

Deja Vu

The Game of Persistent Memory

by Mendel Schmiedekamp

The world has ended. Not in disaster or design, but in the simple evaporation of a dream. All that remains is the Alabaster City. In perpetual shadow it is constructed of haunting recollections and half-envisioned creations. Living stories walk these streets, all memory lost, adrift in forgetfulness. But memories have a way of returning . . .

Deja Vu is a game of forgotten stories. The characters you play are not new characters, but old ones. They have been retired, abandoned, or simply placed on hold.

A character surfaces based on its memory. First, recall a favorite character, now left unplayed and unwritten. Write or find a description and name for it. Now think of five events which describe what the character is and what it can do. For each of these memories assign a short trait description, of what the memory says about the character. Once you have five of these, distribute 40 points of depth among them. Remember that the shallower memories are more prominent and effective. Each depth allotted should also be an even number between four and twelve.

Once this is done give your character four legacy points and you are ready to play.

Encountering Deja Vu

The Alabaster City is a quiet place, a land bleached of its energy and commotion. Pockets remain of the old stories, hidden and secreted away. These favored locations and reenactments provide a chance for the characters to regain themselves as they grow and bring forth memories through adversity.

In encountering these circumstances the characters can regain their old glory, attempting to be protagonists once more. When trying to change events or perform difficult tasks the player rolls a d20 to determine success for the character. If the roll exceeds the depth of an appropriate trait, or a sixteen if no memory has an appropriate trait, the roll is a success. A success means that the character has made some change. Multiple rolls may be required to do very significant or dramatic actions. A success also increases a character's ability to have deja vu.

Entering Deja Vu

At the beginning of each game each player takes the dice of each of his or her character's memories and rolls them. These dice are kept near their associated memory. Each time that a memory's trait is used successfully, increase its die by one, up to the maximum. If the die is at its maximum the memory can cause deja vu. In this case, the player describes how the scene progresses in a way which mirrors the memory which is used in this way. If the description is consistent the character rerolls the die and gains a memory point.

On Memory and Legacy

Memory points may be used in two ways. At any time one memory point may be used to decrease a memory's depth by one. New memories may be treated as starting at depth sixteen and using a sixteen side die for this purpose. When a memory reaches depth twelve, ten, eight, six, or four, replace the memory's die with a new one of that number of sides. The die is then rolled. Five memory points can also be converted to one legacy point.

Legacy points represent the inherent quality that has kept the characters from fading away completely. One may be spent at any time to gain a veto of some event directly affecting the character, or to cause some event directly affecting the character. The most common use of this is to prevent the character's untimely demise.

Each Ending is a Beginning

The ultimate goal of each character is reincarnation. To return to active use. Escaping the Alabaster City, for a time at least. Whether as the finalé of a quest, or the result of surfacing enough memories, each character is ultimately attempting to capture the attention of the players, so as to deserve another stint in the spotlight.