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THE STYGIAD:

Saga of the Pants



A [Risus](#) Campaign © 1999 [Jason Puckett](#)
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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. Goth 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" cliché 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 swirly 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.)

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Risus

