

New Rules for *Risus*: Fallout, Sanity, and Drama Points

by Aaron M. Sturgill

For use with *Red Eye of Azathoth* by Chad Bowser, et al.

Fallout

All Clichés now have a meter called Fallout: a series of open check boxes, grouped in sets of three.



When a Cliché is rolled and *fails*, whether in a task (with a Target Number) or in a conflict (with another character), the GM decides whether a box must be checked. This represents temporary damage to that particular Cliché. When *three* boxes have been checked, the Cliché in question drops by one level, reflecting lasting damage to the character. The player must role-play this negative Fallout, whether the damage is physical, emotional, spiritual, etc.

Erasing Fallout Checks

Some Fallout is, by nature, temporary (a bruised ego; bumps, bruises, and light cuts). The player and the GM will discuss a means or a time frame in which to heal (erase) Fallout checks. Use common sense; one day or scene is often sufficient.

Other types of Fallout are more lasting (broken bones, a devastating loss, or glimpsing an eldritch horror from another realm). These Fallout checks are not so easily erased; the GM will have to determine when or whether they can be.

It's a sensible rule of thumb that these lasting Fallout checks are permanent unless countered with significant restorative activity, such as professional medical or psychological care.

Dire Fallout

Most failed rolls (e.g., those at Difficulty 5 – 10) result in one Fallout box being checked. However, great tasks/conflicts (Difficulty 11+) may incur a greater penalty of two checks.

For example, in a scenario write-up, a Sanity roll might be notated thusly:

The character wake the dreaded Azathoth, the Crawling Chaos at the center of the universe. All present must make a Sanity roll: Difficulty 12/Fallout 2.

Margin of Failure

To reflect a particularly dire failed roll, take note of the Margin of Failure (MoF). A failure within 5 points of the Target Number (Difficulty) incurs the normal Fallout of one check. A failure more than 5 points below the TN incurs two Fallout checks.

Sean makes a Sanity roll for his character, against a TN of 12. His Sanity Cliché is at level 3 – rolling 3 dice, he scores a measly 5. At 7 less than the target Difficulty, this results in 2 Fallout checks for his Sanity Cliché.

Steeling

GMs may decide that PCs do not have to roll Clichés repeatedly for similar tasks of low Difficulty. For example, if a character has made one or two very easy leaps from one low building to another (Difficulty 6), he probably doesn't have to keep rolling for that particular action. The same would go for seeing a horrific, but somewhat run-of-the-mill Lovecraftian creature, like a Byakhee: after once or twice, the character knows what to expect.

The *Sanity* Cliché

All PCs must take a default Cliché called *Sanity* (or another similar Cliché that will be used to roll for and track mental and emotional health). Pay for this Cliché using the standard *Risus* rules for character creation.

Sanity Rolls

The *Sanity* Cliché is most often used when PCs are faced with fears, horrors, or abuse beyond the day-to-day. The Difficulty (Target Number to roll) depends upon the severity of the terror. Here are some examples.

Φ 5 – 6

- Glimpsing a dead body
- Witnessing animal abuse

Φ 7 – 8

- Glimpsing a horribly maimed corpse
- Witnessing an innocent person being abused

Φ 9 – 10

- Witnessing an innocent person being abused, and being powerless to stop it
- Glimpsing a terrible, otherworldly creature (small/common)

Φ 11 – 12

- Witnessing, or perhaps being a party to, horrible cruelty beyond common experience (e.g., prolonged torture)
- Glimpsing a terrible, otherworldly creature (human-size/rare)

Φ 13 – 14

- Witnessing, or perhaps being a party to, horrendous inhumanity on a massive scale (e.g., holocaust, genocide)
- Glimpsing a terrible, otherworldly creature (giant/unique)

Φ 15 +

- Glimpsing a physical manifestation of an earth-shattering cosmic truth (e.g., Azathoth, the Crawling Chaos at the black heart of creation)

A successful roll indicates that the character holds it together in the face of fear. A failure means he doesn't, and loses control of himself in some way. For particularly terrible failures, see "Dire Fallout" (p. 2).

Drama Points

Using the original *Risus* rules for character creation, a PC begins with ten total levels in Clichés. Here's a new option: players can opt to select fewer levels than this, and take the difference in Drama Points. The GM can also allow more than ten free levels, which allows for more adept characters, or more Drama Points, or both.

Sean chooses three Clichés, at levels four, three, and one (eight total). Since the GM allowed ten total levels, Sean's PC now has two Drama Points.

Drama Points are simply used to re-roll individual dice after a roll that a player doesn't like. Even if a PC isn't present in a given scene, a player may use her Drama Points to allow another player to re-roll his dice. One Drama Point = one die re-rolled.

Sean rolls a Cliché with a result of eight – two below the Target Number of ten. He has no Drama Points remaining, so another player, Lucy, spends one of hers to allow him to re-roll one of his dice. He picks up a die reading one and re-rolls it, for a result of four: the task is now a success.

Gaining Drama Points

Players and GM alike award Drama Points to each other for quality role-playing – whatever that might mean to a given group. If a player does something that makes the game more fun for everyone, it's probably time to award a Drama Point. Examples of quality role-playing might include:

- Snappy dialogue
- Innovative use of Clichés
- Advancement of the plot

Thanks & Apologies

This is probably pretty obvious, but there are three RPGs to which I (a) owe a great debt for these ideas, and (b) intend no copyright infringement:

- *Call of Cthulhu, 5th Edition*, published by Chaosium, Inc.
- *Dogs in the Vineyard* by D. Vincent Baker
- *Primetime Adventures*, by Matt ?