



AMBUSHED BY EVIL!

The following is a portion of an *Icons* game set-up to demonstrate how the different elements of the system come together at the game table.

Two heroes—All-American Girl and the Hangman—are investigating the mysterious disappearance of their friend Saguaro, the Man-Cactus, unaware they're being set-up for an ambush by the Ultra-Mind's sinister Alliance of Evil, which has captured several heroes. Three members of the Alliance—Count Malocchio, the Creeper, and Troll—wait in hiding in an abandoned factory complex. Following the clues, the two heroes arrive and enter unawares...

GM: The interior of the factory is dark, the only light coming in from around the boards covering the high windows. Rusting hulks of machinery cast deep shadows over the aisles between them. What do you do?

Hangman: Stay sharp, All-American Girl, we still don't...

GM: (interrupting) Suddenly, Hangman's warning is choked off as a heavy vine coils around his throat and lifts him off the floor!

The GM slides Hangman's player a Determination token for the trouble of the ambush, having not given the heroes a chance of detecting it.



GM: At the same moment, a massively muscled, green-skinned figure rises up, smashing aside one of the presses on the factory floor, his roar of challenge echoing in the cavernous room.

All-American Girl: Troll!

GM: Roll for initiative!

Hangman and All-American Girl's players each roll a die and add their heroes' Coordination levels, while the GM does the same for the villains. They get an initiative order of Troll, Count Malocchio, Creeper, All-American Girl, and Hangman (who rolled quite poorly).

GM: A voice sounds from up on the catwalk overlooking the floor as Count Malocchio calls out, "Get her, Troll! Do as the Ultra-Mind commands and you will be rewarded!"

Interaction like Malocchio's declaration can happen at any time during the page.

GM: All-American Girl, you need to defend against Troll's attack as he lunges forward with a double-fisted smash.

All-American Girl: I dodge out of the way!

She rolls a die and gets a 4. Applying that to her Coordination 4, with a +1 for her Athletics specialty, she gets an effort of 9. The GM rolls a die and gets a 1, adding that to Troll's Prowess of 7 for a total of 8. Troll's attack has an outcome of $(8 - 9)$ or -1 , a failure!



GM: You just manage to roll to the side just as Troll's fists come down, smashing chunks out of the concrete floor. Hangman, you hear another mocking voice coming from the catwalk behind you, "HAHAHA! How does it feel to be at the other end of a noose for a change, Hangman?" It's the Creeper!

Hangman: I might have known!

It's now the Creeper's turn.

GM: The choking vine is cutting off your air, Hangman. Make a Strength test.

Hangman's player rolls a 3 and adds his Strength 3, getting a total of 6. The GM rolls a 4, with a base difficulty of 0 (according to the guidelines for exhaustion). Hangman gets a moderate success, so he loses 2 points of Stamina, rather than pass out.

GM: From high up on the catwalk, Count Malocchio fires a laser-like beam from his Evil Eye amulet at you, All-American Girl.

All-American Girl: I'll dodge that, too.

She rolls again, getting a 5 and adding her level 5 (Coordination + Athletics) for a 10. The GM rolls a 4. Count Malocchio's Coordination is only 3, but he's an Expert with his Evil Eye, giving him level 5 for attacking, and a total of 9. It's not quite enough, however, and the effort on the attack is a -1, a failure.



GM: You just manage to dodge the beam. You hear Malocchio curse in Italian. Okay, heroes, it's your panels. All-American Girl, you go first.

All-American Girl: I should probably help Hangman...

GM: Oh, I don't know, I think you "can handle this" on your own...

The GM slides All-American Girl's player a Determination token. He is activating All-American Girl's "I can handle this!" quality for a compel. Her player decides to accept the Determination and changes her plans.

All-American Girl: Okay, I'm going after Count Malocchio, flying up at the catwalk, out of Troll's reach. I say, "Is that all you've got? That hardly 'counts' at all!" Then I swoop in and take a swing at him.

GM: Ouch! Okay, make your attack test...

All-American Girl's player rolls: 3 + Prowess 5 = 8. The GM rolls 4 for Malocchio's evasion + Prowess 4, also an 8. That's a 0 outcome, a marginal success, All-American Girl hits for half damage. Unfortunately, she and Malocchio are well-matched: her Strength is 7, but his Evil Eye gives him Force Field 7, meaning the Count takes no Stamina damage.

GM: A glowing aura appears around Count Malocchio, and your punch glances off of it. Hangman?



Hangman: Ugh. I need to get out of this vine-noose. I could attempt an escape but...can I use my Swinging power to grab the vine, kick my legs and swing up and over at the catwalk? I want to kick Creeper in the face and break his concentration enough for me to get loose.

GM: (considers for a moment) Sure. Make a Prowess test, but I'm going to bump up the difficulty for the swing because you can't see Creeper yet, only hear him.

Hangman: I'll spend a point of Determination to activate my "Grim Guardian of the Gallows" quality to give me an advantage for improved effort, then.

Hangman's player hands over the Determination token, then rolls and gets a 4. With his Prowess 6, that's a 10 effort. The GM decided +2 increased difficulty was appropriate, given the situation, but Hangman's advantage for +2 increased effort cancels that out. Creeper only has Prowess and Coordination 3, so even when the GM rolls a 5, Hangman scores an effect of 2 for a moderate success!

Hangman has Strength 3 and Creeper has no resistance, so he does 3 Stamina damage, reducing Creeper from 8 to 5. However, the GM rules that while the kick staggers Creeper slightly it does not break his Plant Control (Hangman didn't get a high enough degree of success to slam or stun him): the choke-vine still has its iron grip on Hangman's neck!

The first page of the conflict is complete. The GM moves on to the next page, starting again with the villains.



GM: All-American Girl, Troll suddenly leaps high into the air and grabs at you from behind.

All-American Girl: Augh! I forgot he could do that!

All-American Girl's player defends, rolling a 3 for an effort of 8. The GM rolls a 4 and adds Troll's Prowess 7 for a total of 11; a major success on his bashing attack for a possible slam, which was certainly Troll's intent!

GM: (to All-American Girl) Roll a Strength test against a possible slam.

The GM rolls a 3 plus Troll's Strength 9 for 12 effort. All-American Girl's player rolls a 3 plus her Strength of 7 for 10 difficulty, so the slam is a major success as well.

GM: Troll slams you into the machinery. He does damage 9 against your Damage Resistance 7, so you take 2 Stamina damage through your Damage Resistance and hit the floor hard, leaving a pretty serious dent in a heavy machine press.

All-American Girl: Ouch!

GM: Count Malocchio fires a searing beam from his Evil Eye.

All-American Girl: (reaching for the die) Should I dodge?



GM: (shakes head) No, the beam isn't aimed at you. However, it washes over the wreckage of the machine press above you and the metal melts and pours down over you like heavy syrup, cooling and hardening around you!

The GM slides a Determination token to All-American Girl's player for Malocchio's unorthodox maneuver and success with it, since he didn't bother to roll any tests.

GM: Hangman, make another Strength test.

Hangman's player and the GM roll, but the difficulty of the test is 1 this page (up 1 from 0 on the previous page), so he still gets a moderate outcome. Hangman loses another 2 Stamina, bringing him down to 4.

GM: I also need a Coordination test, as the vines and plants around Creeper grab at you. (Creeper is using his turn to try and bind Hangman and keep him from fighting back.)

Hangman's player rolls again, this time getting a 3. With his Coordination 5 and Athletics specialty, that's a 9 for difficulty, against Creeper's Coordination 3 and Plant Control specialty (+1), plus the GM's roll of 4 for an 8 effort. Hangman evades the grabbing vines.

Hangman: Now I'm going to give Creeper a taste of the gallows and use the Noose of Judgment on him!



Hangman's player rolls a Coordination test with the Noose's Binding attack, plus his Whips specialty. He rolls 3, plus Coordination 5 and Whips (+1) for an effort of 9. The GM rolls 3 and adds the Creeper's Coordination 3 for a difficulty of 6. That's an outcome of 3 for the attack, a major success!

Hangman: I loop the noose over his torso, binding his arms to their sides, and I want to flip him off the catwalk so he's dangling in mid-air and knows that if I pass out...he drops!

GM: Okay, you've got him in a hold, so give me a Strength test to flip him off the catwalk.

Hangman's player rolls a 3 and adds his Strength 3 for a 6 effort. The GM rolls a 2 and adds Creeper's Strength 3 for a 5 difficulty. With an outcome of 1, Hangman succeeds. The plant-controlling villain is flung off the catwalk, with a yelp, dangling in the grip of Hangman's noose.

GM: All-American Girl, you're bound by the metal around you. Your only physical action this turn can be to try and break loose.

All-American Girl: Okay, I'll try and use my Strength to bust out.

She rolls a Strength test getting $3 + 7 = 10$. The GM rolls a 3 as well, but the steel is Material 8, for an 11, a moderate failure. All-American Girl struggles, but to no avail.



The second page of the conflict ends. The third begins with the villain's actions.

GM: All-American Girl, Troll's shadow falls across you as you struggle to get out of the steel trap. He bares his teeth, laughs evilly, and smashes his fists down.

All-American Girl: Uh-oh... I can't defend, can I?

GM: No, you're an immobile target right now, unfortunately. Roll the die for difficulty, but don't add anything.

Troll has Prowess 7 and the difficulty to hit All-American Girl is currently 0. Her player rolls a 4 while the GM rolls a 3. That's a massive success on Troll's bashing attack!

GM: Give me a Strength test against a stun.

All-American Girl's player considers: She could spend Determination to activate her "I Can Handle This!" quality and get an advantage on the test, but she and Hangman are outnumbered, and she isn't sure she wants to spend the Determination now, rather than saving it for the next part of the adventure. So she decides to go with a straight roll, getting a 2, added to her 7 Strength for a 9 effort. The GM rolls a 4, added to Troll's Strength 9 for a 13. That's a major success for the stun, which reduces All-American Girl's Stamina to 0 and renders her unconscious.



GM: Hangman, Creeper scatters a handful of seeds onto the factory floor, which instantly sprout and grow into a thick bed of vines, creepers, and moss beneath him. Give me another Strength test against the choke vine.

No test is required for Creeper to use his Plant Control to create a cushion against a possible fall. Hangman's player tests Strength against the increased difficulty 2, gets another moderate success, and so takes another 2 Stamina damage, leaving him with only 2 Stamina remaining.

GM: ... Then Count Malocchio fires a beam from the Evil Eye at you.

Hangman's player rolls to dodge, but with the -2 penalty of being caught in Creeper's vine reducing his effort, he only gets a marginal success. Even half damage from a glancing blast from the Evil Eye is enough to reduce Hangman to 0 Stamina and unconsciousness.

GM: You try to twist, but blast clips you across the side of your head. You slump back against the wall, and everything goes black...

What will happen to the heroes who have fallen into the clutches of the Alliance of Evil? Will their few remaining teammates find them in time? For that, the Game Master turns to the next chapter of the adventure!