

RULE THE RAILS

a Risus one-page setting by Erik Jensen
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*Steam-driven psychic anarchist Robin Hoods
use their sentient choo-choo trains to take on
the fascist overclass! **GET STEAMED!***

HARD TIMES ON SODOM

Generations have passed since the Second War and the Collapse. Here on the accursed Isle of Sodom, cut off from whatever yet remains of civilization, all life centers around the rails. To transport goods or people across the rocky, dangerous terrain, we must use the railways left for us by our ancestors; and the Syndicate controls the rails. Hidebound and cruel, the Top Hat Syndicate dominates the Isle, meting out harsh justice, controlling all commerce, and eliminating 'undesirables' without hesitation; sentient steam-trains unload jackbooted soldiers to shake down villagers and claim the Syndicate's 'share' of everything. Then, suddenly – hope. Above the chuffing of the engines comes a shout – a flag appears through the steam and smoke – the guerilla revolution has come at last! A railroad underground composed of freethinking gypsy anarchists, steam-tech gadgeteers, fringe philosophers, rogue psychics – these are the **railgangers**, and they have sworn to tear down the Top Hat Syndicate and liberate Sodom once and for all!

TECH AND TRAINS *put a fire in your boiler!*

The Isle of Sodom runs on coal and steam: from the turbines which provide electric lights to the Syndicate buildings in the capital, to the small forges and factories which produce the island's few machined goods. Yet the chief marvel of Sodom must surely be the Engines – sentient train engines with clockwork brains, existing since before the Collapse – and the way these living locomotives bond with the gifted psychic humans known as drivers. A driver must tame a ronin engine the same way a cowboy would buck a bronco – with guile, grit, and persistence. Once bonded, however, a driver and engine are partners until death. The rebel railgangers have amongst them a number of Engines, but the Top Hat Syndicate has their fair share, and heavily armed at that. This anarchist revolution will be fought not only over the rails, but on them as well. Railgangers customize their Engines with crazy paint jobs as well as deadly weapons – everything from cannon and turreted rifles to whirling saw-blades and any other steam-powered whatsits the mad gadgeteers can come up with. The railways are the arteries of commerce, and whoever controls them, controls Sodom. Beyond the towns and factories and rail-lines, the island is dangerous and chaotic, crawling with brigands, steam-cyborg mutants, and strange beasts in whose origins might lie even stranger truths about the Isle, and the time before the Collapse.

ENGINES AND PARTY CONCEPT *time to link up!*

You could get really wacky and have the talking trains count as PCs, but it is suggested you treat the trains as 'mecha': either every PC gets one, or PCs who don't bond with an Engine get some extra bump instead (a larger cliché, an extra cliché, whatever). Optionally, some PCs may have sentient companions who are non-motive (a dining car, a caboose) that get dragged along behind one of the fighting-trains. PC concepts can run the gamut, from soldiers and thieves to rabble-rousers and minor psychics; anybody who would flee from, and fight, the Top Hat Syndicate's iron fist. If your PC is bonded to an Engine, make sure you have a proper description for your Engine's iron-and-brass face, and a positive/negative personality for it ("fearless but bumbling", "loyal but proud", "curious but naive", "powerful but haughty").

SUGGESTED TRAIN-RELATED CLICHES *get trains on the brain!*

Driver – Skilled in bonding with Engines, driving them, spurring them on to incredible stunts (including improbable jumps), and mentally triggering the psychoreactive track switches from a distance.

Conductor – Fencing stolen goods, locating unusual items, underworld & black market contacts.

Engineer – Building, fixing, jury-rigging, and tricking out Engines and other steam-powered gear.

Also, whenever you pump up a cliché, you should refer to the act as "being Really Useful". Horrible train-related puns should be worth something as well, especially if you're playing this as a one-shot.

SCENARIOS *get moving!*

* One of the high muckety-mucks of the Syndicate – the so-called Obese Mastermind – is supposed to be passing through your railgang's turf. Dare you try to take him out? * While scouting in the woods for food, you find an old, rusty Engine that perhaps has a spark of life yet remaining. Can you tame it, or is it an insane, man-killing rogue? And how will you get it back to the rails? * Your gang's hijinks have cost the Syndicate too much, and they will take it no longer; several legendary Brake-Men – expert assassins – have been dispatched to eliminate your entire railgang. * A rival railgang has gotten their hands on some unusual coal which seems to greatly improve the speed of their Engines...but now the Engines seem to be growing addicted to the stuff... * plus all the obvious scenarios of train-battles, heists, and general Robin Hoodery!

GET EQUIPPED. GET ANGRY. GET JUSTICE. *GET STEAMED!*