

The Hellborn have arrived on Earth. Humanity's only hope is the Mecha that are so powerful, they can't be piloted alone. Inside, the Pilot and their Partner cannot speak through the Oxidant Fluid filling their lungs. The only way they can communicate is through their

EYES AND HANDS.

A GAME FOR 3 TO 7 PLAYERS.

PROLOGUE.

It was chaos when the Hellborn came.

They descended from the skies, or crawled out of the depths, or swam from the ocean, or took root in our very own hearts. They destroyed and killed and hated and spread death and disaster wherever they stepped. They killed hundreds and then thousands and then hundreds of thousands before anyone knew what to do about them.

Then came the Mecha. *HOLD. RPS.* Pilots and partners shoving their brains into robotic blenders and becoming one for a beautiful instant as they killed the massive beasts. Working in perfect synchronicity. Complete and utter simultaneity. They were wholly attuned to each others instincts, desires, thoughts, emotions.

They died and now we're what's left.

The ones who aren't perfect, the ones who don't breathe as one being, the ones who aren't fully compatible but still have to make it work anyways. The Hellborn didn't stop coming and so they had to settle for us, even though the best of us are long since buried under rubble and all the good models of Mecha are taken.

If we're lucky, we'll be able to kill a few more before we're gone, too.

And maybe we'll even be able to become one. Beautiful instant. Cosmic flash. Perfect synchronicity and the monster on the pavement.

HOLD and RPS.

In *EYES AND HANDS*, determining the result of **moves** - things that people outside of Mecha can't do - isn't done through rolling dice. Instead, it's done by the *Human Ocular Local Dialogue (HOLD)* and *Regional Parley Synthesis (RPS)* systems.

HOLD.

HOLD is for moves that Pilots and their partners choose to make. It's the means by which Mecha fuse their consciousness with humans. When a move says to "try to *HOLD* with this move" - this is true for most moves that Pilots can make - then when the Board calls "*HOLD*", both the Pilot and their partner will hold up an index card, dry erase board, etc., saying what the move they are trying to *HOLD* is. The Pilot and their partner aren't allowed to reveal their cards or boards or etc. to each other or the Board before the Board tells them to.

If they're the same move, then it's a full success. If it's a different move, but it's related to the same stat, it's a mixed success. If it's not related to the same stat, it's a failure.

For example, Pilot Andrews would like to strike without thinking and her partner Saul thinks that Andrews wants to avoid danger. When they try to HOLD, they get a mixed success, because strike without thinking and avoid danger both use fast.

Pilot Jones wants to use his Buzzer Beater's special move, havoc. His partner Warden picks up what Jones is putting down, so they HOLD and get the same result, which is a full success.

Pilot Amelie wants to do something difficult, but their partner Maury wants to strike decisively. When they try to HOLD, they get a failure, because they don't use the same stat.

You can try to *HOLD* with a Hellborn, if you're grabbing it or being grabbed by it. Try to resist destruction, but instead of your Mecha, Pilot and partner on the line, it's your brain.

RPS.

RPS sync and *RPS challenge* are for moves that Pilots can't choose to make, or moves that the Hellborn make. *Sync* means that the Pilot is performing the *RPS* with their partner, and *challenge* means they're performing it with the Board (on behalf of the Hellborn). The two participating in the *RPS* will play rock-paper-scissors. For *challenge*, a win is a full success, a tie is a mixed success, and a loss is a failure; for *sync*, a tie is a full success, the Pilot winning is a mixed success, and the Pilot losing is a failure.

BASIC MOVES.

do DIFFICULT THINGS.

When a Mecha **does something that doesn't apply to another move**, the Pilot's judgement supersedes their partner's, and they perform *RPS challenge*. On a full success, you do what you wanted to. On a mixed success, you do what you wanted to, but it's complicated; describe how you're at a disadvantage. On a failure, it goes to shit; the Board makes a failure move against you.

RESIST DESTRUCTION.

When a Mecha **hits 0 HP**, the Pilot performs *RPS sync*. On a failure, the Pilot, partner, and Mecha are destroyed. On a mixed success, choose 2 to be destroyed. On a full success, the Pilot performs *RPS challenge*. On a failure, choose 1 to be destroyed. On a mixed success, nothing is destroyed, but the Mecha is out of commission. On a full success, you get a second wind; your HP is 1+cool.

NOTICE DANGER.

When a Mecha **scans the environment to try and identify threats**, try to *HOLD* this move. On a full success, choose 2, and on a mixed success, choose 1: You identify the *most threatening, most vulnerable, most immediate* or *most important* threat in your vicinity. On a failure, a threat in your vicinity notices you; the Board makes a failure move against you.

STRIKE from AFAR.

When a Mecha **stands back and tries to gun down the threat**, try to *HOLD* this move. On a full success, deal 2+far damage. On a mixed success, deal 1+far damage and take harm from the Hellborn. On a failure, the Board makes a failure move against you.

AVOID ATTACK.

When a Mecha **is about to take harm and wants to dodge**, the Pilot performs *RPS challenge*. On a full success, all harm is avoided. On a mixed success, some harm is avoided; subtract fast from the damage dealt. On a failure, all harm is taken.

STRIKE WITHOUT THINKING.

When a Mecha **rushes in and strikes directly**, try to *HOLD* this move. On a full success, deal 3+fast damage. On a mixed success, deal 1+fast damage and take harm. On a failure, the Board makes a failure move against you and you're grabbed by the Hellborn.

be UNAFFECTED.

When a Mecha **is about to take harm and wants to power through it**, the Pilot performs *RPS sync*. On a full success, subtract hard from the damage dealt. On a mixed success, subtract 1 from the damage dealt. On a failure, all harm is taken.

STRIKE DECISIVELY.

When a Mecha **strikes with power and intention**, try to *HOLD* this move. On a full success, deal 2+hard damage. On a mixed success, deal 0+hard damage and take harm. On a failure, the Board makes a failure move against you.

PILOTS and MECHA.

Pilots are those who choose to fight the Hellborn. They blend their minds into the machinery of their **Mecha** and risk their lives to save the Earth.

Each player gets one Pilot, and each Pilot gets one Mecha. Name your Pilot and think of a brief backstory for them: Why are they fighting the Hellborn? Then, decide on their Mecha. Mecha come in seven models, and only one player can pilot a given model of Mecha in each game. If a Mecha is destroyed, their player makes a new one of a different model. The models are:

BUZZER BEATER.

The **Buzzer Beater** will be destroyed by the end of the quarter. It knows it will, and it knows what that means, and it knows it has to do everything it can to make it real bad.

OVERACHIEVER.

The **Overachiever**. Permanent youngest sibling in the shadow of itself. It aims so high, it misses - but when it hits, God help you, it hits hard.

PINCH HITTER.

The **Pinch Hitter** is never anyone's first choice but it always gets the job done. Nobody knows what it really is or how it really works. It likes it that way.

SPEAKER.

Speaker. Psychic. Electric fuckup. Nobody can say what it wants and nobody can say what it thinks but it wants and it thinks and it speaks indeed.

HATER.

The **Hater** is strong and large and blacks out the sun. Its heart is hot and claustrophobic and sees no fresh air. When it falls over, what side will you land on? Will it break you?

LOVER.

A hand on your chest. Breath on your neck. Gently, a prickly bite on your collarbone. The **Lover** is good at its job, so good, and its job is to love and to bite and to kill.

STALKER.

When the **Stalker** comes for you, you won't know until it has you. Who knows where it is at any given moment? Only itself, its Pilot, their partner, and Earth. If you're lucky, it'll never be you.

Details on creating Mecha can be found in each model's section.

All Pilots also get a partner. Decide on which player will act as yours, name them, and then decide what makes you compatible and what makes that compatibility imperfect.

BATTLES.

When a **battle** commences with a Hellborn, send at least one Mecha out to fight, along with its Pilot and their partner.

As many Mecha as you want can go, but at least one player must sit out to act as the **Board**, describing the actions of the Mecha, the Hellborn, and the environment, and determining the result of *RPS challenges*. The Board also keeps score of collateral damage, which can occur as a result of a failure.

During battle, any players who are piloting Mecha **cannot speak to each other or use any sort of formal language to communicate*** (formal languages include things like Morse code and sign languages). They must direct all speech to the Board, and cannot speak to each other “through” the Board, or say things intended to communicate information about their next move to the Board. Usually, players will not be talking at all.

** Worth noting is that these rules can be modified to fit players who can't play the game in this way. For example, players with limited arm or hand mobility should be able to use a list of keywords to communicate instead.*

It is the Board's job to describe the events going on and ask questions about how the Mecha responds. The Board has a number of moves they can make to this end, and do not have to *HOLD* or engage in *RPS* to successfully complete them:

- *describe the environment*
- *detail the destruction of the Hellborn*
- *hint at lurking danger*
- *reveal an imminent source of harm*
- *introduce something that pressures the players*
- *introduce something that complicates navigation*
- *introduce something that complicates killing the Hellborn*

The Board also has a number of moves that can only be made *after* making one of the free moves* or after a player fails a basic move:

- *force the Mecha to trade blows*
- *+1 collateral damage*
- *change one of the Hellborn's mutations*
- *cause harm to the Mecha*

** These moves can be made for free against an Overachiever.*

AFTER the BATTLE.

After a battle is complete, it is time to decide whether or not the Pilots collect **experience** and **advancements**. Ask some questions after the battle is over and the Hellborn is dead:

Did you kill the Hellborn? Collect 1 experience for every mutation it had.

Did you learn something new about a Pilot or their partner? Collect 1 experience.

How long did it take? If it took fewer than 5 turns, collect 1 experience.

How much did it take? If all Mecha only lost 1 or 2 HP, collect 1 experience.

Did you save someone from certain demise at the hands of the Hellborn? Collect 1 experience.

Did you HOLD with a Hellborn? Collect 1 experience for every mutation it had, and describe what it felt like.

How much collateral damage was caused? Subtract that from whatever experience you collect.

Do you have 5 experience or more? Subtract the 5 experience in question and take an advancement: increase the value of any stat by 2, or of 2 stats by 1.

In between battles, you may wish to return to home base and interact there, but you don't have to.

After a Mecha has gone into battle, they can't go into battle again until all other Mecha have gone.

HELLBORN.

Hellborn are the terrifying, hulking creatures that have arrived on Earth and can only be killed by Mecha. The Board will generate a Hellborn before the beginning of a battle by putting together a **shell** and **mutations**. Each Hellborn gets mutations equal to the number of Mecha fighting plus the number of Hellborn killed between them, so two Mecha fighting, one of whom has killed three Hellborn and the other of whom has killed one, would fight a Hellborn with 6 mutations.

SHELLS.

Bear. A lumbering quadrupede. It has 8 HP and deals 2 damage up-close. When it dies, it can deal 3 collateral damage unless the Mecha stop it from falling over.

Bird. A smaller, flying thing. It has 4 HP and deals 4 damage up-close. Mecha can only strike it from afar until it swoops down to attack.

Fish. An aquatic beast lurking beneath the surface. It has 6 HP and deals 4 damage up-close. It can only be seen right after it strikes.

Locust. A swarm of insectoids. It collectively has 4 HP and deals 2 damage up-close. Trying to attack it always requires a successful *RPS challenge*.

Man. A humanoid Hellborn. It has 4 HP and deals 4 damage up-close. It can talk and perform the Speaker's use psionics move (with an *RPS challenge*).

Snake. A slithering constrictor. It has 8 HP and deals 4 damage up-close. It can grab onto a Mecha and prevent it from moving, requiring the use of do something difficult to remove.

Wasp. A flying timebomb of a thing. It has 8 HP and deals 2 damage up-close. When it hits someone, it gains 1 Countdown; when it has 6 Countdown, it explodes, dealing 6 damage to all Mecha and causing 3 collateral damage.

MUTATIONS.

Apollon. It is God. Give this Hellborn as many mutations as you wish. *Fighting the Apollon, win or lose, ends the game (and perhaps the Earth).*

Better. Once per battle, it can downgrade the result of a move.

Bigger. It has 1 more HP. *This mutation can stack.*

Double. It has two bodies or masses that share HP and turns.

Friend. It accompanies another Hellborn. They share turns and their collective HP is the average of the two. *Don't give this mutation to the Locust.*

Gunner. It can attack from afar with a plasma beam, breath of fire, or other power. *Don't give this mutation to the Wasp.*

Harder. It deals 1 more damage. *This mutation can stack.*

Human. When a Pilot died, they turned into this Hellborn. Add another mutation.

Mecha. This Hellborn invaded an old Mecha and took control. Add *Better* and *Bigger*. *Only give this mutation to the Man.*

Worse. When it dies, it deals 1 collateral damage, unless the Mecha can do something difficult to prevent it. *This mutation can stack.*

Zombie. It's the reanimated corpse of a Hellborn already killed. Add another mutation. *Don't give this mutation to the Wasp.*

the BUZZER BEATER.

The **Buzzer Beater** will be destroyed by the end of the quarter. It knows it will, and it knows what that means, and it knows it has to do everything it can to make it real bad.

STATS.

The Buzzer Beater gets, by default:

COOL +1

Cool lets the Mecha do difficult things and resist destruction.

FAR +0

Far lets the Mecha notice danger and strike from afar.

FAST +2

Fast lets the Mecha avoid attack and strike without thinking.

HARD -1

Hard lets the Mecha be unaffected and strike decisively.

***TIMER 5**

The Timer measures how long until the Buzzer Beater self-destructs.

HP 6

The Buzzer Beater's Timer will go down each time it takes a turn. When it reaches zero, the Buzzer Beater self-destructs, ejecting its Pilot and their partner to safety and causing havoc in its immediate vicinity.

SELF-DESTRUCTION.

When the Buzzer Beater is **destroyed in a fireball of fury and noise**, perform *RPS sync* with your partner. On a full success, it deals 2 damage plus its HP to whatever you want it to, and nothing else is hurt. On a mixed success, it deals damage equal to its HP to whatever you wanted it to, plus *its Pilot's partner, another Mech, or the bystanders*. On a failure, it deals 2 damage plus its HP to whatever you wanted it to, plus all of those.

HAVOC.

When the Buzzer Beater wants to **make its self-destruction worse**, try to *HOLD* (Hard) with this move. On a full success, self-destruction deals 2 more damage. Describe how it made the situation worse for everything involved when it self-destructs. On a mixed success, it deals 1 more damage, and takes 1 damage right now. Describe how it made the situation worse for everything involved right now, and also how that affected everything when it self-destructs. On a failure, it takes 2 damage right now. Describe how it fucked up.

the HATER.

The **Hater** is strong and large and blacks out the sun. Its heart is hot and claustrophobic and sees no fresh air. When it falls over, what side will you land on? Will it break you?

STATS.

The Hater gets, by default:

COOL +1

Cool lets the Mecha do difficult things and resist destruction.

FAR +0

Far lets the Mecha notice danger and strike from afar.

FAST -1

Fast lets the Mecha avoid attack and strike without thinking.

HARD +2

Hard lets the Mecha be unaffected and strike decisively.

***WEIGHT 8**

Weight measures how much it will take to fell the Hater.

The Hater's Weight acts in lieu of its HP and resets each time they take a turn as long as it's not being grabbed. If their Weight hits zero in a single turn, the Hater crashes and dies, causing havoc in the immediate vicinity.

HAVOC.

When **the Hater crashes**, perform *RPS challenge* against the Board. On a full success, it ends up relatively okay. The Hater's Pilot and their partner are fine, and the Hater isn't destroyed. On a mixed success, something goes wrong; choose one from the complications at the end of this move. On a failure, something goes terribly wrong; choose two. The complications are:

- *the Hater is destroyed. Make a new Mecha and subtract 1 from its cool until its Pilot and their partner get used to it after a battle.*
- *the Pilot dies. Make a new Pilot and subtract 1 from its fast until the old Pilot's partner gets close to the new one after a battle.*
- *the Pilot's partner dies. Choose a new partner and subtract 1 from its far until the Pilot gets used to their new partner after a battle.*

the LOVER.

A hand on your chest. Breath on your neck. Gently, a prickly bite on your collarbone. The **Lover** is good at its job, so good, and its job is to love and to bite and to kill.

STATS.

The Lover gets, by default:

COOL +2

Cool lets the Mecha do difficult things and resist destruction.

FAR +1

Far lets the Mecha notice danger and strike from afar.

FAST +0

Fast lets the Mecha avoid attack and strike without thinking.

HARD -1

Hard lets the Mecha be unaffected and strike decisively.

***GRAB 4**

Grab measures how much damage the Lover can take before it lets go.

HP 8

The Lover can spend a turn grabbing an enemy. When it does, it always deals 1 damage each turn it's grabbed, ignoring armor.

GRABBING an ENEMY.

When the Lover **grabs onto an enemy and never lets go**, try to *HOLD* (Cool) with this move. On a full success, you grab on and get a +2 bonus to Grab. On a mixed success, you grab on. On a failure, you miss, and take damage.

the OVERACHIEVER.

The **Overachiever**. Permanent youngest sibling in the shadow of itself. It aims so high, it misses - but when it hits, God help you, it hits hard.

STATS.

The Overachiever gets, by default:

COOL +3

Cool lets the Mecha do difficult things and resist destruction.

FAR +1

Far lets the Mecha notice danger and strike from afar.

FAST +0

Fast lets the Mecha avoid attack and strike without thinking.

HARD -2

Hard lets the Mecha be unaffected and strike decisively.

***LUCK 4**

The Overachiever spends Luck to do even better.

HP 6

The Overachiever can spend its Luck to do even better. When it does this, its action is automatically upgraded to a full success. It can regain Luck by voluntarily taking a failure. When it runs out, it can't get full successes for the rest of the battle.

DO EVEN BETTER.

When you **shoot for the stars**, spend a point of Luck and try to *HOLD* with this move. On a full success, get your point of Luck back. On a mixed success or a full success, improve your next move to a full success. On a failure, spend another point of Luck and treat this move like a mixed success.

the PINCH HITTER.

The **Pinch Hitter** is never anyone's first choice but it always gets the job done. Nobody knows what it really is or how it really works. It likes it that way.

STATS.

The Pinch Hitter gets, by default:

COOL +1

Cool lets the Mecha do difficult things and resist destruction.

FAR +0

Far lets the Mecha notice danger and strike from afar.

FAST +0

Fast lets the Mecha avoid attack and strike without thinking.

HARD -1

Hard lets the Mecha be unaffected and strike decisively.

***DNA 3**

The Pinch Hitter uses its DNA to permutate.

HP 8

Whenever the Pinch Hitter gets hit, it permutes. Its DNA always refreshes to its maximum value after it permutes; its default maximum is 3.

PERMUTATION.

When the Pinch Hitter **takes damage**, the Pilot *speaks freely with their partner* for a moment. Decide on how to spend the Pinch Hitter's DNA. Each point of DNA can be spent to exchange values between two stats, 1-to-1 - for example, decreasing fast to -1 to increase cool to +2. Maximum DNA can be increased in this manner as well. Three points of DNA can be spent to increase the value of a stat by 1.

the SPEAKER.

Speaker. Psychic. Electric fuckup. Nobody can say what it wants and nobody can say what it thinks but it wants and it thinks and it speaks indeed.

STATS.

The Speaker gets, by default:

COOL +2

Cool lets the Mecha do difficult things and resist destruction.

FAR +1

Far lets the Mecha notice danger and strike from afar.

FAST +0

Fast lets the Mecha avoid attack and strike without thinking.

HARD -1

Hard lets the Mecha be unaffected and strike decisively.

***SPEECH 4**

The Speaker uses its Speech to speak and use psionics.

HP 4

The Speaker is allowed to speak from a “word bank” that its player constructs during its setup. These words must be under seven letters and cannot be the name of a stat. At least two must be one of these:

- a color
- onomatopoeia
- a reference to a piece of media
- a place

The length of the word bank is equal to the Speaker’s Speech.

use PSIONICS.

When the Speaker **bends the spacetime continuum using psionics**, attempt to *HOLD* with this move. On a full success, choose two results; on a mixed success, choose one result and take 1 damage. On a failure, the Board chooses a result to work against your favor.

- *the Speaker grabs something from afar*
- *something takes 2 damage*
- *someone’s move is upgraded*
- *someone’s move is downgraded*
- *someone can talk using the Speaker’s word bank this turn*
- *the Speaker gains 1 Speech*
- *something gains 1 HP*

the STALKER.

When the **Stalker** comes for you, you won't know until it has you. Who knows where it is at any given moment? Only itself, its Pilot, their partner, and Earth. If you're lucky, it'll never be you.

STATS.

The Stalker gets, by default:

COOL -1

Cool lets the Mecha do difficult things and resist destruction.

FAR +2

Far lets the Mecha notice danger and strike from afar.

FAST +1

Fast lets the Mecha avoid attack and strike without thinking.

HARD +0

Hard lets the Mecha be unaffected and strike decisively.

***QUIET 3**

The Stalker uses its Quiet to stay in the shadows.

HP 4

The Stalker is able to turn invisible and stay in the shadows by spending Quiet. They gain 2 Quiet every turn they are visible and take no damage.

STAY in the SHADOWS.

When the Stalker **becomes invisible**, *HOLD* with this move; the Pilot always supersedes their partner when they use this move. Spend 1 Quiet for every turn you are invisible. While invisible, you can only be hit with a full success.