

RISUS Dungeon Crawl

Copyright © 2001 by Nathan E. Banks

Introduction

The Dungeon Crawl, that oldest of role-playing genres, has itself become a true cliché. What better system, then, is there than S. John's RISUS for playing in such a place?

This document is a cliché, yep, a Fantasy Game Supplement (3), for use with the RISUS system by S. John Ross. You can find RISUS at: <http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm>

Note: All the artwork on this page comes from either the Risus LCB Dingbats font, or from the Sparks Scrapbook 2000 font. Both of these fonts are by S. John Ross, and can be downloaded from his web site free of charge.

Cliched Dungeon Crawl Cliches

The Dungeon Crawl genre absolutely requires several truly clichéd Cliche Classes. There are three basic ones, described in the following paragraphs. For any given character these can (and should!) be modified in a number of ways to get a truly descriptive and accurate cliché. For example, "Fiter" can be renamed to "Warrior," "Roag" can be renamed to "Thief," "Wizerd" can be renamed to "Magus" and so on. The cliché should further have a adjective or two to give it more character, and help determine the character's individual slant on the general cliché. For example you could have a "Mercenary Fighter," a "Holy Warrior," a "Chivalric Knight" and so on. If you want to combine the adjective with the cliché into one word, that's fine to. That way, a "Holy Warrior" might be a "Paladin," or even a "Blameless Paladin" and so on.

Any Dungeon Crawl character must take at least one of the basic Cliche Classes at the professional (3 dice) level. Nothing prevents a character from putting dice into more than one of the basic clichés, or even from putting dice into the same basic cliché class in two different ways (that is, an "Airy Swordsman" who is also a "Sneaky Ninja Fighter"), just as long as one of the clichés has 3 dice in it. And, of course, once the character has his three dice in the basic cliché he's free to come up with whatever other clichés he wants. Since RISUS Dungeon Crawl is a game of heroic fantasy, characters should have 80 points to spend at character creation. Of course, as usual, it's up to the GM to decide whether or not he's restricting the campaign to first level characters (beginning characters; no more than four dice in any cliché).

The three basic Cliche Classes are:

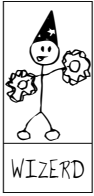


Fiter

You like to fight. I mean, you really really like to fight. Unless you're a Reluctant Warrior (3), there's nothing you'd rather be doing than hewing the necks of monsters with your giant broadsword or double-bladed battle-axe! Bring it on!

Roag

By Snark! Did you see the size of that jewel? You can't wait to sneak over and relieve its owner of the burden of owning such a valuable object. You hail from the fringe world, preferring guile to combat, and darkness and shadows to daylight. You're adept at picking locks or pockets, and sneaking is your favorite hobby.



Wizerd

Come closer, my young friend, and let me infuse you with the wisdom of the ages. You are skilled in the arcane, sometimes forbidden, arts of the supernatural. If you are overwhelmed an uncontrollable desire to cast Magic Missile, you have the staggering ability to do so. Monsters standing in your way will be charred, fried, and charmed into submission.

Cliched Dungeon Crawl Races

In addition to one of the basic Dungeon Crawl Cliche Classes, each character must also come from one of the Cliched Dungeon Crawl Races. If a character isn't explicitly stated to be one of the races in his cliches (for example, as "Hafling Burglar"), then the character is assumed to be Humun.

The four races are:

Humun

Nothing special here. Let's move on...

Elv

O great member of the most noble and ancient Elder People! You are fair of face, pale of hair, and lofty of brow. You are honored by all the Cliched Races. The intelligence and lore of your people fills the other races with awe. Unless you happen to be a half breed, in which case you are reviled and hounded from one end of the land to the other.

Elvs get a special bonus ability! They can see in the dark!



Dworf

Sturdy, terse, and never ever female, you are an expert miner. Where you go, earthworks and feats of engineering linger in your wake. Stocky and heavily bearded, you are not the most comely of races, but you are hardy. Boy, are you ever!

Dworves get a special bonus ability! When finding and disarming traps Dworves get to add a die to whatever cliché they're using.



Hafling

You're short. You're fearful. Big people step on you. But boy are you sneaky! You can hide almost anywhere. No one ever notices you. Other than that, there's not much to you, in spite of the large amounts of food and ale you consume.

Haflings get a special bonus ability! When hiding Haflings get to add a die to whatever cliché they're using!

Equipment

The RISUS Proper Tools rule applies in full force to Dungeon Crawl characters. Wizards have their magic staves and books of spells. Fighters have their chain mail armor and broadswords. Rogues have lock picks and rope. Elves have fancy clothes. Dwarves have tools. Halflings have big feet.

However, in a Dungeon Crawl game there's the potential to get Really Good Equipment (TM)! There are several types of RGE:

Good old fashioned Weapons of Quality. This sort of weapon gives bonus dice to cliches when carried into combat. A single bonus die is sufficient for most weapons (for example, a Sword of Quality +1). Really really ultra mega uber cool unique one-of-a-kind weapons made by master smiths might have +2 or +3.

Magic Empowerers. These weapons can't do much on their own, but when you carry them into combat, boy do they charge you up! Magic Empowerers don't give you bonus dice... instead they give you a funky upgrade! An Empowering Jade Figurine +1 will change all the dice in your cliche from d6 to d8, or from d10 to d12, and so on. As above, a single bonus level is sufficient for most Empowerers. Bigger bonuses should be rare. Raw bloody-like-a-dead-orc rare.

Magical Weapons of Quality. If quality and magic aren't enough by themselves, check this baby out. Here we have a Weapon of Quality with the funky upgrade of a Magic Empowerer. You get to add a bonus die (or two or three) to your cliche, but the bonus die is funky! (Like Spirit Axe +2d8) The weapon is treated like an extra team member, contributing its sixes (or single highest die above six, wielder's choice) to the wielder's roll.

Magical weapons are bought in the same way that cliches are. That is, a Spirit Axe +2d8 costs 16 points, while a Sword of Quality +1 costs 6. Empowerers cost 6 for +1, 16 for +2, and 30 for +3 if the GM even allows them to be purchased at character creation.

There are also some equipment special abilities:

Items of Fortune allow you to re-roll any given cliche roll made when holding the item, but you must keep the second roll regardless of how it compares to the first roll. Additionally, Items of Fortune have a limited number of uses per game session. Each "charge" costs 6 points. (So an Item of Fortune 2 allows 2 rerolls per session and costs 12 points.)

Items of the Leech steal any one die of your choice from your opponent in a conflict. Items of the Leech cost 6 points extra.

Items of Willfulness have a mind of their own. They have a specific goal or desire (to kill something / anything / a specific monster, to be wielded by a certain person, etc;) that they will try to fulfill. The item's owner must roll a cliche contest with the item's rating in order to stop the item from doing whatever it is the item wants to do. Giving Willfulness to an item reduces the cost of the item by a number of points equal to the cost of the willfulness rating. (For example, a Quality Womanizing (1) Sword of the Leech +1 would cost 6 points!) If the cost of such an item is less than zero, you do NOT gain extra creation points. The item is treated as though it has a cost of zero, and may be incorporated into the character's Proper Tools.

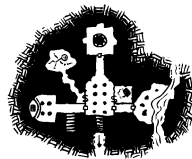
Items of Limited Use only work when certain conditions are met (only works under water, only works during the full moon, only works against Undead, etc.). The cost of the item is halved, if the GM feels that the limitations are serious enough.

Note that all of the above can also be applied to armor as well. That is, you might have a suit of Extra Special Chain Mail +1 that gives you an extra die when you wear it in a fight, or a suite of Beery (2) Platemail +2 that wants you to stop at every pub you see along the road side.

Magic

Magic is a wondrous, and dangerous thing. I wanna cast "Magic Missile!" Any Dungeon Crawl character who has a sorcery cliché of some sort can use magic. Magic effects are achieved through spell-casting. Spell casting is handled a lot like normal conflicts in RISUS, but with a few modifications. Spells have difficulty numbers that must be beaten in order for the spell to go off. The difference between spell casting and normal actions is that spell casting rolls are cumulative. That is, if your character has 3 dice in his cliché and is trying to cast a spell with a difficulty of 30, he just keeps rolling until he has enough to beat the target. Spell casting is a bit like pumping though... it's exhausting! Each roll you make when casting a spell causes your cliché to take one point of damage. So, if you roll 3 dice for your first roll and don't get enough to successfully cast the spell, your cliché drops and the next time you roll only 2 dice. If you ever run out of dice, your spell goes wild, and the GM gets to have a lot of fun describing the catastrophic consequences. Heh heh heh!

Characters have a number of spell slots equal to the number of dice in their magic cliché. Characters can only cast spells that have been "loaded" into one of their slots. Loading a spell may (or may not, at the GM's discretion!) require rest, ritual toad sacrifice, or some other arcane act best left to the imagination.



Cliched List of Cliched Spells

Charm Things

Difficulty: 5

The target must make a cliché roll with a target of 15. If he fails, he thinks you're really cool for a number of hours equal to his margin of failure (15 minus whatever he rolled).

Light

Difficulty: 5

Makes a big bunch of light. So we can all see. You can cast it on stuff to make the stuff make light too.

Read Things

Difficulty: 5

If you couldn't already read, now you can. What's more, you can read stuff written in other languages, even magic ones. Groovy.

Sleepytime

Difficulty: 5

This one is for insomniac Wizerds tossing and turning during the day after long nights of plundering and slaying. This spell will cause the Wizerd to sleep for a number of hours equal the number of dice in his cliché.

Ventriloquism

Difficulty: 5

Allows the Wizerd to make the sound of his voice come from somewhere else. Very popular at parties. Trust me.

Detect Stuff

Difficulty: 5

When this spell is cast, the Wizerd will see all the stuff in his area. What stuff he sees depends on what stuff the spell is designed to detect. (That is, Detect Magic, Detect Evil, Detect William Shatner, etc.)

Locate Stuff

Difficulty: 5

Now, where did granny leave old Bill the last time she used him...?

Protection from Stuff

Difficulty: 10

Once the Wizerd finds out about stuff, he might be afraid of it and want protection. This spell can do that. (Protection from William Shatner, for example.)

Doorstop

Difficulty: 10

Shuts doors and gates (but not portals!) and keeps them that way. Doorstop can be unstopped by the Knock-Knock spell. Stopped doors and gates can also be forced open by characters (and monster hordes!) who have more cliché dice than the Wizerd.

Knock-Knock

Difficulty: 10

This spell creates a new mouth that appears on the Wizerd. The mouth will unceasingly tell bad jokes, causing anything in its way to flee, disintegrate, and otherwise vacate the area. This spell tends to be harder on the Wizerd than it is on anything else, but at least it's a good way to blast apart Stopped doors.

Invisibility

Difficulty: 10

I see you! Can you see me? This spell makes any creature or object invisible. In addition, anything worn or carried by the object or creature is also invisible (as long as the object or creature keeps touching the thing). Casting invisibility again will negate the effect. Otherwise, invisibility is permanent.

Levitate

Difficulty: 10

Look! I'm a llama! Voon!

Web

Difficulty: 10

Ew! This big sticky web requires cliché rolls to escape from. The first roll has a target of 15. If that roll fails, the next time you get a chance roll against 10. If that one fails too, then roll against a target of 5 next time. If you fail that one too, you might as well give it up. I hope you like your new home, because you're stuck in it.

Cure Things

Difficulty: 15

This spell will restore a lost cliché die if cast successfully. Since the Wizerd will lose one cliché die when he casts it, he can cast the spell on himself over and over creating an infinite, self-sustaining loop. Wizerds are so cool it's boggling.

Magic Missile

Difficulty: 15

Summons an AMRAAM from the 20th century that flies to wherever the Wizerd directs it. Whatever the missile hits takes a die of damage automatically.

Shields Up

Difficulty: 15

This spell creates some sort of strange magnetic or gravitational field that surrounds the Wizerd. If your Shields are hit by a Magic Missile (or, apparently, anything else) they will drop. Of course, you won't take any damage from the shield-dropping attack.

Fake Me

Difficulty: 15

This spell creates an exact duplicate of the Wizerd that mimics his every move. This can get really annoying, and therefore Fakes tend to be short lived, especially since they can only absorb one die of damage. However, Fakes do make good decoys, and there's a 50-50 chance that incoming damage will hit the Fake instead of the Original.

Fake You

Difficulty: 30

This spell is like Fake Me, only it creates a duplicate of something that the Wizerd has come across in the past. The Wizerd controls the actions of the Fake. This spell isn't generally very useful, because if the Wizerd does anything (even breathing) while trying to maintain the spell, the Fake disintegrates.

Floating Head

Difficulty: 30

A really useless spell. This creates an invisible magical head about the size and shape of a small round shield. It cannot be created in a place occupied by anything else. The floating head is created at the height of the Wizerd's waist, and will always remain at that height. It will automatically follow the Wizerd, remaining within six feet at all times. It can never be used as a weapon, because it has no solid existence (!) and moves slowly. Since the head is invisible and has no solid existence, you could almost say that this spell does absolutely nothing!

Monsters

What would a dungeon crawl be without fearsome monsters at every turn? RISUS has a very nice way of handling monsters in its Monster Horde mechanic. In general, the number of dice in the horde should depend on the number of monsters, while the size of the die should depend on the monsters' power levels. A good rule is that tiny monsters go 100 to a die, small monsters go 10 to a die, medium monsters go 5 to a die, and large monsters go 1 to a die.

Regular Critters

These are little bugs, little spiders, little rats, and so on that are often found aimless wondering around in dungeons and caves. Every d6 in the horde is worth a hundred critters!

Giant Critter

These are big bugs, big spiders, big rats, and so on that are often found aimlessly wondering around in dungeons and caves. Every ten Critters adds a d6 to the horde.

Ferocious Beast

These are lions, tigers, and bears (oh my!), and apes, and so on with long claws and wicked teeth. Who knows how these guys get into the dungeons. Every five of these guys adds a d8 to the horde.

Dragon

Huge and awesome, Dragons have giant bat-like wings and fiery breath. Each Dragon is worth a d20. A Horde of Dragons is truly something to avoid.

Gargoyle

Stone. Ugly. What else do you need to know? Every five Gargoyles add a d10 to the horde.

Gelatinous Boob

These come in pairs, each pair worth a d6. Not really all that dangerous, although male party members are apt to be distracted by the configuration of this monster.

Ghoul

Ouch. Undead monsters. Every five Ghouls adds a d10 to the horde.

Gnome

Little bitty ugly guys that look like Dwarves but are about the size of Halflings. These guys aren't too

tough, but there sure are a lot of the little buggers! Each d6 in the horde is worth ten Gnomes.



Gublun

Or is that Ork? Or is it a Hubgublun? Or maybe it's a pointed elf-ear? Whatever, you don't want to mess with it. Each d8 in the horde is worth ten Gubluns.

Harpy

Sexy on top, ugly underneath. Kill it quick, before it flies away. Five Harpies are worth a d10.

Kobold

The dog-men cometh! Ten Kobolds are worth a d6 when alone, but a d8 when lead by a chieftain.

Medusa

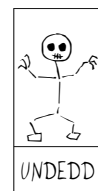
Sexy on the bottom, ugly on top. If you lose the battle you'll be turned to stone! Five Medusas are worth a d10.

Ogre

That looks like a big fat Orc. No wait, it's too tall. Woah! It's got two heads! I think it's gonna... <SPLAT!> They're big, they're bad, they're worth a d12 each.

Skeleton

The aged cousin of the Ghoul, this guy is all bones. Every d6 in the horde is worth one hundred Skeletons!



Undedd

The younger brother of the Ghoul, this guy is all rotting flesh! But boy is he a slow mover! Every d6 in the horde is worth five Undedd.