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# risus firefly

by Anjin, member #17 in good standing, International Order of Risus

## Introduction

Five hundred years in the future, humanity has depleted the resources of Earth-That-Was and struck out to the stars. Led by an Alliance of the last superpowers, the United States and China, over 70 planets and moons were terraformed into Earth-like environments. The central planets are the home of modern civilization with every imaginable technological achievement on display.

Life on the borders of colonized space is very different. Without easy access to modern conveniences, the sparse populations make due with more antiquated tools. These worlds have come to resemble the old American frontier, in look and attitude. Self-sufficiency and hard work are the rule.

When the border worlds declared their independence, it sparked a civil war that burned for years. In the year 2511, after the crushing defeat of the Independent forces in the Battle of Serenity Valley, the galaxy was united under the totalitarian rule of the Alliance.

Now, small bands of men and women rove the 'Verse, doing whatever it takes to stay beyond the long grasp of authority. This is the world of **Firefly**.

## The Rules

In order to play **Risus Firefly**, you will need access to the **Risus** rules. They are available from the [Cumberland Games and Diversions](#) web site.

Here are a few suggested modifications of the rules:

- Because **Firefly** is intended to be taken seriously, the Inappropriate Cliché rule is, well, inappropriate.
- Psychic abilities should be purchased as Double Pump Clichés under Advanced Option 3. See the example for *River* below for an example.
- No funky dice. There's just no call for it.
- Armor, like Zoe's bullet-proof vest, can be represented as a Bonus Die Item. Instead of rolling dice for the cliché, it absorbs the damage that would have been done to another cliché. There is no effect when the Armor cliché falls to zero.
- Bonus Die Items can be limited by treating them like Lucky Shots. For example, Jayne's Callahan rifle, Vera, should have three one die bonuses only usable for combat. Multiple bonus may be used for the same roll. Recovery of the bonuses is solely at the GM's discretion.

## Creating a Character

When creating a character for **Risus Firefly**, you might want to keep these questions in mind:

- **Did the PC support Unification?**  
This is the major philosophical division of the era. A person who supported Unification will have a very different outlook on life than one who did not, especially in the aftermath of the war.
- **What role did the PC take during the Independents War?**  
This really is a different question from the one above. Not everyone fought in the war, but everyone was doing something. However if the PC did, it says a lot about them. A PC on the side of the Alliance may or may not have believed in the cause, but fought only as a professional soldier. The Browncoats, on the other hand, were more likely to have join the fight specifically because of their views.
- **Was the PC raised on a core world or a border world?**  
Although the previous questions may imply the answer to this one, it is possible to believe that a core worlder could side with the Browncoats philosophically or that a Mudder might support Unification in hope that the Alliance could improve their lot in life. Where a character was raised will suggest the types of careers (and Clichés) that are available to the PC.
- **What is the PC giving up/avoiding by taking to space?**  
In a fantasy game, it is just expected that people are going to pick up and go adventuring. In **Risus Firefly**, anyone who gives up a planet-bound life does so for very specific reasons, even if they are not honest about those reasons to themselves or others.



## Common Clichés

- **Captain**  
This cliché involves all of the leadership qualities involved in running a ship. From handling the crew to making sure there is enough money for fuel, any aspect of starship administration is covered by this cliché. Basic competence in technical function is implied, but that's why you hire everyone else. Also, although a captain is expected to handle himself in a fight, this cliché is not combat related. If the captain wants to shoot someone in the face, a different cliché is required.
- **Companion**  
The Companion's profession combines the practices of the courtesan and the tradition of the geisha and is held in high regard by society. The cliché is useful in a diversity of social situations regardless of a target's gender or station. Companion training also involves some ritualized combat instruction, like swordsmanship. This cliché should only be used in combat where these formal methods are useful.
- **Doctor/Surgeon**  
Because the 'Verse is a dangerous place, a doctor is indispensable to the crew. The doctor should be able to heal any kind of damage inflicted in combat, given the correct tools, within reason. There are no specific damage rules in **Risus Firefly**, but a bullet in the stomach will kill a person without a doctor to treat it. A character with this cliché is assumed to have extensive education.
- **Mechanic**  
Like the doctor, the mechanic is all about putting things right. A starship is the most important thing the PCs have. If it fails, it can mean the death of the entire group. Beyond just fixing the ship, a mechanic may also be able to coax it into performing beyond normal expectations.
- **Mercenary**  
A mercenary is a hired warrior, usually proficient in a number of firearms. Anyone involved in shady dealing ought to have a mercenary at their side. Implied with this cliché is a mind for money matters, if only tangentially.
- **Pilot**  
Every ship in the sky needs a competent pilot to make sure it gets pointed in the right direction. As a pilot grows in ability, they can make their ship perform increasingly complicated maneuvers.
- **Shepherd**  
The clergy in this world are known as Shepherds. This cliché covers a wide range of religious knowledge, ritual, and philosophy and implies at least a moderate education. Religion is still a powerful force in the 'Verse and (just about) anyone would think twice before crossing a Shepherd.

### *The Crew*

By way of example, here are the main characters of **Firefly**:

- **Captain Malcolm Reynolds**  
Cynical Captain of *Serenity*(4), Veteran Independent Army Sergeant(3), Ranch Hand(2), Mechanic in a Pinch(1)
- **Zoe**  
Independent Army Veteran(4), *Serenity's* First Mate(4), Cook(2), Bonus Items: Bullet-Proof Vest(1)
- **Wash**  
Wise Cracking Pilot(4), Occasional Electrician(2), Shadow Puppeteer(1)
- **Jayne Cobb**  
Mercenary(4), Tracker(3), Devious Criminal(2), Smartest Man on the ship(1), Bonus Items: Callahan rifle "Vera" [] [] []
- **Kaywinnet Lee "Kaylee" Frye**  
Genius Mechanic with a Sunny Disposition(4), Improvisational Chef(2)
- **Inara Serra**  
Companion(4), Shuttle Pilot(3)
- **Shepherd Book**  
Shepherd(3) with a Dark Side(4), Kneecaper(2), Gambler(1)
- **Simon Tam**  
Formerly Rich Surgeon(4), Criminal Mastermind(2), Ladies' Man(1)
- **River Tam**  
Crazy Psychic Girl[3], Seriously Disturbed Genius(2), Lively Dancer(2)

Some of the more colorful adversaries might serve as examples for non-player characters:

- **Adlai Niska**  
Well-to-do Crime Boss(4), Depraved Philosophical Torturer(3)
- **Badger**  
Big Time Criminal(3)
- **Jubal Early**  
Existential Bounty Hunter(4)
- **Saffron**  
Companion(3), Jury-Rigger(3), Dirty Fighter(3)

### *Starships*

Starships are characters all their own. Characters add their clichés to appropriate rolls. Whether damage goes to the ship or the character is the player's decision.

- **Firefly-class transport *Serenity***  
Hull strong enough to stop a bullet(2)  
Moderate speed(2)  
Standard sensor array(2)  
Crazy Ivan(4)
- **Alliance cruiser *I.A.V. Dortmunder***  
Massive hull(4)  
Ponderous speed(1)  
Standard sensors(2)  
Nifty Torpedos(3)
- **Reaver-modified "Trans-U" transport**  
Large hull(3)  
Fair speed(2)  
Magnetic Grapple(3)

### *Adventuring in the 'Verse*

Here are some tips for playing **Risus Firefly**:

- There are over 40,000 Firefly-class transports in the 'Verse. The PCs should have one because spaceships are fun. They can be a (non-player) character of their own. Think of all the mean things you can do to your players through the ship.
- Money and resources should be scarce. The only reason for the players to have them is so that you can take them away again. Everything should cost more than they can afford without hard work. Just don't overdo it or the players may get frustrated. A careful balance of give and take will propel many adventures.
- The Reavers were scary specifically because no one ever saw them and survived. Don't just make them the bad guy of the week. If they show up in your game, they should come like a force of nature. If your players don't fear what's coming, make them afraid. (At least, make the next set of characters afraid.)
- Show of hands from anyone who thinks nine players plus GM is a nice round number for a gaming group? (I tried it once. Never again.) A small crew with NPCs (with the obligatory shady pasts) will keep anyone from feeling left out.

*Travelogue*

- **Persephone**

Although one of the central planets, Persphone is the most cosmopolitan world in the Alliance with a range of classes and cultures represented. The upper classes are ostentatious in their display of wealth, typified by a lavish annual ball decorated with an anti-gravity chandelier.

*Additional Resources*

As if I'm not logging it enough, [Cumberland Games and Diversions](#) has more than just **Risus** available for your gaming needs.

- **Risus Companion**

Everything you need to play **Risus Firefly** is in the basic six page rules. However, if you'd like to dig a little deeper (heh), the **Risus Companion** help you do that. New advanced rules, adventure ideas, and a look at system concepts can make it a nice addition to your gaming library.

- **Points in Space**

**Points in Space** is a series of resources that can be plugged into any roleplaying game. Although the series assumes a more traditional science fiction setting, it is very easy to trim or transform the aliens out of the way. Currently, there is only one volume available, **Starport Locations**, which can help flesh out that skyplex you where planning on. A second volume of starships is forthcoming.

- **Sparks**

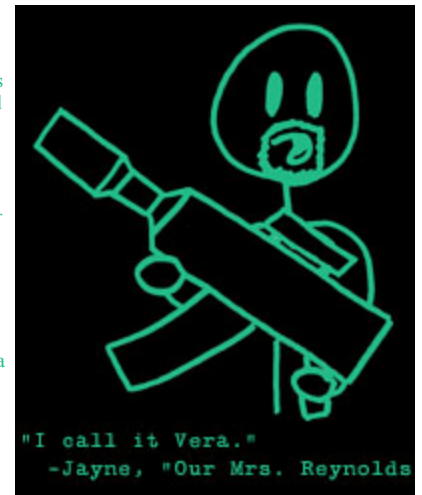
Sometimes you need to know exactly where everyone is standing and how long it takes someone to get to that other guy to keep him from doing whatever to someone else. If your games sound that vague, maybe it's time to break out the **Sparks**. Paper miniatures in font format, they can be printed, used, abused, and discarded at your whim. There are any number of sets available that could fit in the game.

- **John Bells' Firefly & Serenity Risus Page**

Now here is someone that took the original concept and just ran with it. There is lots of good stuff here and it may be better than my stuff. I'm not bitter. Much.

- **John Risus' Firefly Page**

Need an alternate take on running *Firefly* with *Risus*? Try one this. You won't be sorry. Or you might. There are guarantees in the 'Verse.

*FAQs*

1. *What is Firefly?*

If you have seriously have to ask the question, go buy the DVD set right now. You're only hurting yourself if you don't.

2. *What is Risus?*

Cunningly stolen from [Cumberland Games and Diversions](#) web site:

*Risus* is a complete Role Playing Game (RPG) designed to provide an "RPG Lite" for those nights when the brain is too tired for exacting detail. Risus is especially valuable to GMs assembling a quick convention game, or any late-night beer-and-pretzels outing. While it is essentially a Universal Comedy System, it works just as well for serious play (if you insist!). Best of all, a Risus character takes about 20 seconds to create!

*Acknowledgements*

**Firefly** was created by Joss Whedon. **Risus** was created by S. John Ross. They are gods among men. Let all tremble before them.

*Where You Come In*

This is just the beginning. Any ideas, help, or money you want to send me, please [email me](#). I mean, just look at some of those examples. Pathetic. I'd love to add your name to the Acknowledgements section. I know you want to be listed next to those two names.

**Raven's Prayer**

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