

Quest Writing - A Layer Cake Approach

A vertical slice-ish quest based on my original concept. Introduces a world, an NPC living in it, a quest tied to that NPC, and three short snippets of dialogue.

Presented below is a short quest-pitch, intended to function as in-house documentation for other team members, cross-discipline collaborators, or contractors.

This concept is one where everything from the story, to the NPC, to the tone of the dialogue is entirely designed by me. Doing so, I hope to shed light on my thought process and creative range as a narrative designer.

I aimed for just-enough of a full picture for a team member to immediately know where to start working – and for a player to be engaged, pulled in with as little as a single line of dialogue, tempted to go in for more.

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Brief Description: *A third-person, action-adventure RPG, set in a medieval-esque plane between life and death. The player is a small girl in search of her brother; unbeknownst to her, they're both recently deceased. The search for her brother eventually overlaps with a larger mystery – a looming calamity which threatens the lands.*

[Think [Twilight Princess](#) (gameplay) x Little Red Riding Hood (aesthetic) x [The Brothers Lionheart](#) (theme).]

The World: An action-adventure RPG in a cottagecore x medieval setting. An in-between plane for the unfinished dead, home to anthropomorphic animals – some native, others in passing.

The Character: Pastor – a stern, no-nonsense German Shepherd, with a tough exterior but a soft heart. He's a tavern keeper and – secretly – the player's spirit guide; native to these in-between lands, tasked with aiding her soul in departure.

The Quest: The player is asked to clear a flock of pesky mobs out of the tavern's garden in exchange for food and shelter. The player is in want of both for managing buffs and debuffs.

The build-up and tone of this quest implies a mid- to high-level difficulty, and the player is meant to perceive it as such. Mechanically, Pastor will intervene before anything happens to the player, causing them to fail the quest, but trigger another, easier, follow-up quest.

The Stakes:

- Mechanical: The player will lose out on their reward, but will (gruffly) be offered another chance to earn Pastor's approval. This approval is important for the player's **main goal**, which is to find their brother. To do that, they need information, allies, and resources; for which Pastor is a three-in-one deal.
- Narrative: For one, it would save the crops. A food shortage would be bad for everyone. It's also a matter of judgment; this is how Pastor tests the player: how well can they fare in this world, what guidance will they need from him?

The Content: The bigger picture behind the mobs. The scale has been tipped, the balance disturbed, and a crack has silently formed in the land – beginning in the forest and spreading outward, forcing forest-dwelling mobs to flee into villages. Pastor is unaware of the cause, but worried about its potential consequences. The dialogue strips away some of Pastor's mask. It provides a springboard for the player, in their search for their missing brother.

This is the player's second time approaching Pastor. The first time, he shooed them away to look for someplace else to sleep. The tavern had been closed, all the rooms taken. He told the player to come back the next day – with coin (optional step in a larger quest). The player has now come back – without coin.*

**[This quest won't trigger if the player does have the coin. That will instead allow the player to pay for the tavern's services, prompting a different interaction with Pastor.]*

Layer One

"Back empty-handed, huh? We don't do freeloaders here – nor charity, so don't try me. Want to be useful, buns? Start by clearing saplets out of the garden. Then we'll see."

Layer Two

"The buggers have become a thorn and a half. A famine at the height of harvest?" <he lets out a bitter bark-laugh> "No, not on my watch. Get them from behind if you can, they're helpless once you topple them."

Layer Three

"It started a couple moons ago. Wasn't this bad at first, but now... it's a mass migration. Half the forest at our borders – in a frenzy, no less. We're soon to join them by the looks of it. Go, see for yourself."

Note – Until the player has either completed or failed their quest, attempting to talk to Pastor will prompt the text: *Pastor is taking your measure. He has said what he has to say.*