

Narrative Design Sample: [Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant]

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Target Project: Dark Fantasy

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Quest Overview

Hook

- Journey through the perpetual shadow of *Half-Light Hamlet* to answer the plea of a *Woebegone Mendicant* seeking alms and an act of spiritual atonement

Conflict

- Choose between restoring a *White Fire* historically maintained by human sacrifice and siding with Belphegor, a demon serving as a psychological mirror to the order's spiritual rot

Objective

- Ascend the mountain to complete three trials of spirit and blood, ultimately deciding whether to rekindle the reliquary or extinguish the Sun-Thegns' failing light forever.

Character Bios

Woebegone Mendicant (NPC)

- A repentant beggar-priest and the last of the Sun-Thegns, seeking to atone for his order's ritualistic fall by guiding the player to rekindle the mountain's light.

Belphegor, the Noon-Day Devil

- The demonic incarnation of the Sun-Thegn's spiritual rot and dejection, Belphegor acts as a physiological mirror and tempter who challenges the Player to judge whether a blood-stained faith is worth rekindling.

Quest Flow

Entry:

The Player enters a rural settlement known as *Half-Light Hamlet*. This village in the north sleeps in the throat of a steep mountain. The perpetual shadow of the peak veils the hamlet; even the midday sun cannot pierce it.

Encounter:

Amidst dimmed torches specked amongst hovels, the Woebegone Mendicant is kneeled before a rutted path. His head is bowed; hands outstretched, seeking supplication.

Task:

Should the Player choose to give alms, the Woebegone Mendicant (the last worshipper of the White Fire) asks for further aid in their quest of propitiation – an act of atonement. The sun must be coaxed to alter its course across the sky and bring light to this place once more. The Player will venture into the mountainside and, ultimately, ascend it by completing three trials:

** The player is offered an optional debuff, "The Burden of the Way," which adds an encumbered effect (player movement is not hindered, but they must refrain from looting anything to keep the debuff). Health and Mana regen are blocked. If the Burden is undertaken to completion, a greater reward is presented (Shroud of Twilit Brilliance).**

1. **The Scouring of the Sepulchre** - Descend into a desecrated sepulchre at the mountain's root and quell spirits by either the sword or with healing spells and potions. Choose to reconsecrate the ground with Anointing Oil, or burn the forsaken vault to ensure the Restless do not stir again.
2. **The Ransom of the Innocent** - Climb the crags of the mountainside, following crooked byways that coil around foothills. Journey through a barrow and slay the embodiment of Apathy: the Noon-Day Devil, Belphegor. Or take the demon of listlessness' deal and murder the Woebegone Mendicant, availing the Player with *The Morning's Phylactery*.
3. **Rekindle the Reliquary** - Reach the pinnacle of the mountain, enter the Summit Cathedral, and pray for the sun's light or blaspheme against the White Fire.

The Reveal:

- Upon returning from the Sepulchre, the Woebegone Mendicant reveals he is part of the Sun-Thegns, a failing order of warrior priests who, through acts of sacrificial substitution, keep the White Fire shining on the realms of men.

- Before the confrontation with Belphegor, the Woebegone Mendicant admits that the Sun-Thegn's faith flickered, turning lukewarm as the ages marched on. First they doubted, then they became indifferent. Belphegor is the actualization of their spiritual desolation. This has led to the sun and its White Fire to desert this country. The light in the North has failed, and all manner of foulness to creep from blackened shadows and waylay the innocent.
 - Before the engagement with Belphegor, the demon states the Mendicant and his ilk's sin is more treacherous than the Player knows. They are nothing more than a savage, zealous cult of the sun. Their sun, disinterested in the world, has not shone on *Half-Light* because it is merely couched in the shade, as it has been for generations. The Sun-Thegns have tried a multitude of distasteful rituals, including human sacrifice, to lure the sun's light. Their 'White Fire' is a delusion, and Belphegor is not the manifestation of the blemish in their faith, but rather the penance of their malcontent. Though demons are known to be false.
 - *The demon encourages the Player to kill the Mendicant and defile the Cathedral.*
- In the Cathedral, whether the Player has chosen to slay Belphegor or the Woebegone Mendicant, an incarnation for the White Fire manifests.

Choices:

- If the Player has slain the Mendicant, the incarnation of the White Fire is immediately hostile.
- If the Player kills Belphegor but still chooses to blaspheme at the Summit Cathedral altar, it becomes hostile. The Mendicant scorns you, but *Half-Light* remains accessible.
- If both the Mendicant and incarnation of the White Fire are slain, the torches expire in *Half-Light* and the hamlet is overrun with fiends. Killing them offers rare loot and an XP farm.
- If the Player prays at the Summit Cathedral's altar, the incarnation of the White Fire offers succour, bringing the Woebegone Mendicant (name revealed as Cuthbert) back into the fold of his faith. No more depending on alms, but a leading Thegn one more. He has kept his faith. The light shines on *Half-Light* once again, opening the town for trade and a new player home.
- No matter the choice, if the *Burden of the Way* debuff is carried to the Summit Cathedral across all quest stages, an otherwise locked gate is opened to reveal a lootable reliquary. Players can loot the *Shroud of Twilight Brilliance*.

Dialogue Script (Sample)

Woebegone Mendicant

(Aged and breathy)

*"I do not seek your pity, traveler.
Pity is a luxury for those who still have the sun.
Here there is only shadow."*

Belphegor, the Noon-Day Devil

(Bored; detached)

*"Keep your weapon sheathed, deluded one.
The beggar would have you believe him blameless and I the blight of his failing dawn.
When he set you on this path, he knew what he wrought: another sacrifice to forestall the
eternal twilight.
Be not mistaken, he has sent you here to die. But tell me, why should the guiltless pay the
penance of the guilty?
I would not have that be your fate. Hearken to me, and let us strike an accord."*

Player

1. *"I do not bargain with the Accursed, nor heed their twisted tongues (Attack)."*
2. *"If the Mendicant has lied, I would have you now speak the truth."*
3. (If the Player has previously killed the Mendicant) *"[Give the Morning Phylactery] I've already ran through the wretch, demon. If you wish to barter, offer me my reward."*

Incarnation of the White Fire

(Echoed; ethereal)

Upon hearing the Player's prayer:

*"Well done, good and faithful servant.
You have carried the fire where my own elect faltered.
The dead rest. The shadow, broken. And my last herald returned to me.
May the morning-tide be a blessing to you, for all your days.
Step forth, Cuthbert. Your night-walk ends. Be renewed of your charge as my Ray." – the
Woebegone Mendicant steps forward.*

White Fire's Blessing (Permanent Buff): +7% Critical Strike Chance during mornings

Character Log

The Woebegone Mendicant

The Woebegone Mendicant is little more than a beggar. He spends day and night prostrating in shadow, surviving only by the alms of passerbys – an increasingly rare event in the darkened roads of *Half-Light Hamlet*. Despite his worship of the sun and its *White Fire*, the Mendicant has not left this shadowed dwelling for some time. Even his hood hangs low over his head, keeping out the shimmering torchlight of nearby hovels. Whether by circumstance or design, he has seemingly lost the favour of his beloved Fire.

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The content following the separator reflects the player's choice. If the player restores the White Fire, the next section is revealed.

A warrior-priest turned vagrant, Cuthbert is the last of the Sun-Thegns – an ancient order of candlekeepers, hearthtenders, and battle-ready clerics. Despite their prowess in combat against fiends and devils, the Sun-Thegns focused their efforts in the distribution of firewood, oil, and wax to the poor and destitute; honed their skills as glassmakers and decorators; and sent up prayers of praise to the everburning *White Fire*. Once beloved for their piety, they are now scattered and scorned. Myth and legend has grown around them, and some claim that the Thegns could influence the very movements of the sun.

As the North grew cold, their holy fervor soured into zealotry. They sought to warm the cooling sun with the heat of innocent blood, though the White Fire ever shifted further south. The order's faith withered into a lethargic despair, bringing forth the Noon-Day Devil to feast upon their failing spirits and sins committed in the dark.

Since the rekindling of the Summit Cathedral's reliquary, Cuthbert's faith has been restored. He is now a Ray of the Sun, seeking to fan the flames of his long-lost brotherhood once again.

Bestiary Entry

Belphegor, the Noon-Day Devil

Belphegor is the patron of the Noon-Day Shadow – the complacency born of self-satisfaction. A lethargic demon, he does not hunt with claw, nor toil with fang; he simply waits. He is the voice in your ear that tells you your work is done halfway through the day. The anxiety in your heart saying what work you've done is not enough. The fear in your mind that nothing you have done or will do can ever be enough. His sharp mind and sharper tongue has seduced many down the

path of hubris and malaise, leading to a sleep from which there is no waking, and an evening that greets no dawn.

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The content following the separator reflects the player's choice. If the player takes Belphegor's deal, the next section is revealed.

This is no common fiend, but a by-blow of the Sun-Thegn's heresy turned stagnation. He first writhed out from the drops of innocent blood spilled to rouse the sun's waning warmth. He took form as the Thegns marred their order with listlessness. His shadow has enveloped the sun and his shade has clasped the careless.

While the Thegns traded oil for blood and charity for sacrifice, the Noon-Day Devil arrived to palsy their dagger-clutched hands. Those who serve him believe a sun that can shine on the murderous and forsworn doesn't deserve to shine at all.

Lorebook/Crafting Recipe

Tome of Effulgence

[Readable]

[Recipe]

Description

"We do not pray for the sun to stay, brothers and sisters; we pray for the strength to endure the night. Are we so wretched in our faith as to despair at the setting of the sun? Has the White Fire not always arisen at the crowing of the rooster? Why then do you languish in the gloaming light? Be not troubled. For the dawn is only glorious because it triumphs over night. The flame is only felt after the hearth goes cold. And the light burns with everlasting brightness when it is tended. Therefore, my Thegns, take heart at even-tide. For this is our promise and our salvation. But for those who seek to ignite their vigil..."

[Recipe: Sun-Thegn Oil]

1x Ensorcelled Scale

2x Rendered Tallow

1x Drop of Unfettered Sunlight"

Item Descriptions

Shroud of Twilit Brilliance

[Epic]

[Cloak]

Description

“Woven from twilight-gossamer, it shimmers with a light that threatens to set and promises to rise. This mantle garbs those who would lead the Thegns through their final night. To wear it is to carry the sun’s final vow.”

Equip: -12% Sneak Detection; +15% Holy Damage

The Morning’s Phylactery

[Rare]

[Trinket]

Description

“A golden-filigree vessel once worn by the Sun-Thegn hearthtenders. Designed to hold the splinters of firewood to be used as kindling to reignite dying flames. All that remains in this one is ash.”

Equip: +15% Fire Damage

Ensorcelled Scale

[Common]

[Crafting Material]

Description

“Absorbing the surrounding light, this inky black scale appears as a deepening window into the void.”