Fugue Games presents:

Heroic Tails

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Fugue Games

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Heroic Tails

A romping Redwall tabletop RPG using the Risus system.

Prelude

If you're reading this, you probably know what the Redwall Abbey books are, and it's likely you've read them. If not, I direct you to the official website, Redwall.org, and shortly thereafter to a library. Regardless of whether you want to play Heroic Tails, you should be giving the books a try.

Now, assuming you understand Redwall, you're halfway there. All that's left is to describe the RPG side of things, and you should be moving along quite nicely.

Tabletop (often "pen and paper") role-playing started, essentially, with Dungeons & Dragons in the 70's. The basic function is pretty simple: a Game Master, or GM, sitting at the head of the table, dictating to the players their surroundings, and the events of the game. The players have characters they've created - beings that they've documented on sheets of paper, describing their abilities, appearance, skills, and the like. The players describe to the GM what they're doing in the game, and the GM reacts accordingly. Chance is calculated with dice the players roll, usually having something between three and a hundred sides. Over time, as their character develops and becomes stronger, a player may become quite attached.

Risus is a system for tabletop role-playing, created by S. John Ross. At just six pages of core rules, it takes half an hour to learn to play and a thousand lifetimes (give or take a few) to explore the possibilities. Deemed the "Anything RPG," Risus can be used to enact sci-fi, fantasy, steampunk, courtroom antics, sitcom, World War II air combat, hairstyling, carpentry, mecha-

piloting, monster-fighting - well, a lot of different situations. The system is great for humour, but well-suited for any level of seriousness.

Risus is perfect for creating a Redwall pen and paper RPG. Since the majority of Redwall fans aren't really acquainted with this type of gameplay, it provides a short learning curve. The rules are very flexible, so players accustomed to free-form role-playing on message boards shouldn't feel cramped.

Gee, that's nice. Now what?

You can either play Heroic Tales online or in real life, with friends. For the latter, you'll need:

A printout of the Risus core rules.

Some six sided dice (just one per player will work, but it'll be slow going)

Some paper and a pencil.

Fizzy beverages and food with low health benefits.

Friends who like Redwall.

To play online, you can use a chat service like MSN Instant Messenger, AIM, Yahoo! Instant Messenger, or ICQ. In this case, the integrity of the players is key, because you don't want anyone faking dice rolls.

You can also use a program like OpenRPG to play online.

You'll need:

A copy of the Risus core rules

An instant messenger (listed above) or RPG program.

A dice-rolling program (Try Amicron Dice Roller)

A word processor (Notepad is good)

Friends online who like Redwall.

Junk food and pop.

Pretty simple, eh? For role-playing with a chat program, you may find it useful to keep out-of-game details - dice rolls,

comments, questions, banter - in a separate window, while you describe your actions and dialogue in another.

Time to get going

Okay, you've got all the gear together. It's assumed that by now you've read the core rules, and understand things (otherwise, the rest of this document won't make sense). At this point, you choose who's going to be GM - usually in advance, so they can put together an adventure. This can be a detailed or a sketchy process. Five minutes with a piece of paper, and a GM could have a map of a forest. From there, things could just improvisation. Or, you might spend some time and create something with a story, that's carefully planned.

Something to Note

This is an expansion to Risus. It's pretty simple - some new rules and ideas for Clichés. Don't consider it to be complete. It's up to the inventiveness of the players to make Heroic Tails a full gaming experience. Customize, innovate, create - there are new Clichés to be invented, extra rules to be added, options to be used and discarded.

Remember that this is all about having fun. With the Risus system, your survival doesn't depend so much on outstanding statistics as using what you've got creatively. Your success truly depends on how much you amuse your friends, and not on the rush you get from killing all those bad guys so quickly.

Heroic Tails - The stuff you've been waiting for.

Campaigns in heroic tales can be set at any time in the series, or any time in between. Conceivably, you could try role-playing a futuristic, technological Redwall campaign, if that's your thing. It's all really up to you.

Species which were only mentioned in the books and which never really showed human intelligence aren't included as Creature Clichés. Some fans, however, like to role-play wolves. Since no-one's really sure what wolf would be like, it's left up to

you to decide, and create your own Cliché.

Heroic Tales functions on the normal dice system. Pumpable Clichés are an option, and since applying them to Redwall is pretty straightforward, it's not documented here.

Creature Clichés

While every beast of a certain species isn't necessarily the same, there are some properties that they usually share, and that truly generic characters have in abundance. Hares are gluttonous, rats aren't too clever, otters say "mate" a lot: these would all be examples.

The Heroic Tails expansion for Risus adds a new concept to the game. As well as having normal Clichés (as "normal" as a Cliché in Risus gets, that is), a player may have the choice of assigning his or her character a Creature Cliché.

A Creature Cliché has two dice, which don't cost anything out of the initial ten. The name is pretty much self-explanatory: this free Cliché encompasses all the stereotypes of the species. For instance, if you play a hare with a Character Cliché, then you automatically get to roll two dice for activities such as pie eating, running, pasty eating, coming up with insults, singing poorly, and flan eating. (Definitions of Clichés for different creatures are listed below.)

This may not sound too wonderful, with your character only really having an average Cliché score as a result of the new rule. However, the Character Cliché can be combined with dice from other Clichés. That hare, for example: say she had the Character Cliché enabled (thus being a Hare(2)), and was a Scout(3), as well. Being charged by a bloodthirsty (or perhaps just tragically misunderstood) weasel, she decides it would be a good idea to run. So, she takes her three dice from Scout(3) (which includes running), and two from Hare(2) (which also

includes running), and rolls them against the weasel's two dice to see if she escapes safely.

Not all species are eligible for Creature Clichés. Some, like mice, weasels, and shrews, don't have any definable stereotypes, and can fit into a wide range of molds.

Of course, you don't have to use Creature Clichés. They're more of an option than a requirement. In order to create a unique character, you may feel that it's best not to use a Creature Cliché. If you're looking to whip up a character fast, if you're a GM who needs NPCs, or if you think you can be creative even with the stereotypes, then Character Clichés should prove useful.

A note for GMs and players alike: Don't be a power player when it comes to Creature Clichés. This option should only be used when it would be appropriate to do so. If a character doesn't fit with it, don't use it. It's nice to have the little bonus that comes with a Creature Cliché, but the thrill you get from interesting role-play is much more rewarding.

Creature Cliché list

Without further ado, here's a list of Creature Clichés and their various abilities.

Mouse

Shrew

Vole

Rabbit

Stoat

Weasel

Ferret

Fox

Pine marten

Otter (Resistance to spiciness, rudder as a weapon, swimming,

javelin throwing, shanty singing, charisma)

Badger (Bloodwrath*, battle cries, clear thinking and decisiveness)

Mole (Digging and building prowess, hurr hurr -ing, molespeech, mole logic)

Hare (Gluttony, running, insult throwing, singing poorly, comic relief)

Squirrel (Climbing, pinecone flinging, camouflage (only applies to treetops))

Lizard** (Depending on species, may have swimming, venom, etc.)

Bird** (Flying, singing (only applies to some), strong eyesight, gluttony (owls))

Bat (Flying, sonar, talking funny, scaring)

Wildcats (Climbing, claws as weapons, intimidation, style)

Newts (Swimming, camouflage)

Toads (Hopping, speaking toad language)

Rat (Stupidity, cackling, swilling grog, sleaziness)

*Bloodwrath activated at player and GM's discretion. The character loses control, attacking any and all enemies, allies, and inanimate objects. All combat-related Clichés are pumped to double their normal amount of dice for the duration of the Bloodwrath, and drop to 1 at the end. Every time the character makes an attack, there is a one in six chance (rolling, say, one on a die) that he will hit one of his or her friends, dropping a Cliché of their choice by two dice. Bloodwrath lasts for the duration of the battle, or however long seems appropriate.

**Abilities depend largely on species (an eagle can attack with talons, a crow probably can't).

Clichés

The following are some suggestions for Redwallish Clichés, most of which showed up in the books at one time or another. The abilities that might be part of the Cliché are listed in brackets. Please feel free to innovate. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

Legendary Warrior (Surviving grievous wounds, natural talent with legendary weapons, finding the head bad guy, miraculous feats)

[Normal] Warrior (Use of particular weapon, knowledge of warfare)

Wandering Performer (Composing ditties, imitation (acting?), knowledge of instrument(s), wit, charm, singing)

Thief (Picking locks, sneaking, hiding, climbing, escaping, lying)

Cellarkeeper (Knowledge of drink, barrel rolling, navigation in the dark, capacity for liquids)

Abbeybeast (Patience, reading, writing, feasting, domestic chores)

Healer (Medical and herbal knowledge)

Corsair (Swinging on ropes, ship knowledge, saying arr, keeping balance in a storm, gesturing menacingly with nasty looking weapons)

Tribesbeast (Applying dyes, outlandish tattoos, face paint, piercings, etc., camouflage, chanting by the bonfire, use of crude weapons)

Cook (Pursuit of gluttons, knowledge of ingredients, cooking, coordinated spoon handling)

Salamandastron Hare (Stiff upper lip, screaming Eulalia, an' all that)

Scout (Running, evading, good memory, keen eyesight)

Dibbun (Charming elders, imagination, getting into mischief, stealing pastries, food fights, finding adventures)

Slave (Going without food, conspiring, hard labour, looking pathetic)

Note: The GM may find it necessarily to "tax" the Legendary Hero cliché in some way, increasing the cost, perhaps. Also, it may be considered vital for a Legendary Hero to have a Legendary Weapon - a sword that doesn't break, never dulls, and can prepare six different cuts of French fry.

Concerning Items and Their Use

This mainly applies to weapons and instruments. It would be somewhat strange for a young warrior to have knowledge of every weapon, and it would be similarly strange if a performer with a lot of experience to know only one instrument. There are a couple ways of dealing with this, which we'll go over now. It's up to the GM which one to use.

For every die a Warrior has, they might have skill with one weapon. This works out quite neatly: a Warrior(1) is classified in the rules as a "putz". It would make sense that a beast with so little experience would know just one weapon. Similarly, a Warrior(3) is a professional - they would know probably around three weapons. Same goes with a Warrior(6), which would be a master of the trade. If this sounds a little limiting, you may choose each die to represent an area of weapons - once you learn the spear, the halberd isn't far off, right? So, a Warrior(1) could be skilled in polearms, a Warrior(3) in polearms, swords, and short blades.

Another setup would be to separate item skills into Clichés. You'd have one item by default in the basic Cliché, and then add others separately. So, maybe you're a Wandering Performer(3). You'd know the lute, with 3 dice, because that's the instrument you chose to go with Wandering Performer. However, you'd also like to know the bongo drums, so you get an additional Cliché, Bongo Drums(3). Obviously, this system

limits the character early on in the game, so it may be more desirable for a campaign where the characters begin young and inexperienced.

Mass Conflict

Mass conflict doesn't just describe the epic battle at the end of the book. It can also be a food fight, a mock Dibbun war, a dormitory pillow battle, or any number of things.

When mass conflict does occur, it's difficult to keep track of every single character. This is why Teaming Up (described in the Risus core rules) comes in handy: the characters can have their Clichés added up, and act together as one beast. However, the conflicts in the Redwall books often involve many, many combatants. You may desire more strategy to warfare than one large group attacking another large group. Rather than introduce new rules, in this section some (brief) advice will be given for carrying out mass conflict in a manner with perhaps more depth.

Since it's not strategic to have your entire Rat Horde(200) attack the Shrew Tribe(250) (both of them Grunt-Squads), you could break them up into groups. That way, you might have a Shrew Tribe Slingers(50) sneak up behind the rats and pelt them with rocks, while the Shrew Javelin Throwers(90) trap the rats up against the side of a stream. You could have the entire group split up into five or six Squads, maneuvering on the battlefield. It lends some more strategy to warfare.

Of course, this idea could prove cumbersome, depending on the situation. But Redwall is a world of tribes, armies, hordes and gangles of hyperactive dibbuns, and the method should prove useful at some point.

Sample Characters

For the sake of giving you idea what a finished character looks like, and simply as a point of interest, here are several characters from the books in Risus form. They're not precisely accurate, you may notice.

Name: **Martin the Warrior**
Species: Mouse
Description: Tall, imposing, with a well-polished steely gaze. Wearing a green tunic.
Clichés: Legendary Warrior(4), Abbeybeast(2), Woodsbeast(2), Rebel(2)
Notes: Martin's Legendary Weapon is a sword forged from a fallen star. Never dulls or breaks, lightweight, makes great paperweight.
Martin has Bloodwrath, but rarely.

Name: **Gonff**
Species: Mouse
Description: Short and pudgy, with a mischievous grin. Wears a brown tunic and blue coat with lots of pockets.
Clichés: Thief(4), Performer(4), Slacker(2)
Notes: Plays the reed flute.

Name: **Mariel Gullwhacker**
Species: Mouse
Description: A pretty mousemaid wearing a dark red tunic. Has a burning gaze, perhaps just a steely one.
Clichés: Warrior(3), Woodsbeast(2), Performer(2), Slave(2), Castaway(1)
Notes: Weapon is gullwhacker - heavy, knotted length of old rope that's near deadly when wet.

Name: **Lord Brocktree**

Species: Badger(2)

Description: Big, imposing, and muscular. Has a moderately fiery gaze, and is generally amiable. Wearing green tunic. Clichés: Legendary warrior(3), Cook(2), Lord/King(3), Military commander(2)

Notes: Weapon is really über-massive sword. Bloodwrath.

Name: **Dotty**

Species: Hare(2)

Description: Haremaid wearing a white dress and carrying a haversack. Clichés: Warrior(1), Awful Cook(3), Performer(2), Glutton(2), Etiquette(1), Salamandastron hare(1)

Notes: Either goes weaponless or uses a filled haversack. Horrible singer. Plays the harecordion.

Miscellaneous Information

Contact

If you have any new ideas for the game, if you're confused about something, or if you just need someone to role-play with, e-mail webmasta@brycicle.com.

Disclaimer, etc.

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