

It is the year 0099 of the New Century...

Civilization has been pushed to the brink, giant monsters roam the Earth, the remnants of humanity teeter on the edge of war.

You are a Pilot, cursed with Resonance to a mysterious stone known as Betyl which has become Earth's new power source.

It is your resonance that powers mankind's most horrific weapon. A titan of steel and fire built for unimaginable violence.

The Mobile Engagement Chassis.

MOBILE ENGAGEMENT CHASSIS: **STEEL HEARTS**

A TACTICAL MECHA TTRPG

Beta Playtest Kit

*This Beta Kit is aimed at giving players and GMs an opportunity to experience a core slice of the current build of **Mobile Engagement Chassis: Steel Hearts**. **Steel Hearts** is still a work in progress and everything you read within this guide is subject to change.*

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Rising Steel

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My friends for teaching me that no matter how weird you are, there's someone who gets you.

The Nipmuc Nation whose resilient flame gives me hope for humanity's future.

And everyone who has dreamed of piloting a Giant Robot (That means you!)

(And also means Tomino, Anno, Imaishi, Taniguchi, Yoko, Imagawa, Nagai, Kamitani, Hiroi, Priestley, Pondsmith, Sovereign, Felker-Martin, Manning, Makapatag, Flowers, Kojima, My Waifu and many, many more...)

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REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Plenty of Six-Sided Dice. At least 9 per Pilot and a full set of 36 for the GM – 12mm Dice are highly recommended both for their inexpensiveness and portability.
- A double-sided MEC Sheet, Pilot Sheet, and empty Stratagem Sheet for each Pilot.
- Writing implements or digital tracking tools.
- Stones or crystals to track Synergy. Stones can often be found outside.
- A large grid-map and tokens for tactical combat. Wet-erase grids can be particularly fun, as they allow for more destructible terrain.
- A love of giant robots and cinematic bombast.

>>> WELCOME PILOTS

"My name is Murasaki Mui! I'm the Chief Research Officer here at Bastion 6!

I'm here to help guide you through the basics of the New Century and the world of Steel Hearts!

Before we get started, I'm just going to need a tiny sample of your blood... Oh you're worried about how big this needle is? And wanted to learn the game first? Well, I guess my experiments can wait...

In this Playtest Kit we'll go over all the basics from Combat Protocols, Pilot Diagnostics and of course building your MEC!

You do know what a MEC is right...? A Mobile Engagement Chassis...? We've had them since the Awakening 99 years ago... You know when Earth's moon cracked open and started spilling out giant monsters that we now know as Wyrms?! ... You didn't read the History Manual, did you?

MECs are powered by this mysterious stone called Betyl! It creates an incredible amount of heat and electromagnetic energy when it's nearby someone who it can resonate with. And you're one such lucky Resonant! ... Actually, "lucky" may be a bit of a misnomer..."



NAME: MURSAKI MUI
PN: SHE/HER | BT: B

/ CONCEPT AND GOALS \

Mobile Engagement Chassis: Steel Hearts is a Roleplaying Game System for telling stories about incredible mecha action, quiet moments between fragile pilots and the beauty of our planet Earth. While tactical combat is a core element, so is intense storytelling and character building. This game is probably a good fit for your group if you like:

- **Punchy and high-stakes tactical combat with lots of customization.** (Ex: *XCOM*, *Into the Breach*, *Fire Emblem*, *Super Robot Wars*, *Armored Core*)
- **Systems for narrative storytelling that push character moments and growth.** (Ex: *Blades in the Dark*, *Powered by the Apocalypse*, *Mobile Frame Zero: Firebrands*, *Armor Astir: Advent*)
- **Political intrigue and being caught between complex factions vying for power.** (Ex: *Gundam Zeta/Double Zeta/Thunderbolt*, *Heaven Will Be Mine*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Jin-Roh*, *Metal Gear Solid*)
- **Playing diverse characters who have the means to collectively fight fascist and monocultural authorities.** (Ex: *Captain Harlock*, *Gurren Lagann*, *Gundam 0079*, *Final Fantasy 6/7*, *Promare*)
- **Playing characters who will be forced to constantly grapple with the weight of their own mortality and meaning in the world.** (Ex: *Macross*, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Nier: Gestalt*)
- **A world with a vast and diverse ecosystem that is all at once familiar and alien. Works that show a reverence and love for the beauty of nature.** (Ex: *Monster Hunter*, *Shadow of the Colossus*)
- **Giant Robots and Anime Bombast.** (Ex: *Sakura Wars*, *G Gundam*, *Project A-ko*, *Bubblegum Crisis*)

/ A TACTICAL MECHA TABLETOP RPG \

In *Steel Hearts* you and your friends will step into a world of bombastic Mecha action, full of breathtaking sights, shadowy intrigue, and memorable characters. If you're new to Tabletop Roleplaying Games (TTRPGs) don't worry, we'll step you through everything you need to know in this guide, so keep reading in order. That goes for all of you *Realms & Reliquaries* experts too! There's quite a few things that make Steel Hearts different, but I'm sure we can make you a pro in no time!

One of you will be the **Garrison Manager or GM**. It can be a lot of hard work but can also be one of the most rewarding experiences you will have! As the Garrison Manager you get to act as the director to your friends' daring exploits. You'll decide when to focus in the camera for quieter moments, or bring in unexpected elements. You'll also be playing the role of all the Wyrms, non-playable characters (NPCs) and generally providing the players with a tactical challenge. Think of yourself like a Coach, Director, Military Leader, Actor and Therapist rolled all in one! Like a Codirmili-actapist! Hmmm... I guess this is why we just use the term Garrison Manager...

The rest of you will be players in your GM's game, otherwise known as **Pilots**. As a pilot you'll have two character sheets: one to track the health and wellbeing of your human pilot and the other to track the stats and diagnostics of your MEC. Your pilot may die, or your MEC might get totaled, or both! But don't worry! Your GM will provide you with an opportunity to bring in a new character or build a new MEC. The New Century is a dangerous place, so make sure to buy MEC Insurance! ... That was a joke, these things are *way* too expensive to insure.

So, what's the difference between this and playing make-believe in your backyard? Rules that push you towards more narrative moments and of course the great equalizer that is **Dice**! In Steel Hearts you'll roll **6 Side Dice (d6)** equal to your Stats to resolve conflicts, deal damage and overcome challenges. **Normally each face correlates to either 0 (☐) 1 (☐ ☐ ☐) or 2 (☐ ☐ ☐) Hits**. The more hits you roll, the better your outcome will be! This is what we call a **Stat Check**, rolling with **Stat Dice**. When you do something particularly in-character or creative, the GM will reward you with extra Stat Dice known as **Edge**.

There's also negative **Threat** and **Doom Dice** when your Pilots are faced with personal challenges or dangerous scenarios. You also might roll a **Heroic Dice** if you do something epic! Don't worry though, **every Player Sheet has a key for each type of Dice Roll so you don't need to have this all memorized**. To spice all of this up, players generate **Synergy** for each other during combat when they roll Evens. This can be used to energize attacks, charge shields, boost forward or recharge vital Stratagems!

We like to call this the **SET System**, for Stat-Edge-Threat. It lets GMs fine tune the difficulty of rolls and lets players **roll with confidence** while still adding a pinch of randomness! Well, it's technically not *truly* random. Given enough time to calculate the dice's weight and trajectory, and if we're able to account for the quantum ripples in the room- Why are you looking at me like that? Needless to say, you'll be rolling a lot, so make sure to **bring lots of 6 Sided Dice to the table!**

Showing is better than telling though, so let's apply some science with an Example of Play shall we?

/ EXAMPLE OF PLAY – PT. I \

In Steel Hearts GMs and Pilots work together to tell a story so exciting you could put it in a TV Show! Each Player will need a pencil, a Pilot Sheet, a double sided MEC Sheet and a whole bunch of d6s. GJ will explain what GMs need in a later section, but for right now let's jump into the action!

For this example, Bastion 6's Defender Captain Achilles Chavez and his comrade Ajax Wallenrod are going on a Hunt to clear an infestation of Manticores outside of Babel. Bastion 6's actual Garrison Manager, GJ Hangbe will be serving as the GM for this example, and has a surprise planned to progress her players' plot.

Achilles' MEC (Apollo) has already suffered 2 **Part Breaks**. If it suffers a third **Part Break** his MEC will go critical and shut down, with Achilles trapped inside! However, there's only two Manticores left to clear out... Turn Phase has now switched to the **Ally Phase**, meaning Ajax and Achilles can spend their collective actions in whatever order they choose to fight the enemy. Let's see how they handle this...

Ajax: Alright, how bad are these Manticores looking?

GJ: The one you just attacked has rips across its batlike wings, its spikey mane is now a shattered mess. The other Manticore is looking ravenous and panicked.

Achilles: Maybe we could scare them away with a loud noise? Our mission was just to clear out the warehouse. Can I make a **Computing Check** to make a huge sound with my Railgun to try to intimidate them?

GJ: Definitely! It will cost you one Action though. And you'd need at least an 8 to scare off one of them.

[Achilles and Ajax share a nervous glance]

GJ: But since you already killed two of them with your charged shot, I'll give you two Edge to add to your roll.

Achilles: Alright let's go for it... I have 5 **Stat Points** in Computing, plus the 2 **Edge**... So that'd be 7 dice all together?

[Achilles rolls 7 d6 for his Computing Check. He gets 1, 1, 2, 2, 1, 1 and 1. The 1s and 2s each count for 2 successes, and the 1s count for 0. Everything else counts for 1 success. He gets 8 successes altogether.]

Achilles: That's 8 Successes!

GJ: Meets it beats it! The injured Manticore hisses and averts its eyes to the Apollo's sparkling Rail Gun. It leans back on its hind legs and takes off towards the warehouse's exit.

Ajax: Phew... One to go.

Achilles: I'd like to try it again!

Ajax: I'm not sure if that's a good idea-

GJ: Sure! But you are going to be rolling with 2 **Threat** this time instead of Edge. And your goal is still 8.

Achilles: Alright... So that's 5 **Stat Points** for **Computing**, minus any **Failures** you roll for my **Threat** right?

GJ: That's right.

Ajax: Uhhh... Can I help him by firing a rocket at the ground near this thing?

GJ: That seems reasonable, granted your **Blaze Damage** hasn't been doing much against these Manticores... I'd say that's worth a **single Edge**.

Achilles: Awesome, so 6 dice in total minus the two Threat? Easy.

[It was not easy. Achilles rolls 1, 2, 1, 1, 1, 1 meaning he only got 7 Successes in total. What's worse is that for his Threat GJ rolled a 1 and 1, while the 1 does nothing, the 1 counts for 4 Failures, bringing Achille's success total down to 4.]

Achilles: Uhhh... that's 4...

GJ: It's not impressed... In fact, any lower and it might have tried to attack you while you were showing off. You guys only have 2 Actions left before the Enemy Phase.

Achilles: Well I just used both of mine, so I have to wait for Ajax to use his before I can refresh my actions.

We'll pick back up with these three after in just a second! But first I should probably explain to you a thing or two about combat, shouldn't I? Ajax will explain all the fancy details later since he's an ace pilot and all, but here's the basics of what you need to know:

In Steel Hearts units accrue **DMG (Damage)** from **ATKs (Attacks)** until their DMG equals their **Armor**. For a Wyrms or Grunt MEC this may be enough to kill the unit completely, but for most advanced MECs like the ones pilots have this results in Part Break rolls. Something that's a little bit different from other systems out there is that **all ATKs hit!** That's right, no more waiting around to see if you can even hit the thing. While it is technically possible to roll terribly on your ATK and for enemies to Soak DMG, **all ATKs do a minimum of 1 DMG.** (Unless you roll all 1s).

ATKs generally come in two forms. There are **Basic ATKs** that are listed on a MEC's Part and do damage directly equal to the number of Hits on a Stat Roll. Then there's the more complex **Stratagems** which have all kinds of special rules that Ajax will go over later. For right now think of Stratagems like proteins and the Basic ATKs like molecules! Erm... Maybe that wasn't the easiest analogy... Maybe think of Stratagems like spells?

That's not all! When you make an ATK roll you also generate **SYN (Synergy)** for your allies equal to the number of evens you roll! **Synergy can be spent at any time**, to boost the number of dice in an ATK roll, generate shields or even take a free action! Let's see what this looks like in motion:

Ajax: Alright we have two actions and they're both mine... Honestly, I'm not feeling great about being right next to that thing so I'd like to take a Move Action.

GJ: Alright you can move up to your full **Speed**, what were you at for **Speed** again?

Ajax: 14 Speed! [Ajax gleefully pushes his MEC, the Ares, to the other edge of the board as GJ watches in dismay]

GJ: I need to throw more Torque Checks at you two... Anyways, you have one more action!

Ajax: Right. I'm still in **Range** to do a **Basic Attack** with my Charred Launcher. It does **Blaze DMG** based off my **Finesse**.

GJ: Yep, just remember each Even you roll will do -1 DMG because the Manticores have an **Elemental Strength** against **Blaze DMG**.

[Ajax and Achilles exchange another nervous look]

Ajax: In my Pilot Sheet's Gravity section I have Achilles and our bond as one of my Loves. Can I use that to gain Edge in this situation since his MEC is almost toast?

GJ: Sure, but you have to say something super anime while you're firing the rocket.

Ajax: Awesome, so that's 2 Edge from my Gravity, 7 Stat Points from Finesse and then minus any Evens I roll... I'd also like to spend all 4 of my remaining Synergy to

Amplify the Damage on this roll, giving me two more dice.

GJ: Sounds good. What are you shouting while you shoot the rocket?

Ajax: Listen here you overgrown bat, no one bites that man but me!

[Ajax rolls a , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , . 13 Hits! However each even he rolled negates 1 DMG because of the Manticore's resistance, meaning -7 Hits in this instance. Since each Hit translates to direct DMG he deals 5 DMG. Additionally, each Even number generates 1 SYN split between all compatriots passing to the left. This roll generated 7 Synergy, and because Achilles is the only other pilot it all goes to him.]

Ajax: That's 6 Damage! And 7 Synergy for Achilles.

GJ: As the rocket rips past the Apollo you hear a sizzle of fur and a shattering of teeth... But as the smoke clears you notice it's just barely standing.

Ajax: Oh no...

GJ: That was awesome though! Add another Mass Pip to your bond with Achilles for that one.

Achilles: I'm spending 6 of my Synergy right now to buy 3 Shields!

GJ: Good choice. Now it's the enemy turn...

I guess cliffhangers are mandatory even in the Example of Play portions of an anime-esc game. Hopefully, this has given you an idea of what standard combat and interaction in Steel Hearts looks like. It's fast, flavorful, crunchy, and undeniably bombastic. Now that you have a feel for the basics it's time to get our hands dirty with the rules themselves! I'm going to pass things over to Bastion 6's Terran Technologies Researcher, he'll let you in on everything you need to know about... well... You! How to Roll Dice, read your Stats and more! He's a bit *too* into DIY projects, but he's the best engineer we have in Bastion 6. Good luck! And don't forget about that blood sample you promised me!!



NAME: LATIMER JABIR
PN: HE/HIM | BT: B

>>> GROUND BASICS

"So you're the new Pilot Murasaki keeps talking about? Well, it's a pleasure to meet you! Don't mind the gasoline smell that's totally normal... usually...

I'll be stepping you through the basics of filling your Pilot Diagnostics Sheet, measuring your Gravity, rolling SET Dice, and filling out any other paperwork that the EDA might have you do.

You... don't know who the EDA are? You sure the fumes aren't getting to you? You're not seeing any weird colors, right? Anyways, EDA stands for the **Earth Defense Alliance**. All the Bastions are a part of it. It's pretty bureaucratic, but it sure as hell beats trying to let the corporations run things. Who knows, maybe you'll be the one to wake people up to a better solution!

But I'm getting ahead of myself, let's start with the most important thing..."

/ ROLLING DICE \

At this point you're probably familiar with the gist of your average TTRPG. You roleplay your character, get into mischief and at some point the GM asks you to roll a Check. A good GM will keep the number of Hits you need for a Check vague and the consequences for failure fair. Since this is a system where you'll have a rough idea of the bell curve of your roll before you roll, you can always act and **roll with confidence!** There's still always the chance of an unlikely failure or an epic critical, but these are a bit rarer.

Unlike your standard TTRPG you're only going to need one type of dice: The 6 Sided Dice. Preferably about 12 of them if you're a Pilot. You can either get these in bulk or do what I do and pull them out of all your other board games! That said, the bigger your group the more dice you may need. So uhh... if Korolev asks you where all their d6s from their copy of *Cutie Dungeon Crawler* went, just forget I told you the whole "taking d6s out of board games" thing, yeah?

Let's go over the different "types" of d6s you'll be rolling and what they correlate to:

ROLL	STAT	THREAT	DOOM	HEROIC
	-	-	-	1 Hits
	1 Hit	-	-	2 Hits
	1 Hit	-	-2 Hits	2 Hits
	1 Hit	-	-2 Hits	2 Hits
	2 Hits	-2 Hits	-2 Hits	4 Hits
	2 Hits	-3 Hits	-3 Hits	4 Hits [Explodes]

/ READING ROLLS \

Now I know this may look like a lot, but it's actually pretty simple. Like a lot of systems in Steel Hearts it's best to **think of this like a funnel**. Wide breadth distilled down into something simple and clear. In this case it's a lot of pips distilled down into a success or failure.

The gist is this: during a Stat Check you'll add 1 d6 for each Stat Point you have in the Stat you're rolling for. Then roll them and add Hits according to each d6's result. You determined these Hits by referring to the "Stat" column. If you reach the number of hits necessary, you succeed! Sometimes your GM may even grant you the mercy of a Partial Failure if you just miss it.

/ EDGE < THREAT \

GMs may grant bonus Stat Dice (**Edge**) for creative thinking or cinematic roleplaying. You can also add additional Edge dice by bringing in your Gravity which we'll cover shortly after this. When you're being particularly badass your GM might even give you a **Heroic** dice to help ensure your success.

If you're under pressure, groggy, injured, or perhaps just heart broken, the GM may have roll additional negative d6s for you and tell you the Hits you've lost after you roll. For minor difficulties you'll gain **Threat**, and for major obstacles you'll gain **Doom**. This also goes for making rolls at odds with your Gravities.

You may be awarded additional success for rolling far above a Stat Check's target. Similarly, your GM may afford you a partial success (at the cost of a complication) if you roll just below the number of Hits you need to. It's all dependent on your GM, but you should all try to work together to make your session exciting!

/ SYNERGY \

When you're making an ATK (and only when you're making an ATK) there's another layer to reading your rolls: Synergy. Ajax will go over the finer details in the combat section, but just look out for any evens () you roll when dealing DMG as these generate SYN for your allies.

/ WHERE THINGS GET WYRD \

Sometimes you'll have to roll a d6 for things other than Stat Checks or ATKing. Usually this is a random Wyrd DMG (Or associated Status Effect) or having a Part Break.

Part Breaks can be particularly brutal as broken Parts will cease operation entirely and you won't be able to use their bonuses or abilities. But if you ask me, there's nothing a little duct-tape and ingenuity can't fix! You'd just need to make sure the Duct Tape is combat ready... Actually, on second thought don't try that...

ROLL	PART BREAK	WYRD
	HELMET	BLAZE
	CORE	CRYO
	MANEUVER	SHOCK
	OPTION	ACID
	ARM STARBOARD	PIERCING
	ARM PORT	VOID

/ 5 - PILOT STATS \

This is the meat of your Pilot Sheet, and probably the part that'll be most familiar to TTRPG players. Here you'll record the Stat Point total for your various Pilot Stats. This determines the base amount of d6s you'll roll during a Stat Check and maxes out at 9. We'll go over Stat Creation and progression soon enough!

/ 6 - MEDICALS \

Here you can record past, present and ongoing medical conditions, and allergies. Additionally, it's a good place to store information about your family and personal connections. We'll talk about what your Resonance score is later.

/ 7 - EQUIPMENT \

All your junk- I mean property- gets listed here. It's assumed that whatever you can fit in your cockpit you'd probably be taking with you. That said you can also list anything you own that you leave behind, whether that's a sports car or an arcade cabinet.

/ 8 - NOTES / KILLS \

Any additional notes that are relevant to your pilot's life and social standing can be listed here. You'll also have to keep track of the number of lives you've ended. Rumor has it that Betyl acts strangely around pilots who leave behind a bloody trail, so consider each life you take carefully.

EXAMPLE:

PILOT IDENTIFICATION			WALLET #93**-*****	
NAME: LATIMER JABIR			CREDITS: 3,000	DEBT: 2500 300
PRONOUNS: HE / HIM	AGE: 28	DOB: 14/08/0071	AFFECT: TINKERER	IDEOLOGY: HUMANIST
BLOOD TYPE: B	HEIGHT: 178CM	WEIGHT: 81 KG		
PILOT STATS		PILOT GRAVITY		
ENDURANCE ROLL: 5 (MAX 9)	ACCURACY ROLL: 2 (MAX 9)	LOVE: FIXING THINGS ◆◆◆◆◆ + 2	FEAR: WYRMS ◆◆◆◆◆ + 1	
CHARM ROLL: 6 (MAX 9)	PRESENCE ROLL: 1 (MAX 9)	LOVE: _____ ◇◇◇◇◇ + _____	FEAR: _____ ◇◇◇◇◇ + _____	
INSIGHT ROLL: 2 (MAX 9)	MECHANICS ROLL: 8 (MAX 9)	GOAL: NEW MEC PART ◆◆◆◆◆ + 1	TENSION: COCKY ◆◆◆◆◆ + 2 (ONLY A LITTLE)	
		GOAL: _____ ◇◇◇◇◇ + _____	TENSION: _____ ◇◇◇◇◇ + _____	
		TALENT: _____ ◇◇◇◇◇ + _____	INJURY: WIRE BURNS ◆◆◆◆◆ + 2 (NOT MY FAULT...)	
		TALENT: _____ ◇◇◇◇◇ + _____	INJURY: _____ ◇◇◇◇◇ + _____	
PILOT MEDICAL RECORDS		PILOT PROPERTY / NOTES		
MAJOR OPERATIONS / CONDITIONS: -TINNITUS -BROKEN LEG (FIXED) -CHEMICAL BURN (FIXED) -BROKEN NOSE (FIXED) -WIRE BURNS (FIXING?)		RESONANCE: 0 :(EQUIPMENT: - REPAIR KIT -SCRAPPER EXO SUIT -SCRAP (X 103) -KOROLEV'S COPY OF CLITIE DUNGEON CRAWLER -KOROLEV'S COPY OF CODING FOR DUMMIES -KOROLEV'S SAUCE PAN (NEED TO CLEAN...)	
FAMILY HISTORY / CONNECTIONS: GREW UP AS A SCRAPPER IN THE OUTLANDS - IMMIGRATED TO BASTION 6 WITH HIS PARENTS WHEN HE WAS 18. PARENTS KEEP TRYING TO GET CLEARANCE TO VISIT HIM AT WORK... NEED TO CALL THEM MORE.		ALLERGIES: POLLEN	NOTES: SOFT BANNED FROM TRYING TO FIX THINGS IN THE MEC GARAGE -(STILL NEED TO REPLACE GJ'S CRANE)	
PERSONAL HISTORY / CONNECTIONS: FREQUENTLY LOSES BETS TO BASTION 6 STAFF ABOUT HOW LONG HIS DIY FIXES WILL LAST...		KILLS:		
HOBBY: MODEL BUILDING	BEST FRIENDS ARE KOROLEV AND MURASAKI NEED TO PLAN ANOTHER KARAOKE NIGHT...			

And that's all you need to know! See? It's a lot less scary than it looks. Just a hand full of numbers and a whole lot of history. Now that you know what goes where, I think it's about time I walk you through creating your very own Pilot...

/ PILOT CREATION \

Before we get started it's important to have a clear idea of the character you want to play as, as well as their hopes and flaws. Ask yourself how they see the world, why and what about them might change. Try to picture them in your head... Use yourself or your favorite characters as reference if you have to. Got an idea? Then let's start...

/ THE BASICS \

The first thing you should figure out is your Pilot's age. It's important to confer with the group for this. Maybe you're all fresh recruits or old mercenaries. By default, Steel Hearts usually has a young cast in mind, characters who haven't quite figured themselves or the world out yet. If you're looking for a random age just roll a d6, half the result and add it to 17.

Next pick a name that suits your character, something you feel evokes their ethos, or perhaps something their parents wanted them to be more like. Next, you'll need to figure out your Blood Type, you can refer to the chart to the right or roll for it.

If you're random rolling, it can be fun to add a Blood Type's associated Stat Bonus, but this isn't necessary. **You can instead choose**

to give yourself +2 Starting Pilot Stat Points. After all **Blood Type doesn't actually affect these kinds of things** in any meaningful way. Neither does height, weight or date of birth for that matter, so **feel free to put in whatever you feel is appropriate for your character!**

ROLL	BLOOD TYPE	DESCRIPTION
	AB	Eccentric, talented, and slightly two-faced. AB Types blend the best (and worst) of both worlds between A and B. - Any One Pilot Stat +2 -
 / 	A	Reliable, organized, and a bit high-strung. A Types work well with others and are ideal for getting the job done! - Insight & Presence +1 -
 / 	B	Passionate, creative, and a little self-obsessed. While they can be a source of innovation their loner nature can make them difficult to work with. - Charm & Mechanics +1 -
	O	Relentless, confident, and somewhat irresponsible. While unstoppable, their somewhat brute force methods can be unappealing to some. - Endurance & Accuracy +1 -

/ STARTING FUNDS \

While this is largely dependent on your GM and what's decided at the table, Pilots generally start with d6 x 100 Credits and no debts. If you're looking to pick up extra Credits you can always random roll a part-time job. The table on the right assumes that the cast of your game is young and lives in a Bastion or city. Maybe your Pilot moonlights as bartender or club singer? Maybe they walk dogs at the park or manage a library? Perhaps they're just an average Ice Cream scooper in between deadly deployments. It's up to you and your table to decide!

ROLL	JOB LOCATION
	ICE CREAM SHOP
	LOCAL PARK
	BAR / NIGHTCLUB
	POSTAL SERVICE
	UNIVERSITY / SCHOOL
	EDA GARRISON

/ DEBT \

Most Pilots start with no Debt. However, in a non-EDA campaign, your GM may start you in the red with some shady loan sharks eager for you to accrue interest...

/ AFFECT AND IDEOLOGY \

A Pilot's Affect and Ideology serve as your roleplaying touchstone for figuring out how they think and act.

Your **Affect** represents how you like interacting with others and your world. It's also a large part of how you were raised or what you were like growing up. Your **Ideology** represents your world views and what your moral compass tells you is right or wrong.

These traits are by no means immutable, and in many cases should change over time. Perhaps you play as a cutthroat Corpocrat who slowly learns the value of collective care, and your Ideology should change to reflect that growth.

IDEOLOGY TABLE	
ROLL	IDEOLOGY
	PACIFIST You believe violence is never the answer, and that each life is precious.
	CORPOCRAT You believe might makes right, and that money should be power.
	SPIRITUALIST You believe in a spiritual or religious creed that guides your moral principles.
	HUMANIST You believe in being skeptical of everything and in the power of technology.
	ANARCHIST You believe interactions should be built on mutual trust rather than force or coercion.
	EVIORNMENTALIST You believe mankind is just one lifeform in the web of Earth ecology, and that nature is to be protected.

AFFECT TABLE	
ROLL	AFFECT
	LONER You have trouble relating to and trusting others. You're pretty sure they'd just get in your way... or you in theirs. - Endurance & Insight+1 -
	ATHLETE You're a very bodily person, who loves physical activity, exercise and sports! - Endurance & Accuracy +1 -
	IDOL You're enigmatic and creatively centered. Your talent is apparent, and you've become accustomed to the spotlight. - Charm & Presence +1 -
	TINKERER If it ain't broke, you'll still fix it. You enjoy the mechanical (or digital) and are always trying new things. - Insight & Mechanics +1 -
	STRAITLACED You're driven, focused and a bit prudish. You'd make a great class representative. - Presence & Insight +1 -
	PUNK Dumb rules are meant to be broken, and dumber dares are meant to be taken! - Charm & Accuracy +1 -

You're free to come up with your own Affects or Ideologies or randomly roll some here. You should always get **+2 Pilot Stat Points** that have to do with your Affect (you will not gain a new bonus nor lose this bonus for changing your Affect later).

When you act in accordance with your Affect and Ideology you may gain Edge, and when you're acting against it you may gain Threat. After all, a Pacifist might have a lot more trouble in a shootout than a Corpocrat would.

/ GRAVITY BASICS \

Each of us is pulled to certain causes, vices, challenges and triumphs, we call this pull Gravity. We already discussed a bit of how Gravity works back on Page 7 but here's a refresher:

Each point of a Gravity gives you Edge or Threat Dice in a situation pertaining to that Gravity. You can raise or lower Gravity by filling or draining Mass Pips, at a rate of 6 Mass to 1 Gravity. You gain and reduce Mass from roleplaying around that Gravity.

/ INITIAL GRAVITY \

Each Pilot should start off with 3 Gravities (at +1) in any category they want. If the table agrees that more Gravities are appropriate, then you can add them. These Gravities can be anything from "Love of MECs" to "Fear of Loneliness." Make sure to keep them short but specific enough to be easily identifiable when they come up.

If you're having trouble figuring out your Pilot's Gravities, try to think about how their Affect and Ideology play into these categories. Also consider what elements from their backstory they're still carrying with them.

You can also random roll 3 from this table for quick Pilot Creation or inspiration:

/ GRAVITY LIMIT \

You can only have up to 2 Gravities within each category, and their bonuses will cap at a maximum of +3. If you find you need to add a Gravity into a category with no slots open, consider what other categories that Gravity may fall under or whether an existing Gravity should be replaced instead.

/ GRAVITY PROGRESS \

Like the tides pulled by lunar shards, your Gravity will ebb and flow with the course of the story you tell. Whenever your Pilot's story regarding a Gravity progresses, your GM should award you positive or negative Mass Pips to progress your Gravity. Note that when a Gravity is at 1 and loses Mass pips it will go into negative Mass until it reaches -6. At this point that Gravity will dissipate entirely. Lastly, you, the GM or the table may decide it's time for you to add new Gravities as you're faced with new fears, inspired by new goals, pick up new talents and find new loves!

EXAMPLE GRAVITIES TABLE		
ROLL	GRAVITY	
☐	FEAR	
	☐ - LOSS ☐ - DEATH ☐ - WATER	☐☐ - DARKNESS ☐☐ - BUGS ☐☐ - GERMS
☐☐	TENSION	
	☐ - UNTRUSTING ☐ - ROMANTIC ☐ - AGGRESSIVE	☐☐ - LISTLESS ☐☐ - JEALOUS ☐☐ - PRIDEFUL
☐☐☐	INJURY	
	☐ - NIGHTMARES ☐ - CARPAL TUNNEL ☐ - HEART BREAK	☐☐ - SPRAINED ANKLE ☐☐ - BURNS ☐☐ - CAVITIES
☐☐☐☐	LOVE	
	☐ - SUGAR ☐ - MUSIC ☐ - NATURE	☐☐ - COOKING ☐☐ - FAMILY ☐☐ - FRIENDS
☐☐☐☐☐	GOAL	
	☐ - GET RICH ☐ - BE A HERO ☐ - TRAVEL	☐☐ - LEARN ☐☐ - CREATE ☐☐ - MASTERY
☐☐☐☐☐☐	TALENT	
	☐ - FLYING ☐ - PROGRAMMING ☐ - RUNNING	☐☐ - MEMORY ☐☐ - LISTENING ☐☐ - SINGING

/ PILOT STATS \

Pilot Stats determine how many dice you'll roll to overcome challenges that giant heavily-armed robots can't solve (Which as it happens, is a lot of them). These Stats aren't a measure of any kind of physical attributes, rather they're meant as vague igniters that can be taken in a variety of directions. **A high Pilot Stat is a signifier of passion and training rather than some innate biological trait.** It's up to Players to decide and justify which Pilot Stats are appropriate for which situations, and to get creative to leverage their strengths.

New Pilots start with EITHER 15 Stat Points divided amongst their Stats OR more randomly Roll 6 d6 and assign each d6 result to a different Stat (Ensuring Pilots have at least one Stat at 6) between the following:

/ ENDURANCE \

Endurance can mean more than raw weight-lifting potential. It can mean having gone through physical therapy, having environmental resistance or even an insanely strong gut.

Examples: *Busting Down a Door - Resisting Toxins - Pushing Through the Cold - Punching Something*

/ CHARM \

Charm helps you create expressive works of art and woo people with silver tongued words. Charm doesn't always have to be someone who's social, they can just be imaginative and sing beautifully or write eloquently.

Example: *Calming a Wurm - Playing an Instrument - Cooking a Meal - Bartering*

/ INSIGHT \

Insight refers to your accumulated knowledge on a variety of subjects. It can be used for studying other languages, referring to the sciences or programming.

Example: *Writing Code - Knowing History - Deciphering Runes - Studying Biology - Science*

/ ACCURACY \

Accuracy enables nimble navigation, quiet stealth, and precise procedures. Where Endurance takes a head-on approach, Accuracy favors exact and quick solutions.

Example: *Aiming a Gun - Moving Silently - Scaling a Wall - Crawling Through Air Ducts - Pickpocketing*

/ PRESENCE \

Presence is your cultivated awareness of your surroundings, self, and others. It can help you detect lies, notice peculiarities, and calm yourself down in stressful situations.

Example: *Searching for Clues - Eavesdropping - Detecting Motives - Not Panicking*

/ MECHANICS \

Mechanics deals with the hands-on sciences of the world. Anything that requires special tools and getting your hands dirty probably falls under Mechanics.

Example: *Fixing a MEC - Performing Surgery - Picking a Lock - Building a Vehicle - Mending a Wurm*

You may notice there's a lot of overlap in these skills and that's intentional! You could climb vines with either Endurance or Accuracy or even justify Presence if you're climbing very slowly and carefully. Maybe convincing someone to fix your MEC is a matter of Charming them or having enough Insight to earn their trust or sometimes talking enough Mechanics that they see you as someone who is good to have handy.

Remember, even if you're low in a certain stat **you can always roleplay and call on your backgrounds and Gravities to give you the Edge you need to succeed!** If that fails, rely on your friends to help support you where you're weak and vice versa. Lastly, remember that Charm checks aren't required if you can roleplay a discussion effectively, nor is an Insight Check needed to see if your Pilot can solve a mystery that a Player already pieced together. **Those Stats are there to assist Players, not limit them.**

/ PILOT MEDICALS AND BACKGROUND \

In the full version of Steel Hearts you'll find plenty of roll tables in regards to various backgrounds and connections you can have. But for the purposes of this Playtest Kit, we'll just have you fill these out using your own creativity! You can use the **Pilot Evaluation Form** to help cement who your character is.

You should also start with 1 or 2 pieces of personal equipment that has to do with your Pilot's background.

Remember that **you can always call upon your background, history or connections to gain Edge!** Similarly, the GM can call on these backgrounds to add **Threat or Doom**.

/ RESONANCE \

Resonance is the mysterious phenomenon that ties Pilots and their Betyl together. Despite years of research, we're only just starting to scratch the surface of what actually causes it. You can find out more about Betyl and the many theories surrounding it in the History Manual!

When making a Pilot you'll need to roll to discover the type of Resonance they have. Alternatively, if your group feels it's appropriate, you can instead select one. But what's life without a little bit of randomness?

/ EVALUATION FORMS \

As an EDA Pilot you'll still have a lot of paperwork to do even after filling out your Diagnostics Sheet. Your GM will likely have you fill out a **Pilot Medical and Psyche Evaluation Form** so that they can get to know you better and solidify elements of your Pilot. This can be a great opportunity to explore your character's Gravities or discover new ones, explore your personal history and more.

That's all you need to get started on the ground! Next up I'll hand things over to Bastion 6's Experimental Technologies Researcher and they'll go over how to build your very own MEC!

NEW CENTURY RESONANCE TABLE	
ROLL	RESONANCE
	<u>INSOMNIAC</u> Your connection to your Betyl is unusual... What could your future hold? (GM handles the rest)
	<u>TERRAN</u> You've always had to rely more on your own abilities than your Betyl's power. Start with +2 Pilot Stat Points.
	<u>ACE</u> It feels like you and your Betyl were meant to Pilot MECs: Start with +2 Bond.
	<u>LINKED</u> You share a personal connection with your Betyl and can Resonate with it from afar. Start Combats with +2 SYN.
	<u>NEURO-SENSITIVE</u> You're able to vaguely feel the feelings of other living things and may one day be able to refine this ability.
	<u>MAVERICK</u> You are able to Resonate with any Betyl and are a valued asset for this ability.



NAME: KOROLEV HIRSCHFELD
PN: THEY/THEM | BT: 0

>>> MEC BASICS

"Oh! Hi there... Uh... Sorry about all the papers everywhere. You don't have to worry about those. Actually, definitely don't look at those! You probably don't have clearance for... any of them.

What's that? I'm in charge of teaching you MEC Basics?? But Latimer said he would do that! Ugh, I hope this isn't another one of his schemes to get me to be "more social"...

Anyways, my name is Korolev. I'm the Chief Experimental Technologies Researcher here at Bastion 6. As one of our new Pilots, you're going to be in charge of your own MEC, yeah?

Thankfully I know a thing or two about proper MEC maintenance and structure. I'll step you through all of the basics! As for combat tactics... We'll cover that later.

For right now let's get you through the essentials of MEC construction, parts and some terms you need to know..."

/ MEC PILOTING ESSENTIALS \

At an imposing 18 meters high, the **Mobile Engagement Chassis (or MEC)** is the pinnacle of Terran weapon design... For better or worse. They've put us on equal footing with the titanic Wyrms that dominate the planet and ushered in a terrifying new era of Terran warfare. Please make sure you're never fighting a MEC on foot... most of their weapons will incinerate you in an instant...

When you're seated in your MEC's cockpit you'll be surrounded by a glimmering panorama of buttons, dials, levers and monitor screens. Behind you will be a window to your lifeline: Your Betyl. Its green glow will be the first thing to illuminate your cockpit before a chorus of HUDs and camera displays light up the darkness.

Your MEC will always need two essential things to transform it into mankind's greatest weapon: Power and Commands. For power, we rely on the electromagnetic energy and immense heat generated by Betyl when it's Resonating. This is why we need Pilots like you, who can bring out Betyl's latent potential. In an emergency, where your Betyl is lost or your Resonance is somehow blocked, MECs are still equipped with a system of MEC Batteries that will grant you a full hour of operation.

The next key element are the Commands you'll give the MEC using a Neurological Emissions Translator or NET link. Think of it like a kind of Virtual Reality set-up that allows the MEC to directly interface with you. Most pilots use a combination of this and the traditional tactile controls available in your cockpit. It is this relationship between Betyl's power and humanity's skill that we call Bond. But I'm getting ahead of myself, aren't I?

You're probably wondering what all these crazy displays and terms actually mean. So, let's start by breaking down the MEC Diagnostics Sheet piece by piece.

Mobile Engagement Chassis
Diagnostics Sheet

1 Unit ID: # TAG:

2 MEC STATS

TORQUE BASE: + PART: (MAX 2)
DURABILITY BASE: + PART: (MAX 2)
FINESSE BASE: + PART: (MAX 2)
MOBILITY BASE: + PART: (MAX 2)
ATTUNEMENT BASE: + PART: (MAX 2)
COMPUTING BASE: + PART: (MAX 2)

3 MEC STATUS

ARMOR (MAXIMUM DAMAGE THRESHOLD)
DAMAGE (COUNTS UP TO ARMOR)
SHIELDS (ABSORBS DAMAGE BEFORE SOAK - COUNTERS SOAK, MAX 63)
SOAK (REDUCE INCOMING DAMAGE - MAX 33)
BREAKS (MARKS HIT TOTAL, SHUT DOWN AT 3 BREAKS)
SPEED (SPACES MEC CAN MOVE)

4 BETYL STATUS

SYNERGY (REFRESH ONCE ALL PILOTS HAVE NO ACTIONS)
ACTIONS (TOTAL POTENTIAL REROLLS PER MEC STAT ROLL)
BOND

5 Major Upgrades:

6 AUXILIARY

CARGO SLOT 1: CARGO SLOT 2:
CARGO SLOT 3: CARGO SLOT 4:

7 MEC PARTS

1- (HELMET PART)
2- (CORE PART)
3- (MANEUVER PART)
4- (OPTION PART)
5- (ARM PART - STARBOARD)
6- (ARM PART - PORT)

> BREAK: (MODIFICATION)
CANNOT ACT AT RANGE
MEC SPEED REDUCED TO 2
RIGHT ARM LOST

> BREAK: (MODIFICATION)
1 - PILOT DAMAGES AN ORGAN
2 - PILOT COCKPIT EXPOSED
3 - PILOT SUFFERS A BURN
4 - PILOT IS BLEEDING OUT
5 / 6 - PILOT BREAKS A BONE
MEC IS BURNING
LEFT ARM LOST

Notes:

**/ 1 - MEC ID / TAG **

Every MEC is given a unique 6 digit serial number known as the MEC Unit ID. This is primarily for EDA registration and tracking purposes. A MEC's Tag is what you usually referred to it as, like a nickname.

**/ 2 - MEC STATS **

Much like Pilot Stats, MEC Stats determine the number of dice you'll Roll during Stat Checks and when dealing Damage. Your MEC's Base Stats are determined by its **Steel Heart Frame** (more on that later). Some Parts add additional dice which are then tallied into Part section of your MEC's Stats.

**/ 3 - MEC STATUS **

Your MEC's Status displays all the most critical information for keeping your MEC intact as well as track the various damages and resistances it has. Here's a breakdown of what each Status means:

Armor - Armor measures the total amount of damage your MEC can take before it starts breaking. This Stat

only goes up or down when you upgrade your Armor and serves as a kind of damage threshold.

Damage - Damage tracks the total number of Hits your MEC has taken (after Shields and Soak). This number will cap at your Armor threshold. **At that point any additional Damage, even a single Hit, will instead cause a Part Break.**

Shields - Shields represent the variety of blast resisting and concussion disbursing technology we've developed. This counts up as you burn Synergy or use Stratagems that generate Shields. When taking Hits, you have the option to absorb a portion into your Shields, whereby it'll count back down. Try tracking this with a d6.

Soak - When Hits pass your Shields your Soak will reduce the incoming Hits by a fixed amount before you tally the Damage.

Breaks - When you can no longer tally additional Damage and you suffer a Hit (no matter how many) a Part on your MEC will Break. Once you've suffered 3 Breaks your MEC will become unsalvageable and shut down completely... trapping you inside.

Speed - Speed measures the maximum number of Spaces a MEC can travel when taking a Shift Action. This also applies to moving up or down one Space when Swimming or Flying.

/ 4 - BETYL STATUS \

Betyl sits at the heart of any MEC's operation. Knowing how to leverage these Stats can mean the difference between narrow defeat and decisive victory.

Synergy - We'll talk more about Synergy shortly, but essentially it represents a well of energy that can boost your attacks, buy back Stratagems, generate shields and more! I'd recommend using tokens to track this.

Actions - Each MEC starts with a base of 2 Action Points which can be used on Allied Phases. This display is intended to help you track how many you currently have access to using tokens, tallies, etc. **Your Action Points will refresh once all Allies have expended theirs.**

Bond - Bond represents how in tune you are with your MEC and your Betyl. It allows you a specific number of individual Stat Dice Rerolls per MEC Stat Roll or ATK Roll. And yes, the same die can be rerolled twice.

/ 5 - UPGRADES / NOTES \

This section lets you track and display any Major Upgrades installed into your MEC as well as any notes about your MEC's appearance or quirks.

/ 6 - AUXILIARY \

MECs start out with 4 Slots to latch on or store various bits of Cargo, with a full 6 Slots for additional Auxiliary Parts. These Parts can range from installed MEC Parts (which can never break) to additional Cargo space.

/ 7 - MEC PARTS \

Name / Type - Each Part has a name and a specific Part Type. Parts must match the slot's Part Type.

Stats - The middle of these boxes is dedicated to tracking what the Part does for your MEC (and knowing what you'll lose access to if the Part breaks).

Break - Each Part has a unique Part Break consequence that vary from problematic to deadly.

Modification - Whether it's changing a weapon's Element or simply adding a paint job, the Modification Box allows you to track changes you've made to Parts.

Mobile Engagement Chassis Diagnostics Sheet		MEC STATUS			MEC PARTS	
Unit ID: # 351971	TAG: ARTEMIS	ARMOR 14 <small>(MAXIMUM DAMAGE THRESHOLD)</small>	DAMAGE 14 <small>(COUNTS UP TO ARMOR)</small>	SHIELDS 3 <small>(ABSORBS DAMAGE BEFORE SOAK - COUNTS DOWN MAX 3)</small>	1- TRACKER HELM <small>(HELMET PART)</small>	
MEC STATS TORQUE BASE: 2 + PART: (MAX 2) DURABILITY BASE: 3 + PART: (MAX 2)		SOAK 1 <small>(REDUCE INCOMING DAMAGE - MAX 3)</small>	BREAKS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <small>(TOTAL SHUT DOWN AT 3 BREAKS)</small>	SPEED 8 <small>(SPACES MEC CAN MOVE)</small>	2- RANGER CORE <small>(CORE PART)</small>	
FINESSE BASE: 5 + PART: 1 (MAX 2)		BETYL STATUS SYNERGY 2 <small>(MAX 9)</small> ACTIONS X X <small>(REFRESH ONCE ALL PILOTS HAVE NO ACTIONS)</small> BOND 3 <small>(TOTAL POTENTIAL REROLLS PER MEC STAT ROLL)</small>			[PASSIVE] - SCANS FOR TRACKS [ACTION] - UNCOVER HIDDEN ENEMIES [STRATAGEM] - MULTI-SIGHT > BREAK: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <small>CANNOT ACT AT RANGE</small> [MODIFICATION]	
MOBILITY BASE: 3 + PART: (MAX 2)		AUXILIARY CARGO SLOT 1: HYDRA SKULL CARGO SLOT 2: CARGO SLOT 3: CARGO SLOT 4:			[STAT BOOST] - +2 SPEED [PASSIVE] - NOT SLOWED BY TERRAIN EFFECTS > BREAK: <input type="checkbox"/> <small>MEC SPEED REDUCED TO 2</small> [MODIFICATION]	
ATTUNEMENT BASE: 2 + PART: (MAX 2)		COMPUTING BASE: 2 + PART: (MAX 2)			3- ADAPTIVE BOOTS <small>(MANEUVER PART)</small> > BREAK: <input type="checkbox"/> <small>MEC IS [BURNING]</small> [MODIFICATION]	
Major Upgrades: [BRUNT FRAME] - +3 ARMOR [LIGHT FRAME] - +1 SYN TO SELF ON SHIFT ACTION [GROUNDED] - +2 SYN TO SELF WHEN HIT BY [EFFECT] [TUNED MOTORS] - CAN SPLIT SHIFT ACTION [ENERGV CACHE] - +2 SYN TO SELF AT COMBAT START					4- <small>(OPTION PART)</small> > BREAK: <input type="checkbox"/> <small>MEC IS [BURNING]</small> [MODIFICATION]	
Notes:					5- GAUSS SNIPER <small>(ARM PART - STARBOARD)</small> [BASIC ATK] - (FIN) - RANGE 9 [STRATAGEM] - HEADSHOT (X2) > BREAK: <input type="checkbox"/> <small>RIGHT ARM LOST</small> [MODIFICATION]	
					6- TITANIUM SHIELD <small>(ARM PART - PORT)</small> [STAT BOOST] - +2 ARMOR [STAT BOOST] - +1 SOAK [STRATAGEM] - SHIELD BASH (X2) > BREAK: <input type="checkbox"/> <small>LEFT ARM LOST</small> [MODIFICATION]	

/ MEC STATS \

Like Pilots, MECs have 6 Stats that help represent their proficiencies. Unlike Pilot Stats, these are more cold and mathematical measures of a MEC's actual internal build. **Rolling a MEC Stat Check works exactly the same as a Pilot Stat Check.** It can be affected by Gravities and is subject to various Edge, Threat, Doom and Heroic bonuses.

Your base Stats are determined by your Steel Heart Frame (which we'll discuss later) and can be increased through Frame Upgrades and by MEC Parts. Each Stat is networked to synergize together through an interdependent system of... Are you paying attention? Here let me make this simpler for you:

/ TORQUE \

Torque displays a MEC's raw kinetic potential. Whether that's lifting trains, crushing rocks or tearing open doors, Torque is as versatile as it is ubiquitous.

Examples: *Carrying A Wyrm - Breaking a Vehicle - Punching Something - Throwing a MEC*

/ FINESSE \

Finesse displays a MEC's flair for fine motor tasks and precise movements. High Finesse MECs have all the accuracy of a human with all the strength of a MEC.

Example: *Aiming a Gun - Moving Undetected - Picking up something Delicate - Hitting a Weak Spot*

/ ATTUNEMENT \

Attunement displays a MEC's potential for harnessing the immense energy and nearly magical potential of Betyl... Of course, Betyl isn't actually magical... I think.

Example: *Controlling Elements - Channeling the Wyrd - Charging Energy - Resisting Strange Happenings*

/ DURABILITY \

Durability displays a MEC's ability to take a variety of damages as well as survive harsh climates and otherwise fatal conditions.

Example: *Moving through Lava - Surviving an Explosion - Entering the Atmosphere - Resisting Water Pressure*

/ MOBILITY \

Mobility displays a MEC's speed and nimbleness and reflects a machine that is as fast as it is huge. If you're looking to be a blur on the battlefield, mobility is for you.

Example: *Moving Quickly - Climbing Trees - Navigating Crumbling Ruins - Turning on a Dime*

/ COMPUTING \

Computing displays a MEC's processing potential and various automated hacking and calculation protocols and interfaces.

Example: *Hacking a MEC - Predicting the Weather - Scanning Samples - Controlling Drones*

/ MEC PARTS \

MECs are just as defined by their Parts as they are by their Pilots. It's no coincidence that the MEC resembles a human being. They're paradoxically the ultimate weapon of cruelty and a sublime extension of the self and one's personality. **Your MEC's color, form and flavor are all yours to play with. MEC Parts simply track Stats and abilities.**

MECs' Parts come in Model Series, which you might think of like Classes from other RPGs. Each Series has 6 Parts, each with unique abilities and bonuses, which can be freely interchanged with other Series' Parts. When mixing parts, you can forge your own unique playstyle and express yourself with the kind of MEC that fits you best. After all, some of humanity's greatest accomplishments have come from the meeting of diverse factions. But before you try blending anything, it's good to understand the types of parts you're working with here:

**/ HELMET **

Helmet types tend to be the center of a MEC's monitoring and processing power. When your Helmet Part breaks, all your displays and targeting technology will cease functioning. This leaves you unable to Act at Range, whether that's firing munitions or throwing something to your allies.

**/ MANEUVER **

From fortified legs to flight packs, Maneuver Parts allow you to navigate your environments more effectively. Having this Part Break will severely limit your movement and force you to get creative with your routing... Boosting will become critically helpful.

**/ ARM PART – STARBOARD **

Arm Parts are your MEC's primary means of interfacing with the world and specifically their weapons. While not all MECs have arms or hands, they almost universally will have a major interfacing device on the Starboard and Port... Errr... Right and left sides. Both Arm Part slots are largely identical, save for which side of the MEC they're on.

**/ CORE **

Both the Pilot cockpit and the MEC's Betyl are housed in the Core, making it both the literal and metaphorical heart of the MEC. While the Core is the most heavily reinforced part of the MEC, it can also be the most devastating Part to have break. Usually it'll lead to serious Pilot injuries which can quickly turn deadly.

**/ OPTION **

Option Parts provide a variety of auxiliary support, from combat drones to quickdraw weapons. While they're often powerful utilities, when an Option Breaks it can be explosive. This conflagration will cause the MEC to start Burning.

**/ ARM PART – PORT **

Some weapons require both Arm Parts to hold, like the two-handed Blaze Axe. Losing an Arm Part only amounts to losing the associated weapon and interface, including two-handed Parts. It is (relatively) the safest Part to Break... Although, it will make combat harder... Just try not to break any of these parts.

Each individual Part is made up of a variety of Part Bonuses. Needless to say, **when Parts Break or are replaced, these Part Bonuses are removed.** These Bonuses usually come in one of five forms:

**/ STAT BOOST **

Stat Boosts Bonuses are as simple as they sound. They're flat increases to specific Stats.

**/ BASIC ATK **

Basic Attacks (Basic ATK) grant you the ability to spend an action to deal direct DMG to a Target Unit within Range. Each Basic ATK is structured as a compact formula, let's look at an example:

[Basic ATK] – FIN w/ (B) DMG – Range 3

In this instance to make the Basic ATK you must be in 3 Range. If you are in Range you can roll FIN to deal DMG (Each Hit equates to 1 DMG). When you see a Basic ATK say "w/ (XYZ) DMG" that's signifying the ATK deals an Elemental type of DMG. In this instance the (B) is short for Blaze DMG. **Elemental DMG is signified by their first letter.**

**/ PASSIVE **

Passive Bonuses are active at all times and can trigger unique effects during combat, from monitoring enemy DMG to granting bonus Synergy in certain situations.

**/ STRATAGEM **

Stratagems are unique ability cards that are your main means of dealing DMG and affecting the battlefield. We'll explain the minutia of how they work later. But for now just think of them like unique armaments loaded with a synergizing system of... Actually, spells. Just think of them like spells.

**/ ACTION **

Finally, Parts can provide unique Actions in and out of combat. These Actions come in a wide variety, from detecting hidden enemies to charging Synergy to outright causing Status Effects. **You must spend an Action to activate these in combat.**

/ MEC COMBAT BASICS \

While Ajax will walk you through the Advanced Tactics like Elemental DMG, Status Effects and specific Ranges, it's important to give you a sense for the fundamentals of MEC Combat. So let's get right into it:

/ ACTION ECONOMY \

When Resonating with Betyl you'll enter what we call **Rapid Eye Movement Time** or **REM Time**. In this state, your perception of time is so dilated that you'll feel as though combat is happening as a series of turns or Actions. Thus, Combat is divided into two Phases, **which combined form a full Turn Cycle**. During the **Allied Phase** you and your allies are free to take actions in whatever order you please. The **Enemy Phase** functions similarly, only for the Enemy. **The GM decides which should be the beginning Phase based off the circumstances before combat.**

You're free to divide up your collective actions in whatever order you'd like during the Allied Phase. However, some encounters limit the number of Actions per Allied Phase (usually when fighting a particularly speedy opponent), so always make sure to communicate and strategize with your Allies about who should act when. By default, MECs have a pool of 2 Action Points. Remember that **regardless of Turn Phase, you can only regenerate these 2 Actions Points once all Allies have used all of their Actions Points.**

/ BASIC ATKS \

While we talked about the formula for Basic ATKs on the previous page, they remain one of your most direct tools for dealing DMG. It's also worth noting that (with the exception of Dodging) **there is no Miss mechanic, and every ATK does a minimum of 1 DMG.**

/ HOLDING BACK \

When rolling dice to deal DMG, **you always have the option to Hold Back thereby rolling less dice.** This can be helpful when you want to spare an Enemy Unit, as **dealing 6 DMG beyond an Enemy's Armor threshold will automatically kill them outright.**

/ TAKING DMG \

When taking DMG you first have the option to instead have your Shields take the DMG for you. Shields take DMG at a 1-to-1 ratio. If you're out of Shields or have opted to not activate them, then your Soak further reduces the DMG by a set amount. The remainder gets tallied as your DMG. Look out for Elemental Status Effects and dangerously precise weapons that ignore Shields and Soak entirely. They can catch you off guard, or be the critical edge you need.

/ TOTALING A MEC \

Once you suffer your Final Part Break (by default, your third Part Break) your MEC will cease operation entirely. You'll be trapped inside with only the green glow of your Betyl for company. Meanwhile, we'll have to figure out a way to get a replacement MEC since **all the Parts and Frame Upgrades on a MEC are destroyed when it's totaled.**

/ ACTIONS \

When spending an Action can do ONE of these:

- **ATK (ATTACK)** – Use either a Part's Basic ATK OR a Stratagem.
- **SHIFT** – Move Spaces up to your Speed. This also applies to moving up or down one Space when Swimming or Flying.
- **TAUNT** – Make a Charisma OR Presence Stat Check against your Target. If you succeed, your Target must try to ATK you during the next Enemy Phase.
- **IMPROVISE** – Use your environment, Parts, or items creatively. Sometimes this will require a Stat Check to determine DMG or Success. GMs should reward creativity with Edge.
- **USE A PART ACTION** – Execute an Action listed on an equipped Part.
- **EJECT** – Eject from your MEC's Core with your Betyl in an escape pod. **Make a Computing Check, every success grants you an additional space your escaped pod will travel.**
- **SET TO SELF DESTRUCT** – Grants +10 SYN to Self. MEC will explode dealing 6[d6] DMG to all units beside it at the end of this Allied Phase.

/ SYNERGY BURNS \

At ANY TIME you can spend Synergy to do these:

- **RECHARGE** – Buy back 1 Use of a Stratagem based on its Recharge Cost.
- **BOOST [1]** – Move 1 Space in any direction. **This does not ignore difficult terrain.** You also cannot use this to move out of the way of an ATK after it is declared. However, you're free to Boost when Enemies are moving or to move in the way of an ATK to take it. You have a **maximum of 5 Boosts per Phase.**
- **AMPLIFY [2]** – Add an Extra Stat Die to your next ATK roll (Either on a Basic ATK or Stratagem. This has a default **Maximum of 3 Extra per ATK.**
- **OVERSHIELD [2]** – Gain +1 Shield. Keep in mind your Shields have a default **Maximum of 6.**
- **REMOVE EFFECT [4]** – Remove a Status Effect (like Burning) that's currently effecting you. **You can use this Synergy Burn on an Ally if they are beside you.**
- **FLASH ACTION [9]** – Execute an Action without the use of an Action Point. Remember this can be done during any Phase, but only **once per Turn Cycle.**

/ FREE ACTIONS \

At any time, during any Phase you can perform the following Free Actions regardless of the circumstances:

- **Overheat** – Overclocking your MEC is always an option when you need a little extra juice. This causes your MEC to take 1 DMG that ignores Soak and Shields but in return you gain 1 SYN.
- **Communicate** – Resonating with Betyl unlocks a variety of latent human potential, allowing for rapid communication both with your allies and your foes even during combat.
- **Pick up, drop or swap something**– Compared to unloading salvos of missiles or conducting bolts of lightning, picking up dropped items or passing something to an Ally is a lightning-fast maneuver.
- **Burn Synergy** – Burning Synergy is your primary tool in changing the tide of battle. It allows you to maneuver, boost DMG, charge shields and more during **any Phase.**

/ SYNERGY \

Synergy represents the energy overflow caused by your Betyl's Resonance and its harmony with your allies' Betyl. It's an invaluable resource that can drastically shift a dire situation into an advantageous one.

/ GENERATING SYNERGY \

Synergy is usually generated in one of two ways:

When you roll Evens on an ATK Roll – You generate 1 SYN per Even Rolled. This Synergy gets passed to Allies one at a time in a clockwise formation, looping if necessary. However, **you are not in this rotation.**

When you defeat an Enemy Unit you immediately generate 1 SYN for each of your Allies and yourself. Additionally, there are various MEC Upgrades, Parts and Stratagems that can also generate Synergy for you.

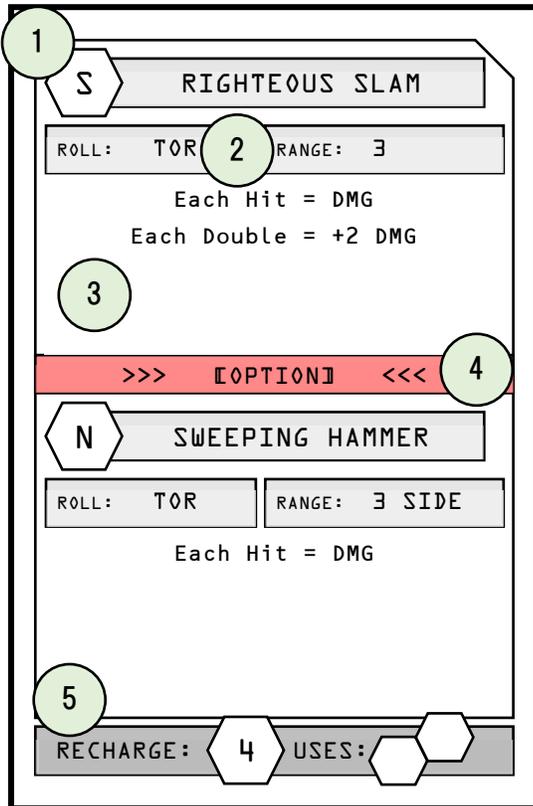
/ OVERFLOWING SYNERGY / SYNERGY DUMP \

By default, Synergy will cap at 9. Any overflow Synergy that comes to you after this simply disappears. Alternatively, you can decide to use an immediate Synergy Burn just before you receive this Synergy. Additionally, during moments of long respite you can perform a **Synergy Dump**. This reduces your Synergy and Shields to 0 but in turn Recharges all of your non-exhaustible Stratagems. Synergy Dumps are automatic at the end of a Deployment.

Keep in mind that Synergy cannot be used for out-of-combat Stat Rolls and is ONLY generated when you're rolling to DEAL DMG on a Basic ATK or Stratagem.

/ STRATAGEMS \

Stratagems represent the apex of your MEC's weapon capabilities. They're versatile, powerful and, from my objective scientific point of view, pretty cool. Each Stratagem can be thought of like a Card with two Abilities, the **Primary Ability** (which also serves as the Stratagem's name) and a **Secondary Ability**. These Secondary Abilities can boost your primary Ability or give you an Alternate Ability. **Once a Stratagem's Primary or Secondary Ability has been used, you'll need to Recharge it with Synergy before you can use it again.** Maybe showing is easier than telling though, so let's take a look at what these Stratagem Cards actually look like:



/ 1 - ELEMENT + NAME \

Each Ability will first be noted with its Element, either using that Element's Symbol, or the first letter in the Element's name (in this case an "S" for "Shock"). Certain Enemies will take more or less DMG against certain Elements. Each Ability also has a name which, in conjunction with the Stratagem's associated part, helps build visual image of the Ability. These Abilities are kept vague so that you can put your own spin and flavor on the minutia of how they look!

/ 2 - ROLL + RANGE \

Next, you'll find an Ability's Roll attribute. This determines which Stat you'll be rolling to determine the Hits for that Ability's formula (much like in a Basic ATK). Some have 2 or more available Stat Rolls for you to pick from, or occasionally none at all (marked with an N/A). An Ability's Range determines how close a Unit or Units must be in order to be Targeted.

/ 3 - FORMULA \

An Ability's Formula calculates its exact effects based on the number of Hits you roll as well as other factors, such as rolling Evens, Odds, two-of-a-kind (Doubles), three-of-a-kind (Triples) four-of-a-kind (Quads) and so forth. Note if a bonus from rolling occurs for each occurrence of this (ex: Each Double).

/ 4 - STRATAGEM TYPE \

This is where things can get a bit... Complicated... Don't give me that look, just bear with me here. Each Stratagem will have one of three Stratagem Types that determines how the Second Ability relates back to the Primary one:

OPTION

Option is the simplest of the three. It is an alternate Ability that can be used instead of the card's Primary Ability. Note that doing this still depletes 1 Use from the Stratagem.

INTERVENTION

An Intervention is like an Option that can be used at any time during any Phase without using an Action Point. You can only do this once per Turn Cycle and it still depletes 1 Use from the Stratagem.**

GAMBIT

A Gambit is an additional Ability that triggers with the use of your Primary Ability if certain conditions are met (Marked with an "IF:"). Note that a Gambit cannot be used on its own.

****Of additional note: Some Interventions will have conditional IF: Statements like a Gambit does, meaning the Intervention requires those conditions to be used.**

These varying types give Pilots a variety of Strategic choices in terms of what to use when. For instance, a Pilot could use Righteous Slam to hit a single target for massive damage, or alternatively could use Sweeping Hammer to damage a group of targets beside them.

/ 5 - RECHARGE + USES \

Finally, each Stratagem will have a **limited number of Uses**, identified by the number of Hexes beside the use symbol. Whenever you use a Stratagem you should mark one of these Hexes to signify it. **You can Recharge Uses at any time** by paying the Stratagem's Recharge cost per Use recharged.

Some Stratagems **Exhaust**, meaning that after being used they cannot be Recharged or Reused until after the Session has been completed. These Stratagems are often incredibly powerful, so use them wisely.

/ TRACKING STRATAGEMS \

You can track Stratagems in one of two ways: Writing them in on a Blank Stratagems Sheet, cutting them out as DIY cards or procuring Premium Stratagem Cards.

Opting for the Write-In option allows players to further customize and tweak their Stratagems as well as for you to add Stratagems of your own seamlessly into the game! Copying Stratagems can be a bit time consuming, but it's a relatively simple procedure.

/ PREMIUM STRATAGEM CARDS \

While not currently available, our top technicians are hard at work to eventually bring you Premium Stratagem Cards. What they lack in hackability they more than make up for in aesthetic quality! While it can certainly be a nice flourish that helps save table space, these cards are by no means mandatory to MEC Combat.

Now that you understand the basic flow of combat, it's time to learn about the bones of the MEC: The Steel Heart Frame.

N	SHIELD BASH	
ROLL: DUR	RANGE: SIDE	
Each Hit = DMG Double = Cause [Stuck]		
>>> [INTERVENTION] <<<		
N	TIMED DEFLECTION	
ROLL: DUR	RANGE: SELF/SIDE	
IF - You/Ally Will Take DMG Each Hit = Negate DMG Triple = Deal 3 DMG		
RECHARGE: 3		USES:

	BLINDING FLASH	
ROLL: N/A	RANGE: SIDE - 3x3	
Cause [Blinded] +3 SYN to Self		
GAMBIT		
	BEACON OF HOPE	
ROLL: N/A	RANGE: N/A	
!! IF AN ALLY IS IN RANGE !! Ally Gains +2 SYN Remove [Effect] Off Ally Ally Gains Shift Action		

	BLINDING FLASH	
RECHARGE 6 SYNERGY	KNIGHT	
	BEACON OF HOPE	

/ THE STEEL HEART FRAME \

Behind all the fancy parts and armor, in the bones of each customizable MEC is the post-Olympian advancement that makes it all possible: **The Steel Heart Frame**. It's a dynamic and versatile skeleton, whose upgrades will carry through whatever drastic iterations of weapons and technologies your MEC goes through. You have a variety of options, but also plenty of reminder text to help you along the way. Here's the basics of what you need to know:

Steel Heart MEC Frame Unit ID: TAG:

Upgrade & Diagnostics Sheet

1 Unit ID and TAG fields.

2 TORQUE, DURABILITY, FINESSE, MOBILITY, ATTUNEMENT, COMPUTING stat columns.

3 Upgrade Nodes for each stat.

4 TOTAL UPGRADES and FREE RESPEC sections.

5 ARMOR section with calculations and upgrades.

6 SPEED section with calculations and BETYL BOND.

7 ARMOR UPGRADES grid.

8 MAINTENANCE section with UPGRADING STAT and REPAIR MEC.

9 FIELD REPAIR ERRORS section.

NOTES / VISUALS section for recording upgrades and repairs.

/ 1 - UNIT ID \

Much like the front of your MEC sheet, this is where you keep you list your MEC's Unit ID and Tag.

/ 2 - UPGRADE NODES \

Each MEC Stat will have a column of **Upgrade Nodes**. By purchasing these Nodes, the Base of that Stat goes up by 1. **Every Stat begins with a Base of 1.** Additionally, **Upgrade Nodes can be purchased in any order regardless of cost**, provided you can afford it. Make sure to check off any Nodes you purchase.

For every Node you purchase, you may want to cross out a Node elsewhere on the table since **each Frame can**

hold a maximum of 18 Nodes. Don't worry too much though, as long as you're in a garage you can uninstall Upgrade Nodes and refund half their cost. Besides, if you mess things up really bad you always have a Free Respec which we'll discuss shortly.

/ 3 - MEC PERKS \

MEC Perks are unique Upgrades that automatically unlock when all attached Upgrade Nodes are purchased. These Perks add additional functionality and complexity to your MEC, making every MEC unique. Whenever you unlock a Perk it's best to circle it and note its bonus in the front's Major Upgrades portion.

/ 4 - UPGRADES / RESPECS \

Here you'll track your MEC's Total Number of Upgrades as well as if you have a Free Respec available. The **Free Respec** allows you to completely refund all Upgrade Nodes you've purchased and reinvest them into your MEC's Frame as you see fit. So try not to worry too hard when you're making your first MEC. You'll always get a second chance!

/ 5 - BASE ARMOR \

Your **Base Armor** is your MEC's Armor value before you add in any Armor that various Parts can give as a bonus. This value is calculated by adding your Base Durability, any Armor Upgrades you've purchased and an additional 6 all together.

Armor Upgrades act like Upgrade nodes, but do not count towards your MEC's Total Upgrades.

/ 6 - BASE SPEED \

Similarly, your **Base Speed** is your MEC's Speed Value before you add any bonuses from Parts. This calculation is a bit easier: Your Base Mobility + 2.

/ 7 - BOND \

As discussed earlier, Bond gives you a set number of MEC rerolls per MEC Stat or ATK roll. Bond is deeply personal and can only apply to one Pilot at a time. Other Pilots would have to form a fresh Bond to gain any Bond benefits. A Pilot can deepen their Bond by going through an extreme or life changing event with their Betyl. This Stat resets to 0 in the event of Pilot death... Please just be careful out there.

/ 8 - MAINTENANCE \

If you ever forget how Upgrades work, you can always refer to the MEC's Maintenance section. This also includes the rules for MEC Field Repairs, which Ajax will cover later.

/ 9 - NOTES / INVESTMENT \

Lastly, here you can keep any notes, draw schematics, and track the outrageous cost of your personal titan of destruction. Hopefully knowing how much you've invested will keep you from getting these machines completely trashed...

Steel Heart MEC Frame
Upgrade & Diagnostics Sheet

Unit ID: #343933 TAG: INARI

TORQUE	DURABILITY	FINESSE	MOBILITY	ATTUNEMENT	COMPUTING	TOTAL UPGRADES:
Strength - Power - Force > Use Case: Lifting, Crushing, Overpowering, Spinning	Armor - Fortitude - Build > Use Case: Endurance, Weather Protection, Stability	Dexterity - Precision - Aim > Use Case: Fine Motor Tasks, Exact Targeting, Balance	Speed - Maneuverability > Use Case: Difficult Terrain, Expedient Travel, Climbing	Resonance - Conduction > Use Case: Betyl Efficiency, Paramoral Effects, Neurotech	Hacking - Calculating > Use Case: Hacking, Remote Control, Rapid Hacks	10 MAX 18
TOTAL: 2 BASE 1	TOTAL: 5 BASE 1	TOTAL: 3 BASE 1	TOTAL: 2 BASE 1	TOTAL: 2 BASE 1	TOTAL: 2 BASE 1	FREE RESPEC: <input type="checkbox"/>
TOR +1 1000c	GRUNT FRAME +3 Base Armor 1000c	FIN +1 1000c	LIGHT FRAME +1 SYN to Self per Shift Action 1000c	ATU +1 1000c	COM +1 1000c	
OVERLOAD +2 MAX Amplify 3000c	DUR +1 2000c	FIN +1 2000c	MOB +1 2000c	REACTIVE 2 Interventions Per Enemy Phase 2000c	ATU +1 2000c	PSYCHOTECH +1 SYN to Self on Triples 2000c
OVERLOAD +2 MAX Amplify 3000c	DUR +1 2000c	FIN +1 2000c	MOB +1 2000c	HYPER BOOST Moves +1 Space per Boost 3000c	ATU +1 3000c	AIM ASSIST Counts as 2 Hits 3000c
OVERLOAD +2 MAX Amplify 3000c	DUR +1 6000c	FIN +1 6000c	MOB +1 6000c	UNCONTAINABLE Is Treated as Even 6000c	ATU +1 6000c	UNSHACKLED Synergy Max for this MEC is 15 6000c
OVERLOAD +2 MAX Amplify 3000c	DUR +1 6000c	FIN +1 6000c	MOB +1 6000c	UNCONTAINABLE Is Treated as Even 6000c	ATU +1 6000c	UNSHACKLED Synergy Max for this MEC is 15 6000c

ARMOR	SPEED	MAINTENANCE	NOTES / VISUALS
BASE ARMOR 11 Calculations: [DUR] + 6 + UPG Take total number of Base Durability and add 6 then add upgrades from below. ARMOR UPGRADES Each Node filled grants an additional point of Base Armor. <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center; line-height: 20px;">1k</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center; line-height: 20px;">1k</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center; line-height: 20px;">1k</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; width: 20px; height: 20px; text-align: center; line-height: 20px;">1k</div> </div>	BASE SPEED 4 Calculations: [MOB] + 2 Take total number of Base Mobility and add 2. BETYL BOND 1 Bonded To: HIROTAKA IMAKISHI Bond will reset to zero on pilot death. Bond allows a Pilot to reroll dice in a MEC Stat Roll equal to their Bond with this Betyl. Increased Bond by completing Pilot Skill Points or going through an extreme or life changing event with your Betyl.	UPGRADING STATS Pilots can purchase permanent upgrades to their MEC's Stats with credits. In the form of Upgrade Nodes. Upgrade Nodes can be purchased in ANY ORDER provided the Pilot has the credits to afford it. MECs can have a MAXIMUM OF 18 UPGRADES AT ONCE. This means each time you purchase an Upgrade Node, you must cross out a Node elsewhere on the Upgrade Chart. REPAIR MEC MEC Damage cannot be healed. Pilot must pay the below cost to Repair ALL DMS. COST 1000 (default: 1000) Reduce Cost! >Field Repairs (1/2 Cost) >Upgrading HQ >Collecting scrap parts >Persuading mechanics FIELD REPAIR ERRORS When making a Field Repair Check, the GM will set a threshold for failure. On a failure you only Repair half as much DMS and roll an Error: 1) MEC will randomly fail at GM's discretion. 2) Random part is Unrepairable next Combat. 3) MEC is [Earning] at the start of next combat. 4) Repair wholly fails at no cost. 5) Start next Combat at -5 SYN. 6) MEC's comms are garbled until your next repair.	Total Credits Invested in MEC: 15,000

/ BUILDING A MEC \

Building your own MEC is easy once you know how a MEC actually works... Well “easy” may not be the right word since you’ll have a lot of options to choose from. Frankly, the building of your MEC never stops, just like the building of yourself. To begin you’ll be given a set number of starting Parts and funds to buy Upgrades. However, over time you’ll discover new Parts and want to try new strategies. As your MEC is broken and remade its form may be malleable, but its heart will always remain. Let’s start with part selection...

/ STARTING PARTS \

When building a MEC you’ll begin with 3 Starting Parts from any MEC Series that your GM approves of at the start of your game. In this Playtest Kit the following MEC Series are available:

- **EDA-VS Knight 02** – A Durable MEC with a variety of support options and classic weaponry.
- **EDA-VS Ranger 02** – A high DPS blend of Finesse and Mobility, built for speed and versatile damage dealing.
- **EDA-VS Wizard 02** – An Enigmatic blend of Attunement and Computing that harnesses Elemental powers.

If this is your first time building a MEC, you can **always simply select 4 parts from the same Series**, as these parts are designed to work well together. If you’re feeling confident you can blend Parts to make your own MEC. **Make sure to pay attention to the Stats your Parts use, as those should be the stats you focus on when upgrading.**

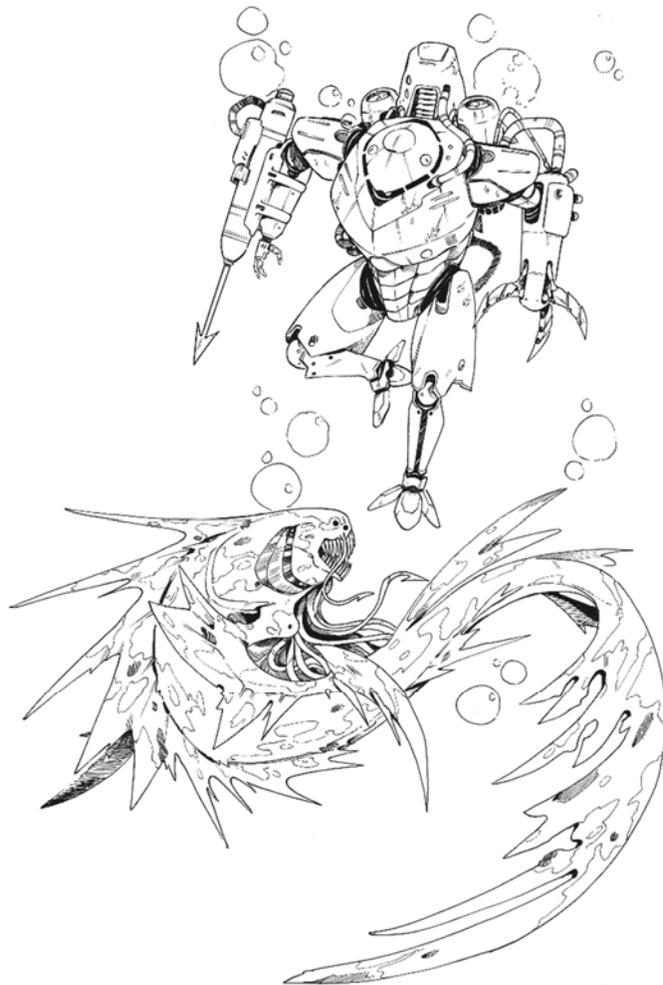
You’ll find all the details for these parts in the Mechanics Shop, which will also include helpful summaries of each Part’s main Stat and focus.

/ STARTING UPGRADE FUNDS \

Next you’ll have 15,000 Credits that you must spend on MEC Upgrade Nodes or Armor Upgrades. Keep in mind that **you can purchase Upgrade Nodes in any order**. I’m not saying you should purchase two 6,000 C Nodes when you first create a MEC, I’m just saying it’s possible... But risky! I shouldn’t have even put the idea in your head...

/ WEAVING IT ALL TOGETHER \

With your Parts picked and your Nodes filled, all that’s left is calculating your Stats, Armor, Speed and then factoring in Part Bonuses and assembling your Stratagems. Lastly, you or your GM will pick a 6 digit string of numbers for your MEC’s Unit ID and you’ll add the finishing touches by giving your MEC a Tag. It’s that simple!



Before you head out in the field in that thing, there's still a few things you should know about combat. But it's probably best if another Pilot explains all those details. Here I'll introduce you to Ajax, Bastion 6's resident ace pilot and your personal drill instructor! ... That's not an exaggeration by the way, he's going to be your superior while you're still training here. Don't give me that look, he's pretty nice. If a bit... Well...



NAME: AJAX WALLENRD
PN: HE/HIM | BT: AB

>>> ADVANCED COMBAT

"So you're the new hot-shot I keep hearing so much about. Name's Ajax Wallenrod, but you can call me... *any time*. If you don't want to get got, you'll listen to my advice very carefully and maybe we can prevent one more battlefield casualty.

I don't know what you've heard about being a MEC Pilot, but it's all at once the most grueling burden you'll have to bear and the most thrilling role of your life.

For Pilots like us, the battlefield is the only place we can truly come alive and break free from the Gravities that weigh down our souls.

So, let's make sure you understand some of the more complicated parts. This way you won't get your skull melted while expressing your complex ideologies mid-combat, am I right?

/ GROUND COMBAT \

The best advice that I can give you when it comes to Ground Combat is this: **Don't**. Your MEC? It's elegant, cold, calculated, designed for battle. Your body? A few stray bullets can mean the difference between traveling the world and ending up buried inside it. But, according to EDA regulations I've got to teach you this anyways.

In the event that you're having a shoot-out with some crazy fanatics, running from a Wurm on foot or having an impromptu fencing match with your arch-rival, your **Combat will be resolved purely with Pilot Skill Checks**. Accuracy usually lends itself to shooting, Endurance to fist fights and so on. The flow of combat will usually work similar to MEC combat, though your GM may try to muddy this water a bit. Just keep your cool, play to your best Stats and above all, please don't do anything stupid. Remember you don't have hit points, so any hit could be the end for you. In the event of getting hit, you may come out with a new Injury but it sure as hell beats being dead.

/ FIELD REPAIRS \

Over time your MEC will accrue DMG, and the **only way to reduce it is either paying a Garage to do it or doing a Field Repair for half the cost**. For Field Repairs you'll need to pass a Pilot Stat Check (ex: MEC or END). **The Check's target is half the Damage you're repairing, rounding up.** Failing will only reduce half the DMG you paid to repair... And you'll have to roll on that nasty little **Errors Table**. But the savings can outweigh the risk, especially when you're deep in enemy territory and high on DMG. Oh, and if you ever think about trying to do a Field Repair during combat, remember my first rule of advice when it comes to Ground Combat: **Don't**.

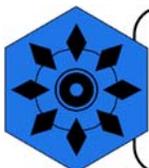
/ THE ELEMENTS \

Whether it's the Blazing fire of the sun or the first Shock that helped spawn life on Earth, our lives are governed by the Elements. For the sake of Combat we've distilled these various forms of energy and chemical reactions into 8 neat categories, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Each of the Core 6 Elements also have an associated Status Effect. We'll discuss how those work next, but here's the shortlist of Elements:



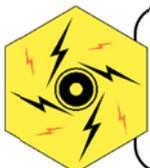
Blaze: The thrust of a jet engine, the searing spit of a fire-breathing Wurm, the warmth of the sun, and the fire in our hearts all fall under **Blaze's** domain.

[Burning] - Any time a Burning Unit ATKs it'll take DMG Equal to half the DMG its ATK dealt. Remember, Status Effects ignore Soak and Shields.



Cryo: The stillness of molecules, the chill of winter, icy monsters and watery Wyrms all channel the frosty nature of **Cryo**.

[Freezing] - A Freezing Unit takes 1 DMG per Space it Moves. This includes being pushed and pulled... Usually it's best to stay put if your MEC Freezes up.



Shock: A spark of neurons, the crack of a railgun, and the furious lightning of the sky itself are just a few manifestations of **Shock** you may know.

[Charged] - When a Charged Unit is ATKed it'll discharge a bolt of 1 Unsoakable DMG to all Units beside it. This effect doesn't loop infinitely if nearby Units are Charged.



Acid: Rotting fungus, potent venom, radioactive exhausts and a Wurm's stomach have one thing in common: **Acid**.

[Corroding] - If a Corroding Unit is ATKed it'll take an additional 2 DMG that cuts right through its Soak and Shields.



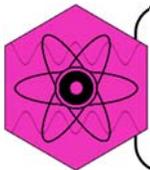
Piercing: When you see a blinding flash of light, or feel the pristine cut of a finely honed edge, you're seeing the deadly exactness of **Piercing** at work.

[Blinded] - A Blinded Unit can't take any Action that doesn't involve Units directly beside it. It's manageable but hectic.



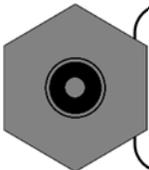
Void: Still molecules, vortexes of mass and entropy, pitch so strange it almost seems alien. **Void** can be hard to pin down, but you'll know it when you see it.

[Stuck] - A Stuck Unit can't Shift nor reposition with a Boost. That said a Push or Pull from your allies can still move you.



Wyrd: Murasaki could talk your ear off about quantum super positions and wavy functions, but the meat is this: **Wyrd DMG uses an Element randomly rolled from the above Core 6**.

[Wyrd Effect] - Some Stratagems call for a Wyrd Effect. This simply means that you'll roll a random Core Element and then use its associated Status Effect.



Neutral: Cosmically mundane, but potent nonetheless, Neutral DMG has no Elemental backing and thus can be equally useful in nearly any situation.

[Frenzy] - We still don't understand a lot about Frenzy. But it does force you to spend an Action ATKing either yourself or a random Unit during the Allied Phase.

/ ELEMENTAL STRENGTHS / WEAKNESSES \

Each Unit will usually have an **Elemental Strength** and an **Elemental Weakness**. These Strengths and Weaknesses are pretty self-explanatory and cause exponentially more or less damage when attacking with the correlating element. **When you ATK a Unit with an Element they're Weak to, they'll take an additional 1 DMG for each Even that you roll. Conversely when a ATKing a Unit with the Element they're strong against, each Even you roll will negate 1 DMG.** Some units have Elemental Strength+ or Weakness+, this means they'll take or negate an additional 1 DMG per Even rolled per "+".

/ STATUS EFFECTS \

Status Effects have a little more minutia to them than just "Apply and Wait". Once you manage to apply a Status Effect on a Unit, **it'll only remain there until the end of the next Phase**. For instance, if a Status Effect is applied during the Allied Phase, it'll disperse at the end of the next Enemy Phase. Now before you try stacking as many Status Effects as you can, know that **a Unit can only have 1 Status Effect at a time**. If a different Status Effect is applied, the Unit will switch to having the more recent Effect. **This switch cause 2 DMG that ignores Soak and Shields**. Remember: you can always Burn 4 Synergy to remove a Status Effect on you at any time.

/ READING COMPLEX RANGES \

When you get to more complex Stratagems you'll start encountering terms and Ranges that may not be immediately apparent. Before we get started it's important to note that **all Ranges require Line of Sight unless otherwise noted**. Units Normal sized Enemy and Allied Units (Units that have a 1x1 Base) do not block Line of Sight, however walls and Larger Units (Units that have a base of 2x2 or 3x3) do. Now, let's go over all the common short hand so you know exactly what you're working with:

>>> SIDE: Side is shorthand for "Any one space that is Beside you," which is to say in any space directly adjacent to yours. If you see a Range that says, "3 Side" this means the Range effects all Units within **3 Consecutive Spaces that are beside you**. An **All-Side** Range effects all Units that are beside you. **All-Side x2** effects all units that are within 2 Spaces of you, and so forth.

>>> #X# - AREA OF EFFECT: Whenever you see a formula that has "#x#" this what we call an Area of Effect (AoE). It means that **this ability will affect any Unit within the given #x# Range**. The center of this AoE is dependent on the Range that precedes it. If that range is a simple number, like 6, then the center of the AoE can be up to 6 spaces away. **If you see a Side #x# Range, this means the center of one of the AoE's sides must be Adjacent to you**. When dealing with Flying or Swimming Units you can assume the Z-Axis of this Area of effect is equal to its shortest side.

>>> LINE: Line is a very specific kind of Area of Effect, in that it starts from you and effects one line of Spaces up to its full Range. For example, an ability with 6 Line Range would affect up to 6 Spaces in a **Straight Line**, starting from the space adjacent to you. Your Line can be a straight diagonal as well.

>>> #T - MULTIPLE UNIQUE TARGETS: Lastly, some Ranges allow you to Target Multiple Unique Targets, the number of which is marked as #T. In the case of an Ability with a range 6 - 3T, it can affect 3 Unique Targets within 6 Range. Note that the same Unit cannot be Targeted twice, however this does not apply to a Unit's separate Tail or other Distinct part.

/ LEVERAGING THE IMPROVISE ACTION \

With all this talk about formulas and ranges, it's easy to lose sight of your most valuable tool as a Pilot: The **Improvise Action**. Are you looking to add some extra Shields to your battered MEC? Consider using an **Improvise Action** to grab another MEC that's been downed nearby as cover. Need to keep your opponent still or Push them for just one square? Consider proposing an **Improvise Action** where you roll Torque to grapple or Push your enemy. Heck, I've even seen someone weld their MEC to their opponent's. **Leveraging your surroundings and using your MEC creatively with Improvise Actions can mean the difference between life and death, so don't forget them!**

That about covers all the tough stuff you'll need to know. But let me check my notebook for some frequently asked questions I've gotten from other cadets before you. Maybe some of their questions will help you out...

/ ADVANCED COMBAT MISC \

Virgil asks: "Who goes first in MEC Combat?"

MEC Combat initiative is decided entirely by the GM and the situation that provoked combat (ex: An ambush or a stand-off). Alternatively, in chaotic situations the GM can have players call Odds or Evens to see which side will go first. Pilots, in my professional experience, should always call evens... and make sure to say, "Even Stevens all day long." I swear it works.

Oracle asks: "What Are Cargo Parts?"

You may notice in the Mechanics Shop something called **Cargo Parts**. **These are parts that can only be stored in an open Cargo Slot and as a result cannot be broken during a Part Break.** They vary from granting useful Stratagem, such as Wyrms Tranquillizer, to providing more exotic properties. They can help round out your MEC's kit or be the crowned jewel of your MEC's technological capabilities.

Joan asks: "What if I roll a Part that is already Broken or a Part Type that I've yet to fill?"

When you roll for your Part Break and there's no Part in that Slot, congratulations! You don't lose any Parts, however you'll still suffer a Break and that Slot's consequences. In the event that you roll a Part that's already been rolled, you'll suffer that Part's Part Break consequence again and tally that a Part Break occurred. Luckily if you roll the same Arm Part twice, this functionally does nothing! Unfortunately if you roll your Core twice, you could be doubly endangered.

Tesla asks: "How do Diagonals factor in?"

The short answer is: They don't. Unless you're trying to pass through a corner that is blocked, diagonals shouldn't be treated as anything special. You can freely move, shoot and count Spaces diagonally as needed.

Dante asks: "How do I advance my Pilot Stats? When do I Upgrade my MEC Stats?"

Pilot Stat advancement is largely dependent on your GM. They'll watch closely, and when they feel you and your fellow pilots have gone through enough or taken enough time to rest, you'll increase a Pilot Stat. **However, you'll need to explain what your Pilot did to advance that stat.** Whether that's training, working on a project or coming to a personal realization is up to you! **Conversely you can Upgrade and purchase parts for your MEC at any time,** provided you have access to a MEC Garage and ample Credits.

Saul asks: "How much does it cost to replace a Broken MEC Part?"

Broken Parts cost half of their original value to replace and cannot be repaired in the field, unless your Pilot is some kind of expert. Alternatively the broken part can be sold for half its original value!

Alright rookie, you think you've got all that? Well you'd better. The rest is up to you and your squad now. You're the only one who can carve your mark on this world, and your teammates will be vital in keeping you alive while you do it. Keep your allies close and your values closer and you may just survive out there...

That about covers everything a Pilot needs to know. Next GJ is going to cover information that Garrison Managers need. If you're not interested in being a GM, then you can take a load off in the canteen and wait for deployment orders. **If you're the one who's going to be doing the deploying then let me introduce you to a good friend of mine...**



NAME: GABRIELLE JOHNSON (GJ) HANGBE
PN: SHE/HER | BT: AB

>>> RUNNING THE GAME

"What do we have here? It's not every day I get someone looking to be a Garrison Manager. It can be a lot of work and a lot of quick thinking when your pilots get themselves in trouble, but if you think you're up to the task, it can also be one of the most rewarding experiences in your life.

But before we get into that, I should probably introduce myself. I'm Gabrielle Johnson Hangbe, but everyone around here just calls me GJ. As Bastion 6's Garrison Manager I make sure MECs get fixed, munitions get loaded and pilots get fed.

If you're wondering how our garage seems to run so smoothly, that's because of me. And trust me when I say once you step into the roll of Garrison Manager you'll realize that "seeming to run smoothly" is about the best you can ask for..."

/ WHAT TO EXPECT AS A GM \

Firstly, you will need to learn the rules in and out, so make sure you already have a strong grasp on how the Pilot side of things work. Secondly, you will be in charge of breaking those rules as needed, improvising on the fly and most importantly controlling all the NPCs and managing enemies in combat.

Now, just because you'll be taking control of enemy combatants doesn't suddenly mean you and your Players are true adversaries. Your goal is not to win against your Pilots, but to test their metal and sell them on every wild and deadly corner of this world. Part of selling that also means providing a healthy challenge tho, so don't feel like you need to go easy on them.

Steel Hearts is a game about trust. The game will run faster and smoother if you trust your players to be honest about their Synergy, rolls, etc and allow them to freely burn their Synergy for things like Shields and Recharges without even having to inform you. Much like the real world, if a person in a position of power doesn't trust the people they're supposed to be helping, conflicts will arise and the whole system falls apart. Likewise, it's hard to earn your Players' trust without trusting them first. So it's up to you to set the example.

Keep in mind, your greatest goal as a GM is to encourage your Players to grow. To challenge their creativity, their tactics, their morals and their pPlots. It's also important to remember that as long as everyone is having fun, you've done your job right.

/ STAT CHECKS \

ROLL DIFFICULTY CHART	
ROLL	DIFFICULTY
1-3	<p><u>TRIVIAL</u></p> <p>Almost anyone with basic Stat competence could accomplish this task. It's not usually worth rolling for unless Threat is involved. <i>EX: Frying an egg, climbing a ladder, listening to two conversations at once</i></p>
4-5	<p><u>SIMPLE</u></p> <p>Easy for those with high stats but a challenge for novices. Good for Simple tasks that a Pilot may still fail. <i>EX: Picking a simple lock, climbing a fence, tracking a strong smell</i></p>
6-7	<p><u>CHALLENGING</u></p> <p>These are tasks that are reserved for Pilots who are proficient with a Stat, and who may fail due to its complexity. <i>EX: Hacking a turret, sneaking around a Wyrm, choking down a sense of panic</i></p>
8-9	<p><u>DIFFICULT</u></p> <p>Pilots will need to be rolling at least 7 or so dice to reliably pass these tests. They represent a strong barrier. <i>EX: Ripping open a reinforced door, making a precise sniper shot, sensing an NPC's feelings</i></p>
10+	<p><u>VERY DIFFICULT</u></p> <p>This is the upper end of Pilot difficulty, where the true masters can let their talents shine in adverse conditions. <i>EX: Climbing an ice wall, writing a hit song, disarming a complex time bomb</i></p>
13+	<p><u>INSANE</u></p> <p>These are generally Checks that none but the most fool hardy and Edge-backed Pilots should ever attempt. <i>EX: Mounting a moving MEC, coding an uncrackable encryption, telepathy/telekinesis</i></p>

Out of combat, challenging tasks are resolved using Stat Checks. In a Stat Check you'll first determine the consequence for Failure and Success (Ex: tripping an alarm vs hacking a security terminal). **If there is no interesting consequence for Failure, there is no need to roll, your Players are assumed to succeed.** Next, you'll determine the Check's Difficulty using the chart to the left. It's often advantageous to not reveal to your Pilots the exact amount needed for a roll. This keeps them guessing and keeps the fear of failure organic.

Lastly, you and your players will collaborate to determine which Stat best suits this task and whether it should be a Pilot or MEC Stat. You have the final say and can often use this Stat selection to highlight a Pilot's strengths or weaknesses.

They then Roll d6s equal to that Stat (plus any Edge or Heroic bonuses) and you'll roll their Threat and Doom. Tally it all up using the charts on the Pilot sheets (and on Page 6) and narrate the results!

/ ROLLING SUCCESSES \

Pilots' successes can vastly exceed the difficulty you may have set for them. In these instances, **you should try to give them additional advantages proportional to the extra successes, known as a Rolling Success** (Usually at a rate of one bonus per 2 Points).

Example: A Pilot hacking a security terminal to turn off the cameras (which required a 5) rolls a 10. As a result they now have full access to the cameras' records and can turn off the turrets too.

/ PARTIAL FAILURE \

Whenever a Pilot rolls between 1-2 below the Check's Difficulty they will only receive a Partial Failure. **Partial Failures can either provide a success with consequence or it can manifest as a failure without consequence.** The GM can either choose which is appropriate or let the Player decide.

Example: A Pilot attempts to sneak past a large crab-like Wyrm, the Heikigani, to grab a keycard. They'd need an 8 but they roll a 6 (Close enough for a Partial Failure). They can now decide whether they wish to get away from the crab harmlessly, or grab the key-card at the cost of being slashed by its claws.

/ MELTDOWNS AND TRIUMPHS \

If a Pilot rolls all 1s on a Stat Check they suffer a Meltdown, meaning they fail incredibly spectacularly enough to cause even more trouble. If a Pilot rolls all 6s (When rolling three or more dice) they gain a Triumph, flawlessly executing their plan regardless of difficulty and even gaining a Rolling Success.

/ WHEN TO ADD DICE \

Adding Threat, Edge, Doom and Heroic Dice is one of your strongest mechanical tools to add weight to a scene and help control a deployment's pacing. They not only let you reward creative thinking but also highlight short-sighted plans. It can make a Pilot feel like a weightless hero, or an over-encumbered human who is in way over their head. Be sure to encourage your Pilots to come up with reasons you should give them Edge, and be attentive of giving them Edge and Threat based on their Gravities.

Edge Examples:

- *A Pilot has put their rival on the tilt by making suggestive comments, they gain one Edge in the duel.*
- *A Pilot is hacking a computer at a company they used to work for, gaining one Edge for their experience.*
- *A Pilot has been (unintentionally) very stealthy throughout the mission, gaining one Edge when they threaten the incredibly surprised guards in the security room.*

Threat / Doom Examples:

- *A Pilot is jet-lagged and hasn't been sleeping well to begin with. They suffer two Threat to scout the area as they struggle to stay awake.*
- *A Pilot has grown feelings for their sworn rival and begins to suffer Threat when fighting them.*
- *A Pilot is caught in a nasty blizzard and suffers one Doom when trying to get a signal out. Their friend is also suffering two Threat as they try to build a makeshift shelter in the whipping winds.*

Heroic Examples:

- *A Pilot makes a long-winded speech about the power of friendship and begins to yell as they deal one desperate last blow to their opponent, gaining two Heroic Dice.*
- *A Pilot sacrifices their life to save their compatriots and gains two Heroic Dice as they make their last stand against an advancing enemy army.*

/ WHEN NOT TO ROLL \

You'll often encounter moments where a Stat Check isn't necessary. This may be for one of a few reasons:

- The Player's associated Stats may be so abysmally low that they either automatically fail or have the savvy not to try. (*EX: Players with a Zero in a Stat or when a Check is Very Difficult, but the player only has two Stat Points or in your judgement has no chance for a Triumph*) Remember you can add Edges or Heroic dice if you think the player is deserving of an extra boost so that they can roll for this occasion.
- The Player narrated a particular action, solved a puzzle, or navigated a particular roleplay conversation so well that their Pilot's Stat Check is an automatic success.
- The associated Stat Difficulty is either so low or the Player's Stat is so high that a Stat Check doesn't need to be made. Especially in an instance where success is more binary, and there's little room for an Expanded Success.

/ RUNNING COMBAT \

You can think of running a session of Steel Hearts as having two kinds of meta-phases. One is primarily comprised of narrative play, where Pilots explore the world, conduct negotiations, and maybe even try to survive the more narrative ground combat. The other is Steel Heart's crunchier (and more structured) MEC Combat, where Pilots will get to see just how good their MEC's build is.

During these Combat segments you should give the Pilots a clear goal (*Example: survive 6 Phases of Wyrms attacks. Find and extract a fabled piece of technology from the Old World. Defeat an invasive species of Wyrms that threatens to cause a mass-evolution event in the area*). Along with this clear goal you'll need to design a Combat Map (usually made of a 1x1 inch Grid) where Tactical Combat will take place.

/ ZONES \

A method I use when rapidly generating a Combat Map is a Tic-Tac-Toe board design, where I imagine a grid of 2x2 or 3x3 **Zones** and then try to fill them in and connect each in interesting ways. Each Zone should try to fill a purpose, whether that's a spot where you'll spawn enemies, deploy your Pilots, or place a key objective or secret treasure.

If you're looking for igniters on how to make each zone feel geologically distinct with its own gameplay quirks, you can take inspiration from the Table on the right! (*Note: The full version of Steel Hearts will have a full suite of Biome design tables to help you rapidly craft maps.*)

Lastly, ask yourself what weather the Pilots might be dealing with and how that may affect their play. (*Example: It's raining so heavily that all Units outside are now Immune to Burning. A strong Blizzard causes Freezing to now deal double DMG. The skies are peaceful and quiet causing Doom against any stealth maneuvers.*)

/ SPAWNING AND INITIATIVE \

There's no exact science behind how many enemies you should spawn to combat against your Pilots. When running hunts a good rule of thumb is roughly one or two Units per Pilot in a heavily combat-oriented Zone.

When determining Initiative consider which side has the element of surprise or better understanding of the surrounding. If you can't reach a conclusion, a good old coin flip can get the job done just as well.

JUNGLE ZONE IGNITER TABLE	
ROLL	ZONE IGNITER
	MUD PIT A massive pit of mud that halves movement speed. Perhaps there are junked MECs buried beneath?
	RIVER A strong river cuts through this area that halves movement. Perhaps it leads to a dangerous waterfall or a calm spring?
	CLEARING Only a few trees are in this peaceful clearing. The sun and sky can clearly be seen here.
	DENSE FOREST Not dense enough to prevent passage, but dense enough that Units will have to weave through trees or cut them down.
	CLIFF A steep and rocky cliff. Does it lead down into oblivion or up towards further treasures?
	CAVE A cave sheltered from the elements. It's humid and defensible. Perfect for a Wyrms' nest.

/ USING HUNT / HEIST SHEETS \

To help GMs keep track of Units that synergize well together and all build on a certain theme, you can easily print out **Hunt Sheets** for groups of Wyrms and **Heist Sheets** for squads of MECs. These sheets will give you everything you need to run an evocative boss encounter or send out waves of dangerous enemies. They can also be mixed and mashed together to create diverse maps and memorable combats!

/ READING A WYRM STAT BLOCK \

Before we get to the Hunt Sheet itself, we should examine the makeup of what a single Enemy Unit looks and plays like.

During the Enemy Phase each Unit gets two Actions. These can either be an ATK, Shift or some other special ability listed on the Unit. Each Unit also has their own Stat Block that'll help you identify what the Unit is capable of and roleplay them a little better.

- Each Unit has a designated d6 Roll associated with it for GMs who prefer to spawn enemies randomly. This isn't the most balanced spawn method, but it can lead to some great stories.
- Next, you'll see the Unit's name, along with a healthy helping of blank space to take notes in.
- **Size** defines how many Spaces it takes up on the Grid (usually squared).
- **Spawn** determines how many of this Unit should be Spawned in a group. If left empty the Unit can hold its own. **If you see a Unit that has a #s next to its Spawn that means that Unit is a Swarm Type.** Swarm types are a group of tiny "Creeps" that each die after only 1 DMG and take up the same space (Acting as a single Unit). You can track the number of Creeps remaining in the Unit with 12mm d6s.
- **Speed** measures how many Spaces a Unit can move in a single Shift Action.
- **Soak** negates incoming DMG to the unit. **Remember each Unit will still take a minimum of 1 DMG!**
- **Hits** is a Stat exclusive to Swarm Type enemies. When Swarms make an ATK action you'll roll 1d6 for each Creep remaining in the Swarm. Each d6 roll that is equal or greater than the "Hits" will deal 1 DMG.

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <h3 style="margin: 0;">HYDRA HATCHLINGS</h3> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>STR A</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>WKN B</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 5px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>SIZE 1</p> <p>SPAWN 8s</p> <p>SPEED 6</p> <p>SOAK -</p> <p>HITS 4+</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>STR A</p> <p>WKN B</p> </div> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <h3 style="margin: 0;">HYDRA WHELP</h3> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>STR A</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>WKN B</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 5px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>SIZE 1</p> <p>SPAWN -</p> <p>SPEED 5</p> <p>SOAK -</p> <p>ARMOR 12</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>STR A</p> <p>WKN B</p> </div> </div>
<p>FUSE (PASSIVE): Whenever a Unit is beside another Hatchling Unit, the two can merge or pass through each other freely</p>	<p>TOOTH AND CLAW (ATK): Deal 3(dS) DMG - Range: Side</p>
<p>LEARN BY WATCHING (PASSIVE): When beside a Hydra, Hits are 3+</p>	<p>BETTER THAN ONE (PASSIVE): Deal +1(dS) DMG per Hydra-type Unit beside this one</p>
<p>ACIDIC (PASSIVE): Doubles cause [Corroding]</p>	
<p>NEWBORN (NATURE): Will run away in fear when the Hydra is defeated</p>	



- **Armor** measures how much DMG a non-Swarm Unit can take. You can use the space inside a Unit's block to track DMG.
- **STR / WKN (Strength / Weakness)** identifies that Unit's Elemental Strength and Weakness (based on the first letter of that Element). A "+" signifies that the Strength or Weakness is doubled by 1 DMG per "+".
- **The bottom rows** identify unique Actions that a Unit can take, Passive abilities that are always active for the Unit and that Unit's Nature to help GMs roleplay the New Century's wildlife. **When you see a DMG formula listing #S** that means you'll roll that many Stat Dice worth of DMG.

/ READING THE HUNT SHEET \

Now that you know how to read each Unit's Stat Block, let us break down the rest of the Hunt Sheet:

/ 1 - HUNT BOSS \

Each Hunt has its own unique Hunt Boss that acts as a kind of super Unit. You'll notice it still has all the elements that make up a normal Unit's Stat Block, but also includes even more unique abilities and a description to help you get a stronger grasp on the Unit's flavor. They also have some unique Stats:

- **AP (Action Points)** defines how many Actions the Boss gets during the Enemy Phase.
- **AA (Action Allowance)** defines how many Actions the Allied team can collectively take during the Allied Phase.
- **DFC (Difficulty)** scores the Boss' general Difficulty and lethality. Bosses at DFC 1 are appropriate for first-time Pilots, while DFC 9 can be deadly to non-upgraded MECs.

/ 2 - VARIANTS \

You can make your Hunt even more unique by rolling up a Hunt Variant that can make the Boss even more challenging. These are best used with experienced Pilots, or when reusing a Hunt Boss.

/ 3 - CARVE REWARDS \

When capturing or killing a Wurm, Pilots will have the opportunity to **Carve** them for unique items. These items can be used for crafting, selling, ornamenting and more!

/ 4 - HUNT HAZARDS \

These are special Units that can be helpful or even harmful. They can be explosive barrels or useful Fortune Bugs full of a mysterious bile. Each Hazard will include the rules for how it works.

FORTUNE BUG

Fortune bugs are a common breed of scavengers. They carry large sacs of bile on their back which can be harmlessly popped.

When Spawning a Fortune Bug, roll a d6 to represent the type that it is (But do not directly inform the Pilots)

When adjacent to this Unit, MECs can take a free action for "Pop" the Fortune Bug.

☐	PHEROMONE SACK: Cause [Burning] - 5x5 AoE
☐	BLOOD PITCH SACK: Cause [Stuck] - 5x5 AoE
☐	PARASITE BILE SACK: +1 Edge for your next ATK
☐	ARMOR HONEY SACK: +2 Turns
☐	SUPER CHARGED SACK: +1 Action

1 / **HYDRA **

Wurm of a Hundred Maws



SIZE 3
SPEED 6
SOAK 2
AP 3
STR A+ **WKN** B
ARMOR 60+606
AA 6-8
DFC 1

The Hydra is a ravenous predator. Its numerous hungry young ride on its back and neck creating the illusion of multiple heads. Some are even freshly hatched from the eggs imbedded in the Hydra's stomach. This territorial Wurm has been known to swim across vast distances, acting like an invasive species, and is well adapted for almost any climate.

HUNT VARIANTS

☐ - **FED** - Fresh from a deep slumber. Will not attack until attacked.

☐ - **SLEEPING** - In a deep slumber. Will not attack until attacked.

☐ - **HUNTED** - Some something else is hunting your prey.

☐ - **MATERNAL** - Territorial. Its AA is 2 lower as it defends its young.

☐ - **PANICKED** - Has fought MECs in the past and will run often.

☐ - **ELDER** - Battle hardened, overgrown, and very clever. (+30 ARMOR)

CARVE REWARDS

☐ **HYDRA SCALES:** SHINY and durable.

☐ **HYDRA FANG:** Still SHARP enough to cut you.

☐ **UNHATCHED HYDRA:** Rare. Fragile. Precious.

☐ **HYDRA TALON:** An undeniably SHARP talon.

☐ **DIGESTIVE SACK:** Full of TOXIC fluids

☐ **HYDRA PEARL:** Indigestible rounded BETYL

NOZUCHI

SIZE 1
SPAWN 2
SPEED 2
SOAK 2
STR A **WKN** P
ARMOR 8

ROLL CHARGE (ATK): Move 5 Spaces in a Straight Line - Deal 3 (A) DMG to each Unit it touches and cause [Corroding]

BARBED (PASSIVE): When ATKed, deal 2 (A) DMG to All Sides

SUNBATHER (NATURE): Nozuchi won't ATK or Shift unless provoked

POISON QUILL (CARVE): A Nozuchi's highly TOXIC quill - Just a drop can add a lovely tang to a meal

BASHE PLANT

SIZE 2
SPAWN 12s
SPEED -
SOAK -
HITS 5+
STR C+ **WKN** S
ARMOR 8

VINE TRAP (PASSIVE): Cause [Stuck] whenever a Unit is beside this one - Includes during a Shift

UNDER THE COLLAR (PASSIVE): Whenever a Unit ATKs this one at the side, this Unit gets a free ATK

HYDRA HATCHLINGS

SIZE 1
SPAWN 8s
SPEED 6
SOAK -
HITS 4+
STR A **WKN** B

FUSE (PASSIVE): Whenever a Unit is beside another Hatchling Unit, the two can merge or pass through each other freely

LEARN BY WATCHING (PASSIVE): When beside a Hydra, Hits are 3+

ACIDIC (PASSIVE): Doubles cause [Corroding]

NEWBORN (NATURE): Will run away in fear when the Hydra is defeated

HYDRA WHELP

SIZE 1
SPAWN -
SPEED 5
SOAK -
ARMOR 12
STR A **WKN** B

TOOTH AND CLAW (ATK): Deal 3(dS) DMG - Range: Side

BETTER THAN ONE (PASSIVE): Deal +1(dS) DMG per Hydra-type Unit beside this one

SALAMANDER

SIZE 1
SPAWN -
SPEED 6
SOAK 2
ARMOR 16
STR B+ **WKN** C

BLAZING GNAW (ATK): Deal 3(dS) (B)DMG - Range: Side

PHEROMONE RELEASE (ATK): Cause [Burning] in a 5x5 AoE - [Triggers as a Free Action when this unit consumes Hatchlings]

PREDATOR (NATURE): Will focus on Gnawing (thus eating) Hatchlings

SELF PRESERVATION (NATURE): Will try to run away once it's at 8 DMG

**/ MISCELLANEOUS GM ADVICE **

There is a lot of minutiae to Running the Game, and there's plenty of useful advice on the internet for first time GMs! That said, I've got a few bits of miscellaneous advice that you'll hopefully find helpful when running a game as different as Steel Hearts:

**/ DETERMINING THE LENGTH OF THE ALLY PHASE **

Unlike the Enemy Phase, the Ally Phase is comprised of a number of Actions equivalent to how long you think the Pilots would have to act compared to their enemy. For a starting encounter or a sluggish Wurm, you should ensure the Ally Phase has enough Actions so that each Player can take 2 Actions. If you only have 1 or 2 Players, consider bumping the number of Actions per Allied Phase up to 6, thereby creating interesting choices and evening the odds.

In general, when it comes to faster Units or deploying a larger group of players, somewhere between 5-8 Actions seems to be the sweet spot of tactical choice and panic. If you really want to put the fear in your Players you can drop the number of actions to 3 or 4. For shorter Action Allowances ensure that the enemy they're facing will take its turn quickly so that the Players stay engaged.

**/ FLEXING ENEMY UNIT ARMOR **

Sometimes your Players will roll incredibly high, get into a fantastic rhythm and rip right through an encounter you've prepared. This can be a phenomenal and rewarding experience and by no means should be avoided! However, there may be times when you'd like to see if they can survive the battle a little longer. In these instances, it's perfectly OK to get flexible with how much Armor a Unit has. If you do this, however, ensure to give your Players a bonus reward for their smart plays and good luck.

**/ ENCOURAGING CREATIVE ACTIONS **

Sometimes your Players will have all their weapons break or be completely outgunned. Sometimes they'll feel cornered or at a dead-end. At times like these it's important to remind your Players that they have access to Creative Actions that can deal DMG or solve problems in varied ways. Never be shy about giving your Players advice when they seem stuck or frustrated, especially if they're new to the system or TTRPGs in general.

Similarly remember to reward creativity and smart thinking! Generously give out Edge dice, reward Players who roleplay well or make the table laugh with a few extra credits or a new piece of loot. Play into your Players' ludicrous plans and play it out like a comedy bit in an otherwise cruelly serious world. Above all have fun!

**/ BUILDING VARIED ENCOUNTERS **

In Steel Hearts each Pilot and MEC will have situations where they're incredibly strong and incredibly vulnerable. Try to learn your Players' strengths and weaknesses and design encounters to highlight different Players. Above all, don't be afraid to come up with encounters where things seem too difficult, as these scenarios can sometimes bring out the best and most creative ideas in your Players.

It's also important to bait your Pilots out of their MECs into dangerous situations with the promise of loot, combat advantages, security rooms and other juicy secrets. You can use these opportunities to ramp up the stress and push Pilots to their absolute limits.

/ GM ADVICE – STRUCTURING A CAMPAIGN \

If you're running Steel Hearts as more than a one-shot you'll want an overarching plot to help tie your campaign together and keep your Players moving. You can find specific campaign igniters in the New Century Field Guide, but for now we'll talk about specific pacing tricks you can use to make your campaign truly sing.

/ FRAMING YOUR SESSIONS AS A SHOW \

Framing your campaign as a show can do a variety of helpful things for you and your players, but here are just a few to sell you on this narrative device:

- It takes pressure off the players to perform their characters perfectly. You can write-off awkward performances or freezing as simply the results of dubbing or problems with the cable box.
- Each Episode can have a title to get your Players thinking about that Episode's theme and content. I commonly use titles that pull from history (leaning into Steel Hearts' science-fantasy) with titles like "The Sword of Damocles" or "21 Grams." It's always fun watching Players rush to their phones to Wiki its meaning and derive hints at the session's content.
- Each Episode can also have a "Previously On" segment, allowing you to organically remind players of past happenings and set the mood. This can also be helpful for getting Players focused as you can begin the "Previously On" while Players are talking. This creates the suspense of a show finally beginning without the need to shush all your Players and tell them to get focused.
- Each Episode can have a "Next Time On" allowing you to tease locales and NPCs you have planned for the next session. This builds anticipation and gets your Players to begin crafting theories, thus further investing them in the world.
- Each campaign can be a distinct Season of episodes, allowing GMs to set a hard limit on the number of sessions they expect to run and giving Players a sense of unease when the end draws near.

/ WEAVING COHESIVE THEMES \

Everyone at the table is going to bring their own story, and your job is to pick up on the common themes and begin to weave those together. It could be as timeless as found family or as abstract as the concept of trust. Finding this theme will help you create your deployments and villains to help propel the story and Pilots towards meaningful reflection on it. There's no exact science to this, but the best method is to critically analyze the stories each of your Pilots are trying to tell and then compare each story to one another.

/ CHOOSING A SOUNDTRACK \

Perhaps the single greatest piece of ambiance you can set in a campaign of Steel Hearts is the musical ambiance. Much of the lore in Steel Hearts is tied deeply to music, sound and vibrations. Using heart-wrenching piano solos or hyped-up metal riffs can put this theme into practice. **Intertextuality** (or the use of outside media and stories to inform yours) can be incredibly effective when used carefully. Perhaps a Pilot has a favorite musical from the Old World, and you can use an acoustic cover of that musical's music in a particularly dramatic scene with them. Maybe you're running a scene that's meant to directly evoke another piece of mecha media (for reasons you'll discover in the TRUTH Manual) and you can cherry pick from its soundtrack to sell the fantasy. Maybe a variety of covers (in a variety of languages) of the same song keeps coming up as a recurring motif throughout your Deployments, and that song in some way ties back into the overarching themes you and your players are developing. You have the entire catalog of actual Terran music and culture at your disposal, so feel free to tap it for dramatic effect. Of course, you plan on streaming your exploits, make sure you have the necessary rights.

**/ FATES WORSE THAN DEATH **

Did all your Players trash their MECs? Spare the boring bloodbath and instead run session where Players must escape Wurm territory on foot or break out of an enemy prison. Use defeat as an igniter for even further adventures with your party, rather than a preamble for an uninteresting end to the arc.

Also consider things you can take away from Pilots that aren't their lives. Perhaps they suffer a breakdown from watching their friends die and must now regain their memories over time. Perhaps a beloved NPC is lost in the fray of combat. MECs are the easiest thing to have Players lose, but there's plenty more on the table that doesn't require Pilot death. Even if a Pilot gets seriously injured, you can spare their life with the magic of Betyl and force them into a comma, playing into some of the stranger parts of TRUTH until the next session.

**/ RUNNING NPC DEATH **

Whether it's an enemy grunt or a Pilot's uncle, NPCs will die frequently in the world of Steel Hearts. You should attempt to make these moments swift and brutal for maximum effect and as a grim reminder of the brevity of the Pilots' time on Earth, and the horrors of the violent world they live in.

When Pilots decide to take a life, be sure to make it as visceral and uncomfortable as your table finds acceptable. Taking a life is a nasty thing and Players should make sure they feel it's worth it if they're going to go through with it. Pilots must track each kill they make, and **when they hit 10 or more kills, their Betyl will begin to grow a sickly red with the rage and violence of their actions.**

**/ RUNNING WYRM DEATH **

Wurm kills should be just as visceral and crunchy. While Pilots do not need to tally any kind of "kills" for this process, a goal as the GM should be to slowly turn Pilots around to the value of nature. Where once hunting Wyrms may have felt like a glorious adventure, it should sometimes feel like an unfortunate necessity. This is especially important given that Pilots can purchase shock-traps to spare the Wyrms that they hunt.

As a GM understand that Wyrms are not inherently evil or bad creatures. They a part of nature, and like our ecology they can be as beautiful as they are troublesome. Wyrms are a vital part of Earth's new ecosystem, and their eradication would not only mean the collapse of that ecosystem, but the destruction of something beautiful. That said, there's nothing wrong with the occasional Wurm that is a threat to nature itself and can be fought guilt-free.

**/ RUNNING PILOT DEATH **

It's important to talk with Players before your campaign begins about expectations around death. Will it be lurking around every corner, a potential unceremonious end caused by one encounter gone horribly wrong? Or will Pilots have a degree of "plot armor" and only die when something truly traumatic is happening in the story. If you go the Plot Armor route, you should still ensure Players know death is still on the table, and pepper in NPC death even more. When a Pilot is going to die you should always make it memorable and work with the Player involved to make sure they're going out in a way that they feel fits the story they're trying to tell. This can be a great moment to build up a villain or to start peppering Player rolls with Heroic dice as they attempt to avenge their fallen comrade.

**/ IMPLIMENT SAFETY TOOLS **

It is crucially important to talk with all your Players about if there's any topics they have boundaries with and to be mindful of sensitivities at the table. The horrors of the New Century are meant to be uncomfortable and force both Players and Pilots to reflect. This reflection, however, should never come at the cost of crossing your players' personal boundaries. Open discussion and the implanting of safety tools are a key part of GM-Player Trust.

> NOTES FROM THE AUTHOR <

Mobile Engagement Chassis: Steel Hearts is a massive labor of love from the author (You can call me Sandro!) and is still **very much a work in progress**. It channels my love of history, nature and of course the mecha genre into the kind of modular but methodical tactics game that I've been craving on tabletop for some time. Seeing as the writing is mostly a solo-effort (though I get some fantastic feedback from my play testers) and all the art for this book is being paid out-of-pocket, it may be a while until the full game is available (and I'll probably get stuff wrong and have to change a few things too!) In the meantime, I thought it meaningful to address the following content in the setting for those curious:

/ CONTENT WARNING \

The New Century is a nasty time to be alive, though it has its moments of quiet beauty. **It's always up to the GM to discuss with players what themes and content are right for the table, and to be mindful of sensitivities.**

Steel Heart's setting is not an escape into a world of daring adventurers who can overcome anything. It is meant as a desperate struggle against seismic and existential forces, where a moment of rest with the people you love is often your greatest victory. (Although it's also rife with climatic battles and some daring crawls...)

The abuse of nature, the rise of fascism, the cruelty of bureaucracies, the disparity between rural and urban, and our own fragile mortality are all pervasive themes throughout this game.

If you are willing to overcome, I tried to make the themes of found family, the joys of the mundane, the beauty of biology and the power of collective action just as present.

/ DIVERSITY \

From the onset of Steel Heart's development, I knew I wanted the game to be grounded on planet Earth. While I love imaginative galaxy hopping adventures, Earth can be the perfect setting to reflect on humanity's history and our relation to its beautiful eco/geodiversity.

Similarly, I wanted to reflect the amazing diversity of our planet's human cultures and histories. As a result, "echoes" of these cultures and histories can be seen in the naming scheme of Wyrms, MECs, and characters. It should be noted none of these Wyrms, MECs or Characters are meant to be the actual myths, just to evoke and rhyme with them. The Hydra's many young can fuse to it, granting it many heads. Thus, it is named after the mythical beast by the EDA Supercomputer known as the 7 Sages System. Ajax Wallenrod has no blood relation to any Greek warriors nor Polish heroes. While you can pick up Necromancer MEC parts, the machine cannot divine the future through the dead.

Being a white second generation Italian-American who was born and still lives in the Northeastern colonized territories of the United States, I've been doing my best to source a wide spectrum of cultural and sensitivity consulting. My goal is to celebrate the diversity of the setting that is Earth, while not devolving into cultural stereotypes or trying to itemize any myths or religious practices. That said, I may fail on the execution, so always feel free to reach out!

Earth is home to hundreds of inspiring cultures, diaspora, histories, and myths. Since there's plenty that I've missed, I want to make Steel Hearts as hackable as possible and ensure that anyone can see themselves, their people and an echo of their culture in the New Century!

No matter your gender, race, sexuality, background, challenges, or dreams, you can be a Pilot. Pilots come in every shape, size and age and each have a unique impact on this world!

/ POLITICS \

Steel Hearts is a game that can be as much about systemic deconstruction as it can be about robotic destruction. One of the game's default factions is the pervasive EDA, a propagandist over-militarized bureaucracy whose dysfunction should be readily apparent to Pilots and GMs. While the EDA has done some good, like solving poverty in urban environments and dismantling many systemically oppressive barriers, they also keep an iron grip over their territory, conscript youth into their military and often leave Free Roamers in the dust. To call them flawed would be a gross understatement.

In my campaigns, I usually run players as being young conscripts of the EDA who have the chance to change things or go off on their own later. I'll spoon-feed them plenty of EDA propaganda at the start, only to pull back the curtain on the reality after. This evokes classic tropes like the New Types in *Gundam 0079*'s Earth Federation, while peppering in a bit of that *Starship Troopers* "utopian military state" madness. Your mileage with this trope may vary, but just remember that **the EDA are not the unambiguous good guys nor a utopia**. They're a caustic, pseudo-empire of city states built on the bones of a mysteriously absent corporation after a climate apocalypse. While there are nice people within it, a nation ruled by force and secrecy is doomed to buckle under it.

If the EDA is the frying pan, Asgard is the fire. Monocultural, fiercely nationalistic and rapidly descending into a fascist regime, Asgard's secession is merely a pretext for its goals of absolute authority. Its leaders and people vary from silver-tongued, to violently patriotic, to near-sympathetically oblivious. Depending on your table makeup, Asgard can serve as either the perfect adversary or a lesson in the dangers and subtle seductions of fascist creeds. One of my favorite playtest campaigns involved a group of mercenaries who opted to work with Asgard in good faith, only to have all their MECs repainted in Asgard's colors and be sent off to do their dirty work. The whole group learned to pick up on fascist talking points, and how demagogues can also come in a suave and persuasive package.

/ A NEW TOMORROW \

Steel Hearts is a game that emphatically looks forward to a tomorrow that is better than the New Century. Fascism, force and its eradicating monoculture only stifle diversity, compassion and creativity. It is represented herein as humanity's greatest threat to itself but one that can be overcome.

Our planet and its ecology is a treasure. We can still divest and rectify the mistakes of our Old World to preserve what we have left.

When we become more mindful, embrace our diversity and make a practice of caring for one another we can create a future built on trust where all of mankind and even nature itself has the safety net of collective care. Otherwise, we may doom ourselves to a competitive world that makes mercenaries of us all.

Finally for all those struggling right now, who feel fragile and disconnected in a cruel and violent age, for all those who feel the weight of the world on their shoulders yet powerless to affect it alone, this game is for you.



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