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Shinkansen

By Gareth-Michael Skarka

Set Pieces

Shinkansen is an adventure set piece for modern d20 games. Set pieces are a concept from films: a scene or sequence with escalated stakes and production values, as appropriate to the genre. For instance, in an action film, a set piece might be a helicopter chase amid skyscrapers. In a musical, a set piece might be a show-stopping dance number. In a comedy, a set piece might find the claustrophobic hero on an increasingly crowded bus, until he can't take it anymore. Done right, set pieces are moments you remember weeks after seeing a movie...memorable nuggets that become the highlights of the tale.

In the context of modern d20 games, a set piece is an adventure sequence that can be plugged in to a larger adventure, with notes offering suggestions for adapting the set piece to the genre of your particular campaign.

Synopsis

Shinkansen is an action sequence set upon one of Japan's bullet-trains. Trouble, of a variety specific



to the genre of your campaign, strikes as the train rockets across the Japanese landscape at 185 mph!

Shinkansen

The Shinkansen is a network of high speed rail lines in Japan. The name Shinkansen literally means "New Trunk Line." Japan was the first country to build dedicated railway lines for high speed travel. Due to the largely mountainous nature of the country, the pre-existing rail network consisted of narrow gauge lines, which generally took indirect routes and could not be adapted to higher speeds. Due to this, Japan entered construction of new high speed lines whereas other countries, with existing standard gauge or broad gauge rail systems, chose instead to simply upgrade their existing train systems when needed.

Construction of the first segment of the Tokaido Shinkansen between Tokyo and Osaka started in 1959. The line opened on October 1, 1964, just in time for the Tokyo Olympics. The line was an immediate success, reaching the 100 million passenger mark in less than three years and one billion passengers in 1976.

The first Shinkansen trains ran at speeds of up to 125

About the Author

Gareth-Michael Skarka has been working in the adventure games industry since 1988. He is the designer of several role-playing games, including *Hong Kong Action Theatre!*, *UnderWorld* and *Skull & Bones*. His design imprint, Adamant Entertainment, ventured into ePublishing in 2003, and produces support for *Skull & Bones*, the pulp d20 line *Thrilling Tales*, and more.

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mph. Shinkansen trains now run regularly at speeds of up to 185 mph, putting them among the fastest trains running in the world, along with the French TGV and German ICE trains.

Originally intended to carry passenger and freight trains by day and night, the Shinkansen lines carry only passenger trains. The system shuts down between midnight and 6:00 a.m. every day to allow maintenance to take place.

The following map shoes the Shinkansen lines running in Japan today:



A typical Shinkansen train car is 80 feet long by 15 feet wide. A 4-foot-wide aisle runs the length of each car, with banks of two seats on one side, and three on the other side of the aisle. The seats can be adjusted

to face either forwards or backwards in the car, and often groups traveling together will turn seats in front of them backwards creating a "salon" with shared leg-room. First class cars (usually the three cars in the middle of the train) have slighty wider seats by removing the 3rd seat (giving a 2x2, rather than the standard 2x3 seating arrangement).

The average Shinkansen train runs with 16 cars, broken down as follows:

Car	Seating	Facilities
1	53	Engine, Control,
		Restroom
2	100	Phone
3	90	Restroom
4	100	Phone
5	95	Restroom
6	100	Phone
7	75	Refreshment counter,
		Restroom
8	68 (First class)	Phone
9	62 (First class)	Restroom
10	68 (First class)	Phone
11	75	Refreshment counter,
		Restroom
12	100	Phone
13	95	Restroom
14	100	Phone
15	90	Restroom
16	53	Engine, Control,
		Restroom

The doors on a Shinkansen train have a Hardness of 6 and 10 Hit Points. The windows are reinforced safety glass, with a Hardness of 3 and 5 Hit Points.

Anyone foolish enough to try to move around on the outside of the train while it is in motion must make a Reflex save (DC 15) every round to avoid falling prone. Characters who fall must make a Strength

check (DC 15) to hold onto the train, or fall from the train, taking 3d6 damage from the distance fallen plus an additional 4d12 damage from the speed of the impact. Characters who are prone, but have made their Strength checks, do not need to make a Reflex save from this position. They may crawl without risk, reducing their movement to 1/4 of their speed.

Every round that characters are moving on the outside of the train, the GM should roll for obstacles on the following table:

d20 roll	Obstacle
1-14	None
15-17	Curve
18	Trellis
19	Bridge
20	Tunnel

Curve: The Shinkansen rockets around a curve in the track. Characters on the train now have to deal with centrifugal force as well as the high speed. For this round, all standing characters must make a Reflex save at DC 25, and all prone characters (including characters already prone, as well as characters who have just failed the Reflex save) must make a Strength check at DC 20 to maintain their grip, or fall as above.

Trellis: A metal latticework gantry crosses the track (used to hang signal lights for the train line, etc.). There is enough clearance between the top of the train and the trellis for prone characters to pass under, but standing characters are in danger. They must make a Spot check (DC 15) to see the onrushing trellis (the GM may rule that characters facing the opposite direction have a DC of 25 or even more), then drop prone (making the Strength check as normal). Particularly heroic characters may decide to do something spectacular like leap the trellis. This

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will require a Jump check at DC 15 (it's fairly easy to leap over), but a Reflex save to land safely (using the standard Reflex/Strength rules described initially). Characters who fail the Spot or Jump checks slam into the trellis, taking 5d12 points of damage (it's like being hit by a car), and then falling from the train for an additional 3d6 points of damage. Not good.

Bridge: The Shinkansen passes beneath an automotive or pedestrian bridge. There is enough clearance between the top of the train and the trellis for prone characters to pass under, but standing characters are in danger. They must make a Spot check (DC 10) to see the bridge (the GM may rule that characters facing the opposite direction have a DC of 25 or even more), then drop prone (making the Strength check as normal). Characters who fail the Spot checks slam into the bridge, taking 8d12 points of damage, and then falling from the train for an additional 3d6 points of damage. Ouch.

Tunnel: The Shinkansen passes into a tunnel. A tunnel uses the same rules as the Bridge, above, but with the additional factor that the train will remain in the tunnel for the next 10d12 rounds, during which time no further obstacle rolls are required. All characters must remain prone during this time, or take damage as described in the Bridge rules, above. In addition, the lighting in the tunnel is very faint, lending a -4 environmental penalty to any actions taken.

Genre Specifics

As described earlier, Shinkansen is a set piece for modern d20 campaigns. It is intended to be plugged in to an existing adventure framework, as an action sequence. What follows are suggestions for use in various common modern d20 setting styles:

Military/Action:

The Tokaido-Sanyo Shinkansen has been hijacked by a group of terrorists, claiming to be Islamists supporting the efforts of Al Queda. In reality, these terrorists are Japanese members of the ALEPH sect, formerly known as AUM Shinrikyo (see sidebar), who are using the train to deliver a stolen Russian nuclear device into the heart of Tokyo, in an effort to shock the world into turning away from nuclear weapons permanently.

The train is being held by 40 ALEPH members (see NPC section). The train is loaded to capacity--use the passenger figures in the Shinkansen description for the number of hostages per car. The leader of the

ALEPH terrorists, Ikegami Hayao, is with the bomb in the Restroom of First class car 9. He can trigger the bomb in 10 rounds, once alerted.

The train is headed towards Tokyo, and will arrive within an hour. The PCs will be sent to rescue the hostages and take the train...but once they discover the true purpose of ALEPH, they'll have to prevent the worst act of terrorism ever committed

Espionage/Intrigue:

The PCs have boarded the Tohoku Shinkansen, in order to meet with a contact. The man is a Russian nuclear scientist, Leonid Grigorov, who is to hand over documents that implicate several highly-placed members in the Russian Army in a scheme to sell nuclear weapons to terrorist groups. He did not go to the Russian authorities because he suspects corruption.

Grigorov is seated as a passenger in car number 8. The PCs will need to meet with him, get the documents, and exit the train at the next stop.

ALEPH and AUM Shinrikyo

The group now known as ALEPH (from the Hebrew alphabet, meaning "to start anew") is more widely known as AUM Shinrikyo, an apocalyptic cult infamously responsible for the 1995 Sarin nerve gas attack in the Tokyo Subway.

The sect claims that its goal is the rebuilding of civilization and destruction of the current paradigm. It is an eclectic Buddhist movement that draws on various Asian traditions, such as yoga and Tibetan Buddhism, yet is full of Hindu motifs and practices—the primary diety in Aum is Shiva, the god of destruction. The founder, Ashahara Shoko, intially taught that members must work to transfer evil energy into positive energy and avoid mass destruction via nuclear war. His direction became much more apocalyptic, however, with various assassinations of government officials, and the aforementioned nerve gas attack. Ashahara is currently jailed for the attack, but the sect continues operations under a new name.

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However, the generals have discovered Grigorov's plan, and have hired assassins to kill him on the train and steal the documents. For ease of statting out the adventure, the assassins hired are from the ALEPH sect--the Russian generals have promised to provide them with a nuclear device as payment. Use the stats for the ALEPH members (and Ikegami, if the PCs are making easy work of the others).

Horror:

The PCs are on board the Joetsu Shinkansen when suddenly one of the passengers in Car 1 succumbs to a virus that he was exposed to while working at a secret government lab. Within minutes, the train is crawling with Zombies! The PCs must survive, possibly save others, and get off the train (the engineer being one of the first victims of the zombies, there is nobody at the controls of the train, so it isn't stopping at any of the scheduled stations). See the NPC section for Zombie statistics.

Sci-Fi:

Use the same set-up as the Espionage/Intrigue plot, but instead of providing the PCs with information regarding a nuclear weapons smuggling program run by Russian generals, the contact is providing evidence of alien infiltration in a relgious cult--and use the ALEPH Operatives as alien-controlled (or perhaps alien-parasite-possessed?) foils for the PCs. Particularly evil GMs can add a twist by having dead ALEPH Operatives suddenly get back up--the alien controllers animating the dead flesh as zombies!

NPCs

Average Passenger

The average Shinkansen passenger is a white-collar "salaryman" worker. Use the following statistics to represent them:

Shinkansen Passenger (Smart Ordinary 1/ Charismatic Ordinary1): CR 1; Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d6 plus 1d6; HP 7; Mas 10; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; Defense 11, touch 11, flatfooted 10 (+1 Dex, +0 class); BAB +0; Grap -1; Atk -1 melee (1d3-1 nonlethal unarmed strike); Full Atk -1 melee (1d3-1 nonlethal unarmed strike) FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ; AL any; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +3; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Occupation: White Collar (Diplomacy, Knowledge [Business])

Skills: Bluff +6, Computer Use +6, Craft (writing) +6, Diplomacy +7,Investigate +6, Knowledge (business) +8, Knowledge (civics) +6, Knowledge (popular culture) +10, Knowledge (Current Events) +6, Profession +5, Read/Write Japanese, Read/Write Language (any two), Research +6, Speak Japanese, Speak Language (any two)

Feats: Educated (Knowledge [business] and Knowledge [civics], Personal Firearms proficiency, Simple Weapons Proficiency.

Possessions: Various personal possessions.

ALEPH Operatives

The fanatical members of AUM Shinrikyo, now known as ALEPH. The worst possible combination of fanatical fervor, apocalyptic world view and dedication.

ALEPH Operative (Strong Hero 2/Fast Hero1) CR 3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 1d8+2; HP 20; Mas 14; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; Defense 18, touch 18, flatfooted 15 (+0 size, +3 Dex, +5 class); BAB +2; Grap +5; Atk +5 melee (1d6+3), or

+5 ranged (2d6, HK MP5); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ; AL none; SV Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +0; AP 1; Rep +0; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Occupation: Student (Computer Use, Knowledge [Arcane Lore], Knowledge [Theology and Philosophy])

Skills: Climb +5, Computer Use +5, Drive +5, Hide +4, Jump +5, Knowledge (Arcane Lore) +4, Knowledge (Current Events) +3, Knowledge (Popular Culture) +2, Knowledge (Tactics) +4, Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) +4, Listen +2, Move Silently +4, Speak Language +1 (), Spot +2

Feats: Alertness, Combat Martial Arts, Combat Reflexes, Personal Weapons Proficiency

Talents (Strong Hero): Ignore Hardness
Talents (Fast Hero): Evasion
Possessions: HK MP5 submachinegun, Wealth
+6

Ikegami Hayao

Ikegami Hayao is the son of a highly-placed member of the Japanese goverment, who feels that the world in general (and the Japan that he feels his father helped to shape in particular) has gone down the wrong path. He is a devoted follower of Ashahara Shoko, and is believed to have participated in the Sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995, although was not charged due to lack of evidence. In the Military/Action genre set piece,, Ikegami has the control device for the nuclear device on his person, and can set it to detonate 20 rounds after he is alterted.

Ikegami Hayao (Fast Hero 4/Tough Hero 2/Soldier 3) CR 9; Medium-size humanoid; HD 4d8+12 plus 2d10+6 plus 3d10+9 plus 3; HP 76; Mas 16; Init +3; Spd 30 ft; Defense 22, touch 22, flatfooted 19 (+0 size, +3 Dex, +9 class); BAB +6; Grap +8; Atk +8 melee (1d6+2), or +10 ranged (2d6, HK MP5 [masterwork]); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ; AL

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none; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +2; AP 4; Rep +2; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Occupation: Dilettante (Intimidate)

Skills: Balance +6, Climb +4, Concentration +4, Craft (chemical) +4, Craft (electronic) +4, Craft (mechanical) +4, Craft (structural) +4, Demolitions +3, Drive +8, Escape Artist +4, Hide +7, Intimidate +6, Jump +5, Knowledge (Current Events) +7, Knowledge (History) +3, Knowledge (Popular Culture) +7, Knowledge (Streetwise) +3, Knowledge (Tactics) +5, Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) +3, Move Silently +10, Navigate +3, Pilot +5, Profession +4, Read/Write Language +3 (), Ride +7, Sleight of Hand +5, Speak Language +2 (), Spot +1, Survival +4, Swim +4, Tumble +6

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Builder, Combat Expertise, Combat Martial Arts, Double Tap, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Surface Vehicle Operation (Heavy wheeled), Toughness

Talents (Fast Hero): Evasion, Opportunist Talents (Tough Hero): Second Wind Talents (Soldier): Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization

Possessions: Wealth +11, Masterwork HK MP5, detonator (Military/Action plot only).

Leonid Grigorov

Doctor Leonid Grigorov is a scientist who has spent his career working on the Russian nuclear weapons program. He has seen his nation fall from the dizzying heights of being a world superpower to little more than a third-world kleptocracy, with opportunists and criminals scavenging Mother Russia's bones for their own aggrandizement. He discovered a plot fomented by several corrupt Russian Army officers to smuggle nuclear devices removed from the warheads of the former Soviet arsenal, and to sell them to the highest bidder on the black market.

In the Sci-Fi set piece, Grigorov has evidence of

alien infiltration occurring on our planet. **Leonid Grigorov (Smart Hero 5/Field Scientist 1)** CR 6; Medium-size humanoid; HD 5d6+-5 plus 1d8+-1; HP 17; Mas 8; Init +1; Spd 30 ft; Defense 13, touch 13, flatfooted 12 (+0 size, +1 Dex, +2 class); BAB +2; Grap +3; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1), or +3 ranged (2d6, Glock 20); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ; AL none; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +5; AP 3; Rep +2; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 8, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 14

Occupation: Academic (Computer Use, Knowledge [Physical Sciences], Research)

Skills: Bluff +3, Computer Use +5, Craft (chemical) +9, Craft (electronic) +11, Craft (mechanical) +10, Craft (structural) +6, Craft (writing) +10, Decipher Script +6, Demolitions +11, Disable Device +10, Drive +3, Forgery +6, Gamble +4, Intimidate +4, Investigate +8, Knowledge (Arcane Lore) +8, Knowledge (Art) +9, Knowledge (Behavioral Sciences) +7, Knowledge (Business) +7, Knowledge (Civics) +8, Knowledge (Current Events) +13, Knowledge (Earth and Life Sciences) +12, Knowledge (History) +8, Knowledge (Physical Sciences) +17, Knowledge (Popular Culture) +8, Knowledge (Streetwise) +12, Knowledge (Tactics) +9, Knowledge (Technology) +11, Knowledge (Theology and Philosophy) +10, Navigate +6,

Pilot +3, Profession +6, Read/Write Language +4 (Russian, English, Japanese, Spanish, French), Research +13, Search +6, Speak Language +4 (Russian, English, Japanese, Spanish, French)

Feats: Builder, Cautious, Combat Expertise, Confident, Educated, Personal Weapons Proficiency **Talents (Smart Hero):** Savant (Knowledge [Physical Sciences]), Plan, Linguist

Talents (Field Scientist): Smart Defense **Possessions:** Glock 20, evidence folder, briefcase, Wealth +8

Zombies

The living dead, wandering the aisles of the Shinkansen and slaughtering anyone they come across.

Human Zombie: CR 1/2; Medium-size undead; HD 2d12+3 (Toughness Feat) HP 16; Init -1; Spd 30 ft; Defense 11, touch 9, flatfooted 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural); BAB +0; Grap +1; Atk +1 melee (1d6+1 plus slam) Full Atk +1 melee (1d6+1, slam); FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; SQ undead, move or attack action only, spawn (those slain by zombie rise as zombie); AL none; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 8, Con --, Int --, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills: None Feats: Toughness Possessions: None.

Modern Character Generator

Statistical blocks created with RPGObjects' Modern Character Generator.

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