

# Don't Waste Your Afterlife

Everyone dies. Most go on to receive their deserved reward in either Heaven or Hell, but others find themselves stationed in between, in Purgatory. You are one of these souls, known as the Dispossessed, that have found neither eternal rest nor endless torment yet. And you've been given a second chance at redemption. Will you be able to achieve it, or will you succumb to temptation and damn yourself for eternity?

*Don't Waste Your Afterlife* mixes Christian afterlife themes into *Don't Rest Your Head*. It explores the nature of right and wrong alongside paths to redemption. The Mad City is Purgatory, acting as the proving ground for atonement. Nightmares are the agents of Hell seeking to prevent the protagonists from saving themselves. But the Dispossessed are not powerless, for the afterlife augments their good and bad qualities from life, giving them a fighting chance against the Mad City.

## The Questionnaire

This questionnaire replaces the standard one.

### What Vice Haunted You in Life?

We all have things that we wish we didn't think or do. Call it sin, bad habit, or inappropriate behavior—this was your albatross, your millstone.

**Think about:** Did you welcome this vice or try to fight against it? Was it something major that became a pivotal moment of your life? Maybe it was subtle, keeping you from ever reaching your true potential. Was the vice something society deemed acceptable? Or was it a deep, dark secret that no one knew?

**Why it matters:** This provides a reason for your character not quite reaching the Gates of Heaven. It's also why the Nightmares hunt him. The GM uses these vices to throw temptations at your character.

### What's Good about You?

People are complex, with shades of good and evil throughout. You didn't make it into Heaven, but that doesn't mean you're a terrible person. You've got good qualities, too, characteristics that are admirable and noble.

**Think about:** Did you give to charity? Were you loyal to your friends? Maybe you were protective of your family, or steadfast in friendship. You could have been a person of deep faith (although you failed to practice that faith well).

**Why it matters:** Your good qualities are as important to the story as your vices are. These qualities are part of the reason you're a Dispossessed, rather than completely damned. It also gives the other protagonists a reason to journey towards redemption with you.

### How Did You Die?

Each Dispossessed has a story of their death to tell. Most are just gruesome, but some are morbidly comical.

**Think about:** Was your death swift and painless? Maybe you lingered, clutching to life as firmly as you could. What was the last notable thing you did before your death? Were you on your way to doing something important?

**Why it matters:** The circumstances around death provide the GM a way to frame both the initial scenes and later encounters.

## What Do You Believe Will Earn You Redemption?

As one of the Dispossessed, you have an idea of what redemption requires. Maybe you must re-enact crucial life decisions within the Mad City. It could be an epic quest of balancing every wrong committed in life (culminating in battle with a Nightmare nemesis). Whatever it is, the nature of your redemption story is personal.

**Think about:** What do you think would make you worthy of redemption? Do you need to slay a multitude of Nightmares? What about helping the residents of the Mad City through small acts of kindness? What if redemption requires that you push yourself to the brink of Exhaustion for the sake of a friend or lover?

**Why it matters:** Your view of what it takes will inform your story arc. It also allows the GM to weave your struggles in with the other protagonists' struggles.

## What Stands in Your Way?

Each Dispossessed has a Nightmare, a personal demon that stalks them, seeking to keep them from their goal. This nemesis might be a twisted perversion of you or your exact opposite. They know your darkest thoughts and your weaknesses, and they seek to prevent your salvation.

**Think about:** What does your Nightmare look like? Do they have minions to do their bidding? Do they scheme and plot, or attack you directly when you're vulnerable? What personal trait of yours does the Nightmare have and use against you? How does it manifest that trait physically?

**Why it matters:** Your Nightmare is the recurring villain of your personal story. The GM uses it to press you, giving you resistance so your righteousness can shine that much brighter.

## Rules Changes

The mechanics of dice, dominance, coins, and so on work as in the core game, but are renamed and rethemed to focus on the Dispossessed's nature.

### Dice

**Discipline** remains the same mechanically, but it more represents inner strength and self-control than innate skill and ability.

**Exhaustion** remains the same mechanically, but now represents the emotional fatigue of being virtuous in difficult situations rather than physical fatigue. Doing the right thing in the Mad City is burdensome, a much tougher prospect than in the first life. Being virtuous drains a Dispossessed, both in body and soul. **When exhaustion dominates**, your ability to push on diminishes and you move one step closer to **apathy** (see below).

**Apathy** replaces **crashing**. It's a temporary state in which the Dispossessed loses the ability to use his talents and becomes listless and uncaring for a number of days equal to the number of Exhaustion dice rolled. This leaves you vulnerable to the Nightmares and dependent on other characters for protection.

**Vice** replaces **madness**, representing the desire to cheat and obtain redemption more quickly by any means. Grabbing vice dice means that the protagonist is choosing to commit an evil act in order to win. **When vice dominates**, the protagonist has invited evil into his heart and soul or caused some other horrifying act to pass—such as defeating the Nightmare at the cost of innocents dying in the process.

Vice dominating checks one of your responses. **If the response is flare**, you are overcome by this vice and give into it. **If the response is fade**, you feel abject horror over what has just happened.

**Falling** replaces **snapping**, and represents a moment of intense evil that moves you one step closer to damnation. You disregard the morality of your actions, only what would be expedient in obtaining the desired result. You also gain **permanent vice** (replacing discipline as in the core rules), as you're losing the battle against your darker nature. Once your discipline becomes zero, you are dragged into Hell and spawn a new Nightmare in your place.

## Talents

The Dispossessed have abilities they never had in life, an exhaustion talent and a vice talent. Either of these could range from an increase of a natural ability to truly supernatural effects. Choose two abilities for your character, one related to exhaustion and one related to vice.

### Exhaustion Talent

The **exhaustion talent** should tie back to what's good about you. It's the way you get yourself out of difficult situations, your default problem-solving solution.

#### Examples

*John's character Carlos was a cop in his former life. His specialty was in gathering information through perception and charisma. His exhaustion talent is **the ability to read people**—he can tell truth from lie, or get information that others couldn't.*

*Corey's character Mickey was a general contractor with a refusal to cut corners. He decides that now that he's a Dispossessed, he can **find flaws in structures**, which allows him to (among other things) exploit them without entirely destroying the structure and causing collateral damage.*

*Annmarie decides her character, Alice, was known for her empathy in life. As a Dispossessed, she's able to **project emotions onto others**.*

### Vice Talent

The **vice talent** should be related to your besetting vice. Think about what you could do with that vice if it were more powerful. Your exhaustion talent gets you out of tough spots, but your vice talent lets you cheat the situation entirely. Like the exhaustion talent, the vice talent needs to be something that a normal person couldn't do in life.

#### Examples

*Donna's character Molly was a businesswoman with a thing for hostile takeovers. Donna decides that if Molly stays in a fight, her **killer instincts** from the business world allow her to sense when danger is coming. She can even expend more dice and sense everything happening within a larger area.*

*Corey's character Mickey had quite a temper. When his anger flares, he can perform **superhuman feats of strength**, like punching through walls. The more dice, the greater the effect can be, like collapsing an entire building.*

*Alice, Annmarie's character, always put herself down because she felt inferior. In the Mad City, she has **invisibility**. Expending more dice augments the ability from turning herself invisible to affecting others or even whole city blocks.*

## Coins

**Coins of hope and despair** work the same way as the core rules, but represent different factors in the path to redemption. Hope represents divine favor, like a brief moment of divine radiance overwhelming the Dispossessed. Despair represents infernal meddling, like a Nightmare causing intense darkness in the immediate area.

## Running this Hack

*Don't Waste Your Afterlife* deals with themes not typically covered by *Don't Rest Your Head*, but much of the advice from the core game still applies here. However, the themes of redemption and morality require some additional handling to make them resonate more.

## The Mad City and Its Denizens

The Mad City should be diverse and anachronistic, representing many time periods, cultures, and even different biomes (like deserts and jungles). The Mad City isn't just a city; it's a purgatorial place for all peoples of all times.

As the GM, use the existing Nightmares to present difficult moral choices to the protagonists. For example, Officer Tock and his lieutenants could hunt the protagonists because the citizens of the Mad City believe the Dispossessed to be unnatural. The Wax King could offer salvation to the Dispossessed in exchange for performing heinous acts against others.

The citizens of the Mad City are innocent: lost souls going about a routine that mimics their first life. The majority of them believe the Dispossessed to be dangerous, an unnatural cancer of the Mad City. At best, the most a Dispossessed can hope for from a citizen is non-interference.

Whether there are Awake in the Mad City is up to you as the GM. If there are, it's up to you to decide whether to allow players to be Awake. If you run with a mixed party, have Dispossessed and Awake establish relationships with each other in their backstories.

Dispossessed may return to the City Living, but what that looks like and what consequences it brings are up to you as the GM. Time may pass differently in the City Living. The Dispossessed might be spirits in the City Living, able to observe but not to interact.

## Making the Most of Morality

The protagonists will likely choose very different paths to salvation. Encourage this, and resist the urge to enforce a "correct" path to salvation. This approach facilitates more opportunities for conflict, as well as creates meaningful moments—which in turn make for a complex and intriguing story.

In order to maximize the chances for protagonists to make choices with moral consequences, put them into situations that involve innocents and collateral damage. This provokes a moral decision, one between an altruistic

path and a selfish path. Does the protagonist risk life and limb to minimize who's caught in a crossfire? Or do they charge ahead with no regard to who might get hurt?

Remember that each Dispossessed seeks a redemption that they've decided upon. If it requires slaying a Nightmare, remember to use encounters involving that Nightmare's minions and lieutenants. If good deeds are needed, give opportunities to help the Mad City's citizens (although they'll probably be resistant if they suspect their helpers are Dispossessed). A Dispossessed may be wrong about the requirements for their salvation, too. Can they persevere when they find out they were wrong, or that their path wasn't as simple as they initially thought?

## **A Note from the Author**

This was the first design work I ever did professionally. Thanks to Fred Hicks and Evil Hat for the opportunity and to Ryan Macklin for multiple editing passes and hand-holding. I've done as little as possible from the last time I touched it, so consider this a design time capsule from several years ago.

-Jeremy