H2.0

HEART

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IRON

SEASON 1

H20
The Heart

Iron Season 1 Edition

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The Heart

The Heart is the part of the H2O rule system that every actor needs to know in order to play. There are a lot of rules in the overall system, but the Heart is relatively simple, and has everything you need to understand what other characters are doing around you. The Heart does *not* contain the rules for building your own character, making gear, playing monsters, or running an H2O game. Those rules are in other books, so that actors can focus on the part they need.

If you've never participated in interactive theatre before, then you can imagine that it's something like a cross between a ren faire, a laser tag game, and a murder mystery dinner. We will work together to create the period atmosphere like a ren faire, but we'll have live safe combat like a laser tag game, and everyone will play different characters to tell a story like a murder mystery dinner. Staying completely in character is one of the most important things you can do; imagine you are in a production of Hamlet and one of the other actors pulls out a cellphone or strikes up a conversation about their favorite video game in the middle of a scene. You would have a hard time staying in character, and even if you could, the scene would be broken for you and everyone else. Don't be that actor. It's understandable if you have to deal with real world issues, but try to take care of it without interrupting the world for others, and come back as soon as you can!

The Heart deals mainly with the laser tag part of the game: the combat system. The particular atmosphere will depend on the particular game being run, and creating a believable character is something you will need to practice with the help of your fellow actors. The combat system lets us run battles involving dozens of characters at any time day or night without dice or computers or referees. You will have a little bit to keep track of, but mostly it stays relatively simple, and if you get confused, other actors will be happy to remind you how something works. A pocket version of the Heart is also available, so you can have a compact reference of the rules to keep with you all the time.

In the Heart, you will learn how to make and take combat calls. We'll look at taking effects and taking damage. Even though damage is an effect, it works a little differently from other effects in that it has to stack up before it really causes problems for your character, where other effects might instantly paralyze your character or put him or her to sleep. Then we'll make sure you know how to tell when your character has died and another on what to do next. There's a section on how your character can recover from injuries and another one on how your character can use gear. You don't need to worry about what your character can do yet, since what you need to know will be on your character sheet. A staff member will help you create your character sheet before you join the game.

Don't be overwhelmed by the several defenses or deliveries or all of the effects. H2O is a robust system and can be used to simulate a huge variety of situations. Remember that this is all of the rules that make that possible, but you'll quickly realize once you start playing your character that many of these rules come up rarely, and you'll usually see just a small fraction of this in use regularly. Familiarize yourself with it then look back at it when you get your character to make sure you know how your character's abilities work. That way, when you use them on someone else, you'll be able to clear up any confusion they have. Others will help you the same way. Don't worry! You'll be an expert before you know it.

How to make combat calls

Any time your character uses a weapon or ability at another character, you need to let the actor of the other character know what happened. To do that, H2O has the combat call. To make a combat call, you will take some sort of a combat action, like swinging a sword prop or throwing a packet or pointing at someone, then you will say the call. In order to count, the action needs to be theatrical and fairly realistic as if you were using the weapon or item in question. The call needs to be loud enough to be easily heard by your target, but you should be careful not to create unnecessary noise which will make it hard for the calls of others to be heard. You can never make fake calls for any reason.

Combat actions come in several varieties. The strike, which is swinging a boffer prop, and the packet, throwing a packet full of seeds, are the most common. Other combat actions are listed in Table 1. You should make the combat call as you begin the action, so that if you miss or someone blocks, the ability has been used unsuccessfully.

Combat calls have three parts: **color**, **weight**, and **effect**, for example, "Grey Heavy Sleep."

The **color** just tells you what type of attack it was. A fireball would probably be Red, while a sword would likely be Grey. Colors will always be White, Black, Grey, Orange, Red, Yellow, Green, Blue, or Purple.

The **weight** tells you how serious the combat call is. Generally, no weight is called, and this is Base weight. You can recover from it on a Recovery Count, discussed later. The other major weight is Heavy, which takes an Encounter Break to recover from. Other weights are listed in Table 2.

The **effect** tells you what the call does. Effects are listed in detail in Table 3. You should act out what is wrong with your character, since no character has an ability that lets one actor ask another what is wrong with their character, how much Health they are down, or what their Toughness is.

Many calls use a default part. Default color will be main color of the prop used to make the combat action. If you know your target can see your prop, and your prop is the right color, you don't have to call the color. If someone doesn't call a color and you can't see the prop, you can assume that the color was Grey. The default weight is Base. The default effect is 1 Damage. Attacks are often made with all three defaults, so if someone swings a grey boffer at you but doesn't say anything with it, the call was essentially "Grey Base 1." If someone throws a red packet at you without a combat call, the call was "Red Base 1."

How to take combat calls

When another player makes a combat call against your character, you need to go through a couple of steps. First, you need to figure out if you have any defenses that will protect you from the attack. If you have more than one that will work, your second step is choosing which one to use, but you can only use one per call. Then you need to call the entire defense, to let the attacker know what happened to the call. Finally, if all or part of the effect got through, you need to take the effect. Generally, this process needs to happen fairly quickly, but newer actors are always given more time. As long as the defense comes in the tempo of combat and you don't call the defense after you've remembered it after you've taken the effect, you're probably ok.

Defenses either come from your character in the form of abilities or from items in the form of your loadout. Defenses are geared to work against a particular color, weight, effect, or delivery. When you call a defense, you should call the entire name of the defense, which is the type of the defense, such as Reduce or Shield, then the thing it works against, such as Grey or Paralysis. Defense types are detailed in Table 4.

How to take damage

Damage is a unique effect. Every other effect represents a status that either your character has or not, for example, your character is either asleep or not, paralyzed or not, crippled or not, etc. Damage represents general bruises and cuts that your character can stand up to individually, but can, taken together, bring your character down. To represent this, your character has two attributes called Toughness and Health.

Toughness is a measure of how generally tough your character is, and new characters usually start with 10 Toughness. This number doesn't change often. Health is a measure of how healthy your character is at the moment, and this number will often go up and down during combat. Your character will start every event with Health equal to his or her Toughness. Healing increases Health, but Health can never exceed Toughness.

When your character takes Damage, just subtract the amount of Damage from your Health. As long as your character has at least 1 Health, you can function normally. Below 1, your character can only move by crawling slowly and is Disabled (meaning you may not use any Ability or most items). In this state, your character will regain 1 Health every minute, but if you take any more damage, you will immediately drop to -5 Health. Normally, characters cannot drop below -5 Health. Below -2, the pain is too intense and your character is also Sleeping.

How to know when you're dead

Sleeping is dangerous on the battlefield. If you are Sleeping (such as when you are below -2 Health) or Paralyzed and get hit with an call which ends up doing 5 or more Damage to you, your character will die. Taking a Death Effect will also kill your character.

What to do when you're dead

10 seconds after you die, your character *permanently* loses 1 Toughness. Make a note on your character sheet and turn it in at the end of the event. It may be a good idea to "die loudly," because if someone nearby can put a Life effect on you before 10 seconds passes, your character will not lose Toughness.

When your character is dead, you have a choice. If you think someone will come find you and rescue you, staying where you are may be the best idea. If not, your spirit can leave the body as a Poltergeist and go wandering the world. If you choose to do this, you will lose 1 Stamina which you cannot recover until the beginning of the next event, you will forget everything that happened since your last Encounter Break, and you must put all your character's possessions on the ground to represent your character's body. Poltergeists can always find their way back to their body, even if the body is moved or destroyed. Any character can destroy a body by spending 10 minutes in some action which would credibly destroy a body. This destruction will force you to become a Poltergeist.

As long as your character has at least 1 Toughness left, a Life effect on the body or on the Poltergeist at the place where the body was destroyed will bring the character back to life. There are other ways to bring a body back to life, but if this doesn't happen at the body or the place where the body is destroyed, the character will lose an additional Toughness. Dead characters can always refuse any effect which would bring them back to life.

If your character ever drops to 0 Toughness, he or she will die permanently, and can never be brought back. If you choose to leave the body at this point, both the body and the Poltergeist dissipate into nothingness, so if you plan to have a body at your own funeral, you should continue to play the body until your character's story is finished.

Poltergeist

Poltergeists are presences that can be vaguely felt but not seen. They can be recognized by their bowed heads and arms crossed at the waist. They cannot cross a line of salt, nor can they enter a circle of salt. Blowing gently in their direction creates a Heavy Avoid on them. Otherwise, they are immune to all calls except those with a Poltergeist Weight. The only things they can do is slowly push around items that belonged to them or whisper incoherently. Poltergeists can only go places you can go, so no walking through walls or flying through the air. Poltergeists cannot speak on their own, though some characters may have abilities which allow them to speak with Poltergeists.

How to Recover

Effects that your character takes do not last forever. You can recover from Base weight effects on a Recovery Count and from Heavy Weight Effects on an Encounter Break. A Remedy Effect will also remove other Effects.

Recovery Counts allow you to recover from Base Effects in the order of your choice by putting one hand on one of your knees for 10 seconds. If you interrupt the count by removing the hand from the knee, moving either foot, or generating a call, you will have to start again. If an effect prevents you from putting a hand on a knee, you can make a Recovery Count from an obviously indisposed position. If you are suffering from a line of sight effect, such as Terror, you have to look around for 10 seconds without seeing the originator of the effect before beginning your count.

Encounter Breaks are 10 minutes of rest. Remain seated, in character, acting out your recovery and rest for this time and your character will regain all Basic Abilities and Stamina and recover from all non-Eldritch effects. During this time, you can also swap out items in your Loadout, choosing different items to have at the ready. An Encounter Break is interrupted and must be started over if you take any Effect, drop character, or move around. A new Encounter begins for your character at the end of the Break.

How to use gear

Every character has 3 Stamina that they can use with items and certain abilities. Stamina normally comes back with an Encounter Break, but some actions use it up for the day or even the Event (like becoming a Poltergeist). Others may also require that the Stamina they use has not been used all day up to that point and not used again during that day. This is called Reserved Stamina.

Game items must have both a prop and an attached tag. Any item is destroyed by removing the tag from the prop. If a tag is removed from a prop, tear the tag immediately. Many items also Properties listed on their tags. Properties represent special abilities that can be generated from items. Properties always contain a Property Code which tells what conditions it can be used under, for example, **D:** means the Property can be used once per day, **E:** once per Encounter, or **S2:** which requires use of 2 Stamina.

Generally, only Properties on items equipped in your Loadout can be used. You can equip up to four items in your Loadout at every Encounter Break, or spend 1 Stamina to immediately swap out one item for another. Items are rated as Common, Uncommon, Rare, or Legendary. Slot 1 can only take Common items. Slot 2 can take Common or Uncommon Items. Slot 3 can take Common, Uncommon, or Rare items. Slot 4 can take any item.

Some basic items can be improvised, which means that anyone with a prop for the item can create and attach a tag for it during an Encounter Break at an appropriate location. More information on this process and other rules about items are available in the Book of Things.

Table 1: Combat Actions

A **strike**	is the use of any boffer prop, including those for thrown weapons. These can usually be blocked by another boffer, and if the combat call targets a particular target, like a weapon (for a Shatter) or a limb (for a Cripple), you have to hit the target itself, not just the other actor's costume or body. Additionally, if you hit parts of someone's costume after a strike has passed their body, that strike is a miss, unless the costume might have prevented the strike from hitting another actor.
A **packet**	is a the use of a small amount of birdseed wrapped in cloth. A packet counts as long as it hits an actor, her gear, or her costume. Arrows always count as packets whether they are represented by packets or boffers.
A **blast**	is multiple packets thrown at once. Any one blast will only affect any given character once, no matter how many packets hit.
An **indication**	is as simple as pointing at the target, but because of the usually psychological nature of these attacks, they only work if the actor of the target knows the call is being made.
A v**oice radius**	attack is made by shouting the call, and the characters of every actor who hears it or should reasonably be able to hear it takes the effect. Usually, if someone uses a voice radius attack and you think someone close to you should have heard it, but they missed it, you should tell them.
A **mechanism**	attack is delivered by a prop. It might be a boffer rigged to swing, or a loud noise or a flashing light. If the light is pointed at you, the boffer hits you, or you hear the noise, look for the tag so you know what call to take.
An **environmental**	attack represents the state of the world, and usually is a continuous effect. If you see glowing props or rope barricades with nearby tags, read the tags to find out where and when and what attack to take.

Table 2: Weights

Base	is the default. If no weight called, the weight is Base. This is not a very serious effect, and you can recover from it with a regular ten second Recovery Count.
Heavy	is a call that you can only recover from on a ten minute Encounter Break, not a Recovery Count.
Lingering	is a delayed call. You don't take the effect until you begin a Recovery Count or Encounter Break or drop below 1 Health. You may call a defense when the call lands, but not when the effect starts. You can also Remedy the effect before or after it takes effect. Once a Lingering effect has become active, it acts the same as a Heavy weight.
Massive	calls affect you even if they hit costume or are blocked. Massive strike calls with targeted effect work no matter where they hit the target, but if they do not strike a particularized part of the target, the actor being struck gets to choose among valid targets to take the effect. In all other ways, a Massive call is the same as a Base Weight.
Piercing	bypasses all Armor, Shield, or Aegis Defenses except a defense to Piercing.
Bane	targets characters with particular traits. You don't call "Bane," but the trait being targeted, for example, Werewolf, Undead, or Human. Bane makes a call Heavy if target has that trait, but does nothing if the target doesn't have that trait. Bane Dead causes corpses to parody the call's effect intermittently for the next five minutes.
Eldritch	lasts until it is Remedied. For the purpose of defenses, Eldritch works just like Heavy. Eldritch lasts across multiple Events and even through Death.

If you take an effect while that same effect is already active on you, you don't take the effect again, but a Heavy weight will replace a base weight, and an Eldritch weight will replace a Heavy weight. Lingering weight doesn't replace anything until it becomes active.

Table 3: Effects

Instant Effects (cannot be Remedied since they are never active. They take effect and are done.)

Damage	Called as a number, this effect subtracts from your health. The default uncalled effect is 1 Damage.
Death	Die. After 10 Seconds, removes all other Effects except Curses and Eldritch effects.
Disarm	Drop a weapon or object held in one of your hands. After it comes to rest on the ground, you may pick it back up.
Heal	Adds its value to your Health.
Intercept (defense)	Protects another character against an appropriate call that struck immediately before the Intercept using the given defense. Intercepts always ignore the target's defenses, but may be Resisted by any character without using any ability.
Life	If dead, restores you to life at 1 Health. Prevents Toughness loss if it takes effect within ten seconds of the death. Targets body or Poltergeist near the body or at the site of the body's destruction. When used on a dead character after 10 seconds both the originator and the target must make notes on their own character sheets noting the date, time, and originator and target. Any character can always Resist Life when Dead.
Remedy	Removes one effect of the stated Color or Effect.
Reveal	Causes you to call out loudly once.
Shatter	Destroys an inanimate game item up to the size of a conventional door. Target may be specified in the call.
Smash	Forces you to immediately move ten feet directly away from the originator.

Flexible Effects (These can be a number of things. Look for the rules on a card or ask for an explanation.)

Buff	Generally a good effect. Specific rules will be given to you at time of casting. If you know the rules, the originator can just tell you the name, but otherwise, the originator must give you a card and confirm you understand how the Buff works. Casting a Buff takes as long as it takes to make sure the target understands the Effect. Buffs always ignore a target's defenses. You may usually have only three buffs on you at any time, and Heroic Buffs count as three. When a Buff is cast and you have enough free slots, it may become active immediately. If not, you may choose which of the Buffs is lost to make room. Unless Buff says otherwise, Buffs expire at the beginning of next Encounter Break
Curse	A Curse is a negative Effect whose mechanics only hamper, never help. Specific rules will be given to you at time of casting, just like with a Buff. Curses do not take Buff slots and always include specific things your character must do to remove the curse. Curses expire at the end of the next day unless specified otherwise.

Table 3: Effects (Continued) Duration Effects (Persist until Recovery, Remedy, or end of Encounter):

Avoid	You may not approach within 10 feet of the originator or do anything that could be interpreted as interacting with them, nor may you begin a Recovery Count until you are at least ten feet from originator.
Bind	Fastens both of your arms to your torso preventing you from using your arms or anything in your hands.
Bleed	You lose, not gain, one Health per minute while below 1. After five minutes at -5 Health, you Die.
Calm	You may not take hostile action. If you suffer any hostile Call, Calm ends immediately.
Crush	You drop to one knee or touch an immobile object or the ground with one hand.
Daze	You may not use any Ability, Items, or Stamina, move at a pace faster than a walk, or make basic attacks. Daze is remedied at the moment you are hit by another call, allowing you to call a Defense.
Disable	You may not use any Ability or activate any item Property except X: Properties.
Enrage	You fly into a berserk rage, unable to tell friend from foe. You must attack any conscious or moving target within ten feet with basic attacks to the best of your ability. You may use Abilities to create an interesting and fun scene. You may not begin a Recovery Count or Encounter Break until no potential targets remain within ten feet. A Calm effect also acts as Remedy Enrage.
Suggestion	You are given one command you will follow as well as you can. Suggestion is Remedied when hit by any hostile call.
Exhaust	You may not use Stamina.
Fog	You may not indicate or use thrown spells or ranged items.
Intimidate	You are unable to attack the originator of the Effect in any way. Remedied if the originator attacks you.
Maim	Leg: you cannot use that leg. You can hop on the other leg or limp heavily forward, but cannot walk. Arm: you cannot use that arm.
Paralysis	Freezes you in place. You may not move your own limbs, speak, or generate calls. Die if you take 5 or more points of damage in one Effect to the torso when Paralyzed
Petrify	You are Immune to all calls but Remedy. Freezes you in place. You may not move, speak, or generate calls, and you must take the appropriate Recovery Count or Encounter Break immediately.
Pin	Immobilizes one foot, sticking it to the ground. You may pivot on the planted foot.
Shuffle	You may not run. When walking, both of your feet remain in contact with the ground.
Silence	You may not speak or otherwise vocalize. Prevents Abilities with verbals.
Sleep	You are in a deep Sleep, more than just napping. You may not move your own limbs, speak, or generate calls. You are unaware of your surroundings. Die if you take 5 or more points of damage in one Effect to the torso when Sleeping.
Suppress {color}	You are unable to generate any effect containing the named color.
Taint	Encounter Breaks take 20 minutes, Recovery Counts take 20 Seconds, and regaining Health below 1 takes 2 minutes.
Terror	You flee from the originator. You may not begin a Recovery Count while in line of sight of originator.
Vertigo	While standing, you are dizzy and disoriented and may not use or generate calls.
Vulnerability	You may not call Aegis, Shield, or Armor Defenses to Color, Weight, Effect, or Delivery. Those Defenses are not expended.
Weakness	You may not make any Strike Calls.
Web	You may not move any body part aside from your head. You can still speak and generate effects on yourself.

Table 4: Defenses

Reduce	Drops a Heavy or Bane calls to Base Weight or negates Base or Lingering calls. Damage is dropped by 5 to a minimum of 0. You choose whether to use this Defense.
Resist	Negates a call. You choose whether to use this Defense
Armor	Drops a Heavy or Bane call to Base Weight or negates Base or Lingering calls. Damage is dropped by 5 to a minimum of 0. If this defense is available, you must use it unless you use another one.
Shield	Negates a call. If this defense is available, you must use it unless you use another one.
Aegis	Drops a Heavy or Bane call to Base Weight or Negates Base calls. Damage is dropped by 3 to a minimum of 1. Works against all appropriate incoming Calls as long as it lasts.
Immune	Negates Calls. Works against all appropriate incoming Calls as long as it lasts.

Table 5: Property Codes

D: (Day)	Can be used once per day.
E: (Encounter)	Can be used once per Encounter.
O: (Once Ever)	Can be used only once. When you use this Property, mark it out as part of using the Property. If the O:Property is the last Property on an item, you can tear the tag instead of marking it out.
X: (Expended)	Can be used only once at a cost of 1 Stamina. A number next to the X indicates higher Stamina cost. When you use it, tear the tag. Items with only an X: Property take no Loadout slot. Only X: Properties can be activated while you are Disabled.
S: (Stamina)	Takes 1 Stamina to use. If there is a number next to the S, takes that many Stamina to use.

If an item is borrowed or stolen, consider any **D:** or **E:** Properties used unless you know otherwise

Table 6: Item Slots

Slot 1	**Common** items only
Slot 2	**Common** or **Uncommon** items only
Slot 3	**Common**, **Uncommon**, or **Rare** items only
Slot 4	**Common**, **Uncommon**, **Rare**, or **Legendary** items