



**DEAD  
END**





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# WHAT IS DEAD END?

Dead End is a gritty survival horror set during a zombie apocalypse. It showcases themes like eroding humanity, psychological instability and the harsh demands of survival while reinforcing the grim and often savage consequences for those who resort to violence.

The living dead in this setting are the mindless, shambling, flesh-eaters featured in Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* and George A. Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* film series. They are little more than a minor hazard. In a post-apocalyptic world of rapidly declining resources, humanity is the real threat.

*Savage Worlds* and *Dead End* are a good example of how effective use of Setting Rules and a handful of Hindrances and Edges can reinforce the dark and gritty nature of the survival horror genre. That said, this is a brutal and punishing setting even for a zombie apocalypse.

This book will give you a preview of the horror that awaits you in the full release version of *Dead End*. It is about ordinary people dealing with extraordinary circumstance. How long can you survive? How far are you prepared to go? Can you live with the fallout of those decisions? Are you ready to embrace the apocalypse? Jump in... the water is fine.

## NEW HINDRANCES

### GUILTY CONSCIENCE MINOR OR MAJOR

The hero suffers from deep guilt over some past action, or failure to act. At the beginning of each session he must make a Spirit roll at a -2 or start with one less Benny. As a Major Hindrance, the penalty increases to -4 and he starts with two less Bennies on a Critical Failure.

### POLLYANNA MINOR

Your survivor is a persistently cheerful and irrepressible optimist with a tendency to find the good in everything. She believes in the innate goodness of people and takes them at their word. Even when they prove they cannot be trusted, she is eager to give them another chance.

## NEW EDGES

The following Edges from *Savage Worlds* are not appropriate for use in this setting: All Arcane Backgrounds (and Edges that require them), Berserk, Connections, Healer, Rich\Filthy Rich.

### MEDIC PROFESSIONAL

**Requirements:** Novice, Spirit d8+, Healing d8+, Knowledge (Medicine) d6+

Medics are first responders trained in triage medicine. Add +2 to Healing checks to stabilize any patients that are Bleeding Out or support rolls to revive an Incapacitated survivor. If the survivor can reach a patient before the end of the round in which they suffered a wound, he may make a Healing check lasting 1d4 rounds instead of 10 minutes per wound.



# THE DEAD

## DAMAGING THE DEAD

The dead possess a certain invulnerability. Any attack can cause them to become Shaken, but they only suffer Wounds to the head. Dismemberment from Called Shots to limbs that result in at least one Wound slow them down or render them helpless, but you must still destroy the brain.

## DISTRACTING THE LIVING DEAD

Zombies lack any discernible intelligence or sense of self-preservation. They will quite literally walk into a wood chipper in pursuit of prey. The undead are easily distracted and drawn to noise. Survivors can draw their attention easily enough by waving their arms and shouting, "Hey! Over here..." or any other noise or sharp movement. Tests therefore work differently on Zombies in the following ways:

Tests are not opposed, simply requiring a success or raise.

- **Success:** Shakes the Zombie and turns its point of attention to the survivor.
- **Raise:** This provokes the Zombie. It will ignore other prey pursuing only the survivor until it catches them or it is Tested by another survivor. This also causes the Zombie to release any prey it is currently grappling.

## THE GROWL

All undead reflexively groan, growl or moan upon seeing live prey. This consumes their first action on the first turn of any combat. By its very nature, the growl negates the ability for the undead to ever gain the drop.

## MOVEMENT

Moving counts as an action for Zombies. They treat stairs as difficult terrain. The dead have no Run die and suffer the standard multi-action penalty to move and attack in the same round.

## ZOMBIE

**Attributes:** Agility d4, Smarts d(z), Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d4

**Skills:** None

**Pace:** 4; **Parry:** 0; **Toughness:** 6

**Special Abilities:**

- **Bite:** They can easily bite off chunks of flesh. Str+d6 damage. This is almost exclusively only used on grappled prey.
- **Hardy:** Zombies do not suffer a Wound from being Shaken twice.
- **Hibernation:** Living Dead hibernate in the absence of prey or other stimuli. Success on a Notice roll at a -2 wakes them.
- **Living Dead:** Zombies are immune to disease, fear, and poison. The dead never suffer Fatigue, and are not Incapacitated by injuries.
- **Life Sense:** Add +2 on all Notice rolls to sense living things (including rolls against surprise attacks and rolls to detect characters using Stealth).
- **Mindless:** Zombies are always considered Vulnerable.
- **Slow:** The dead move at a Pace of 4 and they may never run. Movement is an action for zombies. In addition, they must redraw any initiative card greater than a five.
- **Thanatoviridae:** Anyone who is bitten is immediately infected and suffers a level of fatigue immediately. Victims must make a Vigor check every hour or gain an additional level of fatigue. Incapacitation from this results in instant death.
- **Weakness (Head):** Instantly killed by any Wound to the head.

# SETTING RULES

The following new Setting rules reinforce the tone and harsh reality of the world that exists when hordes of the undead claim the earth.

## EVERYDAY PEOPLE

Player characters start as ordinary people with the following limitations. Attributes and Skills are capped at a d8 and characters may not take any Combat Edges during character creation. On the upside, they automatically start with the Improvisational Fighter Edge for free at Novice Rank.

## FATE IS CRUEL

Any time a survivor rolls a 1 on the Wild Die (regardless of the Trait die), they are stuck with that result and may not reroll for any reason. Even if this roll was the product of a reroll and is lower this roll must be kept.

## FEAR EFFECTS

Characters who fail a Spirit check are Shaken and gain a level of Fatigue that lasts until the end of the encounter. Rather than roll on the Fright Table, characters roleplay their reactions to all sources of fear.

## TRAUMATIC DAMAGE

This variation on damage makes combat more lethal than usual by shifting focus from wound modifiers to physical injuries. With the exception of unarmed damage, survivors cannot spend Bennies to Soak! What's more, they must roll on the Injury Table for each Wound taken. Injuries sustained in this manner last until the Wound heals. Players keep track of their Wounds, but Wound modifiers only apply to Healing and Incapacitation tests.

A roll of 2 (Unmentionables) on the Injury Table means the survivor is Incapacitated instead. Called shots require a roll on the Injury Table to confirm Incapacitation (a roll of 2) before the corresponding result from the Injury Table is applied.



## GRITTY HEADSHOTS

When a Called Shot to the head is suffered by anyone it's a serious injury. A survivor who suffers a Wound of any type to the head is incapacitated. Two or more Wounds suffered to the head in a single attack results in death, this does not cause a roll for Incapacitation but results in instant death.

## OVER WHELMED

Shaken heroes are able to recover quickly, return to the fray and soldier on, unfortunately survivors can't do the same. Shaken survivors move at half their Pace (this

does not affect the run die if they choose to run), and may take no actions.

Recovery operates differently as well, though the survivor may spend a Benny at any time to recover fully.

- **Success:** Survivors are no longer Shaken but may still only move up to half their Pace and are considered to have taken an "action" to recover.
- **Raise:** Survivors are fully recovered and act normally.



# ERRAND OF MERCY

A Jumpstart Adventure by Jerrod 'Savage Daddy' Gunning  
for the upcoming Dead End Setting from Atomic Ninja Studios.

## INTRODUCTION

*Errand of Mercy* showcases some new rules in the *Savage Worlds Adventure Edition* while introducing players and game masters to the world of Dead End, the gritty zombie survival-horror setting coming soon from Atomic Ninja Studios.

The adventure works best with 4-6 Novice survivor player characters. You must have the *Dead End Jumpstart* and *Savage Worlds Adventure Edition* to play. Feel free to create your own characters, or use the included pregenerated survivors. Before running this adventure, you should be familiar with its contents and share the Dead End setting rules with players to avoid any unpleasant surprises.

## PART ONE: THE ROAD AHEAD

The characters are a tight-knit band of survivors traveling on foot to the last rumored Citizen Safe Zone in the country. They've been walking for days, following rural railroad tracks with few stops to rest. What little food and water they have was gathered from abandoned homes along the way. There is not much left, and strict rationing takes its toll. The characters start the day with half the food needed and make Vigor rolls at -2 against Hunger as defined in *Savage Worlds*, under **Hazards**.

As mid-day approaches, the characters find an abandoned campsite. A peculiar odor emanates from the sealed family tent and a quick search reveals its source— and necessitates a Fear Test. Inside, are the corpses of a man, woman and child all shot in the head. Scrawled in blood on the wall is the message, "God Forgive Me."

Despite the horrific scene, the campsite is viable. There is plenty of wood for the fire, enough food and water to last for days, and a variety of useful camping accessories. The characters face a tough decision. They may strip the site bare and make camp elsewhere, or stay for the night. The latter does not require Survival and Vigor tests. But if they choose to stay, there is only one tent and they must dispose of the bodies to use it. How they go about it is their business. Burial is the humane choice, but requires a few hours followed by a Vigor roll to avoid a level of Fatigue.

As night falls, the characters gather around the campfire. Barring any major disasters or detours, they should reach their destination within a day. Before turning in for the night, ask the players to reflect on the journey in character and earn a Benny for role-play by running an **Interlude**, as detailed in *Savage Worlds*.

Unless the characters made camp elsewhere or buried the bodies, a bear suddenly lurches out of the woods after midnight! If handling the scene as a combat, instead of a Quick Encounter, characters on watch must succeed on a Notice roll to receive a card during the first round of combat as described in *Savage Worlds*, under **Surprise**. Sleeping characters instantly wake Distracted at the start of the next round. In addition, every shot fired attracts 1d4 zombies that appear at the end of the encounter.



### PART TWO: RAY OF HOPE

A long hike along a gravel road leads the characters to a rural high school surrounded by chain-link fence and fortified with sandbags, spikes, and razor wire. A quick check of the map confirms that they have arrived at their destination. As they approach, two armed men in camouflage fatigues call down from makeshift towers at either end of the main gate. It swings open as three more rush forward, ordering the group to their knees.

Once their possessions are confiscated, the characters are marched at gunpoint to a small tent just inside the perimeter. An attractive middle-aged woman who introduces herself as Loraine Ray examines the characters for bite marks and other signs of infectious disease. Satisfied, she nods to the nearby armed guard. A few moments later, a stern man in camouflage fatigues enters. He introduces himself as Lieutenant Major Keller, the Defense Coordinating Officer for the Hope High Citizen Safe Zone. He thanks them for their cooperation and explains that such precautions are necessary.

Keller goes on to explain they are welcome to stay as long as they like, as long as they contribute. Food, shelter, and community are the wages of hard work.

Exile is the price for disobedience. As soldiers enter and return their gear, he makes it a point to add that citizens are restricted from carrying weapons. Before leaving, he announces that they all look hungry and suggests Loraine give them the nickel tour en route to the school's cafeteria.

A quick check of their gear reveals Keller has confiscated anything that even resembles a weapon.

### PART THREE: ERRAND OF MERCY

Weeks pass as the group settles into their new role as Camp Hope citizens. Loraine has become a close friend. Thanks to her influence, the characters have superior lodging and the best work assignments imaginable.

As is their custom, the characters join Loraine for dinner. As they approach their usual table, they find her consoling a distraught woman, whom she introduces as Stacey. Loraine goes on to explain that a scavenging party rescued Stacey and her twelve-year-old daughter, Piper, during a routine run near Mercy Hospital earlier that day. Piper wandered off, and before anyone realized she was missing, hundreds of dead overran the scavenging party.



Keller refuses to expend valuable resources on a little girl he considers most likely dead. But Loraine has convinced him to let her lead the characters on a suicide mission to rescue Piper. Assuming the characters make the noble choice, Keller meets them at the front gate the next morning. He hands Loraine an EMT trauma bag and the keys to a SUV. Good to his word, he also returns their weapons along with flashlights, machetes and walkie-talkies.

Getting in and out of Mercy Hospital is a Quick Encounter separate from the Dramatic Task to rescue Piper once inside. As an Allied Extra, the players make a Common Knowledge roll at +2 for Loraine. Failure represents a gross miscalculation to identify the best entry and exits points, which makes sneaking in and out more deadly — adding a -2 penalty to all Stealth or Athletics tests during the Quick Encounter.

Once inside, the characters find the twelve-year-old girl trapped in an elevator stuck between floors. To make matters worse, she has a broken leg and the stairwells and halls are teeming with zombies. The characters must free Piper from the elevator and carry her to safety, all while keeping the dead at bay.

Rescuing Piper is a **Challenging Dramatic Task** as presented in *Savage Worlds*. Freeing her from the elevator is a Repair roll at -2 made by one character, with Support from others keeping the dead away. Additional raises on the Repair check do not apply to Athletics rolls needed later. An Athletics check is required to free Piper from the elevator itself, and a Strength check to carry Piper away from danger, but as above others may Support by dealing with the zombies.

If a roll is failed during a Complication, Piper is ripped away and eaten alive by the dead — necessitating a Fear check at -2. A character incapacitated as a result becomes frozen in terror. Unless another character carries them to safety (Athletics -2), they are devoured by the dead. Overwhelmed (Shaken) characters get a single chance to recover before making an Athletics check to escape the hospital.

If the group succeeds at the Dramatic Task, a Stealth check allows the characters to escape from Mercy Hospital without further incident. If failed, the character suffers a wound as a bite from the dead without realizing it (see Aftermath). This also applies to characters who fail the Dramatic Task and subsequent Athletics roll.

## AFTERMATH

If they rescue Piper without a single casualty, the residents of Camp Hope tout the characters heroes and hold them in the highest regard. If they return without Piper, her mother publicly berates them and the residents of Camp Hope label the characters cowards. Any scenario that involves Loraine's death earns the ire of Lieutenant Major Keller and ultimately leads to their exile.

Win, loose, or draw the characters are ushered to the medical tent upon their return. What happens next is up the Game Master. A Persuasion test may stay the executioner's hand long enough to discuss options like suicide or exile, but the armed guard stationed in the tent has orders to immediately headshot anyone who is bitten. No matter what you and the players decide, a bitten character is doomed to die and return as one of the living dead. It's never a matter of if, but when.

## PERSONALITIES

### CAMP HOPE CIVILIAN

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d4, Stealth d4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 5; **Humanity:** 5

**Hindrances:** Loyal (Camp Hope Leadership)

**Gear:** Non-lethal utensils and equipment only.

### CAMP HOPE MILITARY

Use the Soldier stats as detailed in *Savage Worlds*, under **Typical Allies** for all soldiers.

### LEUTENANT MAJOR KELLER

Use the Experienced Soldier stats as detailed in *Savage Worlds*, under **Typical Allies**.

### LORAIN RAY

**Attributes:** Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

**Skills:** Athletics d4, Common Knowledge d6, Fighting d4, Healing d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Shooting d4, Stealth d4

**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 6; **Humanity:** 6

**Hindrances:** Heroic

**Gear:** Medical kit (+2 Healing), machete (Str+d6), Glock 9m (Range: 12/24/48, Damage: 2d6, RoF 1, Shots: 15)

# PREGENERATED SURVIVORS

Below are pregenerated Novice characters designed for the Errand of Mercy Jumpstart Adventure. You may notice that none of them have names, genders or physical descriptions. Those details are left to the player. This is an integral part of the Atomic Ninja Studios design philosophy, specifically intended to promote diversity and the agency of players to personalize the character they want to roleplay— even when it is pre-generated.

## THE ALPHA

The character is a do-gooder with a messiah complex and a PhD in ass-kicking from the School of Hard Knocks.

<b>AGILITY</b> <b>D8</b>	<b>HINDRANCES</b>	<b>SKILLS</b>	<b>GEAR</b>	<b>PAGE</b> <b>6</b>
<b>SMARTS</b> <b>D6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heroic</li> <li>• Guilty Conscience (Major)</li> </ul>	Athletics ..... d6 Common Knowledge .... d4 Fighting..... d6 Guts..... d4 Intimidation ..... d8 Notice..... d4 Persuasion ..... d6 Shooting..... d6 Stealth ..... d4 Survival ..... d4	Backpack, bedroll, canteen, hip holster, Colt Peacemaker (12/24/48; Damage 2d6+1, RoF 1, 4 Shots left)	<b>PARRY</b> <b>5</b>
<b>SPIRIT</b> <b>D6</b>	<b>EDGES</b>			<b>TOUGHNESS</b> <b>5</b>
<b>STRENGTH</b> <b>D6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quick Draw</li> <li>• Improvisational Fighter</li> <li>Edge (free)</li> </ul>			<b>HUMANITY</b> <b>6</b>
<b>VIGOR</b> <b>D6</b>	<b>MOTIVATION</b>		<b>WOUNDS</b> <b>-1-2-3</b>	<b>FATIGUE</b> <b>-2-1</b>
	Find more .45 ammo for Colt Peacemaker		<b>INC</b>	

## THE DIPLOMAT

The character is a persuasive people-person whose first instinct is to settle disputes, whether welcome or not.

<b>AGILITY</b> <b>D6</b>	<b>HINDRANCES</b>	<b>SKILLS</b>	<b>GEAR</b>	<b>PAGE</b> <b>6</b>
<b>SMARTS</b> <b>D6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hesitant</li> <li>• Loyal</li> <li>• Pollyanna</li> <li>• Pacifist (Minor)</li> </ul>	Academics..... d6 Athletics ..... d4 Common Knowledge .... d6 Intimidation ..... d6 Notice..... d6 Performance..... d6 Persuasion ..... d8 Stealth ..... d4	Backpack, bedroll, canteen, switchblade (Str+1d4), personal journal	<b>PARRY</b> <b>2</b>
<b>SPIRIT</b> <b>D6</b>	<b>EDGES</b>			<b>TOUGHNESS</b> <b>5</b>
<b>STRENGTH</b> <b>D6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive</li> <li>• Charismatic</li> <li>• Improvisational Fighter</li> <li>Edge (free)</li> </ul>			<b>HUMANITY</b> <b>5</b>
<b>VIGOR</b> <b>D6</b>	<b>MOTIVATION</b>		<b>WOUNDS</b> <b>-1-2-3</b>	<b>FATIGUE</b> <b>-2-1</b>
	Reach the Citizen Safe Zone		<b>INC</b>	

## THE JESTER

The character gladly plays the fool and strives to conquer despair and awkward silence with witty remarks or gallows humor. Their particular brand of humor isn't always well-received, even amongst friends.

**AGILITY**  
D6  
**SMARTS**  
D6  
**SPIRIT**  
D6  
**STRENGTH**  
D6  
**VIGOR**  
D6

### HINDRANCES

- Clueless
- Impulsive
- Loyal

### EDGES

- Bolster
- Improvisational Fighter
- Edge (free)
- Provoke

### SKILLS

Athletics ..... d6  
Common Knowledge .... d6  
Fighting..... d4  
Guts..... d4  
Notice..... d6  
Persuasion ..... d6  
Stealth ..... d6  
Survival ..... d4  
Taunt ..... d8

### GEAR

Backpack, bedroll, blanket, canteen, hand axe (Str+d6), cigarette lighter (provides light in 2" radius).

### PACE

6

### PARRY

4

### TOUGHNESS

5

### HUMANITY

5

### MOTIVATION

Reach the Citizen Safe Zone

### WOUNDS

-1-2-3

INC

### FATIGUE

-2-1

## THE HUNTER

The character is patient, with a cold calculating nature and a highly developed competitive streak. They rely on stealth and cunning, and quickly assess the strengths and weaknesses of everyone they meet.

**AGILITY**  
D6  
**SMARTS**  
D6  
**SPIRIT**  
D6  
**STRENGTH**  
D6  
**VIGOR**  
D6

### HINDRANCES

- Ruthless (Minor)
- Stubborn
- Thin
- Skinned (Major)

### EDGES

- Fleet-Footed
- Improvisational Fighter
- Edge (free)
- Woodsman

### SKILLS

Athletics ..... d6  
Common Knowledge .... d6  
Fighting..... d4  
Guts..... d4  
Notice..... d6  
Persuasion ..... d4  
Shooting..... d6  
Stealth ..... d6  
Survival ..... d8

### GEAR

Backpack, bedroll, canteen, cross bow (Range: 15/30/60, Damage: 2d6, RoF 1, Reload 1, 6 bolts), survival knife (Str+d4, +1 Survival)

### PACE

8

### PARRY

4

### TOUGHNESS

5

### HUMANITY

4

### MOTIVATION

Reach the Citizen Safe Zone

### WOUNDS

-1-2-3

INC

### FATIGUE

-2-1

## THE SNEAK

In a world that rewards valor with death, the character has come to realize a clever word and a silent step can accomplish more than a frontal assault. They've mastered the arts of stealth, discretion, and doubletalk.

<p><b>AGILITY</b> <b>D8</b></p> <p><b>SMARTS</b> <b>D6</b></p> <p><b>SPIRIT</b> <b>D6</b></p> <p><b>STRENGTH</b> <b>D6</b></p> <p><b>VIGOR</b> <b>D6</b></p>	<p><b>HINDRANCES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cautious</li> <li>• Suspicious (Major)</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>EDGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thief</li> <li>• Improvisational Fighter</li> <li>• Edge (free)</li> </ul>	<p><b>SKILLS</b></p> <p>Athletics ..... d6</p> <p>Common Knowledge .... d6</p> <p>Fighting..... d4</p> <p>Guts..... d4</p> <p>Notice..... d6</p> <p>Persuasion ..... d4</p> <p>Stealth ..... d6</p> <p>Survival ..... d6</p> <p>Thievery ..... d8</p>	<p><b>GEAR</b></p> <p>Backpack, bedroll, canteen, nylon rope (10"/20 yards), grappling hook, hunting knife (Str+d6), lockpicks.</p>	<p><b>PAGE</b> <b>6</b></p> <p><b>PARRY</b> <b>4</b></p> <p><b>TOUGHNESS</b> <b>5</b></p> <p><b>HUMANITY</b> <b>4</b></p>
<p><b>MOTIVATION</b></p> <p>Reach the Citizen Safe Zone</p>		<p><b>WOUNDS</b></p> <p><b>-1-2-3</b></p>	<p><b>INC</b></p>	<p><b>FATIGUE</b></p> <p><b>-2-1</b></p>

## THE TINKERER

The character is a bit of a nerd with an obsession. They must take things apart, see how they work, and see if they can fix 'em, break 'em, or put them back together in new and interesting ways.

<p><b>AGILITY</b> <b>D4</b></p> <p><b>SMARTS</b> <b>D8</b></p> <p><b>SPIRIT</b> <b>D6</b></p> <p><b>STRENGTH</b> <b>D6</b></p> <p><b>VIGOR</b> <b>D6</b></p>	<p><b>HINDRANCES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clumsy</li> <li>• Curious</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>EDGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alertness</li> <li>• McGyver</li> <li>• Improvisational Fighter</li> <li>• Edge (free)</li> </ul>	<p><b>SKILLS</b></p> <p>Athletics ..... d4</p> <p>Common Knowledge .... d6</p> <p>Driving..... d6</p> <p>Electronics ..... d6</p> <p>Notice..... d8</p> <p>Persuasion ..... d4</p> <p>Research..... d4</p> <p>Repair..... d6</p> <p>Science ..... d6</p> <p>Stealth ..... d4</p>	<p><b>GEAR</b></p> <p>Backpack, bedroll, canteen, flashlight (10" beam), hammer (Str+d4), toolkit</p>	<p><b>PAGE</b> <b>6</b></p> <p><b>PARRY</b> <b>2</b></p> <p><b>TOUGHNESS</b> <b>5</b></p> <p><b>HUMANITY</b> <b>4</b></p>
<p><b>MOTIVATION</b></p> <p>Reach the Citizen Safe Zone</p>		<p><b>WOUNDS</b></p> <p><b>-1-2-3</b></p>	<p><b>INC</b></p>	<p><b>FATIGUE</b></p> <p><b>-2-1</b></p>