Gray Towns Evacuation Skill Challenge

By Ravnica42

*This takes lots of inspiration from the guides of Acidburns and DirkMcThermot, as well as the mission 3 mini-scenes made by Duvalasur. Please give their works a look in the* [*Wallflower Community Resource drive!*](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1dsxLA5G4BfwqygLeHXYNQ76FB7HBhCd7?usp=sharing)

*I put more focus into the resource strain and tough choices to be made, as without some insane luck there's no way to fully resolve each scenario. It's also worth noting my group absolutely crushed the previous Sepulcher fight, so I made this a little mean to properly drain some repairs from them. As always, feel free to tune the numbers and scenarios to fit the situation of your table!*

## Premise

The goal of this challenge is for the PCs to help resolve as many of the rapidly forming emergencies in the Outer Gray Towns as they can. These scenarios offer great bonuses for the Roadblock fight and reserves to carry to future missions, if fully resolved, as well as narrative penalties and buffs for the enemies if left unanswered. BUT! There is a limit to how much time they can spend overall. The PCs will need to carefully weigh what scenarios are worth the extra effort and possibly put their mechs on the line in order to steal a few more moments of preparation from the encroaching Machine Army.

## The Clock is Ticking…

Begin by Setting up a clock that is visible to everyone called **Time/Resources.** This should have a number of segments equal to 4+ the maximum number of scenarios you want your group to respond to. *This does not have to be the total number of scenarios you prepared.* All its segments begin fully filled in.

*For my group of 4 PCs I had 8 scenarios planned out, which means this clock had 12 segments. I could have prepared more, but still set the maximum scenes we do before moving on to Roadblock to be 8.*

This clock is reduced by 1 segment each time the PCs make a roll while in a scenario. When the **Time/Resources** clock hits 0, the skill challenge ends. Any active scenarios immediately resolve at their current **Crisis Clock** count, and unanswered scenarios resolve as a failure.

If the PCs respond to the max number of scenarios you wanted them to, the skill challenge ends with them having done all they could with the time they had.

## Rounds

The Skill Challenge is divided into rounds where each PC can choose what they want to do. Begin each round by describing a number of scenarios equal to ½ the number of PCs you have, rounded up. Each PC then chooses which one of the following they wish to do individually:

* Respond to a Scenario- Spend clock segments to gain benefits & avoid penalties.
* Rest & Repair- Fix damage to your mech
* Stall the Army- Gain more time by risking your mech

*Each of these are described in more depth further on.*

Resolve these in the order of: Responding, Resting, and lastly Stalling. At the end of the round any scenarios not responded to resolve as if failed. Once each PC has done their part, reveal new scenarios and begin a new round. For the final round, Reverse the order so that PCs have one last chance to buy time before answering the remaining crises.

The number of rounds can be adjusted based on the number of scenarios you want to do. I recommend having at least 3 rounds, which allows for each PC to try the options once each.

*For my group of 4 I planned 8 scenarios. Since I was revealing 2 scenarios per round, this meant I had 4 rounds total.*

## Responding to Crises

Each scenario begins by setting up a **Crisis Clock** with 0 segments filled in. I recommend these to have 8 segments**,** but you can increase or decrease the amount of segments based on how much of a challenge you want. Describe the scene in greater detail than you had previously when it was revealed. Then tell the PC(s) what the stakes are for this crisis and allow them to make skill rolls to fill the clock until it fills completely or they choose to stop. Results should be structured as follows:

* Full: The crisis clock was completely filled. This will yield the best reward, but risks taking more time/resource segments.
* Half: the crisis clock was at least half way full. This gives a small reward, a light penalty, or both.
* Fail: The clock did not get filled to at least half way. This will be a penalty, PCs may opt to take these penalties instead of risking using too much time/resources segments.

Resolve any rewards/penalties as the clock fills or when the PC(s) choose to stop.

Skill rolls are done as explained in pg 45-47 of the core rulebook. Let the PCs get creative with how they approach solutions, but don’t be afraid to make rolls difficult or risky if the situation calls for it. For example, trying to diffuse a hostage situation while you approach from inside a mech will certainly keep the pilot safe, but could likely raise the tension and make people uneasy. Rolls can also have extra penalties or bonuses that don’t affect the crisis clock; punching out a panicked settler might get them to shut up for now, but any attempt to be civil or calm things down will have a difficulty. Additionally, you can also give pilots expanded effect for bringing the right tools; having previously calmed a crowd and using their personalized mech’s speaker system could allow the next roll to direct traffic fill an extra segment regardless of result.

I advise you not let the PCs continually roll 1 skill/trigger to resolve these scenarios. Once they use their skill of choice in a given crisis, that's it, they’ll have to think up new ways to approach the issues at hand until a new scenario is answered.

Each attempted skill roll reduces the Time/Resources Clock by 1 segment. Once a roll is made, consult the chart below to determine the segments of the crisis clock filled:

* **9-:**  +1 segment to the crisis clock
* **10-19:** +2 segments to the crisis clock
* **20+:** +3 segments to the crisis clock

## Resting and Repairing Damage

PCs who rest follow the resting rules on pg 82 of the core rulebook with the following changes:

* PCs may spend a maximum of 4 repairs at once this time. Further repairs will require the PC to rest again under these same rules.
* Mechs only clear half their max heat, rounded up.

At the end of the skill challenge, when all crises are resolved or the time runs out, each PC gets to perform a rest under these rules before starting Roadblock.

## Stalling the Machine Army

When stalling the army PCs suit up in their mechs to buy more time. These rolls have increasing stakes each round of the challenge and will generally leave your mech damaged even on a roll of 20+! If multiple PCs attempt to stall in the same round, they both roll, use whichever roll is higher, and each of the PCs mechs take any damage from that roll’s result. The following shows how to count the results:

* **9-:** +2 segments to the time/resources clock
* **10-19:** +3 segments to the time/resources clock
* **20+:** +4 segments to the time/resources clock

Below is an example of progression of stakes for 4 rounds. [**9- // 10-19 // 20+**]:

**Round 1:** +1 ACC regardless of approach

* 3 Kinetic Damage **//** 1 Kinetic Damage **//** No Damage

**Round 2:** +1 ACC if using an AOE weapon (the machine is bunching up)

* 6 Explosive Damage **//** 4 Explosive Damage **//** 3 Explosive Damage

**Round 3:** +1 ACC if using a weapon fo range 15+ (Machine has leading mechs join),

+1 DIFF if the Mech rolling stalled the previous round (Machine adapts)

* 7 AP Energy + 3 Heat **//** 5 AP Energy + 2 Heat **//** 5 Energy (no AP)

**Round 4:** +1 DIFF. Can be offset by creative approach, pushing the roll, or Power at a cost.

* 1 Structure Damage, System trauma roll, 5 heat **//** 1 Structure Damage, 3 Heat **//** 8 Burn Damage (not ticked on a burn counter)

## Examples of Scenarios

*Most of these follow the Evac scenes made by Duvalasur in their mission 3 maps. Feel free to use these or let them inspire you to make your own!*

These examples are mainly to outline a mechanical structure to benefits/consequences. Add narrative complications for later scenes to your table’s preference!

1. **Lui Maize Machine Shop Under Siege - 8 segments**

This machine shop serves the majority of the outer communities' need for metalworking and is directly in the way of the Machine’s advance. The materials and equipment stored there would be a huge asset to the marching army. The workers are scrambling to load trucks with material to take to Merricktown, but the onset of heavy rains, loss of assistance subaltern workers, and stubbornness of the millwrights has slowed the efforts to a standstill.

* **Fail (clock not at least half full):** *The shops are overrun before the materials can be sabotaged/loaded.* All enemies with only1 max structure/stress in Roadblock gain **+1 Armor.**
* **Half:** *You save a few of the workers and a couple truckloads of materials. More still had to be left to The Machine.* All enemy Grunts in Roadblock gain **+1 Armor.** The PCs gain **+3 repairs** that anyone may use while resting before roadblock.
* **Full:** *The materials were fully sabotaged/loaded well, and all the workers made it out.* The PCs gain **+3 repairs** that anyone may use while resting before roadblock. Additionally, PCs may repair mechs as though they had the **replaceable parts trait** while resting and repairing before Roadblock.

1. **Forest Fires to Overtake Evacuation Routes - 8 segments**

A large thicket of vegetation is rapidly turning ablaze. The waxy polimer of its leaves is flammable even when wet, and it has grown unabated in the unfarmed forests between settlements. If left unchecked, it will swallow many of the roadways used for evacuation.

* **Fail:** *The fires are left, raging out of control.* The next 2 scenarios have the size of their clocks **increased by 2 segments.** (ex: an 8 segment clock would become 10)
* **Half:** *You direct the fire to only spread in one direction.* The next scenario has the size of its clock **increased by 2 segments.** Additionally, the next Stall the Army roll gives **+1 time segment** regardless of result.
* **Full:** *You control the fire, sending away from the towns and lingering for the Machine Army.* The next 2 Stall the Army rolls give **+1 time segment** regardless of result.

1. **Bridge Collapses - 8 segments**

While the evacuation picks up, a bridge is destroyed when an overloaded hauler tries to cross. Many families are stranded on the opposite bank and are faced with the dangers of trying to ford the rain swelled river.

* **Fail:** *Your mech must be used to hold what remains of the bridge together while people scramble across in trucks; or the people will have to abandon what few supplies they have.* Choose one: your mech immediately takes **1 structure damage and suffers system trauma**; or the Defense of Evergreen clock **loses 1 tick**.
* **Half:** *The settlers consolidate their supplies as best they can to minimize the trips across the bridge/river, but much is left behind. A small child lightens their load by giving their most prized possession to you.* 1 PC who responded to this crisis has been given a lucky doll; this acts as a **free custom paint job.** Additionally, if that PC already has a custom paint job this instead allows them to **set the die roll to a 6**, expending the system as normal.
* **Full:** *As the last group crosses safely, your radio sounds with another emergency callout. As it happens, the group you’re with knows a shortcut to that spot.* Gain the benefit from **Half.** Additionally, for 1 PC at this crisis, the next scenario they respond to begins with 2 segments of its clock filled.

1. **Davenriche’s Squad Surrounded - 8 segments**

The hired guns serving as the Gray Towns’ guards have been surrounded by the machine forces in a feeble attempt to fight off the encroaching army. Was it Davenriche’s pride that got them in this mess? Or are the tide of machines truly unstoppable? Regardless of which, they need you to cut a way out.

* **Fail:** *It's a bloody mess, and you barely escape yourself.* At most 1 person from the unit survives, and they are too injured/traumatized to speak about what had happened before or what they saw in the fight. (Add narrative consequences to taste here.)
* **Half:** *Enough time was bought for the majority of the squad to retreat, but it was paid with the lives of a few heroes. The survivors can tell you what they saw.* Once, at the start of any round of Roadblock after enemies are deployed, **scan one regular or grunt** enemy on the field.
* **Full:** *They’re shaken, but a few of them can continue to aid with the evacuation.* At the start of each round of Roadblock after enemies are deployed, **apply lock-on** to any 1 enemy.

1. **An Abandoned Broadcast - 8 segments**

A large subaltern control unit, much like the one the PCs fought at the Chau farm, has been spotted on a roadside alone. The evergreen militia close enough to aid in the evacuation are skeptical of it being a trap but there's no denying it could give insight to the Machine’s movements, if the PCs can somehow hack that information out of it without fully activating it.

* **Fail:** *The unit awakens and burrows away deep underground before it can be stopped, taking with it info of your mech.* Roadblock has **a Spite added to its forces**, which begins deployed on the map as an addition to the normal forces. Additionally, the **Machine Horde clock gains +1 segment**.
* **Half:** *The unit awakens and burrows away after pinging your location, but not before you heavily damage it.* Your mech **begins Roadblock with Lock-on** applied. Additionally, the **Machine Horde clock gains +1 segment**.
* **Full:** *You hack the unit and decipher some of the Machine’s movements before the unit locks up completely.* The next 2 Stall the Army rolls have **+1 accuracy**.

1. **Looters Attacking Evacuation Routes - 8 segments**

When the storm comes, some will want to stay and weather it; even if they must take from others to do so. Reports of looters seen ransacking abandoned houses and robbing those attempting to flee begin to come in. If this is left to continue, it will mean news that the evacuation routes are unsafe will spread; and those who are uneasy about leaving will have more reason to resist abandoning their homes.

* **Fail:** *The bandits use their knowledge of the surrounding landscape to attack you and escape; continuing to harass and attack those willing to travel the roads toward Evergreen.* The 1st roll in the next crisis anyone responds to is **Risky and has +1 difficulty**. Additionally, your mech takes **5 AP explosive damage**.
* **Half:** *You force the raiders to flee and abandon some of their ill gotten supplies after a short fight.* Choose one: immediately give **2 charges to one limited system** from amongst the PC mechs, or one PC mech **gains +2 repairs** (up to a max of its normal repair cap). Additionally, your mech takes **3 AP explosive damage**.
* **Full:** *You deal with the looters as you see fit and manage to discover their stash of weapons.* During Roadblock, all of **1 PC mech’s weapons gain AP**.

1. **Oatsville Evacuation Delayed - 8 segments**

One of the larger settlements of the outer Gray Towns is Oatsville, who aren’t making any headway on their evacuation. It's one of the oldest settlements, and many in the community are unwilling to leave behind all they’ve ever known. A sentiment echoes out of wanting to keep all that they built with their own hands. They firmly believe their best shot is to ride it out together.

* **Fail:** *The people demand help, and all you can do to get some of them moving is give in.* Choose 2: your pilot loses **2 pieces of gear/weapons**, your **mech loses 2 repairs**, or you may only rest & repair during the next round of the challenge as you spend time guiding the evacuees.
* **Half:** *You convince a few to leave with you after some extended bargaining.* Choose 2: your pilot loses **1 piece of gear/weapon**, your **mech loses 1 repair**, or you may only either rest & repair/stall the army during the next round of the challenge.
* **Full:** *You get the evacuees to move out, leaving what they can’t quickly fit in their vehicles. One of them brings only supplies to help your efforts.* The PCs gain **+2 repairs** that anyone may use while resting before roadblock. Additionally, **you may place up to 2 1x3 size 1 pieces of hard cover** within 5 spaces of your mech’s deployment at the beginning of Roadblock before round 1 begins.

1. **A Charged Hostage Situation - 10 segments\***

A militia member calls in to report one of their teams hasn't checked back in after going to alert a small collective of homesteaders about the Evacuation. The community in question has been known to be unwelcoming toward anyone from Evergreen. They operate the only large recharging station that serves to fuel farm equipment in the area; which will need to be disabled to deny its use to The Machine.

Upon arrival, the situation is immediately dire. The militia team, some of which appear to have been non-fatally shot, is being held captive by the community leaders. The hostage takers claim this is all just a ploy by Patience to round up the Gray Towners and rid them of their independence and livelihoods. The situation is hanging on a knife's edge; the PCs will need to try to talk down the delusional and panicked settlers, convince them to release hostages and evacuate, as well as give up the codes to access the reactors they’ve maintained.

* **Fail:** *The hostage situation comes to blood all around, and there’s only enough time to sabotage 1 of the reactors on site.* The first 4 enemies to be deployed in Roadblock have **5 overshield.** Additionally, all PCs who have mechs present immediately **take 1 stress.** If no one or no mechs were present for this crisis, the **Machine Horde clock gains +1 segment.**
* **Half:** *You manage to save a few hostages and there’s only enough time to disable 1 reactor properly.* 1 PC mech begins Roadblock with **5 overshield**, then choose one: the **Machine Horde clock gains +1 segment**, or the first 2 enemies deployed in Roadblock have **5 overshield**.
* **Full:** *You deal with the hostage situation as you see fit. Shortly after, you disable one of the reactors on site and hatch a plan for the smaller one.* 1 PC mech begins Roadblock with **5 overshield**. Additionally, one mech present gains the following:
  + Once during Roadblock, you may throw the smaller reactor as a quick action at a space within range 3 as a quick action. The reactor detonates in a blast 2 area. Characters in the blast must pass an agility save or take 3d6 damage, half on success, and objects, cover and terrain in the area automatically take 20AP energy damage. If this is not used during Roadblock, it becomes a core battery reserve.

\**I held this particular scenario to be the final one for my group to respond to. As such, I added rules for the fail condition just in case they ran out of time before then and didn’t respond to it, made the clock a bit bigger to show how tense the situation was, and increased the rewards to match.*