Don't Cry Forgiveness

This is a short hack for the RPG [Don't Rest Your Head](#) by [Evil Hat Productions](#). You need a copy of the original game to play this hack.

Echoes of gunshots dying away in a distance. The bleary howl of a siren cutting through the night. You're used to it, the Gaussian noise of this nightly metropolis. You wander the rain-soaked streets, firmly convinced of the fact that the city just got somewhat safer tonight—another urban predator finally brought to justice. But that safety is a lie, only believed until eight grams of lead kick you back into reality. Like salvation is a lie, as is world peace or that never-ending warm summer breeze. Don't cry forgiveness, you're far beyond that point. There's only one thing left to do to make it bearable at all: Another bullet point to check off your list, another time to reload your gun.

Don't Cry Forgiveness takes your game out of the Mad City and into a world of violence and despair, of revenge and unfulfilled salvation. Enter the world of Film Noir, with its mobsters, cops and hard-boiled detectives.

All these people who do the wrong things for the right reasons, and lack a general understanding on when they're crossing a line with some of their actions. Many of them are evil people who, for some strange reason, try to do something good, although they know in their hearts that they're already too corrupted to succeed. Then there are the good guys, whipped out of their normal lives by events dominated by violence, people who have seen the bad guys winning just one time too often. They all suffer from compulsions, forced by their inner demons to act in distorted ways, driven by obsessions, drugs, and their very own sociopathic definition of what's right and what's good.

The Questionnaire

As usual you'll start creating your protagonist by filling out the character questionnaire. This hack uses the normal set of questions, except for replacing **What's been keeping you awake?** and **What's your path?** with the following ones:

What's your past?

This is the life-changing event that made you into the broken soul you are. Something turned your life upside down - use your answer to describe what it was.

Think about: You lived a normal life, probably had a family, a regular job, and a small house in the suburbs. But suddenly, everything changed. Something turned you from John Q. Public into an angel of revenge. Or maybe it's the other way round? After living your fast pace life on the edge as a gangster, dealing drugs, perhaps owning a couple of chop shops, something earth-shattering happens, leaving you behind with something you already forgot you owned - a conscience.

Why it matters: Your Past is your constant companion. It influences every step you take, and provides a reason for you to get yourself more deeply into the mess this game is about. Past is also one of the dice pools that represent your character.

What's your Obsession?

Your life is a mess. But there is something that helps you to stay focused, something that turns that train wreck of a person into a highly functional individual. That's not a good thing, though. It's more like an Obsession. You are clearly and inevitably compelled to show misplaced and often condemnable behavior, to act strange in the eyes of others, to do things the rest of the society considers, if not criminal, at least to be utterly wrong.

Think about: An obsession like only walking on the left side of the sidewalk. The compulsion to track down the murder of your beloved wife. Or keep it simple with the big classic: drugs: like heroin, sex, caffeine, or alcohol. Watching those movies from the thirties, the ones they just don't make like anymore. Or performing some form of disturbing arts like branding or flesh carving, or watching rain drops forming flow patterns on the windshield and trying to find answers to all those fundamental questions of existence in them.

Why it matters: Like Past, Obsession is also represented by a dice pool. It will help you to excel at difficult tasks, but use just a little bit too much of it and you shift one step closer to the edge.

What dominates the Grand Finale?

You'll start the game with playing the epilogue, the Grand Finale, where all loose ends are tied together and the protagonists take one last retrospective on the effect of their dark deeds, just before everything ultimately culminates into sorrow and death. All players will decide collaboratively what their joint Grand Finale will look like, and will determine some of its circumstances and boundaries.

Think about: Is it violent? Have people died? Are the protagonists allies or enemies in the end? Are they at the mercy of the story's antagonist? Is there any chance for a happy end, or at least to get away scarred and burned, but alive?

Why it matters: Noir stories usually have a definitive (and often very unhappy) end, so your game should have one, too. They also often start with a retrospective on what's to come, jumping backwards in time to the start of all things from there. By doing the same thing in your game, all players are given a chance to work towards their intended finale.

Note that you don't have to fully flesh out your Finale when playing the first scene. Usually, doing some foreshadowing, describing the scene and letting each player state some big final words is more than enough. You can play out the rest of the Grand Finale when you'll enter this scene again at the actual end of the game.

Rules Changes

Madness becomes Past. Those broken souls who run down the misty city streets at night are not just driven by their **Past** – they are obsessed by it. It haunts their dreams, and every situation will be judged under its influence.

Instead of a talent, **Past** provides you with the ability to introduce a **Flashback**. In some way the situation you're confronted with is directly connected to events you lived through before. Give your fellow players a short explanation of how the two events are connected. The more they overlap, the more **Past** dice you'll add to your pool. If both situations overlap in general mood and theme only, assign a single die. When everything looks like history repeating itself all over again, use three or even four dice. And when even tiny details overlap, making it almost impossible to decide whether it's just a vivid memory or actually happening again, award the full six dice.

Past is coupled to **Responses**. Instead of *Fight or Flight,* you will either experience a **Violent Outburst** and **Cower in Despair**: When forced to check off one response, you'll either react with extreme violence or unimaginable sadness and hopelessness.

If *Past dominates,* you completely lose the ability to judge the current situation objectively. You'll be haunted by memories, strange associations, even hallucinations. Check off one response and act accordingly. If you have to check off your last response, clear them out as usual and add a permanent *Past die* (with the usual consequences for your *Discipline*) - from now on, everything your protagonist experiences will be heavily colored by his Past. Lose your last Discipline die, and you'll get completely lost in your Past: the real world fades away and trades its place with a never-ending nightmare dominated by your dark memories. Your protagonist becomes unplayable. If it's okay for your group, you may take control of him once again in the *Grand Finale,* but otherwise his actions are completely out of your control.

Exhaustion becomes Obsession. You have that obsessive drive that pushes you forward and you're especially good at doing things when you just give in to it. You still have a **Talent** for something mundane associated with your **Obsession** and this talent has a minor and a major use. When *Obsession dominates,* add one point to your **Current Obsession pool**.

When your Current Obsession pool overflows, you become *neurotic*. You are compelled to act according to your associated questionnaire answer, unable to do anything else. You won't leave that state by your own and stay fixated on your compulsive behavior – another player character has to lead you back to normality, not necessarily by friendly measures, and you'll need to spend a *Coin of Hope to Get A Break* per the usual rules to reduce your Obsession pool.

Playing a Noir Game

Here are some tricks to give your game a more Noir feel.

You are alone on this

Noir protagonists are a solitary bunch, and the lone wolf is one of the core elements of the genre. To make this work out with your usual ways of roleplaying (group play, that is), seek inspirations in episode movies and short story anthologies. Keep your players from forming a party. Connect the protagonists via events and NPCs, make their paths cross each other again and again - make them enemies if your players are okay with that!

On the clock

A game of *Don't Cry Forgiveness* should not only have a clearly defined end, it should also cover a clearly defined time frame. Often, Noir stories cover only a single night, or a couple of days. Know exactly what amount of time you're aiming for and stick to it. Keep track of the events and their time of occurrence. And use your timeframe to apply additional pressure on your players, in combination with the other elements DRYH already provides you with.

Following the flow of interest

If you're up for some experimenting, just break up your usual flow of scenes altogether. Noir stories are chaotic, not only when measured by the events being told, but also by how they are told. Many stories don't follow a strict temporal sequence - instead they follow the *flow of interest*. If a paragraph focuses on a specific detail of narration, it's not at all unusual you discover the next scene takes place in the future or the past, further exploring this detail. You could do so in your game, too. Shuffling around your scenes to

follow the flow of interest can give your game a distinctive touch, although it requires quite some management and bookkeeping. Keeping track of all occurrences on a timeline becomes mandatory to avoid inconsistencies in your story, but often it's worth it.

Inspirations

Noir is pretty vast genre, especially when taking in account more recent sources. Suggesting that it's all *Philip Marlowe* and *Sam Spade* would be far too limiting. Some of the best modern examples include *Bad Lieutenant* and *King of New York,* both directed by Abel Ferrara. The *Max Payne* computer games, having Noir and Revenge written all over them, are also noteworthy instantiations of the genre. When taking "Morality gone wrong" as the central premise, even the works Quentin Tarantino (especially *Pulp Fiction*) may be taken into account. If you're up for some Science Fiction, *Blade Runner* and *New Rose Hotel* are full of typical Noir elements. Oh, and just don't forget the good old *Sin City*.