



NOW PLAYING



Dead means dead in **Dishonored 2's** Iron Mode. What could possibly go wrong? **ALEX SPENCER**

PUBLISHER BETHESDA / DEVELOPER ARKANE STUDIOS / FORMAT XBOX ONE / RELEASE DATE NOVEMBER 2016



Prey's Mooncrash expansion, which added permadeath as part of its new roguelike-style mode, gave me an idea. Arkane's

previous game, *Dishonored 2*, features a custom difficulty mode – could I use that to attempt my own DIY version? The settings do allow me to turn off saves, and turn on 'Iron Mode'. Meaning if I die at any point, it's back to the start of the entire game. Yikes.

Skipping through the opening cutscenes, I pick the freshly dethroned empress Emily Kaldwin over Corvo, star of the original *Dishonored*. I've previously played through this sequel as both characters, setting a different challenge each time: never kill anyone, never get spotted. With no saves to fall back on, though, those simply aren't an option here. Pacifist Emily is dead; long live stab-everyone-on-sight Emily.

Sticking to the shadows, on the other hand? That could be useful. Tapping into knowledge from that stealth playthrough, I locate the spot where you can jump from a tiled roof onto a train cart that lets you skip pretty much the entire first level. Brilliant. Except I forget about a low-hanging obstacle, and get knocked onto the electrified tracks.

Back to the start it is, this time plumping for old reliable Corvo. This time I actually remember to jump, and the train speeds me to the other side of the map, where I dive into the sea and swim over to the waiting ship.

On the blink

On the sunnier shores of Karnaca, the real adventure begins. Omnipotent mascara-and-Morrissey fan The Outsider has returned my magical powers – including Blink, an ability that lets me teleport up to the rooftops, where I can safely scurry around. I make my way towards the



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objective, trying to avoid any shiny, dangerous distractions along the way.

Like, for example, the five-storey Overseer Outpost on the far side of the plaza. I know from experience that the building is packed with zealots whose religious commandments don't extend

to not killing me. Alas, it's also a deliciously tempting treasure trove of Runes, which can be used to upgrade my abilities.

Before you know it, I'm knee deep in Overseers.

The battle empties my ammo reserves and nearly costs me my life, but I'm the last man standing –

mostly because the rest all end up with their legs chopped off.

I pour my ill-gotten Runes into upgrading Blink and acquiring a double jump. These prove incredibly useful in the next level, as I climb to the roof of the Addermire Institute and descend on the unsuspecting guards below. A few near-misses – including almost running into a Wall of Light, which would have vaporised me – and some creative violence (my favourite

involving a stun mine attached to a bottle of pear soda) later, I'm back aboard the ship on my way to Aventa.

This success leaves me feeling – fairly literally – on top of the world. Which is naturally where it all goes wrong. Remembering another handy shortcut, I scurry up a telegraph pole, jump, and aim Blink at the roof of Aventa station. Apparently, my aim was off. I materialise in the air a foot short of my target and, something about pride and falls going through my head, drop to the streets below.

So, another adventure comes to a rather anticlimactic end. Oh well, back to the start again, and back to Emily. Surely she won't let me down... ■



WHAT IS IT?
An immersive sim in a beautifully designed steampunk world, where you can sneak, stab or shoot your way to victory.