

THE GREAT SOUL TRAIN ROBBERY

*A game of Desperados
robbing the train to Hell*



Alexi Sargeant



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robbing the train to Hell*

*by
Alexi Sargeant*

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ABOUT THE GAME

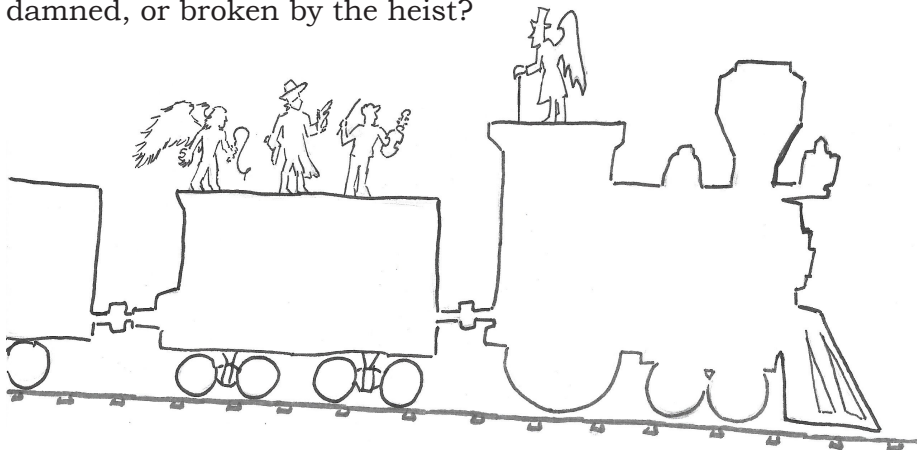
Overview

On the road to Hell there was a railway line.

An express train to the infernal city of Dis, crewed by Furies and carrying treasure and souls to damnation.

You're going to rob it.

You're a motley crew of Desperados with mixed motives. Will you claim your prize from the train? Or will you be overcome, damned, or broken by the heist?



The Great Soul Train Robbery is a tabletop roleplaying game, inspired by works like *Hadestown*, *Pretty Deadly*, and “The Celestial Railroad” that will help you tell an allegorical Weird West story about a crew of Desperados and their attempt to rob the train to Hell.

The game is designed to deliver a satisfying and dramatic story in a single session of play, lasting two to four hours.

HOW TO PLAY

Materials

To play this game, you will need:

- ◆ One player ready and willing to be the gamemaster (GM)
- ◆ Two to six other players to be the Desperados
- ◆ At least three six-sided dice (d6s), but three for each player is ideal
- ◆ Pencils and paper or index cards for notes
- ◆ Optionally, the fillable character sheets for the game found at <https://cloven-pine-games.itch.io/>



Tone and Safety

Begin the game with a conversation about the tone you want. Do you want to lean on the pulpy adventure side of the story? Do you want to focus on the darker and more serious elements? Do you want to allow multiple tones to coexist in your story? Many options can work, but it's best to have all players on the same page.

Also discuss how to handle emotional safety at the table. Subject matter that's fun or fine for one player might be uncomfortable or distracting for another. Your baseline safety tool, then, is a shared expectation that you're playing this game not only to have fun yourself, but to make sure everyone else is having fun, too.

Decide on a set of safety tools to use throughout play. You can learn about many safety tools at bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit, an excellent resource assembled by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk.

These three safety tools have been used in many games of **The Great Soul Train Robbery**:

The X-Card: When a player invokes the X-Card (by tapping a physical card with an X on it or by saying “Let’s X-Card that”) you’ll remove any content that’s being X-Carded, rewinding or reworking the fiction as need be. No explanations or apologies will be required.

Lines and Veils: Before the game starts, you’ll create a list of content you don’t want in the game at all (Lines) and content you’ll cut away from or fade to black rather than describe in detail in the game (Veils). For example, sexual assault is often Lined, and other sexual content is often Veiled.

The Open Door Policy: Any player may leave the game at any time (to deal with an out-of-game need, to stretch their legs, to take a breather, etc.) and return as they’re able. No explanations or apologies will be required. This courtesy extends to the GM, as well.

CHARACTER CREATION

To create your Desperado, roll three six-sided dice. Assign the dice to following tables:

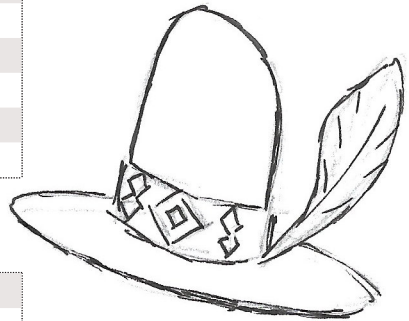
You're a **Class of Desperado...**

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Sharpshooter (speciality: trick shots) |
| 2 | Snake-handler (speciality: poisons/serpents) |
| 3 | Renegade Fury (speciality: punishment) |
| 4 | Fiddler (speciality: fast-talking/fast playing) |
| 5 | Tomboy (speciality: sneak attacks) |
| 6 | Homesteader Widow (speciality: grit) |

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Gambler (speciality: million-to-one odds) |
| 2 | Sawbones (speciality: anatomy) |
| 3 | Revivalist (speciality: sermonizing) |
| 4 | Cattle Rustler (speciality: stampedes) |
| 5 | Blind Drifter (speciality: scavenging) |
| 6 | Runaway Bride (speciality: promises) |

Motivated by a **Nobler Motive...**

- | | |
|---|------------|
| 1 | Love |
| 2 | Justice |
| 3 | Faith |
| 4 | Temperance |
| 5 | Prophecy |
| 6 | Redemption |



But also by a **Baser Motive...**

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| 1 | Greed |
| 2 | Revenge |
| 3 | A Death Wish |
| 4 | Pride |
| 5 | Boredom |
| 6 | Sheer Stubbornness |

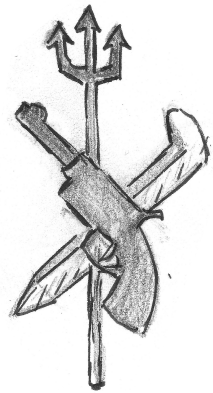
Alice is sitting down to play *The Great Soul Train Robbery* and rolls three d6s to build her character. She rolls a 1, a 2, and a 3. She considers being a Sharpshooter (1) motivated by Justice (2) and a Death Wish (3). Then she realizes she could be a Sawbones (2) motivated by Faith (3) and Greed (1). Though there are many possible combinations she could choose, she decides to go with the Sawbones, a pious but avaricious go-getter Alice names Mercy Buckner.

Feel free to discuss your options with your fellow players. It's probably best to avoid having multiple Desperados of the same class, but it is fine and dandy to have overlapping motivations. After all, two Desperados motivated by Love probably love different things in different ways, and two motivated by Pride may take pride in vastly different areas.

The Player Materials section of this book has more information about each class, including name suggestions and the sorts of gear your Desperado might be packing. Feel free to choose from among them or invent your own options!

Besides your class and motivations, the only other thing you need to write down on your character sheet is your two stats:

Your stats are *Lover* and *Sinner*, and both of them start at 3.



BASIC RULES

Your Desperado's two stats are *Lover* and *Sinner*. Both stats begin at 3.

Use *Lover* to make human connections, to act with honor, to hold onto hope, to resist opportunities for vice, and for selfless acts.

Use *Sinner* to do dirty deeds, to act with brutality, to lie through your teeth, to resist pleas for mercy, and for selfish acts.

Your stats will seesaw as you use them, one going up and one going down. The total will always remain 6.

Actions

When you act and the outcome is in doubt, roll a d6. If the result is less than the relevant stat, you succeed. If it's equal, you succeed, but the GM will add some sort of complication. If it's greater than the stat, you fail (or succeed but wish you hadn't!), and the GM will specify some fallout.

If you're using your speciality or leaning into one of your motives, roll 2d6 and pick the lowest result.

In desperation, you can take a Scar in order to roll an additional d6. Describe the Scar.

If you ever roll 3d6 and all 3 are 6s, you're in hot water indeed. The Conductor will appear immediately, aiming to punch your ticket.

Mercy had been trying to bluff her way past Pinkerton guards. That went badly, and now one of their hellish, three-headed guard dogs is tackling her. She whips out a syringe of horse tranquilizer and tries to give the dog an involuntary nap. The GM tells Alice this sounds like a Sinner roll since she's treating an unwilling patient. Alice argues it's a Lover roll. "If I don't put this doggie to sleep, Slade is gonna give it a permanent good night with his six-

shooter. *I'm acting out of compassion!*" The GM grants the point and calls for a *Lover* roll. Alice rolls two dice, since her *Sawbones* speciality is anatomy. "I know right where to jab it so all three heads get dosed!" Mercy's *Lover* stat is a 4, and Alice rolls a 4 and a 6. The GM nods. "The creature collapses on you with a whimper. You've succeeded, but because you rolled a tie, there's a complication. I'm thinking the unconscious hound is too heavy to shift, so you're stuck under it 'til you get some help. One of the Pinkertons is approaching you. So let's turn to Slade..."

Changing Stats

HABITUATION: When you succeed at a roll, shift a point to the stat you rolled with from the stat you didn't roll with. So if you succeed at a *Sinner* roll, increase your *Sinner* stat by 1 and decrease your *Lover* stat by 1. If you succeed at a *Lover* roll, move a point from *Sinner* to *Lover*, instead.

DESCENT: You can voluntarily move a point from *Lover* to *Sinner* by narrating a flashback scene showing how your vices led you to become a Desperado robbing a train to Hell.

SACRIFICE: You can voluntarily move a point from *Sinner* to *Lover* by making a costly sacrifice for another soul.

Mercy is in dire straits. Her success tranquilizing the hound shifted her *Lover* stat up to 5. But things went badly when her ally, the Sharpshooter Slade, opened fire on the Pinkertons. Now Slade is dangling out of the window of the train, and a Pinkerton is getting ready to take a potshot at him. Mercy doesn't see any recourse but to shoot the Pinkerton in the back, which is surely a *Sinner* roll. However, her *Sinner* stat is 1. Alice asks the GM, "Can I do a *Descent* flashback right around now?" The GM says, "Yes, please. Tell us about how your vices led you to this situation!"

Alice says, "Mercy thinks back to that time her hellraising brother turned up at her practice with a bounty hunter hot

on his tail. She shoved her brother Jed into the supply closet and then played innocent with the bounty hunter. ‘Jed? I haven’t seen him in weeks. I hope he isn’t in any trouble, sir.’ While the bounty hunter poked around, she muttered a regretful prayer, snuck up behind him, and opened his throat with a scalpel. Of course, that’s not a permanent solution as long as there’s still a bounty on Jed’s head, which is why she’s after all that gold aboard the train.”

The rest of the table gasps. The GM says, “That’ll do it, Mercy. Move a point from Lover to Sinner.” With a Sinner of 2, Mercy takes aim at the Pinkerton’s back and squeezes the trigger. Alice rolls a die.

End

If your *Lover* stat ever reaches 6, you are overcome by pity or compassion. You make some kind of foolhardy last stand and lose.

If your *Sinner* stat ever reaches 6, you are damned. The train claims you for the long ride to Dis.

If you take three Scars, you are broken. You refuse to fight any more, perhaps leaping from the train or perhaps simply laying yourself down and accepting whatever fate befalls you.

It’s been a good run, but Mercy and Slade are facing the end. The Conductor of the train turned out to be that bounty hunter Mercy once dispatched. His neck is stitched together with golden thread, and he wields a golden gun called *Recompense*. Slade took a bullet intended for Mercy, making a costly sacrifice for another soul. But now he’s bleeding out fast and Mercy’s gotta do something before the Conductor reloads. “Don’t think you’re gonna get to sneak up on me, little missy,” says the Conductor. “Railroad done gave me eyes in the back of my head.”

“I guess I should have done more lying and killing,” observes Alice, looking at her stats: *Sinner* 1, *Lover* 5. “I

don't think I've got a chance to fight my way out of this." The GM asks if she wants to narrate another Descent flashback. "No, I think this is where I go out. I'm gonna patch Slade up as quick as I can, take a swig of the medicinal whiskey and then pass it to him, and say 'If you get that gold, Slade, promise me after you bail out your pa you'll find my brother Jed and set him up in a honest line of work.'" Everyone agrees that's a Lover roll to stabilize Slade, which Alice makes easily. Mercy's Lover goes up to 6. The GM asks "So what sort of foolhardy last stand are you thinking of?" "I throw aside my gun, stuff a handkerchief into the whiskey bottle, and light the end on fire with the flames licking out of the boiler. I charge the Conductor and yell, 'I've got your Recompense right here, you devil-eyed son-of-a-gun!'"



PLAYER MATERIALS





SHARPSHOOTER

You're a sharpshooter. Your speciality is trick shots. Are you a gunslinging mercenary? Or did you exhibit your shooting with a vaudeville show? How did you hone your skills?

Names

- 1 Reeve Bates
- 2 Phoebe Kirkland
- 3 Oscar Jarvis
- 4 Tanner Kidd
- 5 Roxie "Backfire" McDonald
- 6 Charlie "Longshot" Shee



Guns

- 1 A Henry repeating rifle, trophy of a worthy foe
- 2 A gold-plated Colt revolver, said to be cursed by its last owner
- 3 A pair of matched six-shooters, one heavily corroded
- 4 A Winchester rifle, the very same one that killed your grandpappy
- 5 A double-barreled shotgun, nicknamed "The Fool"
- 6 A bow and arrows, veterans of a hundred outgunned battles



SLAKE-HANDLER



You're a snake-handler. Your speciality is poisons and serpents. Are you a religious leader? Or did you travel as a salesperson of dubious concoctions? How do you command the snakes?

Names

- 1 Sam "Snakebite" Hutchinson
- 2 Deacon Birchwood
- 3 Sylvia "The Hallowed" Lopez
- 4 "Doc" Cheng
- 5 Zion Blanchard
- 6 Riley Black Moon



Snakes

- 1 The black rattler, whose sound is almost as deadly as its sting
- 2 The golden-bellied cottonmouth, whose bite fills victims with insatiable greed
- 3 The Acheronian diamondback, whose venom recalls a person's greatest sorrows
- 4 The Stygian viper, whose tooth inflames hatred and aggression
- 5 The Cocytan constrictor, whose embrace smothers all feelings but remorse
- 6 The Lethean copperhead, whose toxin cures ill memories





RENEGADE FURY

You're a renegade Fury. Your speciality is punishment. Did you defect from the Underworld when you grew a conscience? Or are you just too ornery and ambitious to serve? How do you hide your Fury nature among mortals?

Names

- 1 Batches
- 2 Winchester
- 3 Euphrasia
- 4 Nelleris
- 5 Lonesome
- 6 Agatha



Tells

- 1 Red nails that grow into raking claws in the presence of unpunished sin
- 2 Black-feathered wings kept tightly furled under a long leather duster
- 3 Handmade headdress of bird skulls that softly trill at nearby traitors
- 4 Bloodshot eyes that see the tarry handprints of victims on guilty souls
- 5 Additional hidden mouth that murmurs about feasting on the unrepentant
- 6 Fiery whip that lashes out at kin-slayers if not carefully checked



FIDDLER



You're a fiddler. Your speciality is fast-talking and fast playing. Are you a literal fiddler, or do you play a different instrument? Do you run confidence games out of need or simply for the thrill of it? What is most enthralling about your music?

Names

- 1 Reuben "Smiley" Flowers
- 2 Quick-Step Yao
- 3 Cypress "Press" Fullerton
- 4 Ragtime Jo
- 5 Sophie "Songbird" Turner
- 6 Goldie Lott



Tunes

- 1 "Jackalopes Won't Hurt You," a lullaby for two voices
- 2 "The Narcissus Rag," a syncopated melody with a call-and-response chorus
- 3 "Way Down in the Belly of the Beast," a mournful dirge for harmonica
- 4 "Bowlful of Dust," a toe-tapping dance for banjo
- 5 "Wedding in Tombstone," a murder ballad for someone tickling the ivories
- 6 "The Conductor's Downfall," a fast, fiery fiddle tune for only the bravest of bows





TOMBOY

You're a tomboy. Your speciality is sneak attacks. Are you a youngster who's rougher and noisier than society wants you to be? Or are you older but still bucking convention and proving you're as tough as any? How come you've got no one to look after you?

Names

- 1 Dorothy "Jeopardy" Jefferson
- 2 Little Janie "The Twin"
- 3 Angel Blevins
- 4 Frankie Cain
- 5 Grazia Gallegos
- 6 The Urchin

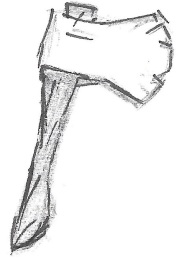


Concealable Weapons

- 1 Slingshot and pouch of stones, taken from Hangman's Creek
- 2 Brass knuckles, stolen from your uncle
- 3 Fancy silver spoon, sharpened into a shiv
- 4 A supply of stink bombs, traded for a kiss
- 5 Bullwhip, pilfered from an inattentive cowboy
- 6 Snubnose sleeve gun, special order from a friendly gunsmith



HOMESTEADER WIDOW



You're a homesteader widow. Your speciality is grit. Are you trying to keep your farm or business going after your husband's passing? Or are you fixing to move back East and start fresh? What became of your late husband, and how do you feel about it?

Names

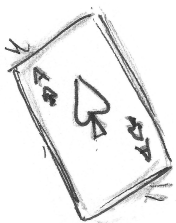
- 1 Gertrude MacPherson
- 2 Ebeneza Scrain
- 3 Mollie "Virtue" Byers
- 4 Cass Rookwood
- 5 Patience Garrison
- 6 Camila "Crimson" Martinez



Implements

- 1 Shovel, borrowed from the churchyard shed
- 2 Pickaxe, tragically never struck it rich
- 3 Shotgun, usually kept under the saloon's counter
- 4 Threshing scythe, surprisingly easy to wield
- 5 Woodman's axe, carefully cleaned of blood
- 6 Hunting knife, tucked safely into your bodice





GAMBLER

You're a gambler. Your speciality is million-to-one odds. Are you addicted to risky bets? Or could you quit anytime you want? What's the most profitable gamble you've ever made?

Names

- 1 Chancellor "Chance" Mahoney
- 2 Perry Decker
- 3 Margie "Money" Black
- 4 Hector "Boxcars" Ramirez
- 5 Lillie Liu
- 6 Blake Hopkinson



Aces

- 1 Ace of Spades, razor-edged
- 2 Ace of Hearts, marked with a kiss
- 3 Ace of Diamonds, gold-coated
- 4 Ace of Clubs, far heavier than you'd expect
- 5 Ace of Stars, entrancingly shiny
- 6 Ace of Needles, always points towards your prize



SAWBONES



You're a sawbones. Your speciality is anatomy. Do you have some kind of medical degree? Or are you more of a self-taught practitioner? Who's the last person who died under your knife?

Names

- 1 Silas Vantress
- 2 Minnie "The Angel" Snyder
- 3 Herbert "Bloodletter" Holman
- 4 Johnny Zhou
- 5 Mercy Buckner
- 6 Anita "Clemency" Clementina

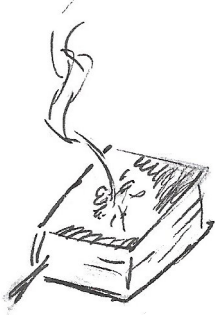


Medicinals

- 1 Strong, pure alcohol, for the pain
- 2 Set of scalpels, some missing
- 3 Syringe, and a bottle of horse tranquilizer
- 4 Jar of leeches, just in case
- 5 Ma Hershel's All-Purpose Remedy, good for what ails you
- 6 Bonesaw, kept sharp and shiny



REVIVALIST



You're a revivalist. Your speciality is sermonizing. Are you a true believer? Or did your faith dry up along the way? How'd you discover your talent for working a crowd?

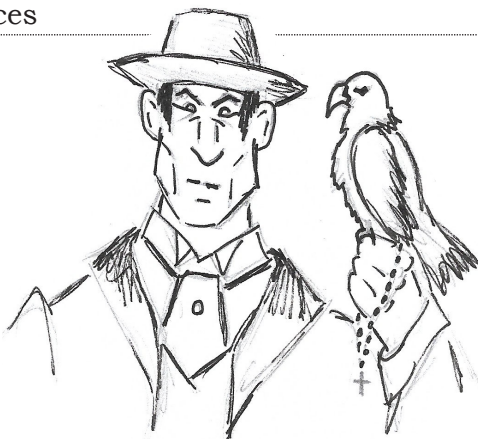
Names

- 1 Father Maurice "Moody" Lancaster
- 2 Sister Maria Reina
- 3 Apostle Jordan "River" Rutledge
- 4 Padre Juan Garcia
- 5 Reverend Blair Haggerty
- 6 Preacher Marguerite Moss



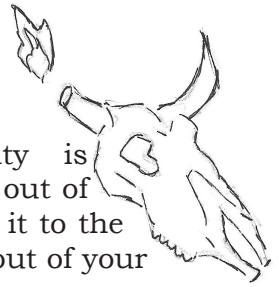
Relics

- 1 Grandpappy's hip flask, now half-full of holy water
- 2 A family Bible, Cousin Imogene's mad prophecies scrawled in the margins
- 3 A bright feather, plucked by your old teacher from the messenger who brought the new mission
- 4 Fragment of the Founder's skull, collected after the explosion
- 5 Uncle Aaron's top hat, through which he could view the world of spirits
- 6 Aunt Lucia's pet raven, who now repeats her gnomonic utterances



CATTLE RUSTLER

You're a cattle rustler. Your speciality is stampedes. Did you start on a life of crime out of desperation? Or were you just glad to stick it to the richest of the cattle barons? How'd you get out of your last brush with the law?



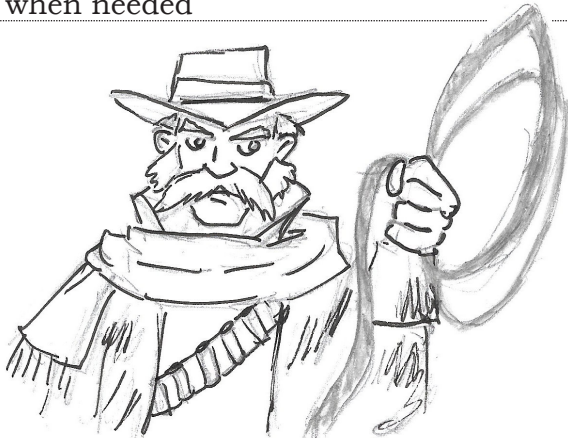
Names

- 1 Guy "Dynamite" Galloway
- 2 Paulie Tong
- 3 Caroline "Venom Eyes" Sawyer
- 4 Harper "No Horse" Freeman
- 5 Rufina Blackwell
- 6 Big Mateo Herrera



Tack

- 1 Lariat, used by your daddy to perform rope tricks to impress the rubes
- 2 Set of spurs, whose jaunty jangle keeps your spirits up
- 3 Electrified cattle prod, a finicky experimental prototype
- 4 Thick leather gloves, bearing the scars of fire and acid
- 5 Set of reins and harness, designed to quickly bridle an unruly steed
- 6 Brightly colored saddle blanket, doubles as a matador cape when needed





BLIND DRIFTER

You're a blind drifter. Your speciality is scavenging. Did you wander around so much because folks weren't hospitable? Or just because you didn't want to put down roots? Were you always blind?

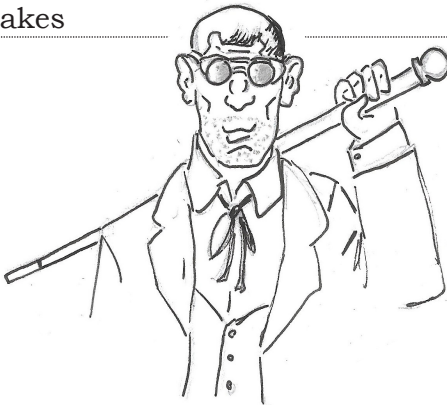
Names

- 1 Old Miss Maggie
- 2 Ezekiel Webb
- 3 Maurice "Two Lives" Franco
- 4 Maddox Chambers
- 5 Augusta "The Brains" McClure
- 6 Alejandra Aguilar



Knacks

- 1 Cane, doubles as a dowsing rod if you have a little faith
- 2 Sharp ears, can hear a cat tiptoe
- 3 Shiny smile, always elicits one in return—you can picture it so clear
- 4 Good nose, can sniff out anyone lying to you—usually
- 5 Quick, confident stride, can often fool someone into thinking you aren't blind
- 6 Strong judge of character, mostly assessed through handshakes



RUNAWAY BRIDE



You're a runaway bride. Your speciality is promises. Did you get cold feet and leave your prospective groom at the altar? Or was something waiting for you there that you just knew wasn't him? Why are you still in your dress?

Names

- 1 Dakota Jones
- 2 Flossie "Steel" Hensley
- 3 Renata Serrano
- 4 Beulah "Browneyes" Pickett
- 5 Susan "Shiner" Sun
- 6 Genevieve Martindale

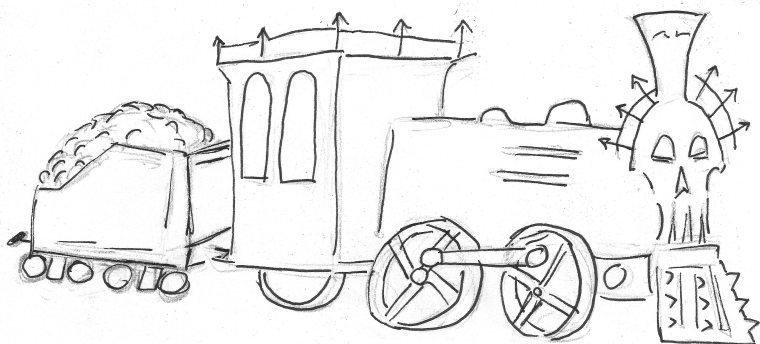


Accessories

- 1 Something borrowed, a fine lace veil your cousin pawned his gun to get for you
- 2 Something blue, Mama's lapis lazuli bracelet, which she swore wards off the evil eye
- 3 Something old, a locket Grandad pressed into your hands on his deathbed
- 4 Something new, a pair of shiny boots that cost a pretty penny from a big city cobbler
- 5 A bouquet of prairie thistles, chosen for both beauty and prickliness
- 6 The wedding rings, kept safe in a silk pouch and still unworn



GM MATERIALS



The Shape of a Game

As the GM, you have the honor and the responsibility to facilitate this game and conduct this Hellish train. Start the game session off with a discussion of safety tools (see page 3) and then lead your Desperados through character creation, answering questions as needed (see page 5).

While the Desperados are being built, make some rolls or choices of your own from the Train Tables (see page 35). This will help you specify where your train line runs, what fuel the train engine runs on, and (most importantly) the prize the Desperados are seeking. Make sure to tell the Desperados what the prize is as they work out the details of their motivations.

Ask players to introduce their Desperados in turn. Use follow-up questions to get specifics about their motivations. For example:

- ◆ What or who do you love?
- ◆ What sort of a prophecy are you following, and how do you feel about it?
- ◆ Whence this death wish, and how is it different from or tangled up with your desire for redemption?



Players may naturally start weaving relationships between their Desperados. If they don't, go ahead and prompt them. For example:

- ◆ Which of your fellow Desperados are you happiest to have at your side, and which do you have doubts about?
- ◆ You two are both motivated by faith—do you feel a kinship there, or does one of you regard the other as a dupe or a heretic?

You can roll for or privately decide on the train's Conductor at this point, or else play for a little bit first to get more of a sense of which Conductor will be thematically appropriate to your Desperados and your game. (See page 37.)

Each game of **The Great Soul Train Robbery** begins in the same place: the caboose of the train to Hell.

You might prompt the Desperados to discuss how they got there (leapt aboard as the train whistled past, stowed away while it stopped at a ghostly wayside station) but don't make them play it out with rolls. After all, why chance the heist not happening at all! Start in the caboose and let the Desperados make their way forward from there. The prize, of course, is rumored to wait at the very front of the train.

Use the train car tables to roll up some cars. Let the players know what the cars are as they enter them or when they'd plausibly have a good view ahead to gauge what's coming. It's good to roll up a few cars at a time so you're prepared if players get a good vantage point or breeze through a car faster than you'd expect. (See page 36.)

Each car should present challenges, obstacles, or temptations for the Desperados. It's okay if some take longer than others. Your Desperados might rush past the tanker car, with perhaps one rolling to resist the temptation to taste what's leaking from the tanker—only to wind up in the bar car, where the unruly patrons demand they all have a drink before they'll be allowed to pass.

The number of cars will depend on the time you have to play and the speed with which your players move through cars. When an hour remains in your session, start thinking about the Conductor's car. Consider using a montage (see page 30) before the final car if you want to create the sense of a more extensive train.

Present the players with climactic challenges and temptations in the Conductor's car. If there are people they've been seeking for revenge or reunion, put them there. If there are tensions or conflicts among the Desperados, have the Conductor inflame them. Pull out all the stops and see if the Desperados can claim their prize.



Wrap up the game by asking each player for an epilogue about what they do after the heist or what legacy their character leaves. Thank them for playing. If folks wish to do so, debrief after the game session so you and your fellow players can discuss what each person found most enjoyable or most moving in the game. Thank your fellow players once more.

Agendas

Your agendas represent the goals you pursue while running **The Great Soul Train Robbery**. Think of them as a way to gauge whether you're doing what the game needs you to do.

- ◆ **Make the heist tense and unearthly.**
- ◆ **Fill the Desperados' lives with action and allegory.**
- ◆ **Play to find out what happens.**



Make the heist tense and unearthly.

This is a robbery attempt on the train to Hell—it shouldn't be a cakewalk, and it shouldn't be mundane. Keep the possibility of detection, destruction, or worse alive at all times. Add elements of the otherworldly around every corner. Why should gamblers be gambling for money when they could be gambling for eyes or memories or shattered fragments of faith? Draw on the legends and superstitions of the Wild West to create a truly suspenseful and supernatural train robbery.

Fill the Desperados' lives with action and allegory.

Perhaps the Desperados want the heist to go off without a hitch and to remain essentially unchanged by their time aboard the train. Slim chance of that! You and your fellow players, of course, want to see the Desperados put on the ropes and (perhaps) pulling together when the going gets tough. You want the moral stakes of the Desperados' lives to be constantly on display, with passengers, antagonists, and other entities aboard the train serving to reflect and interrogate the Desperados' noble aspirations and sordid failings.

Play to find out what happens.

You don't know if the Desperados will succeed—or if they will be overcome, damned, or broken along the way. You also don't know how they'll affect the train and its passengers along the

way. Will one save a familiar Hellbound soul? Will another turn into something monstrous and take the Conductor's place? As the GM, you're not guiding the players to a predetermined outcome. The adventure may literally be on rails, but the players aren't being railroaded. You're staying curious all the way to the final car as you put forward challenges and ask them what they do.

Principles

Your principles tell you how to accomplish your agendas. They are ways to think about the setting and characters so that you and your fellow players can deliver on what the game promises to be.

- ◆ **Make the train alive and insidious.**
- ◆ **Address the Desperados, not the players.**
- ◆ **Ask provocative questions and build on the answers.**
- ◆ **Make your move, but play it close to your chest.**
- ◆ **Present chances for vices and sacrifices.**
- ◆ **Give each car and its occupants their own appetites.**
- ◆ **Dredge up old ghosts and past sins.**
- ◆ **Be a fan of the Desperados.**
- ◆ **Sometimes, call for a montage.**
- ◆ **Give them enough rope to hang themselves.**



Make the train alive and insidious.

The train to Hell is no mundane locomotive. Let every aspect of the setting have its own motive force, and let it be constantly trying to get under the Desperados' skins. Is the train trying to turn their hearts to stone to add fuel to its engine? How are the crew and passengers being twisted by their time aboard this mechanical monstrosity? Never let the setting lose its infernal edge.

Address the Desperados, not the players.

To help your players immerse themselves in their characters, talk to the Desperados directly. So rather than saying, "Alice, what does Mercy do?" say, "Mercy, your fellow Desperado is leveling his gun at you, a curious haze forming round his head. What do you do?" Put them right in their characters' boots and ask them where they walk...or run.

Ask provocative questions and build on the answers.

Turn to your players frequently with pointed questions, loaded with interest that get them invested in the train and the story aboard it. Don't go with a bald question like "Do you see anyone you recognize in this dining car?" when you can ask, "Frankie, how do you recognize the banker at the fancy table, and what terrible thing did he do to your family?"

Use the answers you get from your players. Build on them, weave them together, and bring them back later on when they aren't expecting it! Players are more invested in things they have created. That's why you should start asking these questions during character creation and tie in their answers whenever you can aboard the train.

Make your move, but play it close to your chest.

As you make moves in the game (see the next section for more), don't feel the need to spell out what move you're making. Simply tell the Desperados what's happening in the fiction—how the situation aboard the train is developing (or devolving) around them. Don't say, "I'm making the train even weirder"; tell them what's getting stranger about the train!

Present chances for vices and sacrifices.

You're interested in whether the Desperados find redemption or damnation along the way, so give them chances to make choices. Press drinks on teetotalers, lure gamblers with games, and remind hardscrabble survivors of how the well-fed citizens aboard this train oppressed them in life. If a Desperado seems to be angling for a costly sacrifice or for something to trigger a Descent flashback, play right along. That's the good stuff you want to see during this heist.

Give each car and its occupants their own appetites.

The train cars and the beings inside them have their own stories going on. Think about how the arrival of the Desperados can intersect with them. Are the Desperados simply an annoyance hindering the luxury passengers from enjoying a pampered ride? Or could the Desperados be recruited to help a jealous passenger usurp a more choice seat?

Think about what the passengers and staff of the train want. Who's desperate for an escape? Who's just trying to claw their way to the top of some hierarchy? Who's convinced amassing more gold will finally bring them true happiness? The train itself can want things, too. How do different cars try to warp and manipulate the Desperados to serve their inhuman appetites?

Dredge up old ghosts and past sins.

All these Desperados have histories. You'll hear about some of them as players call for Descent flashbacks. Bring back people from their past, either as passengers on the train or through memories, hopes, and regrets manifesting to the Desperados. This is a story of possible redemption or damnation. Never let the Desperados forget what they might need to be redeemed from—or who from their lives might be able to offer them a reminder of grace.

Be a fan of the Desperados.

This is a story about the Desperados. Let them be the protagonists, whether they choose to be heroes, antiheroes, or simply hell-bent criminals. Put challenges in their way, but also root for them to show off what makes them unique. As a fan, you want to see that Sharpshooter go in outgunned and still outshoot the opposition. You also want to see the quiet moment when the Sharpshooter reflects on a lifetime of living by the gun.

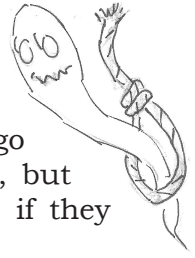
Sometimes, call for a montage.

You don't have to play out every moment of the heist beat-by-beat and roll-by-roll. If the time seems right, you can call for a montage, handing over more narrative power to the players to cover more territory quickly.

One montage approach is to ask each player to describe the challenge of a train car and then have the player to their right describe how they help overcome it. Continue the montage until every player has described a challenge and the overcoming of a challenge. Using this sort of montage before the climactic Conductor's car creates the sense of a longer, fuller train.

Give them enough rope to hang themselves.

The mechanics of the game leave Desperado endgames largely up to the players, but if one of their stats is creeping higher or they've already taken two Scars, start dangling opportunities to go out in a blaze of glory. Never force their hands, but keep things tense and high-stakes so they can, if they want, choose a hill to die on.



Moves

When a player rolls a miss, looks at you expectantly, or hands you a golden opportunity, these moves will help you advance the story. Choose moves that follow from the fiction, but don't be afraid to make as hard a move as you deem appropriate. After all, it's no fun if things are easy for the Desperados, is it?

Demand a price.

As you shuffle into the bar car, Desperados, the bartender catches your eyes. He's inhumanly tall and pale, and he smiles a wry smile. "Well, strangers," he says, "as it happens, no one passes through this car without having a drink and sharing a story. We're all friends here, after all. What'll it be?"

Call their bluff.

Maddox, you've donned the uniform of a fallen Pinkerton to sneak through the armory car. A Fury holds up a commanding hand. "You're no Pinkerton!" she spits. "You smell of shame and doubt. What is the meaning of this charade, mortal?"

Raise the alarm.

Deacon Birchwood, you've been trying to sweet-talk this elderly passenger in the luxury car, but she's not buying it. Her hand is creeping towards the bell rope next to her seat. You're pretty sure that summons security. What do you do?

Open fire.

Patience, you sniped the imp manning the Gatling gun just fine, but he lets out a scream. Suddenly, gunshots are ringing out from inside the armory car. A bullet goes whistling by your ear. There's clearly a bunch of armed guards trying to blast you to smithereens. What do you do?

Make the train even weirder.

Oscar, the quiet car is freaking you out. You can't seem to focus on the mouths of the passengers; every time you try to look at them, your eyes just slide off. Your guns, though, are starting to sing, softly, about every bullet you've fired from them...and where those bullets landed. Slowly, every single mouthless person in the car turns to stare at you. What do you do?

Show the consequences of their lives of vice.

The compartment door slides open, and who should you see on the other side but that nice old widow you defrauded and left destitute with your oily charms. "Maddox," she says, "is that you? There's been some terrible mistake! I don't belong here. Tell them, Maddox!" What do you do?

Twist their bodies.

Patience, you've triumphed over that Fury guarding the car, all right. You feel a wave of righteous rage crest within you. Behind you, your fellow Desperados can see something else: jet black feathers starting to jut out from your shoulders, poking through your dress. They look just like the Fury's wings. Does one of you tell Patience?

Dangle their prize in front of them.

The Conductor grins with a mouth far too wide for his face. “I’m impressed you’ve made it this far. I really am.” He gestures toward the six pairs of angel wings. “I can part with one pair, but only to the holiest among you. Deacon Birchwood, if you turn your gun on that crew of sinners with you, this fine pair of angel wings is all yours.” What do you do?

Offer a costly opportunity.

Oscar, you’ve got a clear shot on the Pinkerton kicking the stuffing out of your fellow Desperado, but if you take it, the sound will alert the other Pinkertons to your exact location. You’re good, but you’re not sure if you can really take them all on. What do you do?

Turn their move back on them.

Patience, you’ve put on your most charming smile to get one over on this gambler. To your surprise, he smiles right back, with genuine warmth. “It does an old man good to meet a kind soul in this place!” He offers you a hand. “Tell you what: forget the card game; would you do me the honor of a dance?” Almost despite yourself, you start to feel won over by his bravado. What do you do?

After every move, ask “What do you do?”

As in each of these examples, give the player a chance to respond after each move you make. Don’t pile move upon move so that the players feel lacking in agency. Open the floor to them and see what they do—and be ready to be surprised. Players don’t always make what you think is the obvious choice.

FAQ

Q: Is this the real Wild West? Does everyone think it's normal that there's a train to Hell?

A: Yes and no. It's the West as seen in its own mythology with a healthy dose of Dante and Homer added. The Desperados have led eventful lives, perhaps encountering the supernatural before, and therefore may assume a hard-bitten seen-it-all attitude about the train to Hell. But not everyone on the frontier takes the Devil for granted, and passengers aboard the train may be a touch confused about their true nature and destination.

Q: Are the Desperados already dead?

A: Probably not. If a player decides to go this direction, it can work. But by default, assume the Desperados are alive and still capable of growing and changing. The drama of the heist is that they might find redemption or damnation along the way.

Q: What happens to souls who die aboard the train? Or are flung off the train?

A: It's uncertain, but likely nothing good. Feel free to ask the Desperados what theories and rumors they've heard. Don't feel a strong need to solve that mystery for them.

Q: How did the Desperados manage to get aboard the train?

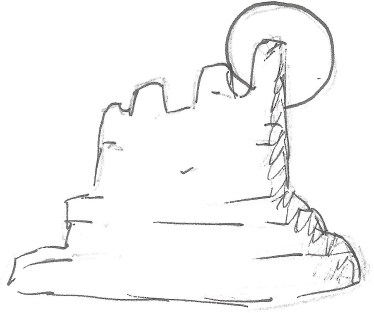
A: Don't worry about this too much. Usually if you tell players they're aboard the caboose they will simply accept it. If your table wants to, you can add an opening montage of the Desperados sneaking or scrambling aboard, guided by rumor and folklore.



TRAIN TABLES

The train runs through:

- 1 The Highwater Line
- 2 The Burnt-Over Lands
- 3 The Primrose Path
- 4 The Fallen City
- 5 The Pit
- 6 The Frozen-Over Lands

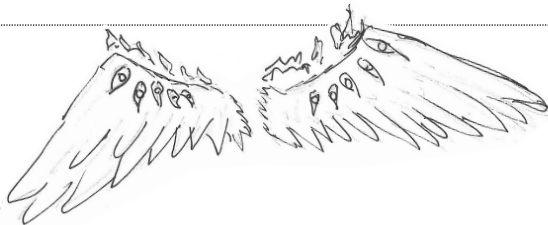


The train runs on:

- 1 Blood—and billows forth deep red smoke
- 2 Bones—and billows forth dusty gray clouds
- 3 Nightmares—and billows forth screams of terror
- 4 Good intentions—and billows forth sweet-smelling poison
- 5 Lucre—and billows forth acrid green mist
- 6 Hearts that have turned to stone—and billows forth thunder and lightning

Prizes (rumors say they're up near the front of the train):

- 1 The biggest gold bullion score in history
- 2 A particular soul (I suppose if you succeed, this will turn out to have been merely purgatory)
- 3 A song so pure the Devil couldn't let humanity have it
- 4 Six pairs of contraband angel wings
- 5 The deeds to your town, sold by unscrupulous bankers
- 6 A golden prickly pear cactus, whose fruit cures any illness



Train Cars (see next section for more regarding each car):

- 1 Dining car. You might be on the menu. (p. 38)
- 2 Sleeper car. What dreams may come... (p. 39)
- 3 Luxury car. Passengers are worried you'll rob them of their baggage. (P. 39)
- 4 Armory. There's a brimstone Gatling gun up top. (p. 40)
- 5 Refrigerator car. Not a place you want to cool your heels. (p. 40)
- 6 Hopper car. Takes a lot of fuel to keep those big wheels rolling. (p. 41)

- 1 Flatcar. Souls aren't the only cargo aboard. (p. 41)
- 2 Livestock car. No, they don't all go to Heaven. (p. 42)
- 3 Saloon car. You'll be *shocked* to find gambling in this establishment. (p. 42)
- 4 Tanker car. A liquid container this big can inspire a powerful thirst. (p. 43)
- 5 Railroad crane. Authorized personnel only. (p. 43)
- 6 Bar car. Pick your poison. (p. 44)

- 1 Quiet car. Silence is golden. (p. 44)
- 2 Boxcar. A hiding place for those beneath anyone's notice. (p. 45)
- 3 Observation car. For sightseers to take in the view. (p. 45)
- 4 Private car. A privilege for the *crème de la crème* of the damned. (p. 46)
- 5 Post office car. A place enveloped in paper and secrets. (p. 47)
- 6 Engine room. The belly of the beast. (p. 47)

Train Personnel and Passengers:

- 1 Winged, whip-wielding Furies.
- 2 Pinkerton guards with three-headed hellhounds on leashes.
- 3 Lowly imps extracting fuel for the train.
- 4 Souls the Desperados would want vengeance on.
- 5 Souls pleading to come along with the Desperados.
- 6 Inveterate gamblers ready to challenge all comers to games of chance and skill.

Complications (use whenever necessary, especially on tied rolls):

- 1 The train comes to a sudden stop as a herd of ghost bison crosses the tracks.
- 2 A second team of Desperados after the same prize boards the train.
- 3 A piece of equipment or loot betrays the Desperados, blabbing their secrets.
- 4 The Conductor cuts their losses, uncoupling the Desperados' car from the one in front of it.
- 5 Train personnel perform a song that compels all souls to get in rhythm and obey.
- 6 The train approaches Hell's gates, which read: "Abandon all hope, you who enter here."

The Conductor (waiting at the front of the train for a climactic confrontation):

- 1 One of the Seven Deadly Sins (Pride, Envy, Wrath, Sloth, Lust, Greed, Gluttony).
- 2 One of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Famine, Pestilence, War, Death).
- 3 The Archfiend of Hooks.
- 4 The souls of three famed criminals, monstrously fused.
- 5 Someone whose life you took, wielding a gun called Recompense.
- 6 The Devil, ready to make a deal.

- 1 Minos, Hanging Judge of the Dead.
- 2 The Great Red Dragon of Revelation.
- 3 Cain, the First Desperado.
- 4 The False God of Slaughter, his head a golden cow skull.
- 5 The Vulture King.
- 6 Old Lady Night, Mother of Affliction.



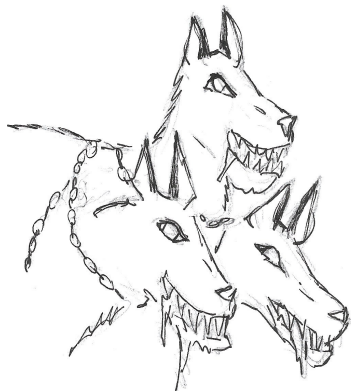
TRAIN CARS

Use the following pages as inspiration for the sorts of things the Desperados might find in each car of the train to Hell. Consider these to be jumping-off points for your imagination, not a canon you must rigidly follow.

Dining Car

You might be on the menu. The clink of cutlery. The patter of wait staff. A feast for Hellbound palates. What meal do you smell here that you thought you'd never have again?

- 1 You are immediately ushered to a table by a solicitous maitre d'. You're handed menus with two items: your favorite meal and your last meal.
- 2 Imposing bankers messily devour plates full of gold coins, greenbacks, and an entire miniature model of the Desperados' town.
- 3 Vulture-faced kitchen staff bustle about in starched aprons, ready to push interfering Desperados into the belly of their massive oven.
- 4 Everyone sees delicious food placed in front of themselves but bowls full of dust in front of other diners. Food consumed here weighs heavy in the pit of your stomach, slowing you down on future challenges.
- 5 An imperious, well-coiffed lady calls you over, mistaking you for waiters, to complain about her meal. She becomes increasingly belligerent and demanding when corrected.
- 6 A glimpse below the tables shows diners being absorbed by their chairs. The whole car is alive and slowly digesting its occupants.



Sleeper Car

What dreams may come... A soporific drone from all directions. Starched sheets stretched tight. Thick blinds blocking light. What keeps you up at night that the sleepers here seem untroubled by?

- 1** Those who were slothful in life sleep away the journey, including someone you know whose inaction cost you dearly.
- 2** An imp harvests nightmares from sedate passengers via crude trepanation.
- 3** Unseen censers fill the car with smothering incense that makes you sluggish.
- 4** A Fury sings a lullaby to a restive passenger, laying a finger to her lips in warning if you approach.
- 5** A sleeping passenger grabs a Desperado, staring at them with unseeing eyes and murmuring nonsensical regrets.
- 6** A tempting dream of success without struggle manifests in front of one Desperado. The others can see the nightmare beneath.

Luxury Car

Passengers are worried you'll rob them of their baggage. Sparkling, cruel conversation. Gilded walls gleaming in lamplight. The stylish way to go down in flames. What do you see here that you immediately covet?

- 1** Souls here gild themselves with a metallic coating that they say helps them retain their personalities in spite of the vagaries of the journey. Do you partake?
- 2** A berth here has one of your names on it, inscribed on a gold plate. Inside is a vision of luxurious rest.
- 3** It's a double-decker car, and complex etiquette determines who gets the choice seats up top. Envious souls below try to enlist you in a scheme to rise to the second level.
- 4** A nervous, well-dressed passenger has a hand on the bellpull next to them, ready to summon Pinkertons to deal with Desperados.
- 5** The longer you stand on the rich, plush carpet, the more it seems like you are sinking into it and the less you seem to care.
- 6** In a spacious steamer trunk, you find expensive articles of clothing like red leather gloves or a black silk neckerchief—all of which fit you perfectly.

Armory

There's a brimstone Gatling gun up top. The scent of gunpowder. Claws clinking against blades. The forces of Hell, waiting for the call to battle. How can you tell the armory was specifically tasked with stamping out Desperados like yourselves?

- 1 The walls are hung with implements of punishment—whips, pitchforks, pokers—that rattle eagerly when you approach them.
- 2 Bored Furies and Pinkertons are gambling, grumbling, and smoking to pass the time.
- 3 The Gatling gun can swivel all the way round to fire burning brimstone in any direction.
- 4 An emissary of the Conductor arrives for a surprise inspection, chiding guards for not keeping their uniforms up to regulation tidiness.
- 5 The wall features an alarm system that alerts the guards in the armory of troubles on the train with a set of cacophonous bells.
- 6 Guards are patrolling the roof of the car, occasionally taking potshots at passing buzzards.

Refrigerator Car

Not a place you want to cool your heels. Metal and glass, chilled to the touch. Breath visible in the air. Heavy doors to keep in the cold. What or who is being kept on ice?

- 1 Shelves are lined with clinking glass bottles, full of the milk of human kindness.
- 2 All along the car are berths where treacherous souls sit and shiver away the last glimmers of warmheartedness.
- 3 A nurse-like Fury inspects the inmates of the car, making sure the treatments are taking effect.
- 4 Your breath spells out words in the frosty air—the words you most regret saying in your life.
- 5 Frost begins forming on your extremities, holding you to the floor or causing your weapons to painfully adhere to your hands.
- 6 Phantom fingers tap along the glass of refrigerated compartments, making pure, clear chimes to lure the curious.

Hopper Car

Takes a lot of fuel to keep those big wheels rolling. A half-filled pail and an abandoned spade. A tingly sense of untapped power in the air. A treacherous walk over a shifting heap. What type of fuel is stockpiled here?

- 1 Blood congeals in massive, teetering vats. A complicated heating mechanism is warming up one vat that's clearly about to be tapped.
- 2 Bones—human, animal, and other—fill the whole car. Every step sends up a choking cloud of fine-ground bone dust, and a misplaced foot could send you tumbling through some behemoth's ribcage.
- 3 Nightmares caged and stacked, chittering and cooing. What innocuous form do they attempt to hide behind?
- 4 Good intentions are almost overflowing from the car. What substance do they take on, and how can you recognize your own?
- 5 Lucre is piled up all round the car in wads and chests, attracting hungry moths.
- 6 Hearts that have turned to stone jostle each other, some hardened by cruelty into coarse granite, some crushed by disappointments into layered slate.

Flatcar

Souls aren't the only cargo aboard. Footsteps ringing off steel deck and bulkheads. An outdoor view hampered by looming stacks of lumber. Dark materials transported for infernal designs. How can you discern the wicked work these materials were put to on earth?

- 1 A granite millstone blocks the path. A Desperado can just shift it if they put their back into it, but it has a tendency to roll right back to where it started.
- 2 Stacks of pipes strain against their bindings, screeching as if for freedom when the wind blows through them.
- 3 A pile of massive bones exudes a scent of staleness and exhaustion, as if your own bones are fossilizing as you smell it.
- 4 Rag-and-bone bundles lashed together and neatly labeled with passengers' names. Wouldn't want to lose your baggage on the journey!
- 5 A grumbling imp arrives to collect a barrel of rusty nails.
- 6 Steel bars are stacked in great towers around you, two of which have partially collapsed into each other, leaving a narrow crawlspace in between them.

Livestock Car

No, they don't all go to Heaven. Indistinct bulks moving behind iron bars—with at least one cage empty, door hanging open. A powerful smell of dung and rotten meat. Fodder slopping from a pail. What's that hissing noise?

- 1 Horses, cows, and sheep that initially appear normal, but they are flesh-eating and ravenous, with bloodstained snouts.
- 2 The car is crowded with sideshow circus animals looking pitiful but defensive—lions, tigers, and bears, oh my.
- 3 Snakes. So many snakes.
- 4 A mythical menagerie includes a many-headed hydra and a fire-breathing chimera.
- 5 Living idols—a calf with a golden hide, a goat with a flensed face and bare skull—demanding worship.
- 6 Creatures bred to torment the damned: a brutish unicorn with matted fur and a red-hot horn, dogs with bees in their mouths...

Saloon Car

You'll be shocked to find gambling in this establishment. Raucous laughter and howls of despair. A many-armed dealer using fancy shuffling techniques. A true den of iniquity, but at least they're happy to deal you in. What has been staked that you desperately want?

- 1 Someone known to a Desperado is deep in a game of blackjack, obviously growing desperate and ready to stake their last remaining shred of hope.
- 2 At a faro table, gamblers are playing for eyes; all sorts of eyes, human and otherwise, are piled on the table. Some players have been blinded along the way and are playing to get their original peepers back.
- 3 Two someones known to a Desperado are running a game of three-card monte, clearly collaborating to swindle the rubes at their table.
- 4 A seat opens up at a poker table where the chips are cherished memories.
- 5 You might lose some of your own but walk away with another's happiest moments.
- 6 In one corner of the room, bettors are egging on challengers for a bare-knuckle boxing champion, a cyclops who's taking on all comers.
- 6 A massive roulette wheel is spun by a blindfolded woman. The wheel depicts various windfalls and calamities, and the ball bears the name of someone you left back home.

Tanker Car

A liquid container this big can inspire a powerful thirst. A mysterious sloshing. A ladder leading to a hatch on top. A small leak tempts a Desperado to try just a sip. What is Hell drinking that leaves your land parched and dry? The tanker holds...

- 1 ...Hope, clear and fresh as rainwater, and just as rare in these parts.
- 2 ...Tears, bitter and salty but purifying, a gift too few taste when arid obstinacy reigns.
- 3 ...Moonshine, and not the liquor kind, but liquid lunar light that guides you through the darkness.
- 4 ...The Dew of Innocence, collected from the petals of tiger lilies and lilacs. A little applied to the eyes lets you see through the soot of cynicism.
- 5 ...The Milk of Human Kindness, slowly curdling into hostility in the unrefrigerated tanker.
- 6 ...The Oil of Gladness, with a rich taste that brings you right back to the last moment you felt genuine joy.

Railroad Crane

Authorized personnel only. A creaking monstrosity. Open to the elements. An invitation to try something foolhardy. What does it look like they mean to build?

- 1 The crane is covered with a heavy canvas tarp, leaving the contraption a mysterious bulk at first.
- 2 A dangling hook swings closer and closer to whichever Desperado feels guiltiest.
- 3 The crane has a strange set of controls, more like a pipe organ than a usual railway crane. Care to pull out the stops?
- 4 The crane looks like it could provide access to the roof of the next car...if you're bold enough to climb out along the arm.
- 5 The train grinds to a halt, and crew members prepare the crane to hoist barrelfuls of locusts into the air to plague the surrounding land.
- 6 The crane's mechanism is powered by a steam boiler that runs on the same fuel as the train engine. It's hungry for more and asks passing Desperados to feed it.

Bar Car

Pick your poison. A wooden bar polished to a mirror-like shine. Bottles clinking and rattling with the train's motion. A solicitous bartender taking slurred orders. You don't think you're passing through here without a drink, do you? What'll it be, Desperados?

- 1 Rye whiskey with a dash of brimstone. Makes your heart beat louder, makes your voice seem softer, lights a tiny fire in your guts.
- 2 Sarsaparilla spiked with a touch of lotus. Fills you with fizzy contentment as your troubles seem so far away and hard to recall clearly.
- 3 A cheap bottle of beer. The biggest tippler in the place will treat this as a challenge and loudly demand you match him bottle for bottle.
- 4 A fancy mixed drink like a gin sling. It refreshes the palate and leaves you feeling indisputably superior to the mangy crowd around you.
- 5 A black coffee. They serve coffee blacker here than anywhere else. Everything around starts to look a little desaturated, too. It becomes harder to look at faces and easier to look for weapons.
- 6 A tall glass of water. Regulars at the bar will treat this as a provocation and get ready to fight. Expect bottles to be smashed against the bartop.

Quiet Car

Silence is golden. An eerie stillness that almost bowls you over. A chorus of emphatic shushing in retort to the merest of murmurs. A respite on the way to pandemonium. What words of comfort die on your lips as you enter?

- 1 Pale bats flutter down from the ceiling to latch onto the noisiest person present and siphon away their voice.
- 2 Souls with mouths sewn shut visibly strain to say something to the Desperados.
- 3 A Fury, herself silent as the grave, makes passengers turn out their pockets to make sure they aren't smuggling any contraband words into the car.
- 4 Souls who saw evil being done in life and said nothing are forced to serve as mute sentries, their desperate gestures of warning ignored.
- 5 Even subvocal verbalized thoughts are prohibited. If you think words too loudly, a white-hot aura of shame will blaze to life around you.
- 6 A loud enough noise will cause the Quiet Car to flicker out of existence, dumping its occupants onto the tracks below.

Boxcar

A hiding place for those beneath anyone's notice.. A heap of final straws. The creak of the door's strained hinges. Hobo signs limned on the walls. What story do the markings tell of the Desperados' previous acts of generosity or indifference?

- 1 The smallest things you did not give to those in need have wound up here to bar your way. A mound of spare coins, a fountain of cups of water.
- 2 A soul, bound and gagged, is guarded by a far worse sinner who is planning a trade at the final destination.
- 3 The door rolls open, allowing the ill wind to pluck at travelers and shriek their secrets aloud.
- 4 The Furies, with no use for them, have tossed former travelers' last hopes in here in a jumbled sack, wriggling like blind kittens.
- 5 The car is heaped with casual cruelties, whose thorns prick you with the slights you barely recall that scourged others.
- 6 The carved hobo signs manifest themselves on your flesh and fade only if proven false.

Observation Car

For sightseers to take in the view. Only window frames and no glass, every seat facing the landscapes. No disguising yourself, no place to turn but to the truth. Look out on the limbo around you, as others look into you. How do you know that you are being judged?

- 1 Owls lazily fly alongside the train, weaving through the open windows, alighting inside the car, their eyes following the Desperados.
- 2 A second-level balcony circles the car under a domed sunroof. On this level, souls sit observing the first floor below and commenting wryly.
- 3 The lantern's light flickers, and it turns to watch you with a winking oily eye, the soot from the smoke burning your sins on the walls.
- 4 The passengers seated all around aren't watching you at all. They're ripe for the picking...but any loot you take will hang above your head, tantalizingly.
- 5 You spot among the passengers someone who held you in low esteem. Their judgments cloud your thoughts and fog up your vision.
- 6 Security floods the car to flush you out. Water rises to pour out of the open windows—whose heavy conscience will cause them to slip under?

Private Car

A privilege for the crème de la crème of the damned. Velvet curtains to smother the noise of the train. Faceless attendants in dark, dapper suits. Gilt-framed mirrors everywhere you look. Who has earned such luxury? The car holds...

1 ...Mephistopheles: the most decorated tempter of Hell, going home after another successful tour. He only needs to look in your eyes to have the perfect offer ready for you.

2 ...Helen of Troy: the one, the only, the face that launched a thousand ships. Her beauty isn't her only attraction; she's ridden this line a hundred times, and she has some stories to tell...for a price.

3 ...A Desperado's Little Sister: but that can't be right! She was alive and well and good as gold, last time you got word from home. What happened to her, and why does she have that hungry smile?

4 ...The Banker: one of you recognizes him as the man with the shiny smile who talked your father into signing that loan. He said it was just business when he foreclosed on the farm and your father hanged himself. Will you take your revenge now?

5 ...The Preacher: he's got a golden tongue and a heart of coal. He tells you that riding this train is the will of God and it will take you to Paradise. The more he speaks, the more reasonable he sounds.

6 ...Nobody: when you enter the car, there's no one there but the attendants...who greet one of you as the rightful occupant.



Post Office Car

A place enveloped in paper and secrets. Rows upon rows of canvas bags, filled with sorted letters. The sounds of fluttering paper. The flashing shine of a silver letter opener. Buried among the mail is a package addressed to one of you: what could be inside?

- 1 Seven azure-hued men each with seven deft arms quickly sort mail, their limbs a whirlwind of activity.
- 2 A burst of wind through a car door scatters all loose letters, turning the car into an unsorted sea of paper.
- 3 A soul has hidden themselves in the car in search of a letter they desperately want to prevent being sent. Do you help them locate it?
- 4 One of the mail sorters wordlessly hands you a sealed letter. It is from someone you loved and addressed to someone who wronged you.
- 5 A large, gilded cage rattles in the corner. Inside is a magnificent eagle which screeches if a piece of mail is opened by someone other than the addressee.
- 6 The train snags a canvas bag from a mail hook, and a second bag the size of a full-grown man comes along with it, writhing and struggling.

Engine Room

The belly of the beast. Sizzling and clanking. Unnaturally hot and bright. The machinery of damnation on an industrial scale. What glimpse of the mechanism draws you, despite your better judgment?

- 1 Ape-like imps scurry over the mechanism, adjusting levers and cursing at dials.
- 2 Crates hold fuel sources sorted by purity, with the best reserved for the Conductor's personal use.
- 3 A particularly unlucky soul is hooked into the machine directly, pleading for release.
- 4 A massive safe boasts a vault-like door and strange hydraulic locking mechanism. Could it hide your prize?
- 5 The shadowy foreman of the engine room assumes you are the extra help he requested from the Conductor and starts assigning you delicate tasks.
- 6 A brawny minotaur works a set of bellows by hand, chanting a blasphemous work song as he goes.

THREE DOZEN TRINKETS AND TRIFLES

Loot you might find aboard the train to Hell. When Desperados pick pockets or raid luggage, choose from these lists or else roll two dice to discover what they lay their hands on.



Thirty silver dollars, slightly bloodstained.



Contraband angel down feathers.



A fistful of explosive bullets.



A flask with a few swigs of invigorating, brimstone-y liquor.



A deck that always deals its owner royal flushes.



A whistle too high-pitched for human ears, very effective on hellhounds.



A wanted poster offering a handsome reward for one of your fellow Desperados, dead or alive.



A bag of hard candy.



A mason jar containing one human conscience, never used.



A pocket watch with hands that point to the holder's time of death.



An elegant knife with the name of someone you love inscribed on the blade.



Legal papers granting the bearer rights to a grand house left rotting in a ghost town.



A ticket to ride the train, still unpunched.



A rifle with no bullets and a strange chamber so no ordinary bullet caliber will fit.



A harmonica that creates a dust devil when played.



A nugget of fool's gold that appears to be real gold to everyone but its owner.



A cross necklace on a chain. The cross burns you when you touch it.



A saddle and bridle sized for something bigger than a horse.



A tiny baby jackalope, its horns just starting to poke out of its fur.



A railway spike of purest orichalcum, harder than diamond.



Minotaur jerky.



The skull of a philosopher, still voluble.



A passel of letters from a famous beauty.



A pair of boots with metal wings where you'd expect spurs.



A wide-brimmed black hat that cloaks the wearer in shadow.



A white Stetson that gives the wearer an aura of righteous authority.



A silk handkerchief with numbers written on it—could they be a safe combination?



A slice of the darkest, moistest chocolate cake imaginable.



A half-eaten pomegranate that, upon close inspection, is full of rubies.



A tattered Bible with a bullet lodged inside it.



A beautiful comb made of bone that whispers softly of what you've lost.



Deeds to a homestead in far-off Purgatory.



A set of skeleton keys sized for doors, trunks, and handcuffs.



A cavalry saber polished into a perfect mirror.



A map to a gold find, lost after the discoverers killed each other.



A single long pinion feather, crackling with electricity.



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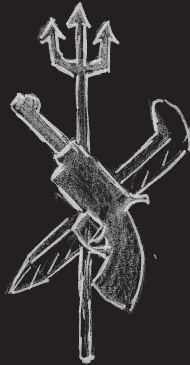


On the road to Hell there was a railway line.

An express train to the infernal city of Dis, crewed by Furies and carrying treasure and souls to damnation.

You're going to rob it.

You're a motley crew of Desperados with mixed motives. Will you claim your prize from the train? Or will you be overcome, damned, or broken by the heist?



2-6 players • 1 GM • 2-4 hours

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