified heads of kings if they think it will help. A TN(12) (the heads provide a +1 to the roll) is required to persuade the king to join. Whether the party succeeds or fails Hannibal will ask if they want a lift back to Europe via elephant, or if they wouldn't mind following up on a lead that TGT was moved to the Island of Corfu, he would pay them well for such an item...

**Island of Corfu:** Has the TGT, Medea rules the island with an iron fist and TGT is one of her prized posessions. TGT is located in the Abandoned Temple of Athena just inland from the city of Corfu.

**On the Docks:** Fight with agents of Xerxes, booked passage with Captain Farmer or if captured brings them to The Sphinx

**Captain Farmer:** Captain of the good ship Obelisk is the only one willing to sail to Corfu and brave the dangers that a voyage to Corfu would entail.

#### On the Obelisk:

The ocean journey will require several stops on islands for food an water (aka Odysseus and Jason and the Argonauts) Harpies, Talos, Sirens, Titans, Cyclopes, Cerci, etc. Feel free to use your favorite Greek myth/story in place of or in addition to those below...

#### Harpy Grunt Squad:

Tear you limb from limb (3), pick you up and drop you in the ocean (3)

#### Siren Seduction Grunt Squad:

Songs that lure you to your death (5), Claws of eye removal (3)

#### Talos:

Crush the looters (6), Achilles heal (2)

#### Saroun the Cyclopes:

Giant wielding a giant club to smash those who would steal from him and his Island (6), Poor Depth Perception (2)

**On the Island of Corfu:** The city of Corfu on the island of Corfu is located on a peninsula off the mountainous Island interior. The shores are guarded by Stop Motion Skeletons. The city is ruled by Medea. All the townfolk will say is "talk to the queen" as they shudder and walk away. The queen's palace is surrounded by stone statues of people, all of whom look slightly stooped as if expecting to be hit, and their faces range from sobbing to looks of sheer terror. They are all covering their ears with their hands.

#### Medea The Medusa

Turn you to stone with her nagging (4), Mentally Unstable (3), That certain je ne sais quoi? (3)

#### Stop Motion Skeleton Grunt Squad:

Attack and kill! (4)

#### Hydra

Lots of heads to bite you with (4), More heads to bite you with (3), even more heads to bite you with (3)

**The Abandoned Temple of Athena:** TGT is guarded by the Mythical Howling Erinyes

#### Howling Erinyes

#### Megaera ("grudging")

Claws and fangs of fate (4), Shrill Howls of "REDRUM" defend them that have slept with anyone in the (4)

Megaera will only attack individuals and those who

adventure.

#### Tisiphone ("avenging murder")

Claws and fangs of fate (4), Shrill Howls of "ADULTERER!" (4)

Tisiphone will only attack individuals and those who defend them who have killed any named NPC's.

#### Alecto ("unceasing")

Claws and fangs of fate (4), Shrill Howls of "THIEF!" (4)

Alecto will attack the party for attempting to steal TGT.

#### The Return:

Feel free to run any monsters you missed on the way out, or just have them get back and be rewarded.

Typically Deus ex Machina is frowned upon in RPGs, but this is ancient Greece and the gods were notorious for getting involved, so feel free to toss your players a bone if needed. Two appropriate gods would be Athena and Hermes. If you really want to have fun, send Hera or her agents (Snakes, Amazons, crabs, etc.) after them...

#### Avatar of Hermes:

Hermes is available to help out any unlucky parties that might end up captured with little or no way out, or stalled with no idea of where to go, or that happen to wander deep into Persia looking to settle a score with Xerxes. He probably shouldn't show up more than once. Hermes appears as a young man with a broad-brimmed hat (or a winged cap), wearing travelers clothing and winged sandals, and carries the heralds staff.

#### Avatar of Athena:

As Hermes above, Athena is available to help out any unlucky parties that are really lost or stalled with no idea of where to go, she can also show up and call off the Erinyes if they get the better of the party. She probably shouldn't show up more than once. Athena appears as a woman dressed in long robes wearing a helmet and breastplate with a serene, serious, somewhat aloof, and very masculine beauty about her.

#### Handy Links:

**Heroes of Troy** <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iliad>

**Argonauts** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jason%23The\\_Quest\\_for\\_the\\_Golden\\_Fleece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jason%23The_Quest_for_the_Golden_Fleece)

**The Mighty Sons of Ritus** <http://www.obsdianport.com/campaigns/the-mighty-sons-of-ritus>

**The Odyssey** <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Odyssey>

**Greek Mythology** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek\\_mythology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_mythology)

**King Xerxes** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerxes\\_I\\_of\\_Persia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xerxes_I_of_Persia)

-CLASSIFIED-

Red Zone Intrusion

This briefing is intended for mission personnel only.

**Location:** Abandoned CABAL Research Facility. Zone Designation R5. Sector 113, Grid Falstaff.

**Estimated Resistance:** Brotherhood 23rd Attack Squadron "Howling Horsemen" - Banshee heavy attack fighters.

CABAL Prototype Nether Obelisk. Possible Project ReGenesis cybernetic soldiers onsite.

*"The situation is grave, commander. In the wake of the Firestorm crisis, we thought that CABAL was gone. Turns out Kane went the extra mile, and had a backup of CABAL's programming fragmented and scattered to a few isolated research stations. One of them was destroyed, but due to the resilient nature of the CABAL program, the others are putting new pieces back where they lost code. These backup programs could be more dangerous than CABAL itself."*

*"We're sending in a strike force to one of these stations. We're not reading any life signs from our satellite observation, but that doesn't mean anything. Records from the last mission to take down a CABAL core indicate that it was protected primarily by automated defenses and cybernetic organisms."*

*"Your team is our best hope. Good luck, commander."*

## Player Information

This adventure takes place in the Tiberium universe of the Command and Conquer series. In the timeline, it takes place shortly before the Third Tiberium War. When creating your character, feel free to take advantage of some 15 years of gaming history, since all technology up to and including C&C3:Kane's Wrath is accessible. The briefing assumes that the party is composed of GDI Commandos, but as the original CABAL was taken down by a joint operation, there could be NOD personnel attached to the mission.

Vehicles can be taken in the same manner as Sidekicks and Shieldmates, and when piloted allow the driver (and any other crew members able to contribute, such as gunners and sensor operators) to take part in a team with the vehicle as the leader. Since Sidekicks can't have a higher Cliche level than the owner, you won't be rolling about in a Mammoth Mk.III, but you could operate a Titan or a Predator.

Weapons are considered Tools of the Trade, and can include railguns, sonic emitters, grenade launchers, sniper rifles, assault rifles, rocket launchers, and a variety of other implements of destruction.

## Game Information

### *CABAL Research Facility Core [10]*

Nobody said it would be easy. Fortunately, you should never need to assault the core directly at such a high level. Dice from this cliche may be siphoned off to 'repair' or pump any of the facility's defense structures.

#### *Nether Obelisk (5)*

Two of these defend the perimeter wall of the facility, one to either end. Their areas of cover overlap the facility itself, and there is no way into the facility that doesn't expose one to their fire. They can target land and air targets, and repeated discharges in an area can ignite Tiberium deposits.

#### *Visceroid (2), Fiend (3), and Floater (5)*

Tiberium has corrupted the local landscape, and Tiberium-based lifeforms are a real and present danger to the operation. Floaters should be avoided, but Fiends are much more aggressive and may seek out the party.

#### *Regenesis Subjects: Initiates (2), Acolytes (2), and Templars (4)*

The result of Tiberium research and cybernetic enhancements, these inhuman warriors serve as the unholy ground troops of the Brotherhood in the Red Zones. They heal when exposed to Tiberium, so take them down quickly.

#### *Banshee Assault Fighters (3)*

A nuisance, but possibly a deadly one if not dealt with. CABAL has taken control of these fighters, rendering the need for a pilot moot. They can only operate for brief periods, due to payload constraints, and each trip back will drain the Core of resources.



Image courtesy of NASA

# RETURN TO THE O.B.E.L.I.S.C.

## Premise

The Outer Belt Elite Level Intelligence and Security Centre (O.B.E.L.I.S.C.) was abandoned almost a century ago at the end of **The Insurrection** - a relic of unhappier times better forgotten. It's still there, spinning lazily on its tether at the L1 between Kuiper Belt Object 136199 Eris and its primary moon Dysnomia. Who knows what secrets lie hidden in the cold and dark some 59.9 AU from Sol?

## Character Creation

Characters are built using 10 dice, with all options available. Characters are Mavericks - the Bottom Feeders in the Spacer Community - outcasts and pariahs who've gotten blacklisted by "**Central**" for whatever reason and but can't stand the idea of becoming a "Groundhog". They now exist on the fringes as private operators. Everyone has a past.

Space Archeology or "Tomb Raiding" is hazardous but occasionally very lucrative, especially since the advent of Warp Sphere technology has allowed FTL travel to distant sites.

## Basic Structure

Choose/randomise the options, add your own TNs, season with atmospheric details and serve. Feeds a small group, or just one with the [Mythic GME](#).

### Act I

The PCs are charged with retrieving the macguffin\* from the OBELISC. It's a milk run, if a little out of the way. What could possibly go wrong?

The PCs warp in at a "safe" distance - "flat" manifold - and dock with the OBELISC. Inside, the OBELISC is apparently howling - it's an eerie and inhuman noise that gets progressively louder as they rise through the levels of the OBELISC. While they are searching the OBELISC, unbeknownst to them, an antagonist sabotages their ship (in a way that is repairable?).

### Act II

At the top of the OBELISC they find the macguffin\* - huzzah! Also, it turns out the howling is due to the aging tether. Surely it shouldn't be making that noise? Indeed not. \*snap\*. Everyone goes into free fall. How much of a problem is that? (the lifts stop working...)

Someone realises/calculates that the new trajectory will intersect with the atmosphere of Eris, causing the orbit to decay and the OBELISC to disintegrate and burn up. No more time for searching - they'd better get going. They make an "interesting" zero-g journey back through the OBELISC to discover the sabotage.

### Act III

A new howling begins. It's soft at first, but will rise slowly in pitch and volume as the OBELISC encounters the atmosphere of Eris.

The Characters repair the damage, serve suitable vengeance on the antagonist (who was caught off-guard by the snapping tether - it wasn't on their agenda either and ruined their clean get away), and escape. To add emotional complexity, have the antagonist offer indispensable repair skills or deliver the trajectory news if the PCs haven't realised it yet.

### Epilogue

If this was a one-shot, then the Characters return the macguffin\* to its rightful owner, who thanks them and pays them. Roll credits and theme tune. If this is a series then here are d6 other segue possibilities:

- The macguffin\* belongs to someone else or the characters want to keep it.
- The macguffin\* has some content that must be made public, but "**Central**" wants it buried.
- The owner has lied about its value and seriously short changes or simply steals the macguffin\*.
- The owner has mysteriously vanished and the PCs investigate or they are likely to be next.
- The macguffin\* is an essential component in a doomsday device. Oops.
- The macguffin\* is a clue to the next step in the larger plot arc (National Treasure/Indiana Jones).

### \*The Macguffin (d4)

- A computer memory element containing (d8):
  - Memoirs/letters of a lost relative
  - Confessions of someone (important?)
  - A list of forgotten war criminals
  - Evidence of forgotten war crimes

- Financial data about a frozen bank account
- The next clue to a greater treasure
- An Artificial Intelligence
- The next big step in Warp Sphere Tech

### An alien artifact that (d6):

- is a limitless power source
- is a doomsday weapon
- is the trigger for a doomsday weapon
- can distort space and/or time
- is actually an egg
- bestows immortality

### A deadly virus

### A person in suspended animation

### The Call to Action (d6)

- A Charlie (a mysterious stranger they never see)
- A "**Central**" official offering a clean slate for all
- An Organised Crime Boss
- A representative of a Huge Industrial Complex
- An eccentric billionaire (who accompanies you?)
- A person who wants to clear a (/their?) name

### The Antagonist (d6)

- The OBELISC A.I. (6)
- A hireling of a rival to The Call to Action (5)
- An under resourced rival to The Call to Action (4)
- A mis-guided rival to The Call to Action (4)
- The Call to Action (5)
- The person being searched for (4)

### The O.B.E.L.I.S.C.

In common with all real spaceships, the OBELISC is more like an office block than an ocean going ship. It's 599m "high" and 80m across at the base tapering to 40m at the top, it has a mass of around  $2 \times 10^8$  kg. It is tethered to a small ice body by a carbon nano ribbon that is 2.7km to the centre of mass and spins once every 110 seconds. Originally the spin plane was turned to be tangential to the orbit, but tidal

forces and the lack of correction burns have twisted the plane of spin exaggerating the tidal forces further, causing the tether to flex and make that awful noise.

The docking manoeuvre is a tricky brachistochrone approach (Pilot TN16). A failed roll may require a landing on Dysnomia to pick up more reaction mass. The fusion reaction thrusters are folded back from the base of the OBELISC to expose the dock (worried?).

Inside there is a stale but breathable atmosphere, but it's very cold and dark. The artificial gravity produced by the spin is a slightly oppressive 1.1g (it's a more pleasant 0.9g at the top). No power means no lifts (do the characters really want to walk up 133 floors?). The OBELISC can be "woken" with a TN10 Hacking roll or a TN14 engineering roll.

### Internal Structure - a schematic map (kind of)

Floors	Content
136-138	Tether gubbins
134-135	Data & Communications
133	Command & Control
122-136	Offices
109-121	Staff Accommodation
106-108	Retail
100-105	Parks and Leisure. Large bodies of water and big objects like vehicles are "interesting" in zero-g.
91-99	Prisoner accommodation
11-90	Reaction Mass
1-10	Dock, Drives, Reactors and Engineering

Note: Eris & Dysnomia actually exist and were originally designated UB313 "Xena" and "Gabrielle" (after Xena's side kick). In mythology Dysnomia was Eris' daughter and the Goddess of Lawlessness, a nod to the fact that the actress who played Xena was Lucy Lawless.

# Risus Old-School Fantasy

## By Griffin Pelton

Rules based on a core of Risus with modifications for original Dungeons & Dragons style play.

To be used with  
Risus: The Anything RPG  
[www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm](http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm)

### Table of Contents: (approximate)

- page 1      Character Creation
- page 2      Assist & Defend Slots
- page 3      Magic & Spellcasting
- page 4      Spell Research
- page 5      Mystic Mutations
- page 6      Advancement
- page 8      Treasure
- page 9      Spell Components
- page 10     Conflict
- page 11     Maneuvers & Tactics
- page 12     General Guidelines

### Character Creation

Start with 6 dice to build a character with.

Be sure to mark each cliche that is a Channeling or Spellcasting type. Channeling cliches are normal cost (1 for 1) and spellcasting cliches cost twice as much (2 for 1 cliche die). Remember to have a source of magical power and pick a mutation number for each magic-using cliche.

Example: Wizard of Light (3) Angelic Spellcasting 4, is a spellcasting cliche and anytime a 4 comes up on dice when using any magic there is a risk of mutation.

### Inventory

Unlike a normal Risus game, for old-school fantasy type games PCs are required to keep fairly careful track of their inventory. Basic rule is if you have the right equipment in your inventory to do something you roll the cliche at full value. If you have makeshift equipment you roll cliche at half. If you don't have any equipment for it, you can't roll the cliche.

Starting money is a roll of your highest cliche, then multiply the result by 10. That's how many silver pieces the PC starts with.

## Assist and Defend Slots:

During character creation you may simply spend any of your starting dice to gain slots. During play you can only use dice gotten when advancing a cliche. Instead of adding the die to the cliche that you successfully advanced you can instead trade it for slots, but those slots have to be somewhat related to the cliche that was advanced. Can also add new slots to previously created items/abilities.

Each die spent earns three slots, which can be divided up (or not) between several choices that can be of either type. A single aspect of the character may be a source of both types of slots. In that situation you should write it down in both places to keep the different types of slots separate on the character sheet. Even better, you should actually have them vary a bit in wording. Try to specify what back of having an Abyss Background lets you be better at tasks (Assist Slots) and which part of it lets you endure things better (Defend Slots).

Some magical items give Assist and Defend slots, but slots bought with character dice cannot be used by magic items.

Assist Slots are items/abilities that can help a character succeed in certain situations. Each slot can be spent to add a single die to a roll that the specific item/ability would be useful in. Assist Slots recover at the beginning of each session. These are declared before the roll they help with.

### Example:

Magic McGuyver Bag [] [] []  
A bag which a wizard has lots of bits and pieces of useful ritual gear he has accumulated over the years. None of it is useful enough to be a full spell component, but often can be used to help with casting a spell.

Defend Slots are items/abilities that can help a character endure certain situations. Each slot can be spent to prevent a die of a specific type of damage. When used the damage is removed from the Defend Slots instead of a cliche. These are used when damage is taken. Can't be used as a form of healing.

### Example:

Abyss-Raised Alertness {} {} {}  
Growing up the the Abyss means you can go for days without rest before getting sleepy. Can be used to prevent exhaustion/tiredness damage.

## Magic

There are two magic-type cliches: Channeling and Spellcasting.

Channeling cliches are for those that channel raw magic and force it into crude effects that can influence a few targets and/or a small area. Using this level of magic requires telling the GM what effect you are attempting before the roll. Channelers boost magic-using rolls by adding one die to the roll for every die lost from the cliche after the roll. Channeled effects rarely last more than the cliche's strength in minutes.

Spellcasting cliches are for skilled mages who have learned to manipulate large amounts of power. A proper spell can affect large groups of people and city block sized areas. You must inform the GM what spell is being used before making the roll. Spellcasting rolls are double-boosted, which means two dice are added to the roll for every die that will be lost after the roll. Spells can have a duration of the spellcaster's cliche in hours.

Spellcaster cliches can use single-boost Channeling level powers.

Both kinds of magic-using cliche can do minor cantrip-level magic with no boosting, but still has risk of mutation.

## Spellcasting

Spellcasters start knowing a number of spells equal to twice their dice of spellcasting cliches. PCs gain no new spells when a Spellcasting-type cliche increases. Gaining new spells is done only through discovering them while exploring, or research.

Spellcasters can only have a small number of their total spells memorized each day. The number of spells that can be prepared is equal to the total dice of all spellcasting cliches the PC has.

So a magic-user character with Fire Wizard (3) Spellcasting, Necromancer (2) Spellcasting, can have a total of five spells memorized. Three fire-based and two necromancy-based.

All known spells should be written down and given a brief description, enough to fit on a index card at most. All spells should be recorded in a group 'spellbook' for new players or new characters to pick from if they aren't feeling creative enough to make up their own spells from scratch.

## Spell Research

Researching new spells is a roll of a spellcaster cliche against a base TN 30. Every gold piece spent on supplies reduces the TN by 1. Each day spent on the research also reduces the TN by 1. A specific scholarly work on related matters reduces the TN by 5. If more than two scholarly works are used in researching a spell, no new book is purchased.

For each 10 gold that was spent on successfully creating new spell that is researched the player must give the name and author of one book which was used in the spell creation process. The name must be indicative of a very specialized work that would pertain to the spell his character was attempting to create. So if Mack the Magic-User was creating his Magnificent Mauler spell, Mack's player might say that one of the tomes Mack bought to assist this process was Inquires into the Application of Conjured Downward Forces by Schumpti Rock-dropper. That sounds specialized enough to me. It's certainly more of a dedicated-sounding title than The Codex Supreme: Treatises on All Known Magicks.

Having deemed the book acceptable, both Mack's player and the GM make a note of the fact that Mack now owns this book. At some future time, Mack's player decides that there really needs to be a spell that would fill the gap that feather fall usually does (check the rule books, feather fall doesn't show up until 1st edition AD&D). Deciding to fill that gap with a new spell called Mack's delicate descent, our exemplary MU heads back to the spell lab. Mack has decided to put 5 gold and 5 days into the research, which would normally make the TN 20. However, since Mack already owns a book dealing with conjured downward forces and thus being a reasonable reference source for his proposed new spell, Mack only has to beat TN 15. Mack's player has added a bit of flavor to the campaign world, and I have a springboard to use for new set dressing on future adventures. Maybe Schumpti Rock-dropper has written other books and there's an Inquires into the Application of Conjured Upward Forces to be found in the next arch-mage's tower. Simple, imaginative, and conducive to the shared world experience - it's a win-win for everyone.

## Mystic Mutations

The mortal form is unable to handle the stress of high-level magic. This applies to magic of all types. So as a magic-user becomes more powerful the increasing amounts of magical energy twist his body into a more suitable vessel. This can be a controlled preemptive artifact replacement parts, directed mutation most often seen in servants of Angels and Demons to be more like their patrons, or it can be random changes like Arcane sorcerers.

Any character that has magic or spellcasting cliches picks a number between 1 and 6. Whenever that number is rolled on any of the dice when that character is using magical abilities (any time a cliche is being boosted or double-boosted, or even in the rare situation magic is being used without any boosting) there is a risk of mystic mutation. This is extra-dangerous for spellcasters when they are double-boosting their cliches and could be rolling as many as eight or nine dice at once.

If the number of dice that rolled the mutation number is equal to or greater than the number of mutations the character has, he gains another one.

For the location of mutation the GM rolls and adjudicates the result depending on the character's power source. If the location is already affected then the character gets a mental affliction/insanity of some kind instead of a physical alteration.

### Mutation Table:

- 1 - Head
- 2 - Eyes
- 3 - Arm
- 4 - Leg
- 5 - Torso
- 6 - Voice
- 7 - Aura
- 8 - Arm
- 9 - Leg
- 10 - Hair
- 11 - Eyes
- 12 - Skin

Mutations have no game mechanic affect. They will change how people react to the character and will often hinder them in some fashion, with the very rare occasion of a mutation actually being helpful in some situation. People will react poorly to a magic-user showing obvious mutations, unless they are of the same church/cult/guild as the magic-user in question.

## Advancement

Experience (XP) is gained when a PC spends money. 1 point for every silver piece spent. When spending at least a day in a non-hostile place (unfriendly is fine) a PC may spend XP to try and become more powerful. The cost to attempt improvement in a cliche is (current cliche dice)  $\times 100$  experience.

Each time you spend the required XP you roll the cliche. If the dice land showing all even or all odd numbers, the cliche gains a die. A cliche (1) must pick either odd or even before rolling.

If you spend more xp than needed on a advancement roll, it will increase the chances of success. Each multiple of the amount needed ( $\times 2$ ,  $\times 3$ , etc.) reduces the cliche dice rolled by one, to a minimum of one.

Suggestions for spending money:  
Extremely fancy clothing,  
custom-made equipment and  
items, enjoying lavish  
hedonistic parties, aquiring  
obscure tomes of lore, etc.

When splitting cliches a player may add new concepts in a new cliche to show off new training or induction in some religious order, as long as it is related to the source cliche in some way.

If the new training or powers can't be attached to the source cliche, then the player will have to spent a split or two guiding cliches towards the desired concept.

At some point a cliche will be high enough that further advancement becomes very unlikely. At this point a player may choose to split one of his character's current cliches into two (or more) related cliches and advance those. The dice of the source cliche can be spread as evenly or unevenly among the new cliches as the player wishes.

Example: A Blind Lecherous Swordsman (6) can't improve that cliche any further. So at the next opportunity he splits it into two cliches. Blind Swordmaster (3) and Irresistible Lecherous Scoundrel (3).

Now the character is even better defined by having two cliches that are each part of the source cliche, yet more specialized. He can now also resume advancing in both of them. The important part is not to make totally new cliches, but to expand on and specialize the abilities the character already has.

This provides all the players with the ability to continue advancing for longer periods of adventuring, and also refine and customize their characters as play continues and the character's personality and abilities become more clear in the player's mind.

The basic rules and creativity of making cliches remain, with the only restriction being the new cliches have to use the old cliche as a starting point. So, from the above example, you couldn't split Blind Lecherous Swordsman (6) into Veterinary Genesplicer (3) and Award-winning Novelist (3). Neither of those are based on blindness, lechery, or swordfighting.

On the other hand the new cliches can be only creatively related to the source cliche. So one of the new cliches could be Blind Master of the Mystic Arts (3) if years of adventuring blind have shown the character the secrets of the universe and allowed him to use magic. Be sure to explain how the new cliches came about to the GM.

As a character advances and splits cliches, don't erase the old cliches. Put the new cliches under the old one, which doesn't have a number anymore. This way you can keep track of how your character has developed and keep his core concepts in mind.

Example:  
Blind Lecherous Swordmaster (6)

Into:  
Blind Lecherous Swordmaster  
Blind warrior-acolyte(3)  
Lovable Lecherous Scoundrel(3)

Later:  
Blind Lecherous Swordmaster  
Blind warrior-acolyte  
Weaponmaster of legend (4)  
Blind mystic (2) channeling  
Lovable Lecherous Scoundrel  
Grandparent to dozens of  
illegal heirs (3)  
Thief with bounties in five  
kingdoms (3)

And so on if a character lasts for a really long time. Just looking at the character sheet in this default state can tell someone the path the character has traveled during his career. It also can be a good source of ideas of what is and is not in a particular character's array of abilities/skills if confusion comes up. If the GM doesn't agree to a certain interpretation, or the player, either can point back to the foundation cliches for support.

When splitting a Channeling or Spellcasting cliche, the player can choose to make one or both of the resulting cliches Channeling or Spellcasting (as appropriate) if the cliches in question are magical in nature.

## Treasure

A monster's treasure is determined by rolling the monster's primary cliche (which may not be the highest) and adding all except 1 results, then multiplying by 10. This is the amount of money the monster has. The type of coins will depend on the monster in question. Kobolds might only hoard copper pieces, orcs will probably have silver pieces, and drakes collect gold pieces. 100 copper for 1 silver, 100 silver for 1 gold. It might be carried by the monster, or in it's lair. Roll when the party has managed to get to where the treasure is. For true dragons, make the multiplier x100.

Because rolling the lowest result for treasure sucks, a 1 result means there is a magic item of some type in the treasure. Each 1 grants a roll on the following table:

- 1 - Rod/Staff/Wand
- 2 - Weapons & Shields
- 3 - Miscellaneous
- 4 - Potion
- 5 - Ring
- 6 - Scroll
- 7 - Book
- 8 - Treasure Map

If duplicates are rolled it can mean either several items (two +1 swords) or a single stronger item (one +2 sword).

For every 100 silver (10 gold) in value, there is a 10% chance that 100 silver worth of monetary treasure is unusual.

For every 1000 silver (100 gold) in value, there is a 10% chance that 1000 silver worth of monetary treasure is unusual.

For every 5000 silver (500 gold) in value, there is a 10% chance that 5000 silver worth of monetary treasure is unusual.

For every X gold worth of monetary treasure determined to be unusual, roll on the following table to determine in what way it's unusual:

- [1] Unusual Shape (e.g. triangular coins or square gems)
- [2] Unusual Size (e.g. giant-forged coins or small bead-like gems)
- [3] Unusual Color (e.g. green gold pieces or blue rubies)
- [4] Unusual Markings (e.g. strange glyphs on coins or carvings on the surface of gems)
- [5] Unusual Property (e.g. glowing coins or floating gems)
- [6] Hazardous Property (e.g. coins coated with contact poison or gems that give off radiation)

Except for number 6 on the list, all of the other unusual qualities add about 10-25% value to the monetary treasure, but the characters have to work hard to get someone who will be willing to buy them. After all, how many fences have ever heard of blue rubies and would recognize their value when he did? The intent here is to spur side adventures and visits to sages and esoteric collectors in order to offload the weird loot.

Scrolls are single-spell spellcasting cliches that can be used by anyone without risk of mutation. All the dice of the scroll cliche are used at once.

Potions add a temporary cliche to the character who drinks them. Healing potions restore the used number of dice of physical damage. The number of dice a potion has is how many doses it has and the drinker can drink as many (or little) of the potion at once.

Magic weapons/shields that give a bonus (+1, +2, etc) bump the dice type up with each plus for any roll they are used with. So d6s become d8s. Having two items with the same bonus doesn't bump the die type, but instead adds another die when both items are useful to task attempted.

## Spell Components

Mystical materials can be discovered during play when a spellcaster experiments with rare/exotic materials found in dungeon/monsters. Whenever a player finds something that they think should be useful as a spell component they can attempt to gain something useful from it.

Roll the cliche being used to harvest the components from whatever (magic fungus, dragon corpse, etc) and consult the table below, reading each die rolled separately:

- [1-3]: Nothing usable. You've only gotten a mess out of it.
- [4-5]: 1 point of usable material. Pick something minor from the target that is useful.
- [6]: Jackpot. Something major is still intact. 3 points of usable material.

Each point can be used instead of a die lost to boosting a cliche. Each component should be useful only to certain types of magic, determined by DM at the time of acquiring it. This should be related to the source of the components. For example: blood from a red dragon will be useful for fire spells, but not very useful for protection magic. The size and potency of the target may limit the amount of components that can be harvested.

## Conflict

These rules are written with a physical combat bias because that is the most common type of conflict greedy adventures get involved with. However, because these rules are based on Risus the combat rules can be used for any type of drawn-out conflict. Anything from negotiations, to a high-society evening party, or a trial to defend one of the party members that got caught breaking the law, or rooftop chases.

In combat everyone involved picks a relevant cliche and rolls it, keeping the dice on the table. This roll is initiative, actions, and hit points combined.

If a character doesn't have a relevant cliche for the conflict they roll a non-relevant cliche at half strength (rounded up) and should be even more creative with their attacks.

Whoever has the highest total roll goes next, which means someone might go several times in a row. Ties are broken by number of dice rolled.

If a character or monster has no cliches with dice they are considered to be out of combat and their fate is decided by the winners.

A magic-user who wants to use magic must declare it before the roll and boost, or double for spells, as normal. Actions with those dice should be related to the effect created.

Attacking is spending a single die to take out a opponent's die of lower value. The die used for the attack does not have to be your highest die.

Even in physical conflicts attacks do not have to deal direct physical damage. You can stun your opponent, disarm them, make them tired, or hurt their morale. 'Damage' can be anything that reduces the target's ability to use their current cliche to resist you.

Can assist other people by giving them any of your dice. They re-roll it and add it to their pool.

When a rolled cliche runs out of dice through damage or actions, PC may re-roll the cliche or switch to a different one.

Anytime you spend a die to attack a enemy or assist an ally, that is your action and the next person goes.

A character is not taken out until they have no dice in any cliche. So if one cliche hits zero, PC uses another right then.

Different types of damage will recover/heal at different times and rates. Boost damage happens when all the dice in that cliche are used up, or PC switches cliches.

When damage brings a cliche down to 0 the character gets a serious wound of some kind. Permanently reduce the cliche by 1 and write down the wound/scar. Cliche reduction from boosting and double-boosting doesn't count as damage for this if it is the damage that reduces the cliche to 0.

### Some Common Damage Types:

Physical - When you are stabbed, punched, etc. Recovers at the rate of 1 die for each full night's rest in a safe location.

Poison/disease/etc - Spider bites, black death, so forth. Restores only when cured by a specific antidote, or magic. Gets worse over time.

Drain - Powerful undead can suck the very life force out of their victims with a touch. This can only be restored by powerful magics.

Casting - Using magic (boosting and double-boosting) exhausts magic-users. This type of damage is restored with a full night's rest.

### Maneuvers and Tactics:

Normal attacks can only remove a die of lower value in combat. For removing a die of equal value a PC can use situational tactics or features of the surrounding environment to gain a +1 combat advantage to the die being used to attack. Which allows a die to take out an equal value die.

Keep in mind that many tactics are better expressed using the assist mechanic.

### Examples:

Swinging on chandelier to get at enemy.

Crushing enemy with stone pillar.

Fireball spell against ice monster.

Using a slashing weapon against unarmored foes.

Wearing heavy armor against enemies with simple/crude weapons.

And so on. GMs are encouraged to be generous in allowing clever ideas, but should also not allow the same tactic/maneuver more than once (maybe twice) in a battle. Unless it was one that is easily duplicated, like using fire against an ice monster.

## General Guidelines

A quote: "Don't make them roll dice if you can't handle their failure." The GM should be prepared to carry on the game if the PCs fail at any point.

If GM calls for a roll, the default is to roll a cliche and add up all the results. GM should give a good idea of what the roll is for so that people can pick an appropriate cliche for it. The GM will have a Target Number (TN) in mind, adding +5 or +10 for cliches that aren't specifically focused on what the roll is for.

Regarding finding things: If you just say 'I'm searching the room' the GM will assume you are just rummaging through piles of trash and opening desk drawers to see if there is anything obvious in the room. Secret doors, hidden compartments, or concealed latches will take more specific examination to find.

Rolling for perception/spot is only if the GM thinks there is a random chance for something, otherwise it's just a matter of spending the time and saying what you are looking for.

Triple damage attacks can either remove three dice of lower value from the target, or a single die of any value.

Strong monsters may have more than one cliche, and may switch between them in combat like a PC. For very large/powerful monsters each cliche will be a different ability. Such as Breath Weapon (4) Spellcasting, or Claws (3). Very strong monsters (such as Dragons) will even roll several cliches at the same time in combat.

Because of how initiative works, it's best to split large grunt squads into several smaller squads for conflicts. Decide how many dice the entire horde of monsters has, then try to divide it up evenly into a number of grunt squads equal to the number of PCs in the party, assuming that doesn't stretch the monster dice too thin.

The damage system includes saving throws and the like. Just use the triple-damage. This means a Basilisk's stare may be avoided once more twice, but the moment a cliche is reduced to zero, that character turns into a statue. Call it 'paralyze' damage. Representing the Basilisk's eyes meeting a character's for a brief second, but the character flinching away just in time. Perhaps with just a heaviness in their body is a side-effect. Monster attacks that do this sort of thing should take effect on a victim the moment any cliche is reduced to zero by the attack.

## Advancement probability

Rolling current cliche level of d6s and attempting to get all odd or all even.

Percentages are approximate.

1d6:	1 in 2	50%	100exp
(Pick even or odd)			
2d6:	2 in 8	50%	200 exp
3d6:	2 in 16	25%	300 exp
4d6:	2 in 32	12%	400 exp
5d6:	2 in 64	6%	500 exp
6d6:	2 in 128	3%	600 exp
7d6:	2 in 256	1.5%	700 exp
8d6:	2 in 512	0.75%	800 exp
9d6:	2 in 1024	0.37%	900 exp
10d6:	2 in 2048	0.18%	1000 exp

Power levels (type of dice)

d6	Normal mortals and animals
d8	+1 items
	or magical creatures
d10	+2 items
	or demons/angels/spirits
d12	+3 items
	or ancient dragons/
	elemental lords

## A Gallery of Scoundrels,

## Do-Gooders, and Ne'er-Do-Wells

By: Gabriel  
Carlson



### Fantasy (heavily D&D-inspired)

#### Ivan

Madman (4), Fearless Mercenary (3),  
Outdoorsman (2), Werewolf Half-breed (1)

Tools: axe, antler dagger, kilt, heavy boots, jerky

#### Jill (pronounced "Yill")

Dashing Adventurer (3), Swordsman (3),  
Snappy Dresser (2), Slick Idiot (2)

Tools: longsword, pomade, extra outfit made of  
fine silk

#### Romeo

Nature's Voice [3], Outdoorsman (2), Animal  
Allies (2)

Tools: flute, antler knife, birdseed, willow bark  
scrolls

#### Andred Hoksottir

Shield Maiden (4), Midwife (2), Over-Protective  
Viking Mother (2), Tale-spinner (2)

Tools: shield, axe, scale mail, medicinal herbs,  
sweets, wipes

#### Xanthru

Hunter of Thing With Squids for Faces (4),  
Extra-Planar Mentalist [2], Zen Floutist (2)

Tools: silver scimitar, blowgun with poisoned  
darts, trophies, bone flute

#### Victoria Dalmont

Noble Warrior (4), Valiant Spirit (3), Would-Be  
Nobility (2), Elegant Dancer (1)

### Tricks

Nimble-Fingered Sel'duk (SoB) (3), Cheat (3),  
Son-of-a-Djinn [2]

Hook: Monstrous Appearance

### Riss

Weapons Master (4), Sly Fox-Changer (3), Dirty  
Fighter (2), Walking Witticism (1)

Tools: sais, bastard sword, bolas, boomerang,  
foil, mace, flail, dashing apparel

### Syl

Wise-girl Fence (4), Rogue Sorceress (3), Half-  
Dürkalf Frost Queen (2), Classy Thief (2)

Hook: Magic is never subtle, and requires  
specially prepared pieces of black quartz as a  
focus

Tools: ill-gotten gains, black quartz pendant,  
lock picks, poison ring, half a bundle of  
cigarillos

### Liza

Willies-Giving Sorceress (3), Priestess of  
DEATH! [2], Evil Overlord (2)

Sidekick: "Goethe" [Hellhound (2), Shadow  
Magic (1)]

Tools: unholy symbol, ritual trappings, leather  
& ring "armor," extra well done doggy treats

### Eva

Pickpocket (4), Elven Acrobat (3), Lipstick  
Lesbian (2), Tricksy Fighter (1)

Tools: dagger, razor ring, pepper bombs, Elvish  
rope, lipstick

### Sama

Stealth Monkey (4), Kung-Fu Acrobat (3),  
Wild-Woman Battle Devi [2]

Hook: Must dance to any music heard

## Fielding

Occult Researcher (4), Field Archaeologist (3), Dog Lover (2), Ex-Army Boxer (1)

## 'Jay

Feral Half-Elf Druid [3], Scrapper (2), Haunting Floutist (1)

Shieldmates: Forest Critter Swarm (3)

## Miska

Catman Hunter [3], Woodland Ninja (3), Dashing Rogue (1)

## Misha

Catwoman Enchantrix [3], Independent Woman (3), Child of the Forest (1)

## Blyx (Ridley Scott's "Legend")

Goblin Huntsman (4), Striving Shakespearean Poet (3), Ambitious Wasteland Captain (2)

Questing Dice: Serve Darkness 5/5

## Xanthea Silversong

Woodland Protector (4), Elvish Scout [2], Cat Lover [1]

Tools: trail rations, dressing tools, hatchet, bow & arrows, heavy blanket, catnip

## Dr. Silas Redgrave

Hypocratic Physician (4), Gruff Vet. (2), Woodsman-in-a-Pinch (2), Afflicted Lycanthrope [2]

Hook: Must shift to wolfman every night of the full moon and kill, or be stuck as a mindless, ravening beast until the next full moon.

Tools: black doctor's bag, lots of wolfsbane, journal (mostly notes about treating lycanthropy), old service [setting-appropriate weapon]

## Milbrook Hornswoggle

Knower of Things (4), Gnomish Merchant (3), Lady's Man (2), Loutist (1)

Tools: cart o' stuff with a "pad" in the back, notebooks, treatises, scrolls, Gnomish "lute," nice wardrobe

## Melrock Hickoryfist

Minotaur Bloodletter [3] Culinary Aficionado (2), Reluctant Jungle-Gym (2)

Tools: trophy scars, battle axe, spice set

## Diira Qolsuthram

Flashy Circus Acrobat (3), Adventurous Water Elemental [2], Run-away Nobility (2), Expert Liar (1)

Tools: flashy clothing, stage jewelry, REAL jewelry, solid necklace (not a torque) that indicates noble house, carrots

## Covahl Plexish

Demon Prince [3], Huntsman (3), Devilish Negotiator [1]

Hook: Demonic Inheritance (weakness to blessed things, aversion to holiness and those with faith)

Tools: recurved horn-tipped ebony longbow with obsidian-tipped raven-feather-fletched arrows, signet ring, form contracts

## Nyles

Sailor (3), Sea Witch [2], Slick-Tongued Smuggler (2), Improvisational Shipwright (2)

Hook: Magic depends on naturally occurring saltwater

## Petunia (Poison Elves)

Psionic Faerie [3], Great Warrior (3), Kink-tacular Nympho (1)

Lucky Shots 3/3

Hook: Tiny

Tools: her-sized halberd, short sword, leather & ring bikini, thigh-high boots, focus crystals

### **Sophie Childs**

Stumbling but Sharp-Minded Apprentice (4), Sagacious Reader (3), Shrewd Haggler (2), Animal Lover (1)

Tools: arcane primers, notebooks, ribbon-bound action/romance serials, animal treats

### **Dairean**

Paladin of the Green [3], Well-Mannered Satyr (3), Forester (2)

Hook: Code of Conduct/Bond of Duty

Tools: battleaxe, stout self-bow, leather armor with embossed tree of life, ocarina

### **My'ira Laiqua**

Well-Read Bard (3), Wailing Battle-Mage [2], Rousing Public Speaker (2), Trained Fighter (1)

Tools: long sword, lavish lyre, annals

### **Justin Archimedes**

Outdoorsman (4), Forest Defender (3), Masterful Tracker (3)

### **Charlotte Caldwell**

Defender of the Downtrodden (3), Reformed Street Thief (2), Fiery-Eyed Paladin [2], Nice Lady (1)

Lucky Shots 3/3

Hook: Code of Conduct (Celibacy)

Tools: blessed long sword, breastplate with chain skirt, faithful steed, simple clothing

### **Mordred**

Undead Slayer (4), White Necromancer [2], Surprisingly Nice Guy (2)

Tools: blessed water, salt, chalk, white ash stakes, torches, bastard sword, antiseptic herbs, bag of jelly candies

### **The Marquises**

(after Tom Waits's "Small Change Got Rained on With His Own .38")

### **Max**

Small-Time Mastermind (4), Knife-Fighter (3), Wise-Guy (3)

### **Ulysses**

Half-Orc Tough (3), Teamster (3), Equal Rights Activist (2), Sportsman-Like (2)

### **Micah**

Mechanical Genius (4), Inventor (3), Chemist (2)

Hook: Foot-in-Mouth Disease

### **Ruby**

Smooth-Talker (4), Racketeer (3), Yenta (2), Bar Wench (1)

### **Nick**

Thug (3), Pick-Pocket (3), Connected Guy (2)

### **Alex**

Cat Burglar (3), Unwitting Psychic [2], Raven-Haired Half-Elf Beauty (2)

Quest: Love-Struck Teenager 5/5

Tools: lock picks, climbing claws, tool roll, slinky black clothing, hand crossbow, stone-biter bolts, lustrous black hair

### **Small Change**

Liar, Liar, Pants-on-Fire (4), Street Urchin (3), Skin-of-his-Teeth Pickpocket (2)

## SOMETHING FAMILIAR

### Nimbles

Sneaky Li'l Sumbitch Rat (3), Super-Strength [2]

Lucky Shots 6/6

Quest: Save Jorlason's Ass ("owner") 5/5

### Sharilaya

Average Cat (i.e. Princess of Everything, Especially You) (4), Magical Helper [2]

Lucky Shots 6/6

Quest: Prove Feline Superiority 5/5

Hook: Fastidious

### Leonardo

Go-Getter German Shepherd (4), Super-Bark [2]

Lucky Shots 3/3

Quest: Stick with Michael (owner) 5/5

### Skraven

Necromantic Touch [3], "Quoth the" Kind of Raven (3), Magical Helper [1]

Hook: Wilting Presence

## DIABLO I & II

### Rosetta

Zen Archer (3), Sister of the Sightless Eye [2], Treasure Hunter (2)

Lucky Shots 3/3

### Vandal

Peerless Fighter (4), Driven Hero (3), Weekend Weaponsmith (2)

Lucky Shots 3/3

### Mordred II

Eldritch Magus [3], Cryptic Sage (3), Herbalist (1)

### Michael

Devout Paladin of the Light [3], Fearless Warrior (3), Natural Leader (2)

Hook: Selfless Martyr

### Rowan

Noble Barbarian [4], Survivalist (2)

### Missy

Elementalist [3], Occultist (2), Playful Scamp (2)

### Nike

Acrobatic Fighter (3), Amazon Warrior [2], Independent Woman (2)

Quest: Protect Jungle Home 5/5

### Ostean

Investigative Necromancer [3], Morbid Aristotelian Philosopher (2), Dog Lover (2)

### Kulavar

Force of Nature [2], Totemic Lycanthrope [2], Emersonian (2)

### Silence

Vengeful Assassin (4), Hardened Soldier (3), Acrobatic Infiltrator (2)

Quest: Mage-Killer 5/5

### Modern +

### Neriel

Angel that Tripped [3], Sculptor (2)

Divine Intervention 6/6

Tools: hammer, chisels, sandpaper, angelic  
raiment, glorious Morningstar

### **Joshua**

Urban Shaman (4), Street Rat (3), Philosophy  
major (2), Seer (1)

### **Ace (cyberpunk)**

Ace Decker [4], Shooting-Range Regular (2),  
Rollerblade Enthusiast (1)

Hook: Over-Confident

### **Fantasy Flight Games's "Redline"**

### **Marie O'Bannon**

Bygone Pirate Queen (4), Smooth Talker (3),  
Crack Shot (2)

Quest: Daredevil 5/5

### **Chuckie-T**

Snake-Eyed Trader (4), Survivor (3), Wasteland  
Scrounger (2), Gunman (2)

Hook: Pariah (Mutant)

# Showdown at Alice's Daydream

by Chester / xwd

## Introduction

In this adventure the PC's are a group of bad dudes (or nice guys or whatever) who operate above, outside, or somewhere in the neighborhood of the law, as is their idiom. They can be vigilantes, rookie cops, FBI special task force, whatever works for 'em. 10 dice, 4 max in a cliche, hooks & tales and pumping allowed. Feel free to throw in whatever else you want. I'm imagining this game being more along the lines of over-the-top action movies.

## The Place

It's an amusement park named "Alice's Daydream" somewhere in the Great Plains of the United States, set right around now-ish, give or take 20 years. The park was constructed about 10 years ago around a massive towering roller coaster named "The Obelisk." The Obelisk towers 100 feet above the ground and snakes its way in, out, and around a pillar of steel, with the cars being pneumatically launched out of the station and receiving boosts at later points on the track. The project took a long time to complete, and due to being over-budget and the distinct possibility of corruption, the Obelisk tragically crashed on its first trip with passengers. The park was never able to recover from this, and closed down less than a year later, quickly falling into disrepair. Nobody cared enough to tear it down, and it has fallen under state ownership via eminent domain. Nobody still cares.

## The Problem

The secluded location proved to be an ideal hideout for a gang of neo-anarchist ATV-riding thugs calling themselves "The Howling Wolves." (They also have other totally sweet vehicles too. Dirt bikes, muscle cars, monster trucks, whatever floats your boat.) Their philosophy is "Finders Keepers," which is basically "we take your stuff and if you want it, come get it." They've begun terrorizing the nearby communities: committing random acts of vandalism, robbing stores, doing donuts on people's lawns at 2 AM. Law enforcement is understaffed due to the historically low crime rate, and are unable to do anything effective.

## The Solution

It's up to the PC's to go solve this problem, since nobody else is up to the task. Remember, this is Risus, and players are encouraged to solve problems in entertaining ways, so violence does not need to be the answer. If the PC's aren't already interested in the gang, show them why it's important that they do something: play to

their sympathies and have some Jerks on ATVs (3) (riding around, running people over, shooting guns inaccurately) show up and threaten or destroy something (i.e., small children, a pizza place, their car). Have them chase or follow the bad guys back to this park, get them to follow up on a tip that there's howling sounds coming from the abandoned park (it's their war cry!), or let them beat up sketchy guys on ATVs until they get their answers. Make sure they come in at sunset or night, possibly sunrise.

Gangs of several (3-4) Bored Jerks on ATVs (3) patrol the park half-assedly, blasting hard rock on boom boxes. If alerted or attacked as a group (and not attempted to be separated), they go for their walkie-talkies and call for backup, which arrives indefinitely until the PC's escape or it gets boring. Other gangsters tool around the park as well, ranging from Mean Dweebs on Dirtbikes (2) to Drunk Morons in a Monster Truck (5), for example. The gang has a couple of ammo stashes in some of the old rides (which still work, mostly) but they've been protected with Half-Assed Booby Traps (2) that cause the rides to start up or catch on fire or something, maybe a Nasty Series of Booby Traps (4) which feature that plus high explosives. They keep all of their loot in the bumper cars, guarded by Really Mean Junkyard Dogs (5), in case you want to get back stolen property.

Their boss is hiding up at the top of the Obelisk, in a converted maintenance room he's remodeled to really open up the place. He refers to himself as "The Wolf." He is a Rhetoric-Spewing Gang Leader (4) and Extreme Sports Extremist (4), and he has an elite Brainwashed Bodyguard (4) who will gladly take bullets or jump off the ride for him. While the ride itself should theoretically be working, it might not be a good idea to try using a ride at a theme park that has been closed for almost a decade. It's the fastest way up and one of the more thrilling ways down, though. When you have the climactic combat, the Obelisk, a Huge Unmainted Roller Coaster (5), gets involved, attacking whoever's riding the coaster the hardest. Losing combat to it should mean that it collapses in a fairly dramatic manner.

## Greetz

Thanks to everyone who helped me out with this, in no particular order: Dan, Calvin, Bio, Shelton, Stephen, Sean, the Risus mailing lists and forums, #nethack, OmniPro, and ScribTEX, an online L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X editor. That's right, I programmed this document. For the sake of argument this document's released under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License, which you can read more about at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>. This version pushed July 21st, 2011.



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## Location, Location, Location

A freak snowstorm can happen anywhere. It should be someplace that the PCs are familiar with and feel safe enough that it would be weird for them to be out and about with a bunch of weapons, but if they are far from home, that's OK. It's your game.

By the time the PCs are out of doors, the scenery needs to be a winter wonderland, with kids out playing in the snow, parents cursing trying to shovel it up. There should be a large number of snowmen around and the occasional snow fort.

## The Storm

This is a good old-fashioned, heavy, wet, super packing snow. Roads are pretty much impassible, so if anyone wants to get anywhere, it's walking time (hopefully the PCs have boots made for such an occasion). Just walking around should be extremely difficult (the kids, being lighter, don't sink in as much and they have sleds). And just like any good scary story, the power goes out too.

## The Incident

Once the PCs are out and about (see **Getting them out of the house**), it happens. A large wad of snow, hits one of them in the back of the head (GM picks his favorite hot tempered target). The PCs will hear the sound of children laughing.

If the PCs shake it off and try to ignore it, let them get pelted by a few more snowballs. If they still ignore it, have a large barrage of snowballs rain on them and have them lose a die in their most applicable snowball-fighting cliché.

## The Incident Snowballs

Not surprisingly, it shouldn't take too long before everyone in town is involved in the snowball fight in some way.

## The Snow Thickens

Somehow, this isn't your typical Christmas snow (damn pollution (or whatever excuse you want to use to make this possible (evil winter wizards work too))). Any snowman that gets hit by a snowball will magically come to life and try to get the person who hit them unless they are a kid.

It shouldn't take too long before the town is amuck with laughing kids and screaming adults.

However, once darkness sets in, even the children aren't safe from the snowmen.

## The Armory

If you are feeling particularly nice, you can have the snow forts armed with ice balls left behind from some of the more ornery kids. These can count as bonus dice gear against the snow man zombies who are made with a particularly soft snow (+1 die).

## Jingle Bells

Just like any zombie apocalypse, there seems to be no end of snowmen around. The PCs even occasionally see them making other, even larger, snowmen. The PCs simply have to survive until midnight. At midnight, they will hear the ringing of sleigh bells. All of the snowmen will cover their ears and fall apart. Ho, Ho Ho! Merry Christmas!

## Snowball Fright!

### Genre

Any

### Tone

Silly Horror

### Campaign Options

whatever ones you want

### Description

Buried in snow on Christmas Eve, what's a poor soul to do but cause a little trouble with the wet, well-packing, white stuff. Too bad the supernatural got involved.

**Truth is stranger than fiction dept.**

[The Great Snowball Battle of Rappahannock Academy, February 25, 1863](#)

## Getting them out of the house

Part of the challenge for this adventure is getting the PCs to actually leave the house (or whatever shelter they are in). Here are some options.

- The pizza delivery guy got stuck (on a 30 minute or free run to the netherworld) and they have to go get the pizza themselves.
- Utilize one of the PCs hooks to have to go and "rescue" someone stuck out in the mess.
- If all else fails, have the house collapse under the weight of the snow. This one might be particularly useful to get them out of the house without equipment.

## Common Random Foes

**Random Brat Kid Horde (4)** - A bunch of hooligans looking to defeat the PCs with their coordinated snowball fighting skills. If they win, the PC will get the whitewashing of their lives.

**Poor Frightened Dog (2)** - maybe in a fenced yard, maybe tied up, maybe running loose. All of the activity is really messing with these poor pooches and they are running scared. If they feel cornered, they will attack. They might organize into a pack of wild dogs (4)

**Snowman Zombie (3)** - If one of the snowmen around town gets hit by a snowball, they will magically come to life. Odds are, they will move through the snow faster than your average PC.

**Snowman Goliath (5)** - if it starts to get dark, the snowmen will have built a few of these monstrosities to add to the terror.

# THE ABANDONED TEMPLE OF THE HOWLING OBELISK

In the Moonstone Tavern the adventurers over hear rumors of activity by an old temple complex called Rug Vorden to the north. They decided to set off the following day...

After a lengthy walk, through the woods along the northern path, the adventurers catch a glimpse of something green jumping into a hollow in a clearing up ahead. A few more steps and they could see a sunken doorway in the ground.

Long abandoned, the Temple Of The Howling Obelisk is a dark and forboding structure. It's wall were thick and darkened by ages at nature's peril; along with unwanted visits...

## 1. Store room

This room is full of cobwebs, boxes, barrels and chests.

**Spiders x4 (2)**

## 2. Entrance Hall

A large pool dominates the centre of this room. Benches surround the pool.

Anyone searching the area must avoid the tentacles that rise from the pool (TN 7)

40gp

## 3. Librarian's Office

This room is empty but it was clearly an office.

## 4. Gallery

This long hall served as a gallery in it's day. Three startled Orcs turn to see you come through the door.

**Orcs x3 (3)**

## 5. Bursary

Once the bursary and finance office of the temple now a tattered velvet room.

*Healing Potion x2*

## 6. Reading room

A round room onced used as a reading room for more volatile arcane texts.

**Demonic Book (4)**

## 7. Arcane Study Area

A sign reads..."do not disturb". As the PC's enter the room a tiny winged man appears with sparkles coming from his fingers!

**Imp Mage (4)**

*holds the key to the Library*

## 8. Library

The dusty shelves are lined with arcane books and scrolls, some chained up and some encased in booksized iron maidens. inbetween the two bookcase is a goblin shaman.

**Goblin Shaman (5)**

*Holds Key to Magick Workshop  
Obelisk Rune (Search TN11)*

## 9a. Lower Entrance

The PCs decend into a torch lit hall...

## 9b. The Conviscation Room

This room used to house the items conviscated before entering the great hall.

*Sword +1 and Mages Robe +1  
120gp*

## 9c. The Vaulted Tower

This tower has a huge metal door at least 1 foot thick. It's all just dust and debris inside.

## 10. Dining Room

This is the dining room with a goblin watch playing cards at the table!

**Goblins x4 (3)**

*Healing potions (1 per PC),  
80gp*

## 11. Magick Workshop

The room looks like an old laboratory.

*Obelisk Rune (Search TN11)*

## 12. Great Hall

At the end of hte great hall is the Howling Obelisk. **Drefl the Orc Warlord (5)** sits on the top step of the Obelisk as it howls it's low but enchanting tune...

...On the Obelisk there are 3 carved cavities?

*Obelisk Rune (Search TN14)...*

...A Red Dragon (6) will burst through from 18 on a roll of a 6 or if the PC's find and place all 3 runes in the Obelisk thus opening the Ruined Catacombs anyway!

## 13. Holy Well

the holy well heals to full health once per visit Rug Vorden.

## 14. Crypt

This stone room houses the crypts of the sacred.

## 15. Lesser Alter

This small room of worship has beautiful carved columns and alter.

*On the alter is the key to the Cell Block.*

## 16. Zoological Study

A large pitted animal enclosure decends from the study area. The enclosures contain nothing but bones but their is a small chest on the lower level.

*Chest is locked (TN 18) 1d6 damage if failed.*

*Contains 100gp (per PC)*

## 17. Cell Block

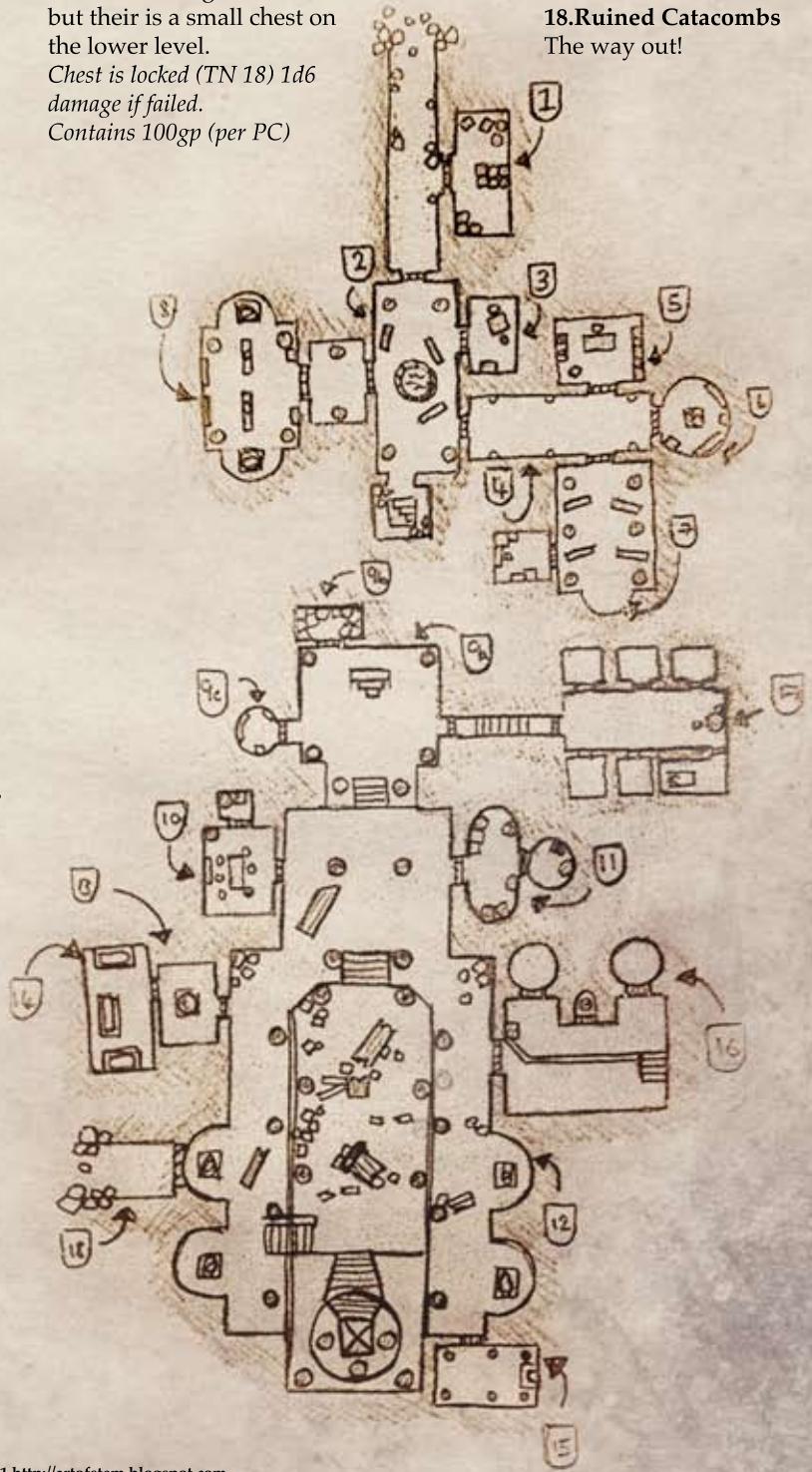
As you enter the block you hear a femine gasp as a huge Ratman lunges from the room on the far right...

...**Orlaf the Rat Jailer (6)** growls as you rage into combat...

...Orlaf has the keys to the cells. The prisoner is **Elivin (4)** she is the daughter of the mayor of the next village to the north!

## 18. Ruined Catacombs

The way out!



# THE LOVE STAR

A one-page *Risus* adventure setting, ©2011 Avram Gruber. *Risus the Anything Game* is ©2007 by S John Ross.

With the known population of the 12 Colonies reduced to a few tens of thousands of people, and spirits low, it is imperative that families stay together, new romances bloom, and broken hearts are mended. The crew of the *Rising Star* remind their fellow ragtag fugitives that they possess a power the Cylons can never understand: the power of love.

## Stories

Unlike real-world cruise ships, the crew of the *Rising Star* mingle pretty freely with the passengers. For each session, there should be one storyline that's mostly about the crew, and two that involve visiting passengers from some other ship in the fleet.

Resolving the major dilemma in any storyline generates a bonus die that can be used in a key conflict in another, not-yet-resolved storyline, provided that there's a character who can plausibly bring something they've learned from the earlier storyline into the later.

### Miss Caprica

The *Rising Star* is hosting the Miss Caprica Pageant, a beauty contest for young, unmarried women.

**First conflict:** Can one of the female PCs be convinced to compete? A male PC to judge? Both?

**More conflicts:** Rival contestants will attempt to sabotage the female PC, or seduce the male judge PC.

**Resolved:** When the pageant ends, and a winner is picked.

### Zacariah's Mother

Zacariah's mother is visiting, and driving him crazy.

**Conflicts:** Argument over whether Zacariah is eating right, sleeping enough, etc. When is he going to find a nice girl and settle down? Zacariah secretly tries to indulge in some behavior his mother disapproves of; does she find out?

**Resolved:** When someone convinced Zacariah's mother to let him live his own life.

### Juno's Job

Cassiopeia is angling for Juno's job!

**Conflicts:** Seducing the male PCs. Disturbing passengers, making it look like Juno's fault. Secretly making problems, publicly fixing them.

**Resolved:** When Cassiopeia is thwarted three times, or is somehow convinced to give up.

### Cassiopeia

Former Sociolator (4), Part-Time Med-Tech (2), Dating Starbuck (2).

## Your Crew:

Feel free to customize them with your own Clichés to bring them up to 10 dice.

### Merlin, your Captain

Starship Captain (4), Old Spacer (2), Religious Man (3)

### Vesta, your Captain's Daughter

Captain's Daughter (2), Cute and Perky (4), Teenager (1)

### Juno, your Cruise Director

Cruise Director (4), Incurable Romantic (2), Organized (3)

### Zacariah, your Bartender

Bartender (4), Black Belt (2), Party Animal (3)

### Dr Brahmin, your Ship's Doctor

Ship's Doctor (4), Gossip (3), Skirt Chaser (1)

## Gogget Visits

"Gogget" Ganges, the *Rising Star*'s former purser, is a member of the Council of 12. Work is taking a toll on him, and he's visiting his old ship to relax.

**Conflicts:** Keeping his aide from bringing up work. Other passengers recognizing him and asking for political help with their problems.

**Resolved:** When Ganges either has had a relaxing visit (several conflicts go by without him being disturbed), or comes to realize that his work is more relaxing than being on the *Rising Star*.

### "Gogget" Ganges

Former Ship's Purser (2), Member of the Council of 12 (4)

## The Captain's Cabin

Captain Merlin's cabin was damaged in the last Cylon attack, so he has to bunk with one of the other PCs while it's repaired.

**First conflict:** The other PCs argue over who has to take the captain. (Skip this if there's only one choice.) If there are more than two choices, use the Cascade mechanic from *The Risus Companion*.

**Other conflicts:** Who gets the bed, and who has to use the floor? Who gets to shower first? Does one roommate need the room for romance? Might there be romantic tension between the two roommates?

**Resolved:** When the roommates have found a way to settle a conflict amicably.

# THE OBELISK AT DAWN

## PREMISE

Three years ago, Queen Neferisus and crew disappeared along with her royal skyship, The Obelisk At Dawn. Today, it reappeared over a field, apparently abandoned. The Pharaoh, King Suptic-Ka, has ordered his servants to investigate.

## Character Creation

Characters are built using 10 dice, with all options available. Double-Pump Cliches can only be used with magical powers.

Characters are faithful and loyal servants of an Egyptian Pharaoh in the paradise underworld of Osiris. That's right...your characters are already long dead.

## Setting Rules

Characters cannot die in the Realm of Osiris, being raised to life at the next sunrise. If they leave this realm, and die again, they face oblivion.

## THE OBELISK AT DAWN

### REALM OF OSIRIS

The skyship is trailing a rope ladder from a door in area 1 that reaches the ground. It is an easy climb. Everywhere on board the skyship is the faint sound of howling wind, screams, and the sound of combat.

**1. Porch:** A long open air porch with walls 4 feet tall, numerous palms in vases, and benches.

**2. Parlor:** Queen Neferisus entertained

guests here. There are numerous benches and a large throne.

**3. Engine Room:** The Engine of Thoth sits in this room and keeps the skyship flying.

**4. Pilot's Room:** This room contains a bed, benches, a sitting pillow and several tables.

**5. Guard's Room:** Five beds and numerous supplies of food and water are contained here. Of note, none of the food or water looks to be no more than a day old.

**6. King's Chamber:** When the King visits the Queen, he stays in this room with a large bed, throne, benches and tables.

**7. Obelisk:** A large obelisk covered in glowing green glyphs stands here under an open roof. The floor is also covered in glyphs. Anyone touching the Obelisk causes the entire ship and everyone on board to slip into the *Realm of Set*, a vast void of darkness and howling winds.

**8. Servant's Rooms:** Each of these rooms has 2 beds.

**9. Queen's Chamber:** A large, plush chamber with numerous benches, tapestries, a throne and a mound of pillows.

**10. Queen's Bedroom:** Like her chamber, expertly appointed with a massive bed and shelves.

**11. Queen's Bath:** A large stone tub sits here. The water is still warm as if recently drawn.

## THE OBELISK AT DAWN REALM OF SET

The Realm of Set is darkness and howling winds. Any character in Area 1 must make a TN 5 roll per round of combat, or whenever entering it, to avoid being swept overboard by the winds to their death. Minions of Set are immune to the winds.

Every 10 minutes in this realm equals 1 year in the Realm of Osiris. The Queen has been here only 30 minutes from her point of view.

### Of Note

**1. Porch:** There are 5 Minions of Set guarding the porch. **Minion of Set (4)x5: Evil scimitar wielding magic-users.**

**2. Parlor:** Anutep, is here, along with 2 Minions of Set. They are torturing the Pilot hoping to force him to take the ship back to the Realm of Osiris so that they may hold open a portal for the Realm of Set to invade. The pilot has resisted so far, but did send back a 'ghost' of the skyship to seek help. **Anutep** has two Cliches - **High Priest of Set (5): Wielding the darkest of magics**, and **Warrior of Darkness (4): Using a spear with supernatural strength**. **Minions of Set:** see above. **Pilot (1):** A total, bloody, mess who can still pilot the Skyship. Once released from Anutep, the pilot can take the ship back to the Realm of Osiris.

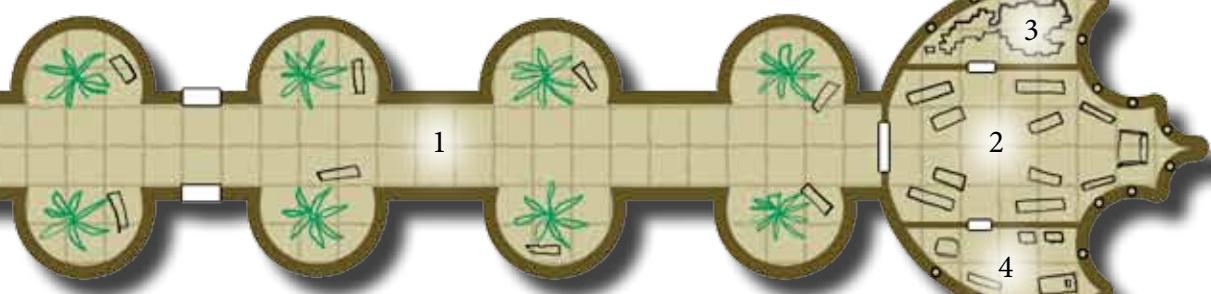
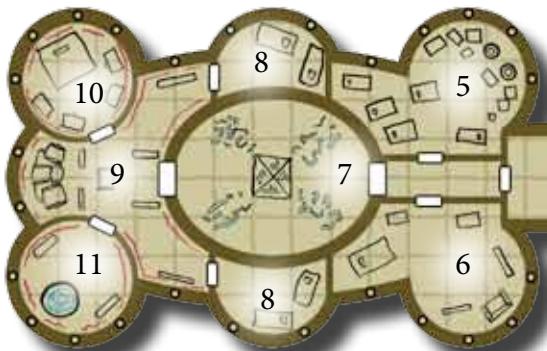
**7. Obelisk:** The moment the characters are drawn to the Realm of Set, they find themselves in the middle of a combat. On one side are the **Queen's Guards (3) x3: Eunuch warriors**. The other is 3 **Minions of Set** (see Area 2), and a **Serpent Headed Monstrosity (6): Huge fangs, raking claws, venomous bite**. There are already two dead Guards of the Queen, and six dead servants of the queen laying in pools of blood.

**10. Queen's Bedroom:** The Queen, Neferisus, along with 3 of her servants are hiding in this room. They have only daggers to defend themselves. **Queen Neferisus (3): Beautiful and aristocratic royalty with a dark secret**. **Queen's Servants (2): Faithfully domestic**.

### DARK HEARTS

Once returned to the Realm of Osiris, the Queen reveals in shame what happened. In their mortal lives, Neferisus and Anutep were lovers. Anutep was able to communicate between the realms and ask Neferisus to aid him in escape.

Anutep, servant to, and by the command of, Set, had tricked Neferisus to come so that Anutep and his minions may use the skyship to invade the Realm of Osiris. The characters prevented it from happening... this time...but there are other means, and Set is very patient.



by Brent Wolke © 2011  
Risus: One Page Challenge

# ARTHURIA

## A campaign outline

*for Risus: The Anything RPG*



In the Year of Our Lord 510, the great wizard Merlin brought to King Arthur his ageless wisdom. His aid took many forms, from showing Arthur how to find (some say forge) the sword Excalibur to granting insight into the Kings enemies. He showed Camelot's craftsmen how to build suits of Shining Armor with coiled springs that increase a knight's strength threefold. He taught sages secrets of mathematics, science, and engineering that propelled the kingdom into a Golden Age.

Nearly 25 years have passed since the coming of Merlin. Arthur's court has grown to nearly 200 Knights, and Camelot has spread peace across Britain. Many from the Round Table have set out on the most Holy of quests, even recovering the Grail of Christ, not a cup

but a stone of an unearthly green glow. The Grail whispered further secrets to those Merlin trusted to study it, powers to drive darkness from men's hearts, to cure all Earthly ills, to master the beasts of the field.

But portents grow dark. Merlin has disappeared. The King's sister, Morgana, has stolen the Grail. An army gathers under the banner of the dark knight Mordred. And the King's mind is bent by the possibility that his most trusted Knight is dallying with the Queen.

What will become of Camelot, of Britain, of the World? If there is no more Merlin, no more Arthur, who will rise to the call of history? Will it be you?

### Who is Merlin?

Let's get down to brass tacks. Merlin is a time traveler. He's not saying where he came from or if he's even human, though he looks close enough to pass. He has been around just about every where and when.

That is, until his time machine's power core *fell out* over Wales in the early 6th century. Merlin crash-landed near the encampment of a Celtic war-chief named Arthur. The traveler took it upon himself to mold this man into the legendary king and to build up the Knights of the Round Table so that one might find his power core (what they called the Grail).

Unfortunately, Merlin came to care a great deal for Arthur and his burgeoning kingdom. When Percival came back with the Grail, the "wizard" didn't just take off again into the time stream.

One of Merlin's students, Morgana, was too bright for anyone's good. She managed to figure out the power core and used it to banish Merlin to another time and place.

It's up to the player characters to recover the Grail and return it to Merlin, wherever and whenever he might be.



### SAMPLE CLICHES AND WHAT THEY'RE GOOD FOR



- **Artisan** (designing Wonders, fixing machines, understanding deceptively advanced physics and maths)
- **Bard** (reciting poetry, singing songs, telling tales, earning free drinks)
- **Courtier** (giving compliments, flattering, politicking)
- **Knight** (dueling, being chivalrous, looking dashing in shiny suits of clockwork armor)
- **Man-At-Arms** (getting down to the actual dirty business of war)
- **Mystic** (reading the hearts of men, controlling beasts, healing the sick)
- **Physick** (healing the sick, concocting medicines, explaining to the peasants what "germs" are)
- **Quaestor** (traveling across the land, enduring hardships of the environment, solving insidious riddles)
- **Sage** (gleaning knowledge of the future from Merlin's writings, spouting lore on any number of topics)
- **Scout** (skirmishing, sneaking, reconnoitering)

## Vanguard



### Offensive Assemblage

**DODGE** - No other card's abilities affect the Vanguard, either on his or the other player's turns. The bonus from the battlefield type still remains active.

## Cannon Trooper



### Offensive Assemblage

**OVERPOWER** - The Cannon Trooper deals an additional die of damage for each '6' rolled when winning a round of combat.

## Torchman



### Offensive Assemblage

**BURN** - An opponent damaged by the Torchman's attack will take a die of damage at the end of their turn, every turn, until they spend their action putting out the flames.

## Detonative Device Distributor



### Defensive Company

**MINEFIELD** - Use his action to name himself or another team member, and a single number from 1 to 6. If that team member is attacked, and their attacker rolls that number on any of their dice, then the attacker takes a die of damage regardless of winning or losing the combat. The effect lasts until the Distributor's next turn.

## Battle Automaton



### Defensive Company

**INTERCEPTE** - The Battle Automaton can intercede and force any opponent choosing to attack one of its team members, to attack it instead.

## Machinist



### Defensive Company

**REINFORCE** - The Machinist chooses 1 set of cards on his team (one color), giving them a +1 die bonus. The Machinist can use their action to change which group on their team receives this bonus. The bonus disappears once the Machinist dies.

## Sharpshooter



### Support Personnel

**SNIPER DISTANCE** - The Sharpshooter does not take damage when they're attacking on their turn - they only take damage when losing a combat round on another player's turn.

## Caretaker



### Support Personnel

**HEAL AND REPAIR** - The Caretaker can spend their action to heal 1 die for themselves or any one of their teammates.

## Agent Provocateur



### Support Personnel

**TROUBLE** - The Agent Provocateur can use his action and take a die of damage to himself to force an attack between 2 members of one other team. This happens immediately, and the Agent chooses who's considered the attacker and who's considered the defender.

# Factions of the Citadel - The Second Age

A one-page Steampunk setting by Dan Suptic ©2012  
For use with S John Ross' Risus: The Anything RPG

In Factions of the Citadel - The Second Age, each player plays as a whole team of combatants in Victorian Europe. They've each been hired by a different wealthy royal family in order to take over vital areas of a giant city-fortress. This setting is made to be played without a GM at all, and is suited for quick, tournament style play. The goal is simple - each player must eradicate all other players' teams and secure the area for themselves!

Teams are made with 10 dice, and each cliché represents a single person on that team. Clichés are picked from 9 specifically listed clichés, and no player's team may have 2 of the same cliché. The only Advanced Option used is Pumping Clichés.

To play, first everyone playing constructs their team. Then, decide if it will be a free-for-all style tournament (where everyone fights at once until only 1 team remains) or if it's an elimination style tournament (where teams fight one-on-one, with the winners pairing up to fight each subsequent round). After that, the battleground is determined with a single die roll - different battlegrounds give a +1 die bonus to different groups of clichés. Once the battleground is chosen, pick a player at random to start.

On a player's turn, each of their team members (each cliché they have) gets 1 action. The player may have their team members act in any order they choose. Any cliché can use their action to attack any other opponent's cliché. All die rolls are open, as are all players' cliché lists (and die levels for each). Attacks use the normal Risus combat rules, with the loser taking a die of damage. The only extra option in combat is the Pumping Clichés rule (and only single pumps, not double pumps). Players may not use the team up rules for their clichés. All clichés have a special ability, and some require an action to activate. These are explained in each cliché's description. Players may choose to have team members take no action as well.

Whenever a cliché drops to zero dice, that single cliché is out of the fight. When a player's whole team is reduced to zero dice in their clichés, then that player has been eliminated. If running an elimination style tournament, then the surviving player moves on to the next round after healing their team's clichés back to normal. If doing a free-for-all tournament, then the surviving players continue to fight on *without* healing their clichés. If you're the last surviving team of either style of play, then congratulations, you've won! Control of the area is yours, and your employers will reward you greatly!

## Battleground table

- 1 - Open area, +1 die to Offensive Assemblage
- 2 - Closed area, +1 die to Defensive Company
- 3 - Unconventional area, +1 die to Support Personnel
- 4 - WIDE open area, +1 die to ALL clichés
- 5 - Simple area, no bonus to any cliché
- 6 - Versatile area, each team chooses a group for their +1 die bonus. Players can change the group that gets this bonus at the start of each of their turns.

## Offensive Assemblage

This designation does not mean the following clichés are offensive in language or dress (although they may still possibly be); this instead refers to team members whose contribution to the effort are the most outright aggressive. The Vanguard, Cannon Trooper and Torchman make up the Offensive Assemblage.

### Vanguard

Quick and agile, and usually the first to scout out an area, the Vanguard strikes hard and fast before his opponent can fully react. Armed with a light scatter gun and a sturdy cricket bat, the Vanguard relies on his speed and maneuverability to get into close combat.  
*Ability* - No other cliché's abilities affect the Vanguard, either on his or the other player's turns. The bonus from the battlefield type still remains active.

### Cannon Trooper

The Cannon Trooper is a soldier equipped with a portable, refit naval cannon and a heavy duty scatter gun for backup. His attacks are devastating, destroying man and machine in a spectacular and explosive display.  
*Ability* - The Cannon Trooper deals an additional die of damage for each '6' rolled when winning a round of combat.

### Torchman

The Torchman sets his foes ablaze with a specialized device that sprays a mixture of chemicals known as 'pyro'. Pyro reacts to contact with oxygenated air by bursting into flames. It's also rather adhesive too, and will continue to burn while clinging to the unlucky victim.  
*Ability* - An opponent damaged by the Torchman's attack will take a die of damage at the end of their turn, every turn, until they spend their action putting out the flames.

## Defensive Company

Those members of the defensive company excel at defending key points on the battleground. Once they've set up camp, a group of defenders can hold an area almost indefinitely. The Detonative Device Distributor, Battle Automaton and Machinist are members of the Defensive Company.

### Detonative Device Distributor

As a demolitions man (or 'demoman') in civilian life, the Detonative Device Distributor is an expert at creating and using small-scale explosives. He can launch grenades at approaching foes with precision, and also place proximity mines to harm those who rush too hastily into battle.

*Ability* - The Detonative Device Distributor can protect himself or another team member with proximity mines. By using their action, they can name themselves or another team member, and a single number from 1 to 6. If that team member is attacked, and their attacker rolls that number on any of their dice, then the person attacking takes a die of damage regardless of winning or losing the round of combat. This ability stays in effect until the start of the Detonative Device Distributor's next turn.

## Battle Automaton

The Battle Automaton is a large, heavy, unmanned mechanical combat vehicle. Armed with a large Gatling gun, the Battle Automaton patrols a set area, keeping the team protected.  
*Ability* - The Battle Automaton can intercede and force any opponent choosing to attack one of its team members, to attack it instead.

## Machinist

The Machinist is an engineer who can quickly construct supporting devices like turrets, ammunition dispensers and makeshift barricades. They keep a powerful, hand-made pistol on hand too for those who force past their devices.

*Ability* - The Machinist chooses 1 group of clichés on his team, giving them a +1 die bonus like the battlefield bonus (this also stacks with the battlefield bonus if it's the same group.) The Machinist can use their action to change which group on their team receives this bonus. The Machinist's bonus disappears once he is brought to zero dice in his cliché.

## Support Personnel

Support Personnel have a varied mix of abilities that can help their teammates or hinder their opponents. The Caretaker, Sharpshooter and Agent Provocateur are all considered Support Personnel.

### Caretaker

The Caretaker is a combination of medic and mechanic, able to keep his teammates and their equipment working well. They're also trained to take care of themselves, using their tools and surgical instruments as weapons.

*Ability* - The Caretaker can spend their action to heal 1 die for themselves or any one of their teammates.

### Sharpshooter

Able to hit opponents before they can even get within natural sight, the Sharpshooter uses a rifle with a mounted telescopic looking-glass to cause damage at a distance. This well-trained sniper also keeps a large machete on hand just in case he needs to get up close and personal with the enemy.

*Ability* - The Sharpshooter does not take damage when they're attacking on their turn - they only take damage when losing a combat round on another player's turn.

### Agent Provocateur

This cliché can use camouflage to sneak across the battleground, spy on the enemy team and incite dissent. A small, concealable revolver is their only direct means of inflicting harm.

*Ability* - The Agent Provocateur can use his action, take a die of damage to their cliché and force an attack between 2 members of one other team. This attack happens immediately, and the Agent Provocateur chooses who's considered the attacker and who's considered the defender.

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*Background image is a public domain reproduction {{PD-US}}*

# GEARS & GASLIGHTS

## Eradicating Spirits and Manifestations for Fame and Profit



### NETHERIUM

It seemed like the solution to all the world's problems, Netherium. Free energy just floating all around us. Scientists able to tap into that energy to power devices of incredible wonder, changed the world. The late 1800s are a remarkable time to be alive.

Yet...some how tapping into the Netherium unleashed a hell upon the world, although the connection is still not full known. It is clear that once Netherium began to be used, dangerous ghosts, spirits, and worse came into our world.

The weakest of spirits haunt, the strongest can manifest physical bodies. Regardless of form, they seek out dark places with histories of bloodshed; castles, dungeons, prisons, or even seemingly normal place with dark pasts.

In response, professional teams of ghost hunters and monster slayers arose to combat this otherworldly menace. Some do it for the fame, some do it for the noble cause, but mostly they do it for the high fees they can charge for eradicating creatures of the night that prey on mortals.

### SAY WHAT?

Basically, Netherium is the spirit shield that keeps the departed out of our reality. It is a form of energy, but once scientists discovered it and started using it to power devices, it tore holes in the spirit shield. This allowed malevolent and harmful spirits back into our world (good spirits have, with rare exception, no reason to come back).

Ghost hunters uses a combination of bullets and swords to destroy physical manifestations of these devilish spirits, but for true ghosts, all manner of clever devices are needed including Anti-Netherial Projectors, Netherial Cages, and other marvelous devices.

Successful ghost hunting teams are world famous and fabulously wealthy from eradication fees, but most die grisly and anonymous deaths

Game play can take place anywhere in the world during the late 1800s, but again, the spirits are especially drawn to dark places with sordid pasts which can lead to a lot of dungeon crawling too.

### GHOST HUNTERS

Professional (hell...even amateur) ghost hunters are built with standard Risus rules: 10 dice; Hooks and Tales encouraged. If the Risus Companion is in use, Lucky Shots and Questing Dice are fine too. Good Cliches to pick are those related to the science of Netherium; fighting with melee weapons; shooting rifles, crossbows, or other missile weapons; being sneaky; being observant and spotting clues; having knowledge of spirits and manifestations strengths and weaknesses, and so on.

### TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Beyond the gear expected of those living in the late 1800s, the science of Netherium has given rise to many tools found valuable to ghost hunters, including (but not limited to):

**Anti-Netherial Projector:** These rifle looking devices with battery back-packs fire reverse polarity Netherium lightning bolts that can harm spirits...*but do not harm manifestations or any other living thing.*

**Clairavayer:** Portable devices the size of a doctor's kit that allow one to speak into it and have their voice transmitted up to a mile away and be heard by those using another Clairavayer.

**Clockwork Rifle:** A specially made rifle capable of firing multiple bullets with each trigger pull from a large magazine of ammunition.

**Gas Lamp:** Part regular gaslight, part Netherial science, this large hand-held device casts a pale greenish-white glow in the direction it is pointed, up to 10 meters.

**Netherial Lenses:** Specially made glass lenses which can be set in goggles, monocles, or even regular eye glasses that allow one to see spirits even when they are invisible.

**Netherial Cage:** A metal tube, capped, and lined inside and out with special glass (similar to lenses above) along with all manner of circuitry...that when opened draws in and captures Netherium and any nearby spirits.

**Nether Conveyance:** Much like a horse drawn carriage, but entirely self-powered by Netherium Engines. It is guided by a pilot, and can attain speeds up to 60 km per hour!

Players are encouraged to create other Netherial or steampunk devices.

### SPIRITS AND MANIFESTATIONS

There are two basic forms of Netherial monsters: Spirits and Manifestations.

A spirit is basically a ghost. At it's weakest it can make small objects move, change the temperature, make noise and the like. At it's most powerful, they shake houses, drain life, cause fear, change the weather and so on. All spirits are invisible but can be seen when they want to be seen (often to scare) or via Netherial Lenses.

Only Netherial devices can affect a spirit. Guns, swords, and even explosions will not harm a spirit. A spirit reduced to zero dice is cast back into the Netherium and may only return by GM fiat.

A manifestation is a spirit which has invested it's being into a non-living object or objects and bring them to mobile life. This can mean inhabiting old corpses (skeletons, zombies, and ghouls!), dead trees, scarecrows, or even things like suits of armor. The most powerful manifestations can even create monsters out of the worst nightmares from bits and pieces.

Manifestations cannot be harmed by Netherical science (such as Anti-Netherial Projectors), but the physical form of a manifestation can be destroyed by bullets, swords, hammers, fire and the like. A manifestation brought to zero dice simply falls down into it's component parts (if applicable).

### EXAMPLE SPIRIT

**Damning Shriek (4):** The DS appears as a rotting elderly mother-type when seen, and can sense the worst fears and self-doubts about the living. Beyond the typical abilities of a spirit, it screams ear-splitting (literally) derision and insults at victims, reducing them to cowering, crying, fetal balls that eventually bleed out through the ears.

### EXAMPLE MANIFESTATION

**Tin Ogre (4):** The TO is a monster of the kitchen, taking the form of a humanoid comprised of pots, pans, utensils, knives, forks, sometimes even full stoves, and any other metal laying about. A TO is quite strong, sturdy, resistant to damage and capable of crushing or cutting depending on it's composition. They are simple brutes.

# NEWS OF THE EMPIRE

14 April 1892

A News-Paper Concerning the City of London, Portal to All Destinations

\* \* \* \* \*

## ELEVATED RAILWAYS IN DANGER?

Are the vaunted elevated railways that encircle and cross our fair city the worst danger to our security?

That is the opinion of this newspaper, whose newspapermen and editors find it deplorable that the policemen charged with protecting our fair city, the greatest city on Earth, and the crossroads nine worlds, have done absolutely nothing to safeguard it against merely one or two well-placed bombs or heat rays.

Indeed, the thousands of miles of elevated railroad tracks that support our city like a girdle could be hopelessly snarled by the actions of only a single fiend.

Imagine if the nefarious Fu Manchu, or the Blue Devils of Pluto, or any of the vile criminal organizations that even today still plague our fair city, were to destroy merely one of the dozen lines criss-crossing our skies? Merely damaging the line between Westminster and Waterloo would put our administration at great risk, not to mention the potential loss of life were this foul deed to be perpetrated while a train were hurtling along the tracks at speeds in excess of forty miles per hour!

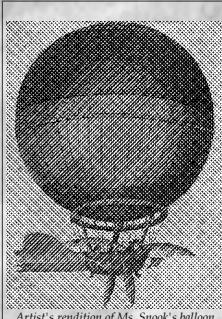
## Murder! Shock! Danger!

Mysterious killer still on the loose

Despite the best work of Scotland Yard's finest policemen and detectives, the Kensington Killer still stalks the streets. His victims marked only by a red ring around their necks and a peculiar odor on their persons, the twelfth victim

## THOUSANDS OF BALLOONS TO RACE IN JUBILEE

Enidia Snook can't wait for the Jubilee Balloon Race to commence April 23<sup>rd</sup> of this year, in which she will compete with thousands of others in motorized balloons in a race around the city of London.



Artist's rendition of Ms. Snook's balloon

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the race is its length, traversing our city from Liverpool to Paddington, and Earl's Court to the finish line, racing across London Bridge (which, we trust, will not fall down according to the child's rhyme!).

The Jubilee Balloon Race is sponsored by the Mornington Crescent Balloon Racing Society and its renowned head, Baron Edward Cannon.

Mr. Cannon spoke of the event from the boarding platform of his own racing balloon, the *Queen's Intrepid*, which will not be flying in the event.

"This is a dashed good opportunity to show the world that British aerialists are the best in the world, and that's a fact you can bet on," he said, going on to make several disparaging remarks about other balloon racers from America and the Continent.

## EXPLOSION ROCKS PORTAL TO VENUS

Portal may not re-open for weeks

No-one yet knows who was responsible for the terrible explosion that destroyed large sections of the ring portal to Venus at approximately 2:22 A.M. this morning.

Chief Detective Inspector Robert Bootblack was on the scene within minutes, and we are informed that he has been assigned to this case.

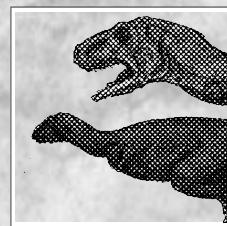
This news-paper has been informed that the damage is extensive but not irreparable. More details will be published as they become available.

## A.F. Forms Heavily Armored Battalion

The British Armed Forces yesterday announced the formation of the First Heavily Armored Foot Battalion, a special division of the British Army dedicated to facing the dangers of our new age.

Members of the new battalion will don specially-constructed armor, helmets, and glasses, reinforced with wires and electrical gadgetry at the uppermost limits of human engineering. According to the Army's claims, these "hard suits" will allow the soldier to see in the dark, carry much more powerful rifles – even those capable of firing many rounds of ammunition per second – and communicate wirelessly with their comrades and commanders.

## CARNIVAL OF PREHISTORIC DINOSAURS ARRIVES FOR JUBILEE



Mr. Josiah Weatherworm, proprietor of the Grand Circus and Exhibition of the Twentieth Century, has personally confirmed with this paper that his unique and exclusive exhibition of prehistoric dinosaurs, procured directly from the Dark Continent, will put on three shows daily, at 10:00 A.M., 3:00 P.M., and 7:00 P.M.

Many ancient beasts will be on-hand, held securely behind iron bars and fences. Animals on-hand will include a Sabre-Toothed Tiger, a Great Ape, a Giant Lizard, a clutch of Pterodactyls kept in a tremendous crystalline dome, and even that king of tyrant lizards himself, a Tyrannosaurus Rex.

Mr. Weatherworm has insisted that all appropriate safety precautions have been rigorously made by the crew of his Circus. He assures this reporter that there will be no repeat of the Mastodon Affair of last year.

The Grand Circus and Exhibition of the Twentieth Century will exhibit in Hyde Park, near the Saturnian Acrobats and the Edison Company Weather Machine.

Children and adults of all ages are encouraged to purchase tickets in advance.

## DEATH PROVOKES INQUIRY ARE MECHANICAL MEN INTELLIGENT?

Some call it an accident; others call it murder. Whatever the cause, Elias Snodgrass lies dead in a coffin, killed while deactivating five mechanical men. His associate, a Mr. John Smith, claims he was killed by mechanical men.

The contraptions in question were assigned to The Beneath, cleaning the unmentionables that flow beneath the New Bailey building as it bobs gently above Newgate Street.

Mr. Smith insists that Mr. Snodgrass was turning the key on one mechanical man when the others – who had been commanded to stop and await their deactivation – turned on him and hit him over the head.

However, the Minister of Mechanization insists that this is simply not possible.

"Mechanical men are not capable of independent thought or action," Minister Hollinger explained to the press this morning. "The possibility is firmly in the range of Mr. Verne's science fictional tales, not science fact."

Nevertheless, the five mechanical men are currently being held at the Ministry for further investigation.

Tesla To Unveil Electronic Marvel  
Genius claims "greatest invention"

Nikola Tesla, famed scientist, has revealed to this news-paper exclusively his plans to unveil a

This steampunk setting for [the Risus RPG](#) was written by [Brent P. Newhall](#) in 2012. It is released into the public domain.

# NOW THERE IS ONLY ICE.

## Clichés

**The Sun**, weak and heartless hangs dim in the daytime sky. A once proud star has shed its heat and its light leaving indigenous and alien ruin buried under endless tons of ice. The surface of this water-bound orb has turned amaranthine white and as hard as stone.

Only the most tenacious of *things* still survive out on the exterior. There is no moon to brighten the bitter night, perhaps it flung itself into the inky darkness of space. With no source of light the nights are aphotic and terrible. With sunset comes such a penetrating cold that it can freeze one solid before he can even take a breath. Some say that just the winds can cut an unlucky wanderer in half. If those things do not kill you then the animals will.

Cerberus Wyrms and the Ur Bears are kings of the ice, but there are other creatures both above and below in the tunnels that are too numerous to list here. There are rumors of sapient and alien cultures that live out there on the surface ice but the rational do not believe such a thing is possible.

There are those that venture out onto the surface to explore and salvage in the sparse ruins that were left behind. Some return with precious metals, stone, and dirt. Some return with artifacts of unknown purpose, still others have come back gibbering with madness.

At its warmest the surface is literally bone chilling. I dare say it may be impossible to measure how cold it gets during the winter. Many have left for the surface and have never found their way home again.

We survive, though, as our kind always has. Warmed by heat drawn up from an immeasurable deepness through The Pipe. This massive network of conduits was here long before our kind came here and will likely remain here after we have frozen to death. No one can say for certain how far this series of ever branching pipework extends, but we uncover more of it every day. Just as some days we lose some. As insane as it sounds the pipe seems to move on its own.

There are vast caverns cradled along these massive lengths of pipe. In some of these caverns we collect the rare earth that pushes its way through over the years, in others we make our homes and places of work.

We tap into the pipe as if it were made for us to do so, using the pressure, heat and steam to drive our thermobaric engines and keep us warm down here. We are provided light, pale and blue, by the indigenous phosphorescent bacteria that inhabit the surfaces near pipe outlets.

A Risus one page challenge by [Ryan Northcott](#)

## PLOTS

*The Thing*: Something alien and strange is found frozen in the ice.

*Cliffhanger*: A rescue attempt goes wrong when subversive elements hamper the search for their own gain.

*Arctic Blue*: The players are tasked with returning a dangerous criminal from a remote settlement back to civilization.

*Whiteout*: An enforcer must find a killer out on the ice before the sun sets for winter.

*30 Days of Night*: A remote settlement is set upon by blood-thirsty creatures.

*Frozen*: Faced with freezing to death after being stranded, the party must make some drastic decisions.

## UNDER THE ICE

It is quite possible to come across anything buried in the ice, from the abundant life that once roamed the seas here to things that had traveled across the ocean of stars to become trapped by the inhuman cold.

Ur-Bears: (Bear 10, Find Food 6) Massive animals, left over from some previous age, seem to exist only to eat whatever living thing they can find, luckily they are only found on the exterior. An Ur-Bear's claws which can grow to the length of a man provide an excellent source of iron and copper.

Cerberus Wyrms: (Hunt in Pack 4, Infest 4, Seek Warmth 2) burrow into the ice to hibernate, but are roused near any source of heat they nears them. The lucky are simply devoured, the unlucky are infested by the spirit of the wyrm and turned into Wyrm Slaves.

Wyrm Slave: (Savagery 6, Servant of Wyrms 4) Our former brothers and sisters turned into hideous monstrosities under the sway of an alien thing infesting their bodies and brains. Sadly there is no way to cure them. In the end, they only serve as hatching chambers, birthing hundreds of wyrms at a time.

Bizarre Machine: (Understand Language 2, Rationalize Violence 4, Work 4) Come in an ever surprising variety of forms, sizes and uses. Rare are those able to coexist with the living, most are prone to erratic behavior and violence.

## ECHOES

Winters Wolves (The Sword), Ice Breaker (Skinny Puppy), The Snow (Coil), Cold Comfort (Haujobb), Die In Winter (Wumpscut)

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## CLICHES

**Dwellers On The Ice** are those brave fools that make a life for themselves on the surface of this barren ball of ice. They occasionally trade in metals for food with those below the surface.

**Prospectors** use powerful Magneto-mechanical tools to find resources buried under the layers of ice. Typically prospectors search for metals and dirt to use for tools and growing food, other times they follow the pipe looking for new caverns.

**Farmers & Hunters** are those that create or gather the resources we use for our daily living, whether those resources are Food, Drinkable water or even Oxygen itself.

**Expeditioners/Wayfinders** venture to explore past the known to find other places and possibly artifacts of a previous age or even just better resources for our people.

**Mechanics/Engineers** are those trained in the creation and use of the Thermobaric and Magneto-Mechanical devices we use in our daily struggles to survive.

## TOOLS

**Thermal Lance:** Can be used as both a tool for melting ice and as a weapon, commonly plugged straight into the pipe, but can be made portable with the use of Hyborbaric Jars.

**Macrotransducer:** Common tool used by Prospectors to find things buried in the ice, can detect multiple wave patterns and signatures.

**Wayfinder Boots:** Used to facilitate travel by foot by cycling through warming and freezing the ice under foot to help maintain steady traction. Also comes in a glove format for climbing.

**Hyborbaric Jars:** Used as short term batteries when away from the pipe.

**Collocation Tubes:** Allow for expeditious travel between caverns using pressure and steam as motive force.

## ECHOES

Winters Wolves (The Sword), Ice Breaker (Skinny Puppy), The Snow (Coil), Cold Comfort (Haujobb), Die In Winter (Wumpscut)

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# ***Ozone-Powered SteamPunk!***

## **A Game of Political Revolution in a Time of Ecological Devastation**

By James MacGeorge, For use with S. John Ross' Risus: The Anything RPG

GUTEN TAG, CITIZEN! Welcome to the Zurich, Greatest City-State On Earth! While you wait for the Reichsbus to us to take you to the Administration Bureau for registration and housing assignment, please take a moment to read through this document. You will have to take a Citizenship Exam in order to avoid exurbanization, so read closely!

### **History Lesson:**

The discovery of Ozone by Dutch chemist Martin van Marum in 1784 went largely unheralded outside of an exclusive circle of scientific dreamers. While the initial discovery may have been by a Dutchman, the Reich has been leading the way ever since! Sixty years later, Christian Friedrich Schönbein, having recently lost his hand in an attempt to create an alternative to gunpowder, was casting about, looking for a new avenue of scientific inquiry, when he rediscovered the mysterious, acrid-smelling gas. Shortly thereafter, he discovered the explosive properties of its liquefied state – the force generated by the detonation leveled a city block, revealing the True Power of Ozone! It didn't take long for another Proud Son of the Reich, Hans Adalwolf, to create an engine, powered by the force released by decomposing compressed liquid ozone. While it was deemed impressive, with limited amounts of ozone available, little was able to be done with it, until 1885. The discovery of what was coined the Ozone Membrane by Brecht Adler prompted a race among the powers to find a way to tap into this seemingly endless supply of energy. The invention of the Ozone Scoop by Johann Austerlitz in 1887 was touted as the pinnacle of human achievement, allowing humanity to reach up to the sky and call down the very power of the Gods themselves. Balloons were armed with the scoops, and Towers built to launch them. The Ozone Race was on!

That was 30 years ago. Since then, the process has been Modernized even further – the Towers actually process the Ozone and deliver the finished product to the cities below, fully usable! It has been the answer to all of mankind's problems – limitless energy, drawn from the very air we breathe! Nowadays, you can see canisters of Liquid Ozone being used to power everything from vehicles to streetlights to gigantic mechanized suits of armor! Truly we live in an age of wonders! All we need is within the walls of our cities, and the Barons ensure that the towers remain standing, the balloons still fly, and the scoops bring the precious ozone down to earth, where it heats our homes and powers our vehicles, and ensures that our O-Knights can defend our walls each day! We no longer need anything beyond our walls, and have chosen to leave the countryside behind! We no longer need "governments", we no longer need "nations" – we have evolved beyond such things, and soon, we will evolve beyond the need for this planet! The Ozone Rocket is in the final stages of development, at which point we will expand our reach to the Stars Themselves!

Not all share our optimism, our drive and our vision – to the East, a new threat emerges! The Barony of St. Petersburg has been overthrown, and the Anarchist Vladimir Ulyanov prattles on about the rights of workers. Renaming St. Petersburg Petrograd, he believes that a new name and a radical ideology will weaken our resolve! The fool! He carries on with his radio broadcasts, urging workers to throw off their shackles, not realizing that we gladly participate in our Grand Endeavor, for the betterment of us all! His arrogance will be his undoing!

### **Current Events!**

- Baron von Zero, the Butcher of Berlin, is on the warpath! Loyal citizens - Enlist Now!
- The Constantinople Tower has fallen, causing massive casualties – beware of infiltration from the Ottoman refugees!
- Sparks and small explosions have been seen on the Tower of Zurich! Who will volunteer to repair our City's Ladder to the Gods?
- Anarchists are everywhere! Don't believe their lies! If they seek to draw you into their conspiracies, report them immediately!
- Keep your eyes open! Criminals are always looking for opportunities, and target those who are new to our City!

### **New Discoveries!**

- New Advances are being made every day in Ozone powered propulsion – soon each Citizen will have their own personal Ozone Powered Jet Pack! Production is under way, and the first models should be available soon!
- Recent advances in Ozone Containment Canisters have allowed the development of Ozone Powered Personal Arms!
- Our O-Knights are More Powerful Than Ever! Shoulder-mounted cannons will ensure that we Dominate the Battlefields of Europe!

### **Songs of the Times!**

- Beware of Scavengers! They reject the safety of the Cities and live amidst the wreckage! Pity them!
- Mutations are on the Rise! Report any Mutant Activity to your Ward Leader! Remember – They're NOT People, They're Mutants!
- Prevention is Key! Wear your gasmask and protective clothing when venturing outside, to avoid Blacklung and Skinrot!

	Simple	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Advanced
	5% failure	20% failure	About 50%	20% success	5% success
1d6	2	4	6		
2d6	3	5	7	10	12
3d6	6	8	11	14	16
4d6	9	11	15	17	20
5d6	12	14	18	21	24
6d6	14	18	21	25	28

	Simple	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Advanced
1d8	2	5	7		
2d8	4	7	9	12	15
3d8	7	10	14	17	20
4d8	11	14	18	22	26
5d8	14	18	23	27	31
6d8	18	22	27	32	37

	Simple	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Advanced
1d10	3	6	9		
2d10	4	8	11	15	18
3d10	9	12	17	21	25
4d10	13	17	22	27	32
5d10	17	22	28	33	38
6d10	22	27	33	39	45

	Simple	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Advanced
1d12	3	7	11		
2d12	5	9	13	18	22
3d12	10	14	20	23	30
4d12	15	20	26	32	38
5d12	20	26	33	41	46
6d12	25	32	39	47	54

	Simple	Easy	Moderate	Hard	Advanced
1d20	1	5	11	17	20
2d20	8	14	21	29	35
3d20	16	23	32	41	49
4d20	24	32	42	52	62
5d20	32	41	53	64	74
6d20	40	51	62	75	87

# RISUS DRAGONBORN

## alternate rules

### contests

#### criticals and mishaps

A critical occurs whenever a character rolls  $4n + 4$  or higher, where  $n$  = the number of cliché dice. At the other end of the scale, a mishap occurs whenever a player-character rolls less than or equal to  $3n - 4$ , where  $n$  = the number of cliché dice.

#### multiple feats

Work out what the most important feat will be. The TN is then increased by five for each extra feat.

#### multiple attacks

A character can attack more than once per round. Each extra attack reduces the cliché dice rolled per attack by one.

### items

#### crafting

Roll the character's cliché v. dice of difficulty for the thing made, in an extended conflict, to create the item. If the character wins the "combat," the remaining dice = the dice assigned to the item (or trap, or whathaveyou's cliché). Required materials may be destroyed.

#### carrying

Each item carried beyond ten is worth a die of encumbrance. Any time you need to do something requiring ease and grace (or add another item), you must defeat your encumbrance in a single-roll contest.

### advancement

At the end of a session, players may roll once for each cliché. On all evens, they may acquire EITHER:

- \* An increase of one die for that cliché;
- \* One die worth of Sidekick Dice, Lucky Shots, or Questing Dice

[rules by obiegoth - add, rewrite, do as thou wilt.]

# Risus Dragonborn

## extended rules!

### General Numbers and Statistics

#### TN list (at 3d.)

- 3-5 (easy)
- 6-8 (tricky)
- 9-11 (challenging)
- 12-14 (difficult)
- 15+ (nearly impossible))

#### Dragon speech:

Dragonborn cliché v. TN 11 to understand Dragon speech)

### Doing Things, Making Things

#### Smithing

Smithing requires raw materials, and provides items with dice based on those materials:

Wood or Leather (1)

Iron (2)

Steel (3)

Exotic (4)

Equipment (weapon or armor) teams up to subtract 6's from opponent, and contributes dice to weight or fame checks, or anywhere else it may affect the character. They are canceled out by opponent weapon or armor dice that meet or exceed them.

#### Potions

Potions require herbs and other organic ingredients.

Difficulty dice = dice of effect (e.g. Healing Potion (3) )

Helpful potions team up with PC, 1x use.

Combat poisons team up with PC on strike, affect opponent if successful (effect determined using poison's own dice total v. opponent resistance, if any).

## **Magic**

Spells are cast with casting clichés such as “College-trained Magician,” or “Student of Arcane Healing”. Clichés may give a permanent 1-die bonus to casting a specific type of spell (Fire, Wound-healing, Summoning Objects, etc.). Spell-casters may wish to take a double-pump cliché for their casting cliché.

### **Learning:**

Spells have dice, and at above 1-die of power, must be learned directly from someone who knows them. 0 to 1-die spells may be learned from books, at a single roll (vs. TN spell dice \* 5). Without a book, or at 2 or greater dice, spells are learned via an Extended Conflict against their dice. On failure, the character may try again after studying for at least a day (+1 die to roll after a week of study).

Most spells above 2 dice are only taught at the College of Chillrock.

### **Improving:**

If much of a session is spent in study, characters may improve a spell by one die in place of another advancement at the end of the session.

### **Casting:**

Roll casting cliché v. (5 x spell-dice). Once learned, cantrips may be cast at any time. May pump casting cliché as desired. On a failed roll, the caster's cliché is reduced by 1 until (s)he can rest and recover wit and energy. A quiet study is a good place, a tavern not so much.

### **Spell Examples:**

0 dice	Candlelight	Creates a warm glow
1 die	Skin of Bark	+1 die of armor
1 die	Small item to hand	Calls a non-restrained object from 10' / spell die
1 die	Leaping Flame	A tongue of flame with a 10' range / spell die
2 dice	Cause Terror	Opponents may resist, will surrender or flee on failure

## **Dragon Shouts**

Shouts consist of words in the Dragon tongue, and must be learned fully from the Brotherhood of Silence. They may do almost anything, but are usually dramatic and combative (breathe fire, project force).

Similar to Questing Dice, they provide available dice per session.

First learned at 1 die, more words can be gained to add new dice.

After three dice, all words are learned – special quests or training from the Brotherhood, usually mystical in nature (“Study the Essence of Fire”) may result in further dice.

## Plot Ideas

### *Start – Gov't / Rebel Hullabaloo*

Dragon attacks amid much bureaucracy. PC must flee via Keep cellars, under the direction of whomever isn't burnt up and knows the way.

### **Wilderness**

Beasts and hazards

Odd travelers on the road

Caves and mines and huts and camps

### **Small towns**

Folksy talk - really, a dragon?

Partisan muttering (*Northland for Northish Folks! Nay, The Legion Provides!*)

Suspiciously simple errands which may turn out to be very dangerous. Or not.

### **Hold Capital**

#### **Talking with the Jarl**

Jarl Jarlson, Jarl of Jarburg. He believes in dragons, and is concerned that their return is deeply significant. He is also standoffish, pragmatic, and decisively neutral in all matters of politics. He would like the PC to report on any further dragon business. This may be quite soon, in the event of a:

### **Dragon Attack**

**Jarl Jarlson** sends **Thane Throl (4)** and the PC to meet defenders at the Northern watchtower, where **4 Run-of-the-Mill Guards of Jarburg (6 dice total)** are at the wall.

#### **Young Dragon:**

**Roaring, winged beast of Legend (5)**

**Fire-breathing Speaker of the Ancient Tongue [2]**

If it dies, its soul is mysteriously absorbed by the PC!

(If Fame is desired as a cliché to track how often the PC is confronted with requests for help, PC Fame is at +1 after this.)

Jarl applies laud and some opulent but not-that-useful gift, and tells guards to look the other way, Throl is annoyed.

## **Brotherhood of Silence**

The Brotherhood can teach shouts, mostly doesn't speak, and will send mysterious and intrusive warnings to hurry up and visit, once the PC has Zorbed a dragon soul. Their stone monastery is located at the top of the frozen peak of High Holyheim, on a path beginning at the end of the infamous...

## **Road to Ivanstead**

The subject of a well-known tavern song, "The Gods-Damned Road to Ivanstead." In travel by road, roll \*constantly\* for mishap, damage to Tools of the Trade, strange obstacles, etc Off-road, attacks and murderous landscapes, diversionary locations.

## **Basic Bestiary**

Treasure is counted in dice by value, power, or material (e.g. a Steel Sword (2)). Usually, treasure dice will not exceed the total dice of the creature owning it.

### **Young Dragon**

- Roaring beast of Legend (5)
- Fire-breathing Speaker of the Ancient Tongue [2]

Treasure: Jewels or weaponry stuck to (or in it), its own scales (+1 endurance each) or bones (+2 endurance each)

### **Wolf (2)**

Treasure: Pelt, teeth, etc. Sometimes forks. (Why?)

### **Run-of-the-Mill Guard (3)**

Treasure: Armor, Very Obviously Emblazoned With the Insignia of the Hold or City; odds and ends, average weaponry, a little gold

### **Average Bandit**

Clever Outlaw (2)

Vicious Fighter (2)

Treasure: loot, weapons and armor, disturbing trophies or heart-tugging mementos of an earlier life

### **Deer**

Quick-footed woodland creature (2)

Treasure: Hide, meat, antlers

### **Troll**

Vicious, shambling creature of caves and ruins (4)

Stunningly powerful arms, for crushing and throwing [1]

# Risus Dragonborn



clichés

tools

loot

tale

hook

burden dice

questing dice, powers & shouts

<input type="checkbox"/>				
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# Ninja Burger: Paragon City Franchise

By: Gabe Carlson, I.O.R. #433  
Dedicated to Danny Deepfreeze, Cpt. Shiny Shield, Distracting Beauty,  
Grinning Wolf, and Major Mirage  
Special Thanks to: Bill, for being a huge geek

Inspired by "Ninja Burger: The RPG" ([www.ninjaburger.com/rpg/](http://www.ninjaburger.com/rpg/)) and  
"City of Heroes" (<http://na.cityofheroes.com/en/>)  
Incorporating "Risus: the Anything RPG" by S. John Ross  
(<http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>)



## THE PREMISE:

The PC's are a team of Ninja Burger delivery ninja working in a city full comic book superheroes, supervillains, and the like. What could POSSIBLY go wrong?

## THE RULES:

Standard Risus with the fixin's you usually like and the honorable addition of:

**Ninja Pockets:** Ninja keep ALL KINDS of things in their pockets! All Ninja Burger employees have a "Ninja Pockets" cliché, which allows them to produce anything they might desire at a moment's notice. Failing a "Ninja Pockets" roll doesn't mean that they don't produce anything, just that the GM decides what actually comes out of the Ninja Pocket. Producing something from Ninja Pockets also doesn't count as an action, and ninja never fail, so it makes perfect sense for ninja to assume that they will grab what they want on the first try and be able to use it immediately. At the GM's discretion, the usual amount of character creation dice/points may be increased to accommodate Ninja Pockets.

**Team Spirit:** Rather than members of a team-up adding only the 6's they roll to the leader's total, teammates add their highest die rolled and all duplicates. So if you roll "3, 3," add those 3's to the team's total. If you roll "4, 4, 5," add that 5 to the team's total.

**Also:** It is highly recommended by our ancestors that PC ninja not actually have a "Ninja" cliché, but instead break up the qualities/skills that make ninja what they are. "Master of Disguise," "Silent as a Doormouse," "Kung Fu Killer," "Saboteur Extraordinaire," and the like allow for more variety and flavor; most important qualities to the Ninja Burger experience.

## THE CREW (12 dice +Hooks):

### Gedde Wannabe

Gedde is an aspiring hero. You'd think ninja skills would be plenty qualification to fight crime, but in Paragon, it barely lifts you out of the minor leagues. Gedde is working at Ninja Burger to pay the bills while looking for a patron hero to sidekick for.

Master of Exotic, Esoteric, and Other-"E"-Word Weapons (4), Batman-Like Stealth (3), Fry Cook (2), Ninja Pockets (2); Quest Dice (Impress a Superhero) x10

**HOOK:** Networking (Gedde gets all starry-eyed around named superheroes and will go out of his way to introduce himself to and show off in front of them)

### Silken Viper

"Silky" is an undercover Arachnos agent. There are 100,000 heroes living dual lives in Paragon City, so why the heck can't the bad guys track down anyone's secret identity?? Working for Ninja Burger gives her license to break into homes, get close to heroes, and, hopefully, turn up information about who

the heroes are when they aren't fighting crime, and then report back to Arachnos.

Ninja Pockets (4), Master of Disguise (4), Violent Acrobat (2), Iron Chef (2); Lucky Shots x3

HOOK: REALLY secret mission (You're on a mission so secret that you don't know what it is. You don't know who you're working for or what the end goal is, but you're constantly finding notes left for you, secret messages in TV broadcasts, and other spur-of-the-moment instructions that tell you to perform odd, seemingly random tasks throughout your normal day. You tried to disobey one of these instructions once; you woke up in the hospital missing a few days.)

### **Scott Resnick (a.k.a. Hiro Notzomuchi)**

"Hiro" has no sense of direction, which is why he got lost going home one night in a bad part of Talos Island. While forcing a gate at the end of an alley, the gate slammed into the back of a Tsoo Sorcerer, knocking him out COLD and saving the last semi-conscious Burger Ninja from the team that the Tsoo had ambushed. The Ninja Burger franchise swore gratitude, the Tsoo swore vengeance. So, he's working for Ninja Burger for protection, despite not being the ninja they think he is. Or any sort of ninja at all, really.

Office Temp (3), Common Sense (So rare, it's a goddam super power) (3), Veteran of the Food Service Industry (3), Ninja Pockets (1); Lucky Shots x9

HOOK: Slick... Real slick... (You're about as graceful as a stoned guinea-pig and as stealthy as an excited yak. You're a Pisces, not because you were born between February 20th and March 20th, but because you trying to be slick or cool is like watching a fish out of water.)

### **Miso Edamame**

Miso is a flower-powered champion of the environment and healthy, ethical eating. She decided to work with NinjaBurger in order to advance a vegetarian agenda and get people to order Ninja Burger's delicious meat-free menu items... for their own good... Or ELSE!

Master of Meat-Free Cuisine (4), Hippie Plant Whisperer (3), Stealth Monkey (3), Ninja Pockets (2); Questing Dice (Convert, Convert, Convert!) x5

HOOK: "I speak for the trees... WITH MY FISTS!" (People disrespecting the environment and plants [ESPECIALLY vegetables] turns Miso green with rage.)

### **Itsu Tohotso**

A mystic warrior trying to find perfection of spirit and perfection of Five Spice Powder. Grandfather said, "True power can only be gained through struggle and pain, but, when attained, brings tears to the eyes of the enlightened one's foes. Now, pass the sriracha."

Master of Heat (4), "Body of Steam" Technique (3), Ninja Pockets (3), Muay-Thai Disciple (2); Questing Dice (Ambiguously Asian) x5

HOOK: Feel the Burn (Itsu has a champion's need to test himself against any form of heat and/or spiciness he comes across in order to prove that he is the true master of "hot.")

## BS-Con 2012: "A Pirate's Life for Me" (PvN pt. 2)

### "Way-Ho an' Up She Rises": A Synopsis

The crew of the "Seaward Sally" has been contracted to pilfer a chest of valuables from a well-to-do Japanese family. A small band of scallywags made their way into the family compound (a small fortress, to tell it truly) and out again with the goods in hand/hook. All that need be done now is to get back to the harbor where a "borrowed" junk be berthed, sail her to where the "Sally's" waiting, and then deliver the goods. Piece a' steak and kidney pie, right?

But in getting to the harbor, there may be...

- 1) guards [Family Thugs (4)]
- 2) police [Government Thugs (4)]
- 3) sneaky buggers in black pajamas (NPCs)
- 4) festival parades [Chinese Pirates (6)]
- 5) wrong turns [Cramped Streets in a Strange City (6)]

And in getting the junk to the "Sally" there may be...

- 1) coast guards [Seaworthy Government Thugs (5)]
- 2) other pirates ("The Fall")
- 3) a shipwreck ("The Seaward Sally")
- 4) storms [Force of Nature (7)]
- 5) sea monsters (Furui Tsume)

And in getting the goods to the buyer there may be...

- 1) competition (Chinese pirates)
- 2) other pirates (real wokou)
- 3) sea monsters (Furui Tsume)
- 4) navy patrols ("The Vambrace")
- 5) more black-pajamaed fellers (NPCs)

### The A-Team (10 dice +Hook)

#### Captain Montgomery "Mad Monty" Scott

Pirate Captain (4), Fierrce Negotiator (3), Fearless Swordsman (3); Shieldmaties: Crew of the "Seaward Sally" (3)

Hook: Hook. You always lack the Tools of the Trade for things that require two dextrous hands.

#### Beauregard "Boo" Laveau

First Matey (4), Gun Jack (3), Voodoo Chil' (3); Booty Dice: Grandmere's Wisdom x5

Hook: Mantle of Responsibility. The welfare of the crew rests on your shoulders as much as the captain's.

#### Nathaniel Cumberbatch

Sneak Thief (4), Buccaneer (3), Bard (2); Lucky Shots x6

Hook: Stars in His Eyes. Nathaniel is writing a collection of epic poems and story-songs about pirates. He stops to take notes, interview, and ask for input and feedback.

#### Michel Dupont

Swashbuckler (4), Continental Aristocrat (2), Gypsy Blood (2); Lucky Shots x9

Hook: Pride. You sail with them, but you're better than these curs and will not stand to be earnestly insulted by anyone.

#### Anne Reed

Capoeirist (4), Escaped Slave (3), Scallywag (3); Lucky Shots x3

Hook: PTSD. While not claustrophobic, you always lack the proper Tools of the Trade when confined or restrained.

### Personages of Note

#### June Scott

Captain of the Pirate Ship "True Love" (4), Enterprising Young Woman (3), Teahouse Proprietor (2); Booty Dice: A Pirate's True Love x5 [x10]

[Hook: Not Particularly Piratical. You don't lie, cheat, or steal, and you don't want to hurt anyone, let alone kill them. You're a fine captain; just not much of a pirate.]

#### Jade Opal

Kung Fu Master (4), Emissary of the Pirate Queen of Qin (3), Daredevil Sailor (2); Lucky Shots x3

#### Furui Tsume ("Old Three-eye")

Many-Tentacled Sea Beasty (8); TENTACLLLES! (+2)

#### Cpt. Edward Teach, Returned (14 Dice)

Flesh-Eating Revenant (6), Fire-Breathing Sadist (4); Shieldmaties: Skeleton Crew (9), "The Fall" (+1)

# RULE THE RAILS

a Risus one-page setting by Erik Jensen  
[wampuscountry.blogspot.com](http://wampuscountry.blogspot.com)

***Steam-driven psychic anarchist Robin Hoods use their sentient choo-choo trains to take on the fascist overclass! GET STEAMED!***

## HARD TIMES ON SODOM

Generations have passed since the Second War and the Collapse. Here on the accursed Isle of Sodom, cut off from whatever yet remains of civilization, all life centers around the rails. To transport goods or people across the rocky, dangerous terrain, we must use the railways left for us by our ancestors; and the Syndicate controls the rails. Hidebound and cruel, the Top Hat Syndicate dominates the Isle, meting out harsh justice, controlling all commerce, and eliminating 'undesirables' without hesitation; sentient steam-trains unload jackbooted soldiers to shake down villagers and claim the Syndicate's 'share' of everything. Then, suddenly – hope. Above the chuffing of the engines comes a shout – a flag appears through the steam and smoke – the guerilla revolution has come at last! A railroad underground composed of freethinking gypsy anarchists, steam-tech gadgeteers, fringe philosophers, rogue psychics – these are the **railgangers**, and they have sworn to tear down the Top Hat Syndicate and liberate Sodom once and for all!

## TECH AND TRAINS *put a fire in your boiler!*

The Isle of Sodom runs on coal and steam: from the turbines which provide electric lights to the Syndicate buildings in the capital, to the small forges and factories which produce the island's few machined goods. Yet the chief marvel of Sodom must surely be the Engines – sentient train engines with clockwork brains, existing since before the Collapse – and the way these living locomotives bond with the gifted psychic humans known as drivers. A driver must tame a ronin engine the same way a cowboy would buck a bronco – with guile, grit, and persistence. Once bonded, however, a driver and engine are partners until death. The rebel railgangers have amongst them a number of Engines, but the Top Hat Syndicate has their fair share, and heavily armed at that. This anarchist revolution will be fought not only over the rails, but on them as well. Railgangers customize their Engines with crazy paint jobs as well as deadly weapons – everything from cannon and turreted rifles to whirling saw-blades and any other steam-powered whatsits the mad gadgeteers can come up with. The railways are the arteries of commerce, and whoever controls them, controls Sodom. Beyond the towns and factories and rail-lines, the island is dangerous and chaotic, crawling with brigands, steam-cyborg mutants, and strange beasts in whose origins might lie even stranger truths about the Isle, and the time before the Collapse.

## ENGINES AND PARTY CONCEPT *time to link up!*

You could get really wacky and have the talking trains count as PCs, but it is suggested you treat the trains as 'mecha': either every PC gets one, or PCs who don't bond with an Engine get some extra bump instead (a larger cliché, an extra cliché, whatever). Optionally, some PCs may have sentient companions who are non-motive (a dining car, a caboose) that get dragged along behind one of the fighting-trains. PC concepts can run the gamut, from soldiers and thieves to rabble-rousers and minor psychics; anybody who would flee from, and fight, the Top Hat Syndicate's iron fist. If your PC is bonded to an Engine, make sure you have a proper description for your Engine's iron-and-brass face, and a positive/negative personality for it ("fearless but bumbling", "loyal but proud", "curious but naive", "powerful but haughty").

## SUGGESTED TRAIN-RELATED CLICHES *get trains on the brain!*

**Driver** – Skilled in bonding with Engines, driving them, spurring them on to incredible stunts (including improbable jumps), and mentally triggering the psychoreactive track switches from a distance.

**Conductor** – Fencing stolen goods, locating unusual items, underworld & black market contacts.

**Engineer** – Building, fixing, jury-rigging, and tricking out Engines and other steam-powered gear.

Also, whenever you pump up a cliché, you should refer to the act as "being Really Useful". Horrible train-related puns should be worth something as well, especially if you're playing this as a one-shot.

## SCENARIOS *get moving!*

\* One of the high muckety-mucks of the Syndicate – the so-called Obese Mastermind – is supposed to be passing through your railgang's turf. Dare you try to take him out? \* While scouting in the woods for food, you find an old, rusty Engine that perhaps has a spark of life yet remaining. Can you tame it, or is it an insane, man-killing rogue? And how will you get it back to the rails \* Your gang's hijinks have cost the Syndicate too much, and they will take it no longer; several legendary Brake-Men – expert assassins – have been dispatched to eliminate your entire railgang. \* A rival railgang has gotten their hands on some unusual coal which seems to greatly improve the speed of their Engines...but now the Engines seem to be growing addicted to the stuff... \* plus all the obvious scenarios of train-battles, heists, and general Robin Hoodery!

**GET EQUIPPED. GET ANGRY. GET JUSTICE. GET STEAMED!**

# SIXGUNS & SKYSHIPS

A CAMPAIGN OUTLINE FOR S. JOHN ROSS RISUS: THE ANYTHING RPG  
BY GUY HOYLE © 2012

"The War for Southern Independence was six years done, and the triumphant *Federal Union* was pursuing its dream of *Manifest Destiny* from sea to shining sea. Those who fought and died in vain for states' rights had no choice but to forswear their independence and accept *Restoration*. Some never did, and those few found themselves drifting - going to the furthest edges of the continent to the lands less civilized, some barely settled, where the Union might not dictate their lives. These were rough places, and work was hard to come by. Those who got by lived by a simple code: 'Any job, no questions asked.'"

The setting: An alternate *America*, circa 1871, where history has followed the same broad outlines as ours, with some very different details. There was a kind of *Civil War*, and the *South* lost there, too. *Abraham Lincoln* was assassinated and *Ulysses S. Grant* is now President. However, science has produced a "non-explosive" form of hydrogen, called *phlogiston*, which is used in lighter-than-air vessels. *Clockwork automatons* are becoming more common.

## CAMPAIGN SEEDS

- The PCs are the ragtag crew of a cobbled-together phlogiston-ship, trying to scratch out a more-or-less honest living on the Western frontier (mostly by cargo runs and smuggling) and keeping out of the way of the Union. The crew is driven by the necessity to earn enough to keep their ship operational, as well as to keep a low profile to avoid notice by the Union authorities.
- The PCs are notorious outlaws, secretly working for the Federal governor in exchange for amnesty. Nobody knows this except for the territorial governor. They have to keep their arrangement secret because working with known outlaws could be a political liability for the governor.

## VILLAINS OF NOTE

- Criminals and schemers, who can be enemies, allies, employers, or a combination of all three.
- Union authorities and agents, who take a dim view of the borderline-criminal activities the PCs are often forced to undertake.
- Ex-Confederates (a.k.a the Konspiracy) who conspire to overthrow the Union; zealous, paranoid, and dangerous.
- Ghost Dancers: Native American mystic warriors following a messianic leader who promises to bring back the buffalo herds and take back the lands stolen from them by the Union.

## ADVENTURE SEEDS

- The PCs are approached by a wealthy Japanese tourist and his family, who want to tour America without frills. They are willing to pay an exorbitant sum, but some of their requests seem... non-touristy. Are they spies of Meiji Japan, out to spy on American secrets, or are they just slightly eccentric?
- Legitimate jobs are few and far between these days because of recent Union activity in this area. The ship is running low on phlogiston, and the crew must decide on taking on safe, low-paying jobs, or to take a risky, high-paying job that would compromise their principles.
- An old war buddy calls on the PCs, cashing in on a large favor. Trouble is, it runs the risk of bringing the PCs to the attention of the Union. Even worse, NOT doing the job means that Konfederacy conspirators will come after the old war buddy... and if you're not working WITH the Konspiracy, you're working AGAINST them!

## SOME SAMPLE CLICHES

Action Girl	Famous Literary Character	Lady of Adventure	Schoolmarm
Bookworm	Federal Agent	Longcoat	Sheriff
Bounty Hunter	Federak Officer	Mad Scientist	Sky Baron
Bureaucrat	Fictionalized Historical Character	Master of Disguise	Sky Pilot
Cattle Puncher	Gambler	Mechanical Monster	Sky Pirate
Cattle Rustler	Gentleman Adventurer	Mr. Fixit	Soiled Dove (Hooker w. a Heart of Gold)
Civil War Veteran	Gentleman & a Scholar	Officer & a Gentleman	Spirited Young Lady
Clockwork Creature	Ghost Dancers	Proper Lady	Steampunk Gadgeteer
Damsel in Distress	Gunslinger	Rail Baron	Town Drunk
Dance Hall Girl	Hired Gun	Saloon Owner/ Bartender	Train Robber
Determined Widow		Sawbones	Wrench Wench
Drifter			

# The Clockwork Crackdown in Halloweentown

by Jack W. Shear

## Setting

The death of the Pumpkin King ushered in chaos and tumult within Halloweentown. The Pumpkin King had groomed young Voodoo Dolly to be his successor, but on the day of her coronation she went missing.

Unbeknownst to even the most ancient of Samhain elders, an enemy had been watching Halloweentown for years. The Iron Man, the long-exiled Duke of Screamwork, returned with an army of steam-powered horrors to take over Halloweentown. The Iron Man's forces made war against the denizens of Halloweentown, but soon conquered the land of eternal Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>. Now the denizens of that spooky realm must live under the heavy metal fist of the grim-faced Iron Man.

The Iron Man's aim was simple: in place of the traditional, organic way in which the residents of Halloweentown went about the business of crafting nightmares, planting fears that turn delight into dread, and spinning yarns that contain a nugget of worldly wisdom with a tale of terror, the Iron Man industrialized the purpose of Halloween. Vast, smoke-belching factories now dot the landscape of Halloweentown; where fears and shivers were once made with an artisan's care for the people of the day-lit world, they are now produced on an assembly line. No care goes into their production, no thought or passion goes into their design. And the morbid creatures of Halloweentown must labor at the machines that create these stereotypical and commonplace dreads.

Nevertheless, the very machinery that is reducing the art of crafting night-time thrills to a mere process and the steam-powered weaponry used by the Iron Man's agents might prove to be the undoing of the Duke of Screamwork's regime. A rebellion is brewing amongst Halloweentown's repressed populace. There are those who gather in the shadows to plot the Iron Man's overthrow, who will stop at nothing to break free from the monotonous shackles of the Screamwork factories, and who are beginning to appropriate the Duke's technology for their own ends. This is where the player characters come in.

**Things to read:** Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*; Ray Bradbury's *The Halloween Tree*; Tim Burton's *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy*; Roger Zelazny's *A Night in the Lonesome October*.

**Things to watch:** *A Nightmare Before Christmas*; *Coraline*; *The Corpse Bride*

**Things to listen to:** Abney Park's *End of Days*; Voltaire's *Ooky-Spooky*; Rasputina's *How We Quit the Forest*; Emilie Autumn's *Opheliac*; Unwoman's *The Fires I Started*

## Cliches

**Boogieman (or Boogiewoman)** – appearing in closets and under beds, jump-scares, summoning creepy-crawlies

**Trickster** – magical feats of toilet-papering and window-soaping, deception, getting away with murder

**Corpse Bride (or Phantom Husband)** – making things go deeply weird within houses, summoning domestic horrors, magical use of stitchery

**Boneman (or Bonewoman)** – disassembling and reassembling your skeleton, rattling up the dead, giving the creeps

**Graveyard Kid** – opening portals to the other towns, summoning ghosts, knowing what graves contain the items you need

## Steal These Steam-Powered Devices for the Revolution!

**Spring-Healed Boots** – jump enormous heights!

**Pneumatic Hammer** – smash the control machines!

**Ripper Claws** – affix these to your forearms and go to town on the agents of the Iron Man!

**BatThropter** – strap this batwing-shaped ornithopter pack to your back and take the fight to the skies!

**Steam-Tank** – you'll really have the Duke of Screamwork's goons on the run with this steam-spouting war-machine!

## Foes

**Ironbones** – iron-plated skeleton warriors animated by clockwork mechanisms (grunt soldiers 3, lunkheads 2)

**Steamwitches** – the creators and maintainers of the Iron Man's forces (mechanics 3, steam-wizardry 4, cackle 3)

**Mechaspiders** – clockwork spies on the look-out for insurrection (devious 3, sneakers 4, biters 2)

## Things to Do in Halloweentown When You're (Kinda Sorta) Dead

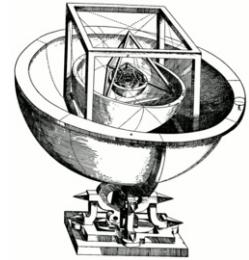
**Monkeywrench the Iron Man's Factories** – infiltrate the factory, find allies, avoid detection, and wreck the machines of production in the name of true nightmare craftsmanship!

**Turn the Means of Oppression Against the Oppressor** – make contacts within the resistance, discover the location of the warehouses where the Iron Man keeps his steam-powered weapons, break in and liberate them, distribute them to your comrades

**Rescue Voodoo Dolly** – where did the Pumpkin King's successor get to anyway? Was she abducted by the Iron King's agents or did she run off with that scamp Cupid from Valentinetown? Track down the leads, case the joint where Voodoo Dolly is being held, plot her escape, bust in guns a-blazing and make it happen

# THE ORREY

## SPACE STEAMPUNK IN THE KNOWN SOLAR SYSTEM



### HISTORY

Colonialism as we know it never happened. The regions of earth developed at an equal rate, creating eight great civilizations. Though each empire had a vastly different culture and polity, they all shared the human propensity to produce and consume. The race to progress was fierce and not without conflict. By the mid-nineteenth century, the globe was pockmarked with sprawling, sooty metropolises, surrounded by the wastelands of denuded forests and gloomy skies cluttered with dirigibles and airships.

### THE EIGHT CIVILIZATIONS

#### **The Alexandrians** [*Western Europe and the British Isles*]

- Rational, Aggressive, Theoretical

#### **Russia** [*Eastern Europe and Asia Minor*]

- Stolid, Creative, Productive

#### **The Mthethwa Paramountcy** [*South of Africa*]

- Spiritual, Technological, Political

#### **The Nation of Islam** [*North of Africa and Middle East*]

- Scholarly, Mercantile, Patient

#### **Hindustan** [*South Asian peninsula*]

- Theatrical, Financial, Militaristic

#### **Han** [*East Asia*]

- Academic, Conformist, Efficient

#### **The Inoka** [*North America*]

- Exploitative, Exploratory, Stubborn

#### **The Inca - Nahuatlaca confederacy** [*South America*]

- Ingenious, Communal, Ferocious,

### DENSE OIL

Desperate for resources, humanity turned its eye to the stars. It was the invention of Dense Oil that made them accessible. A cube the size of a die could power a steamship for a year. Dense oil was rapidly applied to powerful engines that could propel manned vehicles out of the atmosphere. The race was on! Smoking, clanking rocketships exploded into the sky, reaching first the moon and then onwards to the other planets in the solar system.

### CLICHES

**Buyer** (negotiating, land-assaying, scamming, inventorying)

**Diplomat** (talking, drinking, speaking languages, understanding cultures)

**Engineer** (spaceship fixing, monkeywrenching, parts-buying)

**Explorer** (tracking, camping, trailblazing)

**Gasser** (freefalling, breath-holding, line-climbing)

**Miner** (digging, exploding, tunnelling)

**Naturalist** (capturing, cataloguing, analyzing)

**Navigator** (planet-hopping, asteroid-avoiding, chart-making)

**Prospector** (gas and oil finding, claim-jumping, haggling)

**Spy** (sneaking, listening, duping, observing)

### OUTWARDS

What humanity discovered outside its orbit was as fantastic and fruitful as their pulp literati had imagined and as dangerous. From deadly environments, to hostile natives to unplumbed resources, heroes of sometimes competing sometimes cooperating earth empires will find the solar system is a world of adventure and risk.

### THE PLANETS

**The Moon** - Colonized by Hindustan, who installed a mining operation and now hold a monopoly on the best ore rights. Port Shiva is a frontier town.

**Mercury** - Despite its heat, Russians have developed Dense Oil refineries on cobalt islands in the lava seas.

**Venus** - The steamy, deadly jungle planet is still barely explored and has yet to reveal the riches of the other planets and so is mostly attractive to naturalists, crackpots and foolhardy Inokan explorers.

**Mars** - The desert planet offers rich mineral deposits, already claimed by the Han; the natives are not so generous.

**Asteroid Belt** - Perilous for navigation, and a perfect hideout for Islamic space pirates.

**Jupiter** - Floating Alexandrian cloud cities fueled by gas mining dot the atmosphere, but who or what is sabotaging the operations on the ground?

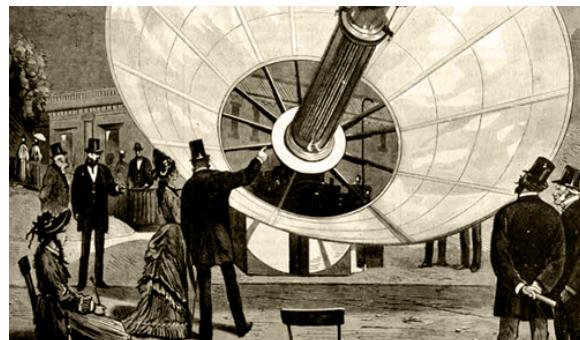
**Saturn** - No human has made it past the rings alive.

Mthothwan scientists claim evidence of ghosts on the surface.

**Uranus** - An Incan prison planet of unspoken atrocities.

**Neptune** - The ocean planet has yet to be developed, only a few floating outposts run by the hardest of adventurers stake claims for their earth civilizations.

**Pluto** - The ice planet has so far proved to be utterly unwelcoming to man, but there is evidence of great reserves of oil under the white.



A campaign setting by Olman Feelyus for **Risus: the Anything RPG**  
part of the November 2012 #risusonepagechallenge.

# Where Once We Stood On the Shoulders of Giants, Now We Climb Anew

By James MacGeorge, for use with S. John Ross' Risus: The Anything RPG

- It has been twenty-three years since the body of Vormesh, God of Magic, fell to the Aerth, changing all of our lives forever. We still don't know who or what could have slain a God, or why, all we know is what happened next. The body was massive, miles long. The capitol of the PanHumanoid League, Stormhaven, was wiped off the map, as Vormesh's massive hand flattened it. The shockwave from his skull bouncing off of the Whitecap Mountain Range leveled the Monasticity of Ohm, home to the greatest concentration of holy men in all of Aerth. A dark bluish liquid poured from the wound in the back of the skull, filling the Sundown Valley and drowning the entire Halfling Nation in a single deluge of Godsblood. His other arm splashed into the Sea of Falling Tears, creating a tsunami last spotted headed towards the coastal port of Deepwater. A thousand stories have been told since we took refuge in the Tinker Gnome Tunnel Structure UGN 5740, those are some of the less personal, easier to relate ones. There are plenty more of children lost, families torn apart, loved ones killed in the crazy days immediately after the Descent, as it's now known. Our Tunnel Leader has encouraged us all to keep diaries, both to keep us occupied, and to serve as a reminder, so that who we were is not completely forgotten.

**15 Heshuary, 345 CE** – We were the lucky ones, we thought. During the Descent, mages still had their magic. It wasn't until Vormesh suffered fatal cranial trauma that the magic left the world, the power of magic bleeding out as its God did the same. I was one of the most powerful mages in the PHL. My Elvin wife, Lanifel, barely 400, and my half-human children were with me when we felt the impact. I cast a spell, the first that came to mind and teleported us all to the far side of the continent. From leagues away, we saw the body drop, shiver and remain still. We saw the cloud of dust rise up, darkening the skies. We saw the fires burning, and we thought we had witnessed the worst, but we were wrong. No longer needing to fear the sun, the Black Below is almost empty now, the Night Races at last claiming dominion over the surface lands, or what is left of them. I saw a pack of Night Elves tear my children apart, and do things to my wife that I will never forget, no matter how I wish I could. That's all I can write tonight.

**21 Heshuary, 345 CE** – There is no more magic. When the God of Magic passed on to wherever Gods go when they die, the ability of the mortal races to pluck and tug at the strands of reality passed along as well. Whereas once I could summon forces to alter reality at a whim, I am now simply a man with a sword and memories of meaningless worlds. After the death of my family, I spotted a large crowd, all headed in the same direction. They were traveling to the nearest entrance to the Gnomish or Dwarven areas of the Black Below. By the time we reached the gate to the Gnomish Tunnel Structures, the crowd had swelled to the thousands. Even at two abreast, they could only keep the gates open for so long, and when the Ogre Horde appeared behind the refugees, the Gnomes did their best to hold them off. In the end, though, the gates had to be shut. The screaming lasted for several hours. The Ogres beat on the doors for several days before they got tired and wandered off. We haven't seen the outside world since then. The Dwarves have gone deep, abandoning their cities close to the surface to search for their ancestral homes, available for the first time in millennia now that the Dark Races are gone. If the Elvish Nations yet live, they are trapped above, and likely fight for their survival. The Gnomes have refused to abandon their charges, though, and a new PanHumanoid League is rising in the areas under their protection, made up of the remnants of the Old World. There are members of each of the races here, even a few Halflings.

**25 Heshuary, 345 CE** - Organized into Tunnels, we maintain our new home, while far below, the Gnomish forges build new magic. Rather than powered by mystical forces, it is shaped by the power of steam and other gasses, and the power of ingenuity. We patrol, we build, we rebuild, we defend against the occasional incursion from the surface, and we wait. The Gnomes have begun mass producing their flint-locked projectile weapons, and Gnomish fashion has been becoming more and more popular among the general population. Top hats, pocket watches, vests with fob pockets adorn more and more as I walk my tunnel. The Descent seems to have sharpened the minds of the Tinker Gnomes. While they once had the unfocused, almost lunatic fascination with the mysteries of their craft, they are now focused, and it seems that each with each passing day brings forth a new, wondrous invention. They have accommodated our lack of infravision with an ingenious system of lights, lined together and possessing the power of lightning. It's not just their fashion catching on, it's their speech mannerisms, their fascination with geared mechanics, I've even seen several elven children shaving the front of their hairlines, mimicking the high foreheads of our Gnomish benefactors. Though the air is black with the acrid smoke from the forges below, I find myself becoming accustomed to the stench, and the soot that covers us all.

**17 Uld, 345 CE** – First chance to write in quite some time. Our tunnel, 5740, was invaded by a force of the un-dead when a wall crumbled, exposing a previously undiscovered structure below. Truly our land is cursed, that our magic must be taken away, but magical creatures such as the zombies that poured into our tunnel yet live. It has taken the better part of a month to clear out the tunnels, and life is slowly returning to normal. Hah. I must be assimilated – to think that huddled in a falsely lit tunnel lit by hard light candles could be normal. I find that I do not have the stomach for any more writing this night.

**19 Sravil, 345 CE** – The first Gnomish Automatons have reached the front lines. It turns out the un-dead we faced last month were merely a vanguard, sent to test our defenses. Rumor has it that the Dwarves, curse their beards, stirred something up in their eagerness to retake their cities. Something old, something deadly, something that hates the living. Now we are trapped, between the desolation above and the icy stillness of the tomb that awaits us below. Our Gnomish allies continue to prove themselves invaluable, however – in mere months, they have progressed farther than they had in the years previous, and while we are pressed as never before on both sides, I have faith that our determination, combined with the technological marvels offered by our Gnomish Allies shall allow us to triumph, to persevere, and perhaps even thrive!

**24 Tameroon, 346 CE** – Our Campaign is over! The Lich King is dead, his hordes returned to whatever cursed netherworld they came from. His demonic backers have been given a thrashing, and we have proven that a land without magic is not defenseless. The Gnomish Automatica Division even slew a Pit Fiend, a feat I can honestly say would have proven beyond the powers of all but the most potent of sorcerers before the fall. The Gnomes have announced the establishment of the first above ground outpost, walled with lightning wire fences. I have submitted my application to be among the first garrison to be stationed at Fort Aspiration. I sleep easily this night, knowing that my future, while still uncertain, at least allows me to dream of seeing the sun once more. For the first time in ages, I feel no need to write of the past, for I look forward to the future!

# Years of Woe

Compiled and edited by Ryan L. Shelton for the November 2012 Risus One-Page Challenge.  
Original ideas from the imaginations of the players of the Dieselarch Lexicon: <http://lexicon-rpg.wikispaces.com>

## ❖ Overview ❖

The Dieselarch Empire is crumbling. The once bright Sunlight Hegemony has crumbled as Anachomages and Ætherpriests battle over the nature of magic. Rebels and anarchists have pulled many of the once great cities down stone by stone. Scattered pockets of empire remain, ruled by aristocratic lords or powerful members of the Bureaucratic Pool

## ❖ Geography ❖

The Archipelago is divided into three regions based both on shared geography and the periods during which they were conquered by the Dieselarch Empire.

**Dieselomnia.** Three large islands, 7 medium islands and numerous smaller islands in the center of The Archipelago, Dieselomnia is the traditional home of the Dieselarch Empire and was largely the extent of the empire in its earliest days.

**Jopagella.** These ten medium islands and numerous smaller islands stretch across the southern reaches of The Archipelago.

**Qallach.** The four large and 15 medium islands of Qallach wrap from the east, through the north, and to the west of the Archipelago.

## ❖ The Anticithera ❖

An enormous difference engine, built during the first age of the Dieselarch Empire, this was used to extensively to help plan all levels of government activity. Even private citizens consulted the Anticethra at Correlation Centers across the Archipelago.

## ❖ The Sfaira ❖

Widespread use of the Ætheric Pump (the single most important invention/discovery of the Dieselarch peoples) depleted the membrane between reality and the Sfaira, allowing Exobios to freely enter this world. By the time of the Years of Woe, Exobios exist in nearly every corner of the Archipelago.

## ❖ Factions ❖

**Ætherpriests** Although it suffered greatly as a result of the popularity of Æther Pumps, the Religio-philosophical underpinnings of The Hapellan Church survived, and was ultimately proven true. Ætherpriests, Techomages, Mechanomancers are all wonderworkers whose medium is some combination of technology and Ætheric magic.

**Anarchists** Nearly all opposition to the Empire was internal. And while all anarchists want to destroy the Empire, they have little common notion of what should follow. As the Empire crumbled and the Years of Woe began, nearly any bandit or warlord not associated with another group or ideology was called an Anarchist.

**Bureaucrat Pool** Once the clerks and minions of the Dieselarchi aristocracy, the bureaucratic class slowly gained power and ultimately isolated the aristocracy and ran the Empire themselves. Now they manage autonomous remnants of the Empire throughout the Archipelago

**Knights of the Empire** There are three major orders of knighthood extant in the Archipelago.

**The Knights of Ætheria** The largest and best-respected of the Knighthood Orders, the Knights of Ætheria were originally a large band of Mercenary fighters who styled themselves the Æther Lords. The Sunlight Hegemony viewed them as a major threat, but chose to co-opt them into the peacetime providers of protection and security. They are best known for their use of Æther and Steam powered mechanical mounts, such as the Quartz Raptor and the Coal-burning Pony.

**The Sheriff-Knights of the Court** The Court of the Empress's Mercy (the Imperial Courts) had maintained a large number of Sheriffs to enforce its ruling since its institution, and when the Knighthood Orders became popular, the Sheriffs became Sheriff-Knights.

**The Knights of Iscar** The technologically ambitious Knights of Iscar constantly maintained the pretense that their efforts were directed at the overall advancement of the sciences, and hired themselves out not just as a military unit but as a general research and development team.

**Republic of Arts** As the Early Age of the Dieselarch Empire waned into transitory chaos, a small group of scholars, utopians, and sophiturgists established the Balloon Brigade. Driven by a desire to preserve the accumulated Dieselarchi wisdom and culture, and taking advantage of the Ætheric Pump, Frejervik Nestoria perfected the Vistulic Skycraft. Using the technology of the Vistulic Skycraft, Nestoria and his companions outfitted the first fleet of lighter-than-air craft: The Balloon Brigade.

The Republic of Arts is the same idea, 900 years later. It is a flotilla of airships, a sky-borne city-state, which roves the Archipelago to rescue works of art and culture. Their fleet of airships slowly moves from island to island in the Archipelago, sending squadrons of Shrikes and Wyvern personal-fliers down to the surface to find treasures from the great Empire's past.

**Exobios** Creatures originating from other dimensions. There are many different types of exobios. Some are sentient and have integrated into Dieselarchi society. They frequently live in their own ghettos or communes.

## ❖ Sample Clichés ❖

**Technomage, Mechanomancer, Ætherpriest:** creating techno-magical æther-powered devices, probing the depths of reality, use your æthereal essence to work magic.

**Sheriff-Knight:** Keeping the peace, fighting rogue exobios, enforcing the rule of law.

**Æther Lords:** Noblesse oblige, riding quartz raptors and coal ponies, defending the peasants from Anarchists.

**Iscari Knight:** thauma-technological supremacy, fighting with weird science weaponry, secretive sci-warrior

**Republican Agent:** swashbuckling, personal-flier pilot, dashing personality

**Bureaucrat:** leadership, grinding opponents beneath the cogs of bureaucracy, Dieselarch history

**Exobio:** Alien sensibilities, extra-planar abilities, traveling in and out of the Sfaira



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# It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad Whimsy World!

A 1-Page High Magic, Non-Medieval Fantasy Setting by [Mark Chance](#) for use with S. John Ross's *Risus: The Anything RPG*

## History

Born in 1901, Milton Elias "Milt" Whimsy revolutionized the entertainment industry with his loveable cartoon characters and family-friendly, big-screen adaptations of classic fairy tales. By the time he was 54, he had amassed both a personal fortune and a sterling reputation, and he controlled an international entertainment corporation that produced movies, television shows, and stage plays. When he opened the first of his Whimsyland theme parks in 1958, his fortune and reputation grew even more.

Unknown to almost everyone, Whimsy was a powerful wizard from the 7th Dimension. He used transspiritism to enter the 3rd Dimension and be born as a human in order to escape the machinations of the Dark Lord Geoff Ratzenbourg, whose perverse evil threatened to turn the 7th Dimension into Ratzenbourg's personal hell. Whimsy used his magic to weave a benign enchantment throughout all his creations, encouraging people's natural inclinations toward kindness and joy.

Disaster struck both Whimsy and the 3rd Dimension in 1966 when Ratzenbourg burst through the dimensional barriers to attack Whimsy at the ribbon cutting for the joyfulest place on Earth, the amazing Whimsy World. In a barrage of soul-searing necromancy, Ratzenbourg ripped all of Whimsy's attractions from across the globe into a specially constructed prison zone in the 7th Dimension. Tens of thousands of people visiting Whimsy attractions found themselves trapped in a twisted realm constructed from theme parks, movie theaters, resorts, playhouses, and shopping malls.

## Whimsy Worlds

The Whimsy attractions trapped in the 7th Dimension have been warped and forged into a Möbius strip of enormous size on which the normal laws of physics and the natural world do not apply. The thousands of square miles assembled along the Möbius strip are loosely divided into five "worlds".

Each world has a theme, and magic pervades everything. Ratzenbourg's hell spawn minions have shapeshifted into a variety of motif-appropriate forms. Animatronic models have become sentient and taken sides in the ongoing battle between good and evil that rages across all five worlds, each of which presents a wide variety of genres that can be mixed with high-magic action.

Travel from one world to the next can be hazardous and unpredictable. A roller coaster in Adventure World could lead to Spooky World by way of Frontier World today, but do nothing but provide an exciting ride the next.

Large swaths of the Möbius strip provide windswept plains, blue seas, tropical wildernesses, burning deserts, and other

thematically appropriate terrains. There are few limits to what adventurers may encounter in the 7th Dimension.

**Adventure World:** Swashbucklers, wicked pirates, ancient jungle kingdoms, fanged cannibals, Arabian knights, genies in bottles, and lost boys.

**Animal World:** The circle of life, animal kings, savage wolves, mischievous squirrels, well-furnished dens, and amphibians on wild rides.

**Frontier World:** Cowboys and Indians, covered wagons, herds of buffalo, bushwhackers and polecats, settlers, cities of gold, rushes for precious metals, and gunfights in corrals.

**Spooky World:** Haunted houses, moonlit graveyards, ghosts and goblins, bumps in the night, wicked witches, black cats, and dancing skeletons.

**Tomorrow World:** Robots, laser pistols, teleportation bubbles, rocket ships, bug-eyed aliens, and alien cityscapes.

## Sample Clichés

**Animatron:** A sentient animatronic model that now has powers based on its form. Animatronic Ben Franklin with a lightning kite?

**Awakened Wizard:** A trapped tourist with new found power. Eldritch might, but on whose side?

**Imaginationalist:** A Whimsy World technician that has arcane power over transmogrified attractions. Are her powers capable of controlling the worlds?

**Plucky Kid:** A dauntless lad or lass ready for adventure. But where are Mom and Dad?

**Costumed Mascot:** A high-school student trapped in a funny animal character costume. What strange powers does the costume contain?

**Customer Service Warrior:** A Whimsy World employee determined to make everyone's stay better. Who knows what his checklists can do now?

## Possible Plots

**The Five Purgatorial Keys:** Are rumors of five magical keys that can open the doors out of the prison true?

**It's Small, Terrifying World After All:** There are people trapped in that family-friendly ride. Their screams of terror echo through the streets. Can they be saved?

**Where's Milt?:** Why hasn't Milt been seen since Ratzenbourg's attack? Is he dead? Biding his time? Imprisoned in some darker pit?

# SWEET HOME CSS ALABAMA

By Brent Wolke • For use with S. John Ross' *Risus: The Anything RPG*

## HOW IT HAPPENED

At the Battle of Cherbourg in 1864, it would appear that the USS Kearsarge defeated and sunk the CSS Alabama, but no...the resulting explosion and apparent sinking was just a rationale for a massive cross-dimensional rip which caused the CSS Alabama to 'sink' out of our reality, and rise into the World of Atragha.

## WHY IT HAPPENED

A sorcerer of some might in the Atragha used his powers to summon other-worldly heroes to his aid. It worked, and it brought the CSS Alabama and crew into his world, but the explosive energies also killed the sorcerer in the effort. What the sorcerer wanted other-worldly heroes for, or indeed, who he was, is unknown. The only thing for sure is...the crew of the CSS Alabama is stuck in another world.

## THE WORLD OF ATRAGHA

To the limits of anyone's knowledge, Atragha is a primitive world of immense magic and monsters. It exists as a massive continent with 3/4ths of it dominated by tangled forests, swamps, and networks of rivers. There is a large snow covered mountain range with cuts off the remaining 1/4th and is said to be a desolate desert. Everywhere are the ruins of civilizations that have come before.

The people of Atragha are primitive, organized into thousands of tribes with complicated alliances, and look pretty much like the human crew of the CSS Alabama. The Atraghans work no metal or stone (but often live in the ruins). Despite this, they are powerful for they have access to magic so powerful they can command the weather, create lightning and fire from their hands, and all other manner of world-shaking effects.

And they need it.

Atragha is also populated by monsters. At one end, there are terrible beasts lurking in ruins or stalking people through the swamps and forests, and at the other end, the giant cloud eaters...monsters so huge their heads touch the sky and who usually take no notice of the villages they crush beneath their feet by accident.

Into this world, the humans have been thrown, and in it they find themselves...far more powerful than any Atraghan, rivaling even the sorcerers.

## CHARACTER CREATION

Characters are built using 10 dice and may take Hooks and Tales. If the Risus Companion is in use, then Lucky Shots, Questing Dice, Side Kicks and Shieldmates, are also available.

Suitable cliches to choose from are related to naval combat or operations, fighting, shooting, and the like. If the adventures are to take place after sometime arriving in Atragha, then characters could have conceivably picked up some new 'native' skills. Players may also choose to play native Atraghans.

**Human:** Humans, even though they are roughly the same in size and appearance of Atraghans, are 3 to 4 times stronger, and capable of immense physical feats in comparison. Any (any!) cliche taken by a human is automatically considered a Double Pump cliche at no extra cost. Humans cannot take any cliche related to magic.

**Atraghans:** The native people of Atragha look to be roughly human, but are significantly weaker than humans. On the other hand, they are capable of magic, a force so potent as to rival humans. Any cliche involving magic is considered a Double Pump cliche at no extra cost.

## TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Rifles, sabers, bayonets, cannons, and other personal items from the civil war era as possibilities for humans. Clubs, bows, spears, furs, and other primitive gear as possibilities for Atraghans.

## CONFLICTS

A few notes about conflicts between humans, Atraghans, monsters, and everything else. Humans are powerful. Very powerful. So are monsters. The Atraghans? Not so much unless they have magic. As such, use the following rules.

**Human versus Monster:** Humans and monsters are on roughly equal footing, and so use their cliches in conflict as normal.

**Human or Monster versus Atraghan:** In this case, the Atraghan is considered at half-dice versus either humans or monsters.

**Human or Monster versus Magic:** If an Atraghan has access to magic, and is using magic in a conflict, then she battles at full dice.

## MAGIC

Magic is mighty. It can change the weather, and call thunder from the sky. It can cause earthquakes and floods. It can make one fly or turn skin to living stone. It can make someone spit fire, or throw lightning. It can animate trees to do a sorcerers bidding, or blight a forest of every living thing. It can summon monsters and banish them as well. Magic is mighty.

## ADVENTURES

Individual human crew of the CSS Alabama may choose to abandon ship and take up life in Atragha, while some Atraghans may have been taken up as crew aboard the CSS Alabama. Adventures as such may follow the ship as it steams or sails its way through the many rivers or adventures may follow humans and Atraghans as they explore a mysterious world.

The following are possible adventure seeds to get players started.

**Over The Sea:** Atragha is but one (albeit large) continent. The Alabama is capable of sea voyages. What other lands and people exist over the sea? Perhaps others who will know of a way home?

**Resupply:** There is plenty of wood to repair the Alabama as it takes damage, but mining operations must commence if they are to replace damaged metal, or to forge new sabers, and manufacture new rifles, cannons, and shot. An outpost in the mountains must be founded, working mines must be dug, and crews of natives must be hired.

**Strangers:** The crew of the Alabama may find they are not the only humans on Atragha. Others, summoned through magic, from different time periods of Earth are also attempting to make a new life on this magical planet, and can present allies or enemies.

**Who Came Before?:** Ruins of multiple past civilizations can be found half-buried in swamps and hidden in forests. Who were these people? Why did their civilizations fail? What are these strange artifacts? Some one needs to find out, and watch out for the monsters.

**What Child Is This?:** The first human Atraghan baby is born and while no one knows what this child will be capable of--stronger or weaker than the combined parentage--everyone is in a panic with some claiming a God or a Demon has been born. Some will protect it. Some will attempt to kill it. The heroes?

# TEMPEST

A Ritus One-Page Setting by [Brent P. Newhall](#)

## HISTORY

For untold millennia, man hid in his caves, whipped by Father Storm and buried by Mother Snow. Some who hid appealed to the raw power tearing through their world, and made dangerous bargains. Thus spirits were wed to humanity.

There are still a few old women who remember the time before aeromancers charted the sky and waters. Now, those brave enough to dance between the storms venture out, establishing trade with other pockets of humanity. What strange beasts, food, tools, and dwellings has man made for himself during his millennia trapped in the womb of Tempest?

## CONCEPT

Many small, violent storms afflict the world of Tempest. Deluges carve new swamps, valleys, and hills within months. This is a Play-Doh® world.

Until recently, anyone who ventured beyond a small clan would be wiped out by a storm. But some made deals with spirits, which now inhabit their bodies.

The world is full of disconnected human tribes living in a pocket world of unique vegetation and animals. Life grows as quickly as possible on Tempest, so many plants flower and fruit within weeks of germinating.

## SPIRITKIN

A human can make a bargain with a sentient spirit, which will inhabit the human. This spirit gives the human tremendous powers and resides in the human's consciousness, turning the human into a Spiritkin. Spirits may have all sorts of reasons to do this, and most have an agenda.

Spirits are independent personalities with no physical body. Some recall strange, hazy memories, never with enough detail to establish personality or place. There are also rumors of humans taken over by their spirit, but perhaps they just went mad.

## SOCIETY

All humans (discovered so far) live in tribes of less than 100 people. Before the Charts, most tribes lived in caves near an ocean, hunting fish or wild game and foraging for fruits and vegetables. A few tribes built solid structures.

A dozen tribes developed Spiritkin who communicated amongst themselves and made the Charts. These tribes formed a simple alliance based on intermarriage and mutual protection, which has shown little strain thanks to their massive gains from exploration and trade. This won't last forever.

## CLICHES

ALL PATHS REVEAL THEMSELVES TO ME

BREATHING IS FOR THE WEAK

FATHER STORM'S FURY IS AS NOTHING TO ME

FIRE SKIN

FLAMING FAMILIAR

FLESH OF STONE

I CAN TELEPORT FINE WHEN NOBODY ANNOYS ME

LIGHTNING IS MY BROTHER

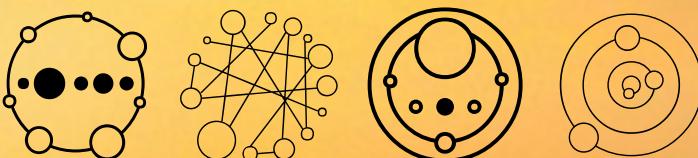
MY FEET SUMMON THUNDER

MY TOUCH BRINGS PAIN

THE ROCK IN THE STORM

# Wardens of Mars

A one-page setting by Dan Suptic ©2012  
For use with S John Ross' *Risus: The Anything RPG*



**Mars, the red planet**, 4<sup>th</sup> from the sun, *should* be a peaceful world. The intelligent race that inhabits the planet is a simple group of people. Tall and thin, hairless with dark red skin, the Martians are a very community-driven people; each gifted with a strong but incomplete magical power, they work together to form beautiful hive-structures, create food and drink of many varied styles, and mold the basic rocks and sand of their planet into works of art.

Sadly, Mars also hosts an odd phenomenon. Periodically, breaches in reality open, and inhabitants and landscape from other dimensions begin to encroach upon the face of Mars. It has been a long time since anyone has attempted peaceful communication with these outsiders, since the different alien's intentions have been universally hostile. A new class of citizen grew, the wardens, tasked with using their powers to create weapons and destructive magical spells to fight off the invading forces that visit the world.

**The PCs** in Wardens of Mars are a group of wardens, tasked with eliminating breaches. These breaches are usually the size of a large city block, and finding the focal point of the breach requires fighting several monstrous aliens and exploring alien architecture that has overtaken the area.

PCs are made with 10 dice, with advanced options up to the GM. Aside from their magical cliché (explained below), warden's clichés almost always include a combat cliché or two (using anything from a staff or spear, to crafted weapons that shoot beams of energy). Other clichés range from explorative clichés, to social or occupational clichés from their former life.

Every character (and indeed, every Martian) is gifted with one (and only one) magic power. No single Martian can perform magic on their own though - a Martian needs at least one other Martian's power combined with theirs to make an effect. At the very least, each magical effect requires an action-type and a focus-type of power combined. So, to create some water, one Martian would need to use Create magic, while another would need to use Water magic. More complex magic may require more abilities - creating a stone golem from thin air would require the Create and Animate action-type abilities, and the Stone and Body focus-type abilities.

**Magic clichés** are listed as *Gift of Phobos* (for action-type magic) or *Gift of Deimos* (for focus-type magic), and are then followed by the specific flavor of magic. So, someone who has Fire focus magic at 3 dice would list it as *Gift of Deimos - Fire* (3). When casting magic, all Martians involved roll their magic cliché, and the highest rolled total is the result of the attempt. Magic used in combat works the same, but if the highest rolled result still fails the combat roll, whoever rolled the *lowest* result takes the die of damage to their magic cliché.

**Common magical abilities** are listed below - these lists are not meant to be all-inclusive, and players can take any magic ability they like, with GM approval.

**Common Gifts of Phobos (action-type abilities) include:**

- *Create* - Make something from nothing.
- *Destroy* - Eliminate a quantity of something.
- *Animate* - Cause something to move on its own for a while.
- *Shape* - Change the shape of something.
- *Alter* - Usually needs 2 focus-types, change something to something else.
- *Strike* - Launch a bolt made out of something as an attack.
- *Move* - Move a quantity of something from point A to point B.

**Common Gifts of Deimos (focus-type abilities) include:**

- *Stone* - Rocks, boulders and most walls.
- *Sand* - From fine sand to piles of pebbles.
- *Metal* - Hard iron and steel.
- *Air* - Breathable, nitrogen rich air.
- *Water* - Rarely found naturally, but useful for many things.
- *Fire* - Burning flames.
- *Body* - Martians and anything Martian-shaped.
- *Mind* - Thoughts, feeling and memories.
- *Energy* - Lightning, laser and plasma.

**Closing breaches** requires wardens to first travel to the breach, possibly encountering alien scouts on the way. Once there, they need to investigate the alien structures to find the breach's focal point (which manifests as a swirling orb of energy that gives off a low hum). Other alien hazards besides inhabitants and structures can hinder the PCs - environmental effects are commonly encountered as well, like extreme temperatures and harsh weather. Once the focal point is found, one of the wardens must spend a few minutes dispelling it. Any warden (and indeed, any Martian) has this ability to dispel focal points, but once the process starts, it will send out a silent call to alien inhabitants in the area - the other wardens will need to guard the one dispelling the focal point.

Once dispelled, the breach will quickly melt away. Any aliens and alien environment will disappear within seconds, leaving the normal Martian landscape. The wardens can now return home and enjoy a nice break before the next breach appears.

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# Wolfe and Archie - The Nero Wolfe One-Page

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By: Judd M. Goswick (Based on the Novels by Rex Stout)

## Our Heroes

Nero Wolfe, famous private detective, lives ensconced in his brownstone on West 35th Street in New York City. He seldom leaves it and every day, but Sunday, he spends 9am to 11am and 6pm to 6pm in his Orchard greenhouse on the top floor of his abode. He is curt, obstinate, magisterial, and the best detective money can buy.

He is aided in his residence by his orchid expert Theodore Horstmann, his cook Fritz Brenner, and his "leg-man" Archie Goodwin.

Archie is the brawn to Wolfe's brain. He is a bit too breezy to be termed "hardboiled", but he is definitely a good egg. He likes dancing, baseball, and has contacts all over the City that come in handy to his boss.

More Here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero\\_Wolfe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero_Wolfe)

## The Series in Brief (and Additional Characters)

Most of the mysteries are concerned with upper-crust New York socialites who can afford the fees Wolfe charges to keep himself in fine food and orchids. The stories are also a love note to the way the City moved and breathed in the early 20th century.

Wolfe and Archie often run afoul of the NYC Homicide Detectives in their cases. Chief among them is Inspector Cramer. The Police do not like it when Wolfe horns in on an investigation they pick up and they always assume he is pulling a fast one - usually because he is!

There are three additional private eyes that Wolfe and Archie will call upon to fill-out the ranks when needed. Saul Panzer is a gifted PI and a generally useful investigator. Orrie Cather is a click-tongued social butterfly who gabs info out of people to great effect. Fred Durkin is great at following subjects - Archie says he "can't wait until Mr. Wolfe sends him to Russia to tail Khrushchev".

Lon Cohen, a reporter for a local paper, the *New York Gazette*, is often of use as well. He trades info on suspects for exclusives on cases.

Lily Rowan is a rich socialite that is Archie's favorite dance partner at the Flamingo Club and is often his in-road to the upper crust families of the city.

## Nero Wolfe

Eccentric Genius Detective (4)  
OCD Orchid Lover (2)  
Husky Gourmet (3)  
Avid Reader (1)  
Agoraphobe (1)

Hook: Vanity - Wolfe cannot abide someone showing him up or making him look easily fooled. He will go to great lengths to solve cases dealing with these people.

## Archie Goodwin

Hardboiled Private Detective (3)  
Ladies' Man (3)  
Well-connected Man (3)  
Snappy Dresser (1)

## Game-Mastering for Wolfe and Archie

The challenge when running a game with these two characters is to strike a balance between their styles. Wolfe stays at home unless something has gone truly off kilter. Archie works the streets for his boss and also goads him into working when Wolfe gets in a pout.

Rex Stout, the author of the series, uses Archie's good memory to good effect, having Archie report verbatim to Wolfe while the genius closes his eyes and puffs his lips as he works the problem over in his head.

The odd pairing and the resulting kinship, teamwork, and affection are the selling points of the series just as much as the mysteries. Some stories can be complicated or even created by issues resulting from some issue or consternation in the brownstone. These stories add unique color to what might otherwise be a fairly obvious mystery. A good GM can also have a mystery somehow upset the environment Wolfe enjoys, forcing him into activity to solve the case and put things back the way they were.

The chemistry of the players who step into the two main roles is key. They should be able to play these two men who are often as divided as united. Many a case involves Wolfe keeping Archie out of some crucial point of the plan or Archie performing his "duty" of nagging Wolfe to force him to work. If the players can have these tempests in their proverbial teapots without ruining their fun, the game will pop.

# Shadow Ops

## What is it

The Great Reawakening brought magic back into the world, granting people extraordinary powers. Unfortunately, it didn't also grant an instruction manual and most of those who "came up Latent" with magical abilities were unable to control them. This culminated in the Bloch Incident, where uncontrolled magic use resulted in the destruction of the Lincoln Memorial and the deaths of thirty-four people. In an effort to prevent future catastrophes, the McGauer-Linden Act created the Rea Commission of the US Congress, which designated five "authorized" schools of magic and associated five "prohibited" schools, otherwise known as "Probe" schools. Certain practices within authorized schools were also prohibited.

The Great Reawakening did not come quietly. Across the country and in every nation, people began "coming up Latent," developing terrifying powers—summoning storms, raising the dead, and setting everything they touch ablaze. Those who Manifest must choose: become a sheepdog who protects the flock or a wolf who devours it...

## Character Creation

Characters are built using 10 dice and may take Hooks, Tales, and Lucky Dice.

### Ideal Cliches

Sorcerer, Selfer, any Modern theme, ask GM

### Hooks

Selfer, Prohibited School

### Magic

[All magic is double pumped]

### Legal Schools

\**Pyromancy* – Allows the Sorcerer to manipulate flame.

\**Hydromancy* – Allows the Sorcerer to manipulate water.

\**Terramancy* – Permits the manipulation of earth and associated flora.

\**Aeromancy* – Allows the Sorcerer to manipulate air.

\**Physiomancy* – "Healers" are able to manipulate living flesh.

\* "Artificing" - Creates BMER's

### Prohibited Schools

\**Necromancy* – Permits the manipulation of dead flesh.

\**Negramancy* – Covers the manipulation of decay.

\**Portamancy* – The rarest of all schools, able to manipulate the fabric between dimensions, opening portals between them and permitting transit.

\**Elementalist* – Can manipulate various forms of kinetic energy to create sentient elementals.

\**Rending* – The reverse of physiomancy

\* "Whispering" - Terramantic magic used to control the actions of animals

### Tools of the Trade

Since all Sorcerers are officers in the US military, they have M9 pistols and access to other military hardware. Limbic Damperner allows better control of magic (no blowback from magic) Selfers are civilians

### Common Enemies

*Gahe* – Impervious to conventional weaponry, requires magic to beat. Always double pumped.

*Rocs* – Flying bird like creatures that often have Goblins riding them. Goblin air support

*Goblins* – Indigenous to the Source, the Defender Goblin tribes want humanity off their territory. Goblin Sorcerers are painted white

*Selfers/SOC* – Self explanatory Adventures

*New York City* – There is a group of Selfers in hiding, fighting for Selfer rights

*Mescalaro* – A domestic terrorist group of Apaches fighting for their freedom, worshipping Gahe as Mountain Gods

*Source* – Everything in the Source is brighter, better, shinier. Magic is more powerful (No blowback damage from magic)

### Glossary

*BMER* – Bound Magical Energy Repository. Any inanimate object into which magic is bound

*Selfer* – Latent individuals who flee authority and use their magical abilities unsupervised



# Hanoi Hilton



## Overview:

The Year is 1965. You have been captured in enemy territory. Locked up in this camp with no chance of escape. It's up to you and your fellow prisoners to come up with a plan to get out. At least if you ever want to see your family again. Damn Johnson, Damn this War.

You are so tired of watching over your shoulders.

Guards, dogs, and the Warden are bad enough, but it seems that your fellow prisoners are starting to turn on you too.

## Basics:

Each Player takes on a soldier cliche for their primary cliche. All other clichés are up for grabs but try to keep it at least mildly realistic. The Players goal is to come up with and execute an escape plan.

The NPC's are trying to prevent an escape by the Players. It is possible that they will stumble across your plans. IT is even more possible that they will coerce the information out of the players.

## NPCs:

Guard Dogs: These things are mean, once one has been sicced on you the best thing you can do is just curl up in a ball and try to protect your throat.

Guards: These guys are the enforcers of the camp.

Break the rules? Start a fight or a riot? These guys descend in packs of five or more and distribute their own brand of discipline usually with a club or a knife.

The Warden: A sadistic master manipulator. Get taken into his office and there is no telling what to expect. He will try to get information about anything you may have heard. He may try to be your friend. He may try to offer you rewards. He may just beat the information out of you with his bare hands. Resist him at all costs.

## Gameplay:

This is a highly story driven world. Most "combat Scenarios" come from trying to resist questioning by the warden. The warden may attempt different methods of interrogation. The characters figure out how their various clichés are best able to resist. If you lose this combat you spill the beans and tell the warden everything you know about any planned escape attempts. Of course how compartmentalized those plans are can make a huge difference in how well the warden and guards can use that info..

Players may be selected at random for questioning. Or the warden may suspect they know something.

No Pumps or hooks or any of the optional stuff required, Just roll along with standard rules.

# **STAR WARS: RISUS EDITION**



Original Produced By: Timothy Groves  
Reimagined by: Shenron



# RISUS

THE ANYTHING RPG

by S. John Ross

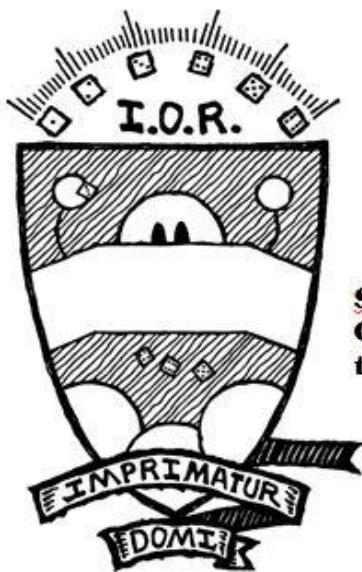


This Game supplement requires the Risus: the anything rpg to play. This rpg can be acquired through a free download at

<http://www.drivethrurpg.com/product/170294/Risus-The-Anything-RPG>

This game supplement was made possible through the great works and dedication of s. John Ross, the entire star wars universe, and George Lucas.

This Risus supplement covers everything from character creation to special rules that relate to the Star Wars universe. For the most part the rules from the Risus Core apply. However, extra rules have been added in regarding the force, the dark side, races, gadgetry, vitality, and starships.



**Shenron is member #635 in the International Order of Risus and has never asked S. John Ross to remove his pants.**

**For Carrie Fisher, who was our princess that advocated awareness about addiction, mental illness, and having a positive body image. She left us drowned in moonlight, strangled by her own bra.**



1956-2016

## Chapter 1: Timeline of Eras

*Choosing an era is important because it decides what type of characters are prominent and general setting information.*

### **The Old Republic**

*25,000-1,000 years before the Battle of Yavin*



The Old Republic was the legendary government that united the galaxy under the rule of the senate. In this era, the Jedi are numerous, and serve as guardians of peace and justice. The Tales of the Jedi comics take place in this era, chronicling the immense wars fought by the Jedi of old and the Empire of the Ancient Sith who fought for domination.

### **Rise of the Empire**

*1,000-0 years before the Battle of Yavin*



For a thousand years, the Galactic Republic maintained democracy in the galaxy with the Jedi as its guardians of peace and justice. But a Sith plot with a millennia in the making, engulfs the galaxy in the Clone Wars, leading to the ascendancy of the Emperor and the fall of the Jedi. This is the era that contains the prequel trilogy.

### **Era of the Rebellion**

*0-5 years after the Battle of Yavin*



An outcry of resistance begins to spread across the galaxy in a protest against the Empire's tyranny. Cells of the rebellion fight back and the Galactic Civil War begins. This era begins with the victory that secured the Death Star plans, which is now known as the Battle of Yavin and ends a year after the Emperor's death over the moon of Endor. The Rebellion starts to form itself into a government, first as the Alliance of Free Planets, and later as the New Republic. This is the era that contains the classic trilogy.

### **The New Republic**

*5-25 years after the Battle of Yavin*



Having defeated the Empire at the Battle of Endor, the Rebel Alliance must now transform itself from a militant resistance into a functioning galactic government. As Imperial territory is claimed, the New Republic suffers from growing pains, having to fend off insurrections, Imperial loyalists, and wayward warlords. Also, Luke Skywalker, one of the last Jedi begins to train new apprentices, rebuilding the Jedi order.

### **The New Jedi Order**

*25-30 years after the Battle of Yavin*



The Jedi Knights are now a hundred strong. The New Republic has signed a peace treaty with what remains of the Empire and the galaxy is finally enjoying a peaceful respite from decades of war. It's at this time that a horrible alien menace invades the Republic from beyond known space. The Yuuzhan Vong lay waste to entire worlds in their scourge, as depicted in the novels of the New Jedi Order.

### **Legacy of the Force**

*37-140 years after the Battle of Yavin*



This is the era of Luke Skywalker's Legacy. The Jedi Master has unified the order into a cohesive group of powerful Jedi Knights. Coruscant has begun to undergo reconstruction from the Yuuzhan Vong invasion and the Galactic Alliance weathers internal pressures. However as this era begins, planetary interests threaten to disrupt this time of relative peace and Luke is plagued by visions of approaching darkness.

## Chapter 2: Sample Cliché's

*Character creation is per the usual Risus core rules but the player can choose to purchase gadgets and other Star Wars specific options. This is not a definitive list of cliché choices.*

**Administrator** - filling out paperwork, distributing red tape, analyzing complex forms and registrations.

**Belter** - Piloting through asteroid fields, mining asteroids for precious metals, using vacc suits.

**Diplomat** - Compromising, getting everyone to feel like they're getting the best of the deal, talking in really complex terms.

**Doctor** - Making sick people well, analyzing new diseases, having really bad handwriting.

**Farmer** - Growing things, recognizing plants, spitting.

**Fighter Pilot** - Flying fighters, shooting down enemy fighters, attracting the opposite sex, trick flying.

**Gunfighter** - Shooting things, quick drawing, tick shooting

**Jedi** - Swinging a Lightsaber, affecting people's minds, talking mysteriously, making a simple brown robe look cool.

**Mechanic** - Fixing or modifying things, scrounging parts, bitching about poorly written manuals.

**Force Adept:** Practicing and believing in an strange force tradition that is neither Jedi nor Sith.

**Merchant** - Buying, selling, analyzing the market, appraising goods, trying not to lose his/her shirt.

**Moisture Farmer** - Trying to grow things on a planet without water.

**Pirate** - Using any sort of weapon with minimal training, stealing ships, stealing cargo, stealing virtue.

**Sith Lord (Warrior, Inquisitor, Apprentice)** - Swinging a lightsaber, looking menacing, killing people over the vidscreen, plotting to rule the galaxy, just bearing not very nice.

**Smuggler** - flying freighters, appraising contraband, shooting blasters, making wise ass remarks.

**Soldier** - Firing Guns, operating tanks and speeders, taking orders.



### Chapter 3: Races

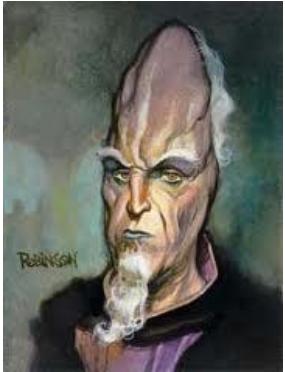
A horde of alien races exist in Star Wars. Here are some of the more common alien races that are player character appropriate. Each race as a racial cliché and a hook, feel free to work out the details with your GM.

#### **Bothans**



Bothans are furry mammalian anthropoids, about 1.5 meters tall. Hailing from Bothawui and several colonies, Bothans differed in facial appearance and body structure with canine, feline, and equine features. They were known for being master politicians and spies, craving intrigue and subterfuge.

#### **Cereans**



Cereans were a sophisticated and cultured humanoid mammalian species that hailed from the planet Cerea in the Mid Rim. They had tall tapering heads, which housed large binary brains, enabling them to focus on many things at the same time. Aside from this unique feature, Cereans were physically similar to Humans, although they possessed an extra heart, which supplied extra blood circulation to support their brains.

#### **Duros**



The Duros were a humanoid species native to the planet Duro who were among the galaxy's first space faring civilizations. Their homeworld was located on both the Corellian Trade Spine and at the end of the Duros Space Run, two major hyperspace routes that linked Duro with other important commercial centers.

#### **Ewoks**



Ewoks were curious individuals that stood about one meter tall; they were omnivorous and used spears, slings, and knives as weapons; they also used hang gliders, battle wagons, and bordoks as vehicles. Although extremely skilled in forest survival and the construction of primitive technology like gliders and catapults, the Ewoks had yet to progress past stone-level technology when discovered by the Empire. They were quick learners, however, when exposed to advanced technology with simple mechanical processes and concepts.

## Gamorreans



Gamorreans were porcine humanoids from the lush jungle Outer Rim planet of Gamorr where their technological level was equivalent to lower technology periods that Human civilizations experienced more than 25,000 years before the battle of Yavin. They also colonized the planet Pzob in the K749 system and were the majority sentient species on Lanthrym in the Elrood sector. Their vessels provided only essential amenities as well as shields and weapons. Gamorreans were typically green-skinned with a large powerful physique, and were known to be fierce warriors prized for their great strength and brutality in combat. They were organized into clans headed by a Council of Matrons.

## Gungans



The Gungans were sentient amphibian humanoids native to the planet of Naboo. Prior to the Invasion of Naboo, the Gungans were a largely isolationist society. They were able to combine machinery with biology. They lived in large bubble-like domes under water. Gungans had strong leg muscles for swimming, and were aided by their long fin-like ears. Their arms ended in four-fingered hands, and their feet had three stubby toes each. Females tended to be slightly smaller, with sleeker faces. They often tied their long ears back.

## Ithorians



Ithorians were a mammalian herbivorous sentient species from the planet Ithor. They were commonly called "Hammerheads" by less sensitive beings because of their long, curving neck and T-shaped head. They found this nickname offensive. Ithorians had two mouths and four throats, allowing them to speak in stereo. Female Ithorians had two humps on the back of their head, while males had only one. They had glossy, usually brown flesh. They stood roughly between 1.8 to 2.3 meters from eyestalk to toe. Their reflexes and coordination were somewhat slower than that of average humanoids.

## Kel Dor



The Kel Dor, sometimes referred to as Kel Dorians, were a species hailing from the technological planet Dorin. They required masks to protect them when in oxygen-rich atmospheres. They were also known for the unique Force-using traditions of the Baran Do Sages. One notable Kel Dor was the Jedi Master Plo Koon, who was a member of a famous Kel Dor Jedi family. Sha Koon, a Jedi Knight, was Plo Koon's niece.

## Mon Calamari



On average, a member of the species stood between 1.3 to 1.8 meters tall and also smelled of salt and the sea.. They were a fish-like amphibious humanoid species with salmon-colored skin, webbed hands, high-domed heads and huge, fish-like eyes. They were equally capable of breathing both on land and in water with them being at home in either environment.

## Quarren



The Quarren or Qarren, were one of several aquatic sentient species from the planet Dac, called by off-worlders Mon Calamari. The Quarren shared their homeworld with the Mon Calamari, another sentient species hailing from Dac. The Quarren had many conflicts and a tense relationship with the Mon Calamari. However, in order to make their planet prosperous, they were forced to provide resources from the ocean depths so that the Mon Calamari could build star ships for off-worlders.

## Rodians



Rodians were a reptilian humanoid species native to Rodia in the Tyrius system. Highly recognizable due to characteristics in facial structure and skin pigment, Rodians were infamous for their violent culture, which sprang from the difficulties of life in the jungles of their homeworld. Though they were often relegated to the fringes of galactic society as bounty hunters or criminal henchmen, Rodians were not merely simple-minded thugs. The Rodian people managed to produce artists, merchants, and politicians who were found even among the upper classes of the Core Worlds.

## Sullustans



Sullustans were a species of humanoids from Sullust. As skilled pilots and navigators, Sullustans, also known as Bomewrights, were common sights for spacers and at busy spaceports. The Sullustans played an important role in the Galactic Civil War and were charter members of the New Republic. Notable members of the species include Nien Nunb and Ten Numb.

## Trandoshans



Trandoshans (*T'doshok* in their language) were large, bipedal reptilian humanoids from the planet Trandosha (or Dosha). They had super-sensitive eyes that could see into the infrared range and the ability to regenerate lost limbs, although very slowly, and were anatomically built heavier and stronger than most humanoids, including Humans. They would also periodically shed their skin. Unlike some other reptilian humanoids, such as the Barabels and the Ssi-ruuk, Trandoshans had no tails.

## Twi-Leks



Twi'leks (pronounced /'twil?k/) were an omnivorous humanoid species originating from the planet Ryloth. They tended to eat cultivated molds, fungi, and rycrit meat. Their distinctive features included colorful skin, which varied in pigment from individual to individual, and a pair of shapely prehensile tentacles that grew from the base of their skulls. The tentacles, called "brain-tails", "lekuu", "tchun-tchin", or "head-tails" were advanced organs used for communication and cognitive functions.

## Wookies



The Wookiees' natural habitat was the dense forests of the planet Kashyyyk (though one source does contend that they were immigrants to this planet). Kashyyyk was covered with massive wroshyr trees, in which the Wookiees constructed their homes and cities. Reportedly, Wookiees were descended from tree-climbing mammals.

## Zabrak



The Zabrak, also known as Iridonians (when referring to the Zabrak who came from Iridonia), were a carnivorous humanoid species native to Iridonia, a planet located in the Mid Rim known for its inhospitable terrain and fierce predatory life. They were a species known for having a fierce sense of self-determination and an equally dominant need for independence. Zabrak resembled Humans to some degree, but had a number of significant physical characteristics that set them apart from baseline Humanity. The most striking of these were a series of vestigial horns that crowned the heads of both males and females.

### Chapter 3.1: Droids

Droids are a “race” option for Star Wars, but follow a handful of special rules. The player should decide what type of droid he player is, such as Protocol, astromech, probe, medical, and combat to name a few.



Racial Cliché: Droid 1 (Represents the droids main programming or use of built in gadgets as well as this cliché can be added with another one of the Droids clichés when resisting elemental hazards [even if this brings the base rating over 6])

Hooks: There are many hardships of being a droid;

- Droids have to be owned by someone, usually by another member of the party.
- Droids are not well liked and are not welcomed in a lot of places.
- Droids do not “heal” or recover their lost dice like normal characters do. They require a mechanic roll at a difficulty of five per die currently missing. Each such roll replaces one lost dice. A correctly equipment droid could make these rolls their self.

### Chapter 4: Vitality

Each Player Character and each Major NPC has 7 Vitality. This is considered one’s life force or general physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. When a character loses a contest and would normally take cliché damage the said character takes Vitality damage instead. A character’s maximum cliché dice pool can never be higher than their current Vitality score. So if a character has a cliché rank of 6 but their current Vitality is 4 – then the maximum amount of dice available to them is 4 regardless of cliché used. Vitality is recovered as normal cliché dice are per the core rules. For simplicity – all other opponents follow the usual cliché damage rules.

## Chapter 5: The Force and the Darkside

*These are special clichés that follow their own set of rules in how they work, how they can be acquired and/or used.*

**The Force:** The Force is a subtle and powerful ally. As a cliché, it must be purchased double pumpable, so every die in The Force costs two dice to purchase. No character can start with more than two die in The Force. A character with three dice in both The Force and Jedi clichés is considered a Jedi Knight and a character with six die in both Jedi and The Force is considered a Jedi Master.

The Force may be used in the following ways;

- As a “sense” roll, rather than using any other cliché
- As a Team Member on any Jedi Roll, contributing its sixes to the total
- As a pool of double pumpable dice (must be double pumped to use) to be added to any other roll. (*For Example; Luke Skywalker desperately needs to drop a proton torpedo into a small thermal exhaust port on the Death Star. He pumps his Force one die [meaning he'll drop to Force [1] for the rest of the battle], gaining three dice to add to his Fighter Pilot, bringing him to Fighter Pilot (7) for his next attack*)
- Force effects that target another person (This includes things like the Mind Trick, using The Force to push/pull, throwing objects at a target, and other related Force “Powers”. This usually calls for rolling The Force Cliché against the targets highest cliché).
- Force affects that effect the environment (This includes whatever tricks the Force wielder decides to do such as move heavy objects, etc. The Force cliché is then rolled against a target number that the GM sets for the act the player described. The Target number follows the scale in Page 1 of the Risus Core.)

**The Dark Side:** The dark side is a faster more seductive road to power because it uses the person's raw emotions to manipulate the force. Dice in the Dark Side may be gained during game play, but this is not necessarily a good thing. At any point during game play when a character does something evil he immediately gains an advancement point in the dark side. These advancement points are recorded on the character sheet and stay there. These advancement points function just like the normal advancement rolls at the end of the session.

Additionally, if the character uses the force in an evil way (Force Lightning be an example) it immediately adds an advancement point to the Dark Side Cliché and makes an immediate Advancement roll. If a character succeeds in the improvement roll for a certain evil use of the force, the player is immune to future Advancement rolls involving the same evil use of the force.

Whenever a character's Dark Side rating reaches 6 the character automatically falls to the Dark Side.

The Dark Side may be used in an identical manner to The Force, with the following differences;

- As a non-double-pumpable Cliché, only two dice are gained when The Dark Side is used to pump another Cliché.
- The Dark Side may be used as a stand-alone cliché in actual injuring combat.
- Any use of The Dark Side is considered an evil act, and guarantees an improvement roll at the end of the session, as detailed above.

A character may start with one die in the Dark Side at character creation. Doing so will grant him one additional die for use elsewhere on the character. This is in addition to any bonus dice granted by Character.



## Chapter 5: Gadgetry and Wealth

Every die spent into Gadgetry gains two dice for the Gadget. Examples of Gadgetry are Han Solo's Millennium Falcon, or Luke Skywalker's Lightsaber. Gadgets have their own cliché dice, divided up into whatever clichés the player desires. The Gadget may team up with the player, though never as the team leader, and thus lend its sixes. Gadgets may have Hooks, granting them one additional die.

A character may start with one item of Gadgetry. A player may not spend more than two dice into a Gadget at character creation, meaning no starting Gadget will have more than four dice, five if Hooked. If at least half of the character's backstory (if the Character Story option is in use) details the gaining of or modification of the Gadget, the player may place the additional Story die into the Gadget, allowing Gadgets of six or even seven dice.

### **Improving Gadgetry**

Gadgetry may be improved. One pip can be added to a Gadget if the character makes a Mechanic roll with a TC of three times the dice value of the Gadget. Three pips equal one die, and must be converted as such; pips are otherwise ignored, but must be recorded for upgrade purposes. Upgrading a Gadget may be done at the end of any session in which the character states that he is spending time upgrading the Gadget. No Gadget may be improved above nine dice. A new cliché may be added to a Gadget if the GM approves. The difficulty to add a new cliché to a Gadget is equal to eight times the number of clichés the Gadget already possesses. Note that only one cliché may be used at a time on a Gadget, and no Gadget may have the Force, Jedi, or the Dark Side.

### **Droids Redux**

A Droid may be gained as a Gadget, becoming an NPC controlled by the GM, but owned (and required to obey, to the best of its ability) by the character with the Droid Gadget. Droid Gadgets gain three dice per die expended, rather than two, and have both the Droid Hook and one die in the Droid cliché as a free bonus. However, bear in mind that while the Droid must obey its Master,

it can only do so to the best of its ability.

Sometimes, its behavior will be...not what the Master expected. Thus the increase in dice gained for selecting a Droid as a Gadget.

### **Gaining Gadgetry after Character Creation**

A character may be 'loaned' Gadgetry during play, but such things will never permanently belong to the character. At the end of the current adventure, the Gadgets in question will be lost. This covers the Rebel Alliance assigning a Starfighter to a pilot, for example; the Starfighter is not the pilot's personal property, to use as he sees fit. If a character, at the end of an adventure, has any "Free" Advancement Points, he may assign them to a new Gadget, as with any other cliché. If a successful Advancement Roll is made for the Gadget, the player may add it to his character sheet. Such a Gadget will, of course, start at one die or two dice for its clichés. Gaining a Gadget in this manner reflects some amount of effort put into the Gadget, such as a Jedi Padawan building his first Lightsaber. Gadgets may also be merely purchased, by expending dice in Wealth. Only one new Gadget may be gained per Adventure, and only one Gadget may be used at a time in any event. Each improvement traded in will grant the character one die in his new Gadget. No more than four improvements may be traded in on any single new Gadget.

### **Losing Gadgetry**

A character may choose to expend a Gadget's dice by "Taking the Hit" with the Gadget. However, should a Gadget be reduced to zero (or fewer) dice through such action, the Gadget is destroyed and erased from the character's sheet. Gadgets may be repaired, if not destroyed, requiring a Mechanic roll with a Difficulty of five per die currently missing. Each such roll replaces one lost die. A Gadget may also be lost as a consequence of a player's action, beyond merely "Taking the Hit". For example, Luke Skywalker loses his father's Lightsaber in Episode V when his hand is cut off. A Gadget lost in such a manner may be replaced by succeeding in one Advancement Roll. No bonus dice are gained for this roll; rather, the Gadget is replaced. The roll is made with the dice invested in the Gadget, not with the dice the Gadget itself

possesses. A Gadget may be marked as 'Expendable'. Such Gadgets are used up after the first time their dice are rolled, successful or not. This halves the cost of the Gadget (or, alternately but equally, doubles the dice you get for selecting the Gadget.) The Gadget may be replaced, as detailed above. A Gadget may instead be 'Depleting'. Such Gadgets lose one die from their cliché on each use, successful or not. This is considered a Hook, but grants *two* additional dice rather than one. The Gadget may be repaired, as detailed above.

## Sample Gadgets

- Holdout Blaster: Blaster [1], Gadget Cost: 1d
- DL-16 Personal Blaster: Blaster (2), Gadget Cost: 1d
- DL-44 Heavy Blaster: Blaster [2], Gadget Cost: 2d
- S-14 Sporting Blaster Carbine: Blaster (3), Hook: Useless against Armor, Gadget Cost: 1d
- E-11 Blaster Carbine: Blaster (4), Gadget Cost: 2d
- T-37 Heavy Blaster: Blaster [3], Gadget Cost: 3d
- Stormtrooper Armor: Armor (3), Hook: Poor Visibility, Gadget Cost: 1d
- Bounty Hunter Armor: Armor (4), Gadget Cost: 2d
- Mandalorian Battle Armor: Armor (6), Gadget Cost: 3d
- Sonic Grenade: Explosive [2], Expendable, Gadget Cost: 1d
- Thermal Detonator: Explosive [6], Expendable, Gadget Cost: 3d
- MedKit: Medicine (4), Depleting, Gadget Cost: 2d
- Padawan's Lightsaber: Lightsaber [1], Gadget Cost: 1d
- Knight's Lightsaber: Lightsaber [2], Gadget Cost: 2d
- Master's Lightsaber: Lightsaber [4], Gadget Cost: 4d

**Wealth:** Some characters just happen to have a goodly supply of cash; this cliché reflects this. A Wealth roll is required only if the character wishes to buy something quite expensive. Examples include: A blaster (5), a droid (10), a landspeeder (15), a stock light freighter (20), or a starfighter (25). Unlike other rolls, failure does not result in the loss of a die. Rather, success causes the *permanent* loss of one die in Wealth. This loss can be recovered through character advancement.

Wealth can be used to purchase Gadgets, as suggested below. In the event that it is used so, the character gives up one *permanent* die per Gadget Die Cost gained. This is *instead* of the loss given for more mundane items.

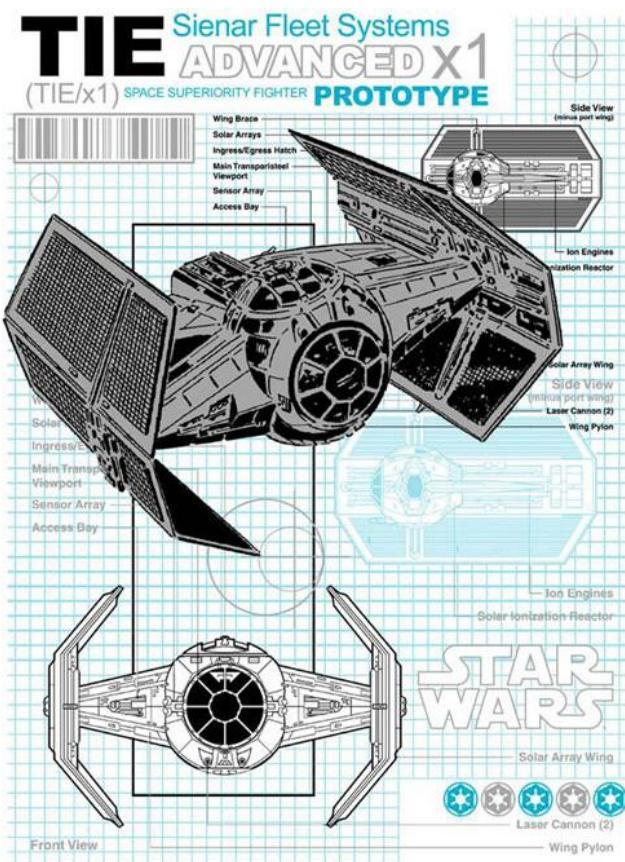
## Chapter 6: Starships

Starships of any sort must be purchased as Gadgets, if they are to be the private possession of a character. However, the rules for creating Starships are stricter than for other Gadgets. A Starship's dice are divided among three clichés: Offensive, Defensive and Cargo. Any of these pools can be zero dice, but if all three are zero, then there's not much point to having the Gadget.

- *Offensive* cliché covers the ship's weapons, and to a lesser degree its hull strength and shielding. It is used when making an attack with a ship.
- *Defensive* cliché covers the ship's shielding and mobility. It can be used in place of Offensive, provided the pilot is not intending to actually damage his opponent. It can also be used for speed checks, when racing or fleeing.
- *Cargo* cliché covers the ship's cargo holds, tractor capability and life support. It can be used to boost a Merchant, Pirate, Smuggler or Diplomat roll. Like any other Gadget, a Starship will gain two dice to split up among its clichés for each die spent acquiring the Gadget. Starships can be damaged in combat, like any other Gadget. The missing dice can only be replaced by repairing the starship, requiring a Mechanic roll with a Difficulty of five per die currently missing. Each such roll replaces one lost die.

## Sample Ships

- A-Wing Fighter: Offensive (1), Defensive (3), Cargo (0), Gadget Cost: 2d
- X-Wing Fighter: Offensive (4), Defensive (2), Cargo (0), Gadget Cost: 3d
- Y-Wing Fighter: Offensive (3), Defensive (2), Cargo (0), Hook: Obsolete by modern standards, Gadget Cost: 2d
- TIE Fighter: Offensive (2), Defensive (1), Cargo (0), Hook: Symbol of the Empire, Gadget Cost: 1d
- YT-400 Stock Light Freighter: Offensive (0), Defensive (0), Cargo (2), Gadget Cost: 1d
- YT-900 Stock Light Freighter: Offensive (0), Defensive (1), Cargo (3), Gadget Cost: 2d
- YT-1300 Stock Light Freighter: Offensive (1), Defensive (3), Cargo (4), Gadget Cost: 4d



## Chapter 7: Character Advancement

*Character Advancement in RISUS Star Wars is tracked using Advancement Points (AP). Each cliché on the character's sheet can gain Advancement Points. In particular, an individual cliché will gain an AP under the following circumstances:*

- The first time in the session that a character successfully uses the cliché at a non-trivial moment
- The first time in the session that a character rolls all sixes on a cliché roll. In addition, each character can gain anywhere from one to eight “free” Advancement Points per session. These AP are “free” because they are not automatically assigned to any one cliché; however, before any Advancement Checks are made, the character must have no unassigned AP. AP can be assigned to any cliché with five dice or less, or to a new cliché not currently possessed by the character. “Free” AP can be gained for the following:
  - One for participating in the session;
  - One for at least attempting to role-play the character;
  - One if the character made a significant discovery;
  - One if the character displayed heroic behavior;
  - One if the character solved a significant challenge;
  - One to three if a Story was completed, based upon the difficulty of the Story.

## The Advancement Roll

At the end of any session, a character may attempt an Advancement Roll for any cliché that has Advancement Points invested into it. This includes for new clichés, which are assumed to have one die for purposes of this roll. The character rolls the cliché’s dice, and if he matches or goes under the total AP for the cliché, then the cliché increases by one die; and all AP is removed from the cliché. If, however, the Advancement Roll fails, the character will lose a number of AP from the cliché equal to its current number of dice.

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**DiceSum**

TN:	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
1	83	67	50	33	17																														
2	97	92	83	72	58	42	28	17	8	3																									
3		100	98	95	91	84	74	62	50	38	26	16	9	5	2	0																			
4			100	100	99	97	95	90	84	76	66	56	44	34	24	16	10	5	3	1	0	0													
5					100	100	100	99	98	97	94	90	85	78	69	60	50	40	31	22	15	10	6	3	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0			
6						100	100	100	100	99	98	96	94	90	86	79	72	64	55	45	36	28	21	14	10	6	4	2	1	0	0	0	0		

**BestFace**

TN:	2	3	4	5	6
1	83	67	50	33	17
2	97	89	75	56	31
3	100	96	88	70	42
4	100	99	94	80	52
5	100	100	97	87	60
6	100	100	98	91	67

**HighDice**

TN:	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
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2	92	81	61	39	8	6	3																												
3	99	93	79	56	19	14	14	8		1		0																							
4	100	97	88	69	28	24	23	16		3	2	2	0		0																				
5	100	99	94	77	36	32	32	23		6	4	4	1		0	0		0					0												
6	100	100	96	83	43	40	40	31		10	7	7	1		1	0		0													0				

**BestSet**

TN:	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
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3	99	94	80	61	23	16	15	8		1		0																							
4		98	91	78	40	29	28	17		3	2	2	0		0																				
5		100	97	89	57	44	41	27		7	4	4	1		0	0		0																	
6			99	95	72	59	54	38		13	8	7	2		1	0		0																	



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## Captain's Serious Risus

While "vanilla Risus" is great for its free-form nature, dead-simple character creation, and flexibility, *Risus* in its original state has a lot of issues that get in the way of its use for more "serious" campaigns. While it is originally intended as a beer-and-pretzels kind of an RPG, the previously mentioned merits are equally valid for that "serious" playstyle. Over the past few years of GMing for the system I have developed a number of house rules that tweak the rules to provide consistency and tactical options to your characters that were difficult or ambiguous in "vanilla" *Risus*. They help to mitigate some of the "death spiral" and power scaling issues inherent in the core dice mechanic.

*Serious Risus* is an attempt at a total overhaul of *Risus: The Anything RPG* into a system that is better suited for the consistency and predictability that a more serious campaign or play style requires. The following rules are compiled and re-written based on my personal house rules and borrows the core dice mechanic change from [Ye good olde system](#) by F. Andres Domene Caliz from the Risusiverse. As with the *Risus* itself, feel free to change or modify any of these systems to fit your gaming group or campaign. These are merely my suggestions.

If you are new to *Risus*, *Serious Risus* is based on, and references, the "core" *Risus: The Anything RPG* by S. John Ross. The rules which can be downloaded in their 4-page entirety from <http://risus.cumberlandgames.com>. Consider this a more serious "companion" to *Risus*, designed to compliment and tweak it, but not replace it.

### The Dice Mechanic

The biggest change in *Serious Risus* is a modification of the *Risus* dice mechanic. In order to provide a much more grounded campaign and a much less steep skill curve between cliché ranks, rather than a Cliché (4) rolling four dice on a contest, they will instead roll a single d6 and add the cliché rank as a modifier. So a Cliché (4) really operates as 1d6+4. Everything works very similarly, and a one point advantage over an enemy still equates to a 16% higher chance of success with every rank, but it becomes much more predictable and granular, and lessens the massive gap in skill between a Cliché (4) and a Cliché (3) character, for example.

During contested rolls the cliché is still reduced by 1 rank, which would change a Cliché (4) to a Cliché (3), and the modifier from a +4 to a +3. A character is still out of action when a cliché reaches a rank of 0, and may still switch between clichés during combat. During contested rolls, a cliché rank is only lost for the defender of a contested roll, but not for losing an attack roll (unless a "critical failure" is rolled).

A "critical hit" occurs when you double the opponent's roll or the target number. In the case of a contested roll it should reduce the opponent's cliché rank by 2 rather than 1, and in the case of a target number, the GM should find some especially good result that occurs. A "critical failure" would be rolling half of the opponent's roll or the target number. In the case of a critical failure in a contested roll, not only do you not do the die of damage to your opponent, but you receive a die of damage. Against a target number the GM should determine a particularly negative effect result.

Teaming up needs to be slightly modified, with every team member rolling above a 5 on the d6 adding half their cliché rank to the party leader (rounded up). In addition to being able to "team up" during combat, players may team up against target number rolls where it would logically dictate that teamwork would help. Examples would be trying to move a massive boulder, or trying to intimidate an NPC.

### Advanced Options from vanilla *Risus*

*Serious Risus* by default uses the rules for "Lucky Shots," "Hooks" (but not "Tales"), "Pumps", and "Double-Pump Clichés", from the vanilla *Risus* document. *Serious Risus* also does away with the rules for "Inappropriate Clichés."

### Advantages/Disadvantages

At character creation, you can buy advantages for a cliché by spending disadvantages on the same or different cliché. Acceptable trades are up to GM approval, and should be balanced in a way that both the advantage and the disadvantage situations have a similar frequency of occurring. There should also be the possibility of a "neutral" situation which would be unmodified. For any situations where you roll that cliché in a situation that falls under the advantage parameter, you roll a die type one higher than you would normally roll. For disadvantages you roll a die type one lower than you would normally roll. So a d6 would become a d8 on advantage, or a d4 on disadvantage.

#### Example of using same cliché:

Rifleman (4)(adv. long range shots, disadv. throwing/melee range shots)

- In this case, a neutral situation would be a mid or standard range shot.
- Rifleman (4)(adv. able to take time to concentrate, neut. a fast shot, disadv. under immediate pressure)
- In this example, a neutral situation would be where the PC isn't under immediate danger, but doesn't have enough time to plan out a shot.

#### Example of spending to different cliché:

Barbarian (4)(adv. surrounded by enemies)

Tribe leader (3)(disadv. communicating with any other tribe or race)

- In this example, the neutrals would be a barbarian fighting alone, or a tribe leader communicating with his own tribe and race.

Advantages and disadvantages may also be applied by the GM on-the-fly in any situation where a PC or NPC is put into a significant position of advantage or disadvantage compared to their opponent. It is possible to disadvantage your opponent on one turn, then find an advantage for yourself on the next, resulting in a roll of a d8 for yourself against a d4 for your opponent.

### Magic/Psionic/Superpowers/Technology/Prayers/Martial Techniques etc.

Magic or technology based clichés are typically handled as flavor to how a character handles a situation. For example, in combat, there would be no real difference between an equally skilled magician firing magic missiles and a ranger firing arrows. Or a demolitionist blasting down a door with a firebomb compared to a fighter running at it full sprint. The rolls work exactly the same.

For any abilities that would have a substantially greater or more complex effect than a standard roll would warrant, the character must first roll the cliché versus a target number set by the GM to determine if the ritual/preparation/incantation etc. was successful. If the effect was something like a buff or similar instantaneous effect then only the target roll is needed. If the ability has to then be deployed/aimed, such as a fireball, the player would make a standard cliché roll against the target to see if the application to target was successful.

When using such an ability, the player would name the ability and add a brief description of it to a list on their character sheet. This list can be named your Spellbook, Technology Manual, Style Guide etc. tailored to the type of abilities your character would use. The GM sets a target number at this time based on the challenge that ability would pose to the character. That target number is recorded on the sheet and used for any future attempts. This ensures that tactical options are fluid for each player to set for themselves, but consistent enough to be relied on. Abilities can be added to or removed from this list at will, and target numbers may need to be adjusted after a session by the GM for consistency.

**Example:** Say you have a Rogue (4) that wants to use a poison he has in his inventory to poison an enemy on his next strike. The rogue decides this would be an "Apply Poison" ability, and the GM determines that the target number would be 5. The rogue adds this to his Rogue Tricks list as "Apply Poison TN 5 - Applies a vial to the currently in use weapon just prior to attacking." The rogue would then roll his d6+4 against the target number of 5 to determine if he could apply the poison quickly and accurately enough, then roll his d6+4 against the opponent's cliché to see if his attack struck.

If a player fails at the target number portion of the action, the player may make no follow up action until their next turn.

### Special Items

Any item that would offer a benefit or advantage outside of the normal tools of the trade of one of your clichés can be added to your character sheet as a special item. These items can offer benefits including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Bonuses to dice rolls: Such as a "Sword of Rending +1" that would offer a static +1 bonus to any cliché rolls that the sword would be used in. Can also take the form of a die type, such as "Sword of Rending d8" which would change the die rolled to a d8. On an advantage such a sword would be bumped all the way up to a d10!
2. Additional character clichés: Such as a "Trophy Dragon Head (2)" that could give your character an additional, but specific, additional cliché. In this example, you could use the Dragon Head for trying to impress local villagers. You could roll just the cliché for dragon head, or if you have another applicable cliché, you can roll that cliché and then roll the special item to apply a bonus in the same way as "teaming up". Or a "Sword of Dragon Slaying (5)" which would offer a huge combat capability, but only vs. a specific enemy type.
3. Non-statistical bonuses: Such as a "Magic Compass of Intent" which could always point towards the location of your heart's desire. These items don't provide any direct bonus to rolls, but provide a benefit in roleplaying terms.
4. Limited use items: Such as a "Med Pack -4" which can be used to repair missing dice to a cliché during combat. Each time you use a charge for the item, you would reduce the number by one. Or a "Combat Steroid (+1) -2" which would provide a benefit similar to another item type, but with a limited number of uses.

### Sidekicks:

Characters met during game may join the party as a sidekick. This NPC assigns to whichever PC helped out the character the most, or is most relevant to the NPC. NPC has a single cliché and may apply their rolls following the same rules as teaming up to the PC's rolls.

### Character Advancement:

In *Risus*, even with the modified dice mechanic for *Serious Risus*, adding even a single die to any cliché represents a significant increase in the capabilities of that cliché. This should be reserved for rather major occasions, such as the end of an entire story arc, or monumentally impressive feats after several sessions. An alternate way to provide for character progression is through magical (or technological) items. Such items in *Risus* can provide tangible benefits and power increases, as well as specialized abilities, without causing issues with power creep that would result in ranking up a cliché every session. In addition, items can be tailored to the play styles and interests of the PCs, can be doled out along with standard loot, or given as options by merchants etc. in town for their hard earned gold.

### Comments


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---

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[Sitemap](#)[Recent site activity](#)**Ye good olde system****or "Why bother"**

Why should we add all those numbers from a dice pool? What the heck is a dice pool? It seems pointy. And what's all that about counting "succeses"? There's only a success or a failure!

Ye good olde system uses the oldschool formula: Stat + Dice VS Difficulty. And it always worked!

So ye good olde system (YGOS) is meant to be used when you have a single die available, or when you fancy a more streamlined statistic (leaving out all that Death Spiral stuff).

**But how does it work?**

Really? I think it's clear! When attempting anything interesting, roll 1D6 and add the value of any cliché you're using for that. Compare the result with the TN. Obviously the TN needs to change a little bit. Check out this Shiny Brand New Target Number Chart!

**Shiny Brand New Target Number Chart**

<b>1</b>	<b>Automatic. Don't bother rolling.</b>
<b>2</b>	So you stepped on that ant. Congratulations.
<b>3</b>	Only a first-day rookie may fail.
<b>4</b>	<b>Challenge for a schmuck, routine for a pro.</b>
<b>5</b>	That seems a bit hard.
<b>6</b>	<b>A challenge of a professional.</b>
<b>7</b>	Wow, that jump was... Impressive.
<b>8</b>	<b>An heroic challenge. Really inventive or tricky stunts.</b>
<b>9</b>	I can't believe you just did it. Amazing.
<b>10</b>	<b>A challenge for a Master. Nearly superhuman difficulty.</b>
<b>11+</b>	<b>You've GOT to be kidding. Actual superhuman difficulty.</b>

**What about the crunchiness?**

Combat and opossed works as ussual. Each conflict round the loser loses a cliche point until it heals. Innapropiate cliches inflict double damage. Pumping and double-pumpable cliches can be used the same way. There's, however, a pair of little changes:

- Teaming up:** Every member of the team beating TN 5 grants a +[half cliche value] to the team leader.
- Funky dices:** Only d6, d8, d10 and d12 can be used. The TN chart should be extended into the superhuman difficulty up to 20.
- Sixes ace:** When you ace, you can 1/2D to the result (1d3 for D6, 1d5 for D10...)

#### Comentarios



F. Andrés Domene Cáliz

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Ye good olde system  
Borrador guardado a las 17:30

#### Comments

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