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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 deeping 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 / bizzare 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.

Halfing - 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 "Uurgghh!"

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 cliché.)

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 exersize 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' cliché to play a Human character, but if a character takes the 'Human' cliché they can use it for any of the following rolls: charm, luck, carousing, sex appeal, fast talk, etc. I guess taking the cliché makes them "more Human than Human"... or something.
3. Mandate that every player take at least one race cliché 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 clichés 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 cliché 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.

Aerial 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 clichés. 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 clichés:

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, srying, 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 treatise 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.