Zen and the Art of Mayhem
Light Hearted Combat Rules

Some less serious more lighthearted or whacky games don't need complicated gritty combat rules, which will only take away from the fun. Combat is meant to be fun and fast with characters smacking each other around without risk of serious damage or death. Often these interactions are between the characters where they are not really trying to hurt the other, well not permanently at least.

Damage

Damage is handled a little differently with light hearted combat rules. Instead of wounds that slow down and affect the character, they are more short term annoyances. Damage is less permanent and the character will be able to brush off attacks much easier then a more gritty combat. Treat all damage as stun, basically doubling to see if the character loses an action or is knocked out, but when applying damage to hit points it is halved.

Damage Effects

Damage should have effects on the character, not cuts and bleeding, but more like scorch marks, messed up hair, and lumps. If characters are hit and loses an action they show outward signs, eyes all swirls, or large lumps on their head, little animated birds above their heads, etc…

Swords and knives do not cut flesh, they are used to cut clothing, or ropes, or objects around the opponent. When a sword hits, clothing will often show signs of damage, but the flesh will remain mostly unharmed, maybe a small cut will be present. Weapons are much more effective when used for flashy moves.

Guns hardly ever hit people, but firing a barrage of bullets can have the same effect as hitting someone, causing the person to lose their action. Typically the first shot will graze a living target instead of imbedding itself into said target, the damage is the same. Or the shot can be used to knock a weapon or object out of some ones hands, cut a rope, etc…

Knockback

Knockback is much greater in light hearted combat. If the damage in hit points is greater then twice the characters DAN, they have a chance of taking knockback. The character will have to make a coordination check, if the roll fails a character is knocked back 1 meter for every 5 points of damage. If the damage taken is more than four times the characters DAN then they most make a 1/2 coordination check, if they fail they are knocked back 1 meter for every 2 point of damage. If the damage is more then a characters hit points they are knocked back with no coordination check, 1 meter for every 1 points of damage.

Healing

Wounds are never that permanent in light hearted games, once combat is over the character will often be bandaged up covering the wounds caused by the fight. Typically while bandaged the character will get back 1/2 their DAN an hour in hit points, but will receive a -4 to all physical actions while bandaged up. If the character needs to, they can shed all the bandages, and will no longer receive any negatives, but will not be gaining hit points back either. During the night a character is able to heal up 5x DAN.

Free Hits

If a character loses an action they are set up for a free hit. Basically they will automatically fail their defense roll. Take the characters natural defense with no modifiers or dice rolls. If for some reason other then a fumble the opponent fails to hit then the damage will only be the damage roll, no other bonuses.

Special Attack Types

Light hearted combat has its own set of special moves and attacks, these are attacks that can be used in different situations. Not all special attacks are appropriate for all situations and should not be used every single action. How much and how often will depend on the game type and the attitudes of the players and Architect.

All Knockback: This attack is not meant to actually harm the opponent, but to send them flying. The attack is done normally however the damage is doubled and is applied all to knockback, sending the opponent 1 meter away for every 1 point of damage. Typically the character will travel away in a gentle arc, passing right through any obstacle in their path, leaving a nice hole in a wall or ceiling, getting leaves and branches caught on them as they travel through the tree line, etc… In some situations the character will not be able to pass thorough an obstacle and instead hit it, leave a small impact creator, and then slide down.

Being Stopped By Words: A harsh statement, a pun, pointing out ones flaws, etc… All these actions can cause a opponent or character to be spotted dead in their tracks losing an action. They typically only work once and are a great way to defend against an attack.

Dramatic Pose: A character can take a dramatic pose thus causing a spotlight on their character or group. This gives a bonus in dramatic situation. Like entrances, the character poses when they bust open the door, there is a chance everyone in the room will pause what they are doing and stop and look. Or the character can do a combat pose or set of moves before they start a battle which can intimidate or give pause to an opponent.

Zen and the Art of Mayhem

Flashy Moves: Instead of actually hitting an opponent a character can perform a flashy move that will leave a opponent in shock and awe, thus losing an action. The attack is usually some type of fancy move with a weapon or skill often doing damage to an object near the opponent. Roll attack as normal, if the defender wins then the move wasn't that impressive. However if the attacker wins, treat as x4 damage, no damage is actually taken by the opponent, instead it is all to losing actions. Flashy moves can be used against more then one opponent at once, everyone viewing could be affected, great way to stop a charge of minions. Even allies have a chance to be effected depending on the type of flashy move, if they have seen it before, and how successful it was.

Mass Hammers: A special weapon people can pull out and use on anyone who gets too silly. If a character announces he is using a mass hammer, the Architect will have to decide what tonnage it will be. The tonnage will go up due to how silly the person they want to hit has become, usually they are between 50 and 1000. The Mass Hammer doesn't automatically hit, but treated it as if the character has a 10 skill and rolls with their coordination. The damage is losing actions for as long as the Architect thinks is appropriate. The average is 1 action per 100 tons.

Now I'm Really Angry: With this action you get +2 to all physical stats for 1d10 turns. To activate Now I'm Really Angry, something has to happen that gets the character furious, It could be a comrade going down in battle. Losing a battle where your life hangs in the balance. When you recover from a heavy blow that almost caused you to lose, etc... The Architect has to approve whether or not you are angry enough or not to activate this ability.

You Deserve That: When a character says something down right mean, gets too cocky, etc.. they can get hit automatically by the person they insulted, and will lose 1d6 actions, or as long as the Architect feels they deserves it.

SD Mode

SD stands for Super Deformed, it is when the character appears to be much smaller, typically the size of a child, with a squat body and normal sized head. What causes SD mode is up to the players and Architect.

Typically SD mode is caused by a reaction to something else happening in the game. It could be the result of a comment, the character goes SD and make an additional comment like it being false, or bragging, etc… Or it could be the result of getting mad or angry at another, the SD character can rant and rave, run around, etc... More then one character can go into SD mode at a time, and others can be drawn into the SD environment, even if it is only to yell at the SD characters.

Things that happen while the character is in SD mode is happening outside the normal game. It is kind of like Vegas, things that happen in SD mode stays in SD mode. It is kind of like seeing what is going on in the characters head at the moment. Any fights or attacks done in SD don't do anything as soon as the SD moment is over.

Moving Back and Forth from Light Hearted Combat to more Serious Combat

Some games may want to approach each combat situation differently. Sometimes being light hearted and silly, other times much more serious and dangerous. Interactions between PCs and sometimes friendly NPCs will be treated with the light hearted combat rules. Or as the characters encounter minions and other types of minor threats, the light hearted rules will apply.

However when the character encounters a rival, villain, or other major baddy the rules may revert back to the core rules, or other alternate set. It is important for the Architect to let the players know which combat rules they are using for a battle. If the combat switches from one set of rules or another the players should be fully aware. Like if the character just smacked his friend and sent him sailing over the tree line, but a stranger steps out of the shadows and draws a sword with a steely eyed look at the character. At this time the Architect should inform the players that this guy means business and that the light hearted rules no longer apply.

Eye for an Eye

Typically the world should match how the characters want to play. If they are having fun with the light hearted combat rules and get in the spirit of it, then everything should be fine. However if the characters abuse the light hearted rules and want to snap the neck of an opponent every time they knock someone out, then they taking a more gritty approach, and the world should become more gritty to match them. If the characters only resort to drastic measures every now and then, and it make sense to the style of game they are in, then there is nothing to worry about.