

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.¹

¹ Offer void where prohibited, taxed, or restricted by law. Or wherever being a pal of Vin will earn you the Unbelievable Geek (5) Cliché.

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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, Conjuror, 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 days' 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

Ummm... 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 "velocityly 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 Dungeonmaster 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).

| Dungeonmaster Roll is... | Treasure value is... |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| < half TN | rag 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 Dungeonmaster 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, Dungeonmasters 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 started-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. |