

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 Risus 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 snuch 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