



Rivalry - Chapter 2 (Option A)

[Note - Chapter 2 is divided into two paths, A and B. Option A is an adventure path that reflects a choice of travel by train out of New Orleans following the events of Chapter 1. This is considered the default option. Option B, which will be released separately, involves travel by airship. It should only be attempted by a party with a skilled Aviator. Both storylines will rejoin for Chapter 3.]

Prologue

You have recently completed a short retrieval job on behalf of the Wells Fargo office in New Orleans in the Confederation of Texas. It is now clear that there are agents working on behalf of the Southern Pacific Railroad itself that have been responsible for lost Wells Fargo shipments, mostly of advanced technology. You have just finished thwarting the theft of a prototype mining automaton bound for San Francisco.

Because of the ongoing threat, you have now been hired to escort the automaton in transit all the way to the office in San Francisco, the capital of the Rocky Mountain Republic.

You have decided that the train remains the safest mode of travel in spite of the concerns about railroad employees. You will simply have to be on your guard, watching for anything and anyone suspicious.

Scene 1 - Traveling Through Texas

The party will begin with a couple of days of normal travel through the states of New Orleans and East Texas. During this time, they may investigate passengers and workers, examine portions of the train, and ask any relevant questions they like. Important points and difficulties are listed below, but these should in no way be considered to be the only avenues of investigation.

- The passengers consist of a diverse mix of laborers, entrepreneurs, and others. The majority of them are indeed traveling to San Francisco from the American Consolidated Union to make their fortunes out west.
- A simple Investigation, Persuasion, or Streetwise check will determine that although there are a

number of people looking for physical work, there are also a few professional scientists, both Spark Wranglers and Gearsmiths.

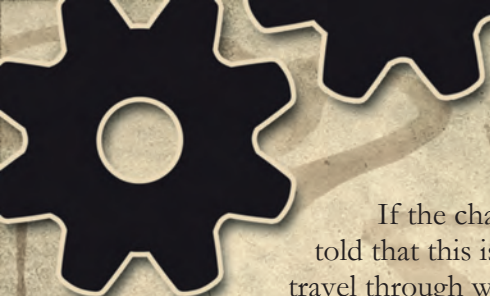
- A slightly more difficult Investigation or Persuasion check (-2) will allow the character to strike up a conversation with Adelaide Kellerson, a wealthy gentlewoman who is traveling with her son Edward to live in San Francisco. Her husband is a very important executive who was responsible for Wells Fargo's acquisition of the Central Pacific Express.
- Another slightly difficult check (-2) using Intimidation, Investigation, or Persuasion will determine that the crew members of this train are unaware of the thefts that some Southern Pacific employees have committed.
- A series of checks using some combination of Stealth, Lockpicking, Investigation, and perhaps even Climbing (if entering from above) will allow the characters access to the luggage and mail cars. They will be able to determine that their automaton is secure. They may take additional measures (such as rigging traps to the crate) if they like.

Scene 2 - Into the Wilds

At San Antonio, a number of things change about your train. First of all, you are asked to disembark and make your way to the station office for the signing of, as they put it, "standard legal forms." These turn out to be Hold Harmless agreements that specifically refer to the very likely possibility that the train will be attacked by bandits somewhere between here and the RMR border. You notice that a number of passengers who have made this trip before seem to regard the forms as routine. Others who are traveling west for the first time are understandably alarmed.

In addition, you notice that a new car is being added to the train between the coal car and the luggage. This is a flatbed with very short but very sturdy walls all the way around it. In the center of the flatbed is a rotating vehicle mount with a large gatling gun.





If the characters ask, they will be told that this is standard procedure for travel through what is known as “high risk” territory. Bandits from Mexico

frequently cross the border and attempt to raid the Southern Pacific trains for money and goods, and also to destroy any “ungodly” automatons they might find. Passenger trains are at slightly less risk than cargo trains, but only slightly.

Two additional railroad personnel also board at this time. A rifleman will ride in the caboose, and another gunner will man the gatling in the flatbed. A very difficult Investigation or Persuasion check (-4) will alert the players that something is odd about the gatling operator. If they are particularly vigilant, they may notice that he seems to man the gun somewhat casually, as if he does not expect to see any action.

The journey from San Antonio to El Paso proceeds without incident. After a night spent in El Paso, most of the passengers appear more relaxed about the trip. If approached about this attitude, they point out that raiding across the deserts of Nuevo Mexico and Arizona is much more difficult, and they will scoff at any attempts to inspire concern.

Scene 3 - The Raid

As is expected, the train comes under attack somewhere in the desert. If the party members are paying attention to likely ambush points, they may have time to prepare a defense. They will not be able to rely purely on notice, as the attack occurs immediately as the train is exiting a tunnel.

Complications:

- The gatling gunner is nowhere to be found. The rifleman is still available in the caboose, but he can't do all the work. Anyone with Shooting can attempt to operate the gatling gun.
- One of the passengers, a rather well-dressed woman with an east-coast accent, is wondering if anyone has seen her son. He is not in her car, and she is very worried that he will look out the windows while gunfire is happening. She will keep trying to interrupt the party members as they are trying to move through the cars to actually defend the train.

- The party may notice (with a -2 Notice check at first) that the train is beginning to slow down. When asked, the firemen will indicate that they do need to refill the boiler. They can't keep going if they run out of water. What's worse, if the characters try for a stop-and-defend strategy at the water tower, they will discover that the next tower on the line is empty.

To scale the battle appropriately, there should be two bandits for every melee or short-range combatant in the party (such as Spark Wranglers) and three for every long-range combatant. Do not include the rifleman in the caboose, as he can be used at will to compensate for particularly good or bad luck on the part of the players.

BANDITS

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Strength d6, Spirit d4, Vigor d6

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 5, **Toughness:** 5

Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d8

Equipment: Remington 1858 Navy, horse

Once the fight begins to wind down, some of the characters may engage in a more direct search for the boy and the gatling operator. It turns out that neither can be found anywhere on the train.

Scene 4 - The Kidnapping

The well-dressed woman is hysterical by this point. She introduces herself as Adelaide Kellerson, wife of wealthy businessman Grant Kellerson. She says that her son Edward may have been taken with the intention of demanding ransom. Assuming the party members agree to try to track him down, they will have to follow the rails back a bit to find where two sets of footprints lead off into the desert. Locating and following the trail will certainly require Tracking or Notice checks. A raise on either might reveal that the smaller footprints are stumbling as if forced.

As the party travels, Survival, Notice, or Stealth will be appropriate for avoiding being caught unawares. However, even without the advantage of surprise, the kidnapper has a very advantageous position. He is placed high up on a mesa, and he has a very long-range rifle. He has the boy tied up inside a nearby cave, and the boy is being guarded by a very large automaton scorpion.

The party need not face both of these Wild Cards at once, but may end up doing so depending on the choices they make, or to provide additional difficulty if the GM determines that the players need a more challenging encounter.



KIDNAPPER

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Strength d6, Spirit d6, Vigor d6

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 6, **Toughness:** 5

Skills: Fighting d8, Shooting d10,

Equipment: Martini-Henry Mark I, a mysterious electrical device

[Note - This mysterious electrical device is designed to emit a powerful electromagnetic field that will suppress all automaton activity within a short range. It is used by the kidnapper to get past the scorpion. If the party takes the time to examine it, they may also use it to avoid combat with the scorpion. If the party keeps it, they will find that it is unreliable and breaks after a few uses.]



SCORPION AUTOMATON

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d4, Strength d12, Spirit d6, Vigor d12

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 8, **Toughness:** 10 (2)

Skills: Fighting d12

Special: All Automaton edges and hindrances. Also, the Scorpion Automaton has several special notes:

Bite: Str + d8

Claw Grab: The Scorpion attempts to grab an opponent. Success requires a hit with a raise. Any grabbed character may only attempt to escape on her action, which requires a simple success on an opposed Strength roll. The Scorpion may have up to two opponents grabbed at a time.

Weakness, Large: Finding weak points is easier than usual on this automaton. Saboteurs get a +1 bonus on Sabotage rolls, and successes allow the Saboteur to declare attacks that disable specific portions of the Scorpion (such as a claw) with a simple hit, regardless of damage. Such disabling attacks do not count as wounds, however.

Epilogue

Mrs. Kellerson is very grateful for the rescue of her son. She will offer a reward upon the train's arrival in San Francisco.

If the kidnapper has been returned alive, the engineers and other railroad officials will insist that he be taken to the police station in San Francisco to be charged. The party may question him if they want, but they will not get very much out of him. If pressed very successfully (GM's discretion), he may reveal one or more of the following facts:

- He was hired by someone in San Francisco, a man who often pays him to do "odd jobs." He will not tell you the man's name or any other details.
- He had nothing to do with the bandits. He was not responsible for the empty watertower, so he assumes the bandits did that.
- He did not build the automaton. He has no idea who did. He was just told how to handle it.
- He was expecting a zeppelin to come and pick him up in a couple of days, after the train arrived in San Francisco without the boy.

The rest of this part of the journey will proceed uneventfully. But there are many questions left to be answered and even more that will be raised in Chapter 3!



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