Panic Train – Opening scene

There was a reverberating *clonk* as the back carriage was finally pried loose, and the yelling soldiers were left behind. Now there were just four carriages of refugees, a dozen railway employees and some militiamen, and a train that wouldn’t stop.

The needle on every meter and gauge was deep in the red, or bouncing around so wildly as to be useless. Elisabeth sighed and wiped her face with a rage, leaving another greasy blotch. She looked around for Chief Engineer Theodophus Grimbold, who, of course, was nowhere to be found.

She took a chance and left the engine room to push through the first passenger car, filled with grim, cloth-capped civilians sitting in terrified silence. to the roofless carriage they were using to store supplies. She had a brief conversation with Sally, who was cleaning their collection of mismatched muskets, and eventually found Grimbold, hanging off the side of the train by what appeared to be his trusty protractor wedged in the door jamb, grinned wildly.

“The brakes!”

“WHAT?!”

“THE BRAKES!” she screamed over the sound of the screaming train. “THE BRAKES WON’T WORK!”

He shook his head and clambered on top of the train, pulling his flat cap low against the wind, and crawled over to her.

“THE B-”

“You don’t need to shout, I’m right here. And yes, it’s the brakes. I had a look just now – the soldiers must have cut them when we were trying to leave the station.”

She blinked at him. “What does that mean?”

“It means we are royally fucked, Madam Conductor.”

Elisabeth groaned.