

Noble Legacy - Unique Villager & Environment Questlines (Gisla, Hardwin, Cecilia, Leonard & Topher)

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Noble Legacy Environment Quests: Gisla, the Unblinking (Witch Hut Quest)

Ledger Text: *Folk across the realm have spoken in equal parts disdain and reverence of a voyant who dwells on the edge of a nearby forest. Dubbed Gisla the Unblinking, rumours claim (from those who swear to have never met her) that she is able to glimpse truths best left unseen... though the methods by which she does are said to be deeply unsettling. Perhaps it is wise to learn what lies ahead?*

LORD/LADY

Are you... Gisla the Unblinking?

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

That is what they call me, aye.

LORD/LADY

I... I see...

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

...Did you come here with purpose? Or has your station led you to believe you may wander into any hovel you fancy?

LORD/LADY

...You know who I am?

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

(Small laugh)

It would be difficult indeed to overlook the one at the crux of the realm's affairs. You are the subject of many readings, my dear.

LORD/LADY

(Unnerved)

I see...

I, too, am here for a prophecy...

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

What offering have you brought?

LORD/LADY

Offering...?

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

(Chuckle)

A witless little thing, aren't you?

Do you expect me to draw omens from your excrement? Even the Norns would struggle to find wisdom in that... apart from, perhaps, a glimpse into your last meal.

LORD/LADY

Apologies. I... I only wish to know what lies-

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

(Impatient sigh)

If you wish for me to peer into the beyond, we will require a vessel.

We must first burn flesh from the bone of a creature born pure to this soil... and see what truth lies buried underneath.

What truths its spirit, suspended between life and death, still
clings to... before it returns to the earth.

LORD/LADY

So, I must bring the carcass of an animal?

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

Unless you would rather offer your own flesh instead. I, for one,
would not be opposed to such arrangements...

Now go. Your ignorance was once amusing... now it merely tests my
patience.

Do not return without something worthy of the flame.

Upon retrieving the carcass

LORD/LADY

Gisla, I have the carcass.

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

Hm...

LORD/LADY

Gisla...?

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

Yes, yes, so demanding, you are! Did the Duke never teach you
patience?

Before you so rudely interrupted, I was pondering what your own
testament might reveal... were your marrow cast into the flame.

LORD/LADY

...My own... testament?

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

(Amused)

When wicked deeds are committed, the bones are blackened with signs
of lies, lust, wrath...

The flesh is merely a veil of virtue. Bone reveals what the soul
would sooner hide.

I was merely wondering... what sins would tar yours.

LORD/LADY

I... I see...

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

(Chuckle)

You look confused... or is that a touch of fear I see?

LORD/LADY

I am not afraid, Gisla.

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

(Scoff)

You are.

As any would be, stepping off the beaten path and into the weeds.
What would your folk think, seeing their lord clawing at truths best
left unheard?

Yet... for all their incessant talk of virtue... they come all the same.
Clutching their little baskets of herbs, coins, bones. Desperate to
catch a glimpse beyond the veil... before it bites them in the arse.

Now, let us commence. Place the offering into the flames. Quickly
now, my dear.

Step 03: Place the Carcass into the Flame

(No dialogue required)

Step 04: Speak to Gisla the Unblinking (Readings)

The Split Bone:

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

Hm... What lies before us is the 'Split Bone'...

See how the bone splits apart beneath the flame? What was once whole
now lies broken and scattered.

It speaks of an insatiable hunger for power that shall bring Normandy
to ruin... until naught remains but avarice, upheaval... and ash.

The Whitened Bone:

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

Hm... What lies before us is rare indeed - 'The Whitened Bone'...

See how the yellowing of life gives way to the flame? A pale white
runs along its edges, untouched by soot or stain.

Such signs foretell a prosperous land, one blessed with plentiful
harvests, proud halls filled with songs of bravery and triumph, and a
people who stand shoulder to shoulder against all odds.

The Blackened Bone:

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

Hm... What lies before us is rare indeed - the 'Blackened Bone'...

See how it refuses to whiten? The stain runs deep... even those who
look beyond cannot see the truth it masks.

It warns us that the souls appointed to guide and protect the realm
shall instead yield to vice and temptation. The blind will lead the
blind into an age of endless dark.

The Fractured Bone:

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

Hm... what lies before us is the 'Fractured Bone'...

Look closely. The once smooth, adjoined bone now forms cracks that spread across its surface. What would you say it resembles? Veins, perhaps? Or roots?

It exhibits to us how all things are bound together - the many fractures divide while still remaining connected, showing us that life is fleeting, but yet bound together all the same.

—

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

...That is all this creature's spirit has to tell.

One day, I shall make my presence known to you again... where you will hopefully come *prepared*.

Now, be gone with you.

Meeting the Witch Again (Repeatable)

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

There you are, my dear. I foresaw your return...

Not through the bones, mind. You carry all the subtlety of a boar in a chapel yard. I could hear you coming from half the forest away.

If you have come *prepared* on this occasion... we may begin at once.

Step 02: Interact with the fireplace (Go to Readings Section)

Ending dialogue (Repeatable)

GISLA THE UNBLINKING

That is all the creature's spirit has to tell.

I am certain we shall cross paths again. Yet you would do well to not make a habit of my services. The Gods do not favour those who take from the land... yet give nothing in return.

Cecilia

Step 1: Speak to the Villager

VILLAGER

(Worried)

My lord! Forgive me, but... I must ask you something. It is quite urgent.

(Worried)

Does my hair appear to you as long, flowing locks that trail upon the ground?

LORD/LADY

(Deadpan)

No, no it does not.

VILLAGER

(Resigned)

...Right.

(Resigned)

Then I have been fleeced.

LORD/LADY

By whom?

VILLAGER

(Skeptical)

Cecilia - a merchant. Folk speak highly of her wares, so I decided to seek her out.

(Skeptical)

She sold me this ring, which she called "The Ring of Tremendous Tresses"...

(Skeptical)

Said it would make my hair grow to the ground in three days.

LORD/LADY

...And?

VILLAGER

(Deadpan)

All that has grown is my disappointment.

LORD/LADY

Hm... Would you like me to speak to her and see your coin returned?

VILLAGER

(Frustrated, Resigned)

Yes - please. Look for a small hut with a market stall set before it. That is where she conducts her... (Beat) "trade"...

LORD/LADY

(Determined)

Very well, I shall speak to her. I cannot have this merchant deceiving my people with such blatant falsehoods!

Step 2: Locate Cecilia's Stall

LORD/LADY

Is this the place?

It seems rather busy...

Step 3: Speak to Cecilia

CECILIA

(Playful)

Oh... my. Well, well.

LORD/LADY

(Determined)

Good day, I am the lord of a nearby holding. When your time permits, I would like to speak with you about—

CECILIA

(Determined)

Come, come, to the front, my lord/lady! I would not have you waiting with all this rabble!

LORD/LADY

(Determined)

No. I will not take their place.

CECILIA

(Playful)

Are you certain? Please, I insist.

LORD/LADY

(Determined)

No, Cecilia. I shall wait my turn and, in the meantime, see what draws such a crowd.

CECILIA

(Playful)

...As you wish, my lord/lady.

—

Step 4: Speak to the Customers

VILLAGER 1

(Excited)

Do you see this, my lord? The charm of "Hyperefficient Harvest". Supposedly makes my crops grow and flourish in no less than a week!

(Excited)

I am certain Baron Osric will find great use in it.

LORD/LADY

(Skeptical)

Osric does not require superstition to tend to his fields...

VILLAGER 2

(Excited)

What do you think of this, my lord? This is the "Necklace of Prompt Prosperity". Said to bring fortune straight to your doorstep...

(Excited)

I am sure Chancellor Edwin could only dream of such a treasure!

LORD/LADY

(Deadpan)

It would not bode well for Normandy if the Chancellor were seen relying on the "Necklace of Prompt Prosperity"...

—

VILLAGER 3

(Excited)

Countess Vivienne will be beside herself with envy once she beholds this gorgeous gemstone. I am sure she, too, will make the trip!

LORD/LADY

(Resigned)

...Aye. She would love this place.

LORD/LADY

(Skeptical)

Cecilia seems to be keeping a close eye on me. Perhaps it is my turn?

Step 5: Speak to Cecilia

CECILIA

(Playful)

Greetings, my lord! Welcome to Cecilia's Marvellous Emporium of Wonders and Trinkets.

(Playful)

Might I tempt you with a recommendation?

LORD/LADY

(Resigned)

No, no. That will be fine. I wished to speak with you beca-

CECILIA

(Determined)

Are you certain? Look here, my lord/lady...

(Playful) (Determined)

The "Elixir of Miraculous Momentum". It guarantees that you will get every task done in half the speed! Chopping wood - or brigands, hunting, mining, ruling - all done twice as fast.

LORD/LADY

(Hopeful)

That would be most useful...

CECILIA

(Playful)

Or, or what about this? "The Ring of Tremendous Tresses"! Wait just three days, and you will have long, flowing locks that trail upon the ground!

LORD/LADY

(Deadpan) (Skeptical)

...I've heard that one already.

CECILIA

(Playful)

Then you must surely know it's worth! So, tell me... how many trinkets do you wish to buy?

LORD/LADY

(Deadpan)

None.

CECILIA

(Shocked)

Wh- what?

LORD/LADY

(Skeptical)

I do not want a single one of your trinkets... or any of your pond-water potions.

What I want (Dramatic pause) ... is you.

CECILIA

(Confused)

P-Pardon? I... I don't follow.

LORD/LADY

(Skeptical, frustrated)

It is clear you have a talent for selling wares. How else are people buying - and believing - this utter tripe? Such th-

CECILIA

(Frustrated, clears throat)

May we speak in private? Away from all of my... loyal customers...

LORD/LADY

(Resigned)

...If we must.

Step 6: Follow Cecilia to the Back

CECILIA

(Skeptical)

You want me to... what? Trade within your holding? Is that it?

LORD/LADY

(Matter-of-fact)

Precisely. Talent like yours belongs in a thriving market, not beside some muddy trail.

CECILIA

(Melancholic, Ashamed)

Talent? You would call this... talent?

LORD/LADY

(Deadpan, Skeptical)

Convincing half of Normandy to journey out and buy utter garbage?

...Aye.

CECILIA

(Sigh, Hushed tone)

Listen, my lord/lady. I owe a man - a dangerous one. He wants coin I do not have. Every time I think my debt's cleared, it doubles... and so do the threats.

(Hushed tone)

Everything out there, the lies... the tricks - it's to buy me time.

Choice:

LORD/LADY

I cannot aid you.

LORD/LADY

I apologise, but that is a matter you must face alone.

CECILIA

(Sigh, resigned)

Then it is back to business...

Choice:

LORD/LADY

Is there anything I can do to help?

CECILIA

(Mischievous, playful)

...Aye. There is something...

(Hopeful)

He and I were meant to meet today to discuss our dealings. If you go in my stead and persuade him to let me go... I'll owe you.

LORD/LADY

I see... very well. I shall do that for you. Where will it be held?

CECILIA

(Excited)

Take this. It's the note I've written detailing the location - [Sigh] rather roundabout, I'm afraid. Straightforward directions have a habit of being intercepted by the wrong people.

(Playful)

Oh! And... before you go. From my stall...

(Playful)

The "Fortune's Wager". My signature piece. You'll need it.

Step 7: Follow the riddle

LORD/LADY

This seems to be the old, crumbled well that the list speaks of. I should continue from here.

This path appears to match up with the one described..

This must be the hut. Who's there?

Step 7: Speak to the Collector

COLLECTOR

(Tense, angry)

Who the hell are you? Huh, what's that ring you've got there? Cecilia's, no doubt. Another of her "loyal" customers, are you?
Thanks for your patronage! (Loud laugh)

LORD/LADY

(Tense)

Leave Cecilia alone. Name your price.

COLLECTOR

(Triumphant)

Hah! You've got nothing I want more than her. She sells lies like gospel, and every coin she makes from those fools goes straight into my pocket.

(Angry, sluggish) And that girl... thinking she can send men my way to solve her problems...

(Angry)

A bold plan for one nearing the end of her purpose. I'll have her buried for it soon enough.

LORD/LADY

(Angry)

Is that so? Then we are done talking.

Step 8: Kill the Collector

LORD/LADY

(Mutter, resigned)

A foul man indeed. I should tell Cecilia she is free of him.

Step 9: Speak to Cecilia

CECILIA

(Playful)

Welcome back. I imagine you come bearing good news?

LORD/LADY

(Resigned)

In a sense. He could not be reasoned with – he is slain... and you are free.

CECILIA

(Playful)

How unexpected! I cannot imagine what part of his charming disposition provoked such hostility...

LORD/LADY

(Deadpan)

...You used me.

CECILIA

(Playful)

Used you? I never said to kill the man. Whatever followed was
entirely of your own making, my lord..

LORD/LADY

(Resigned)

You never needed to say it, Cecilia. You knew that meeting could
never end peacefully.

(Curious)

...And you were awfully quick to place your plan in my hands. Why?

CECILIA

(Reflective, sigh)

He chased me across Normandy and never lost sight of me. He was...
ruthless.

(Reflective)

But in my travels, I kept hearing the same tale – a lord/lady who
chops his/her own wood, mines his/her own ore... and leaves very little
standing in his/her way.

(Determined)

That's when I knew I had my answer.

(Triumphant, playful)

Set up shop nearby... make enough noise... and wait. You virtuous types
are all the same. You'd come eventually.

LORD/LADY

(Deadpan)

So... you gambled with my life.

CECILIA

(Deadpan)

No, I gambled with mine. If I was wrong about you... he wouldn't have spared me for it.

(Triumphant)

The ring was my calling card. I wanted him to know, in his final moments... exactly who had sealed his fate.

(Playful)

Simple, really.

LORD/LADY

(Resigned)

Yes, quite... It was a dangerous gamble to make, Cecilia.

CECILIA

(Resigned, sigh)

A dangerous gamble was all I had left.

(Resigned, reflective)

The thought of dying before I had the chance to become better than all of this frightened me more than anything. But that fear kept me going.

(Reflective) I just had to keep selling... and hope to God someone would come. And that you did.

LORD/LADY

(Reflective)

I see... then I was your last chance. I am glad I made sure he cannot harm you again.

Now you are free of him... what do you plan to do?

CECILIA

(Sigh, calm)

Free indeed... That isn't something I've tasted in a long time...

(Playful)

I'll repay the debt by joining you, my lord/lady If you'll still have me, that is...

LORD/LADY

(Amused)

Hah. Deceiver or not... you have a sharp mind for business. We'll be glad to have you, Cecilia.

CECILIA

(Playful)

Hmm, "Glad to have me" may be a stretch. You must promise I shan't be driven out with torches and pitchforks! You certainly took your time, my lord/lady...

LORD/LADY

(Chuckle)

I promise, no one shall say a word of it.

CECILIA

(Determined)

In that case... no more lies, trickery, or deception. It's about time I settled down and used my talents for someone worthy of them.

(Playful)

Oh, and... keep the ring. Consider it a loyalty discount.

Leonard:

Ledger text: A notorious travelling blacksmith has caught the attention of many folk in the holding, his spirited personality and remarkable craftsmanship earning him no shortage of admirers. Yet despite many hoping he will settle, whispers persist that securing his services is not so simple...

Step 01 - Speak to Villager

VILLAGER

(Amazed)

My lord! He is most marvellous, is he not?!

LORD/LADY

Who? The Duke?

VILLAGER

(Cheerful)

No! Master Leonard, the blacksmith of great renown!

(Cheerful)

His craft is revered across the realm. I am amazed the Duke has not claimed him already!

LORD/LADY

(Skeptical)

... I fear I do not understand.

VILLAGER

(Cheerful)

You do not know of him? He is the son of Thibaut, Master of the Forge, and he is no less than a wonder at his art, just as his father was. Today, he arrived at our holding!

(Amazed)

They say he once forged a blade most sharp; it cleaved through stone like butter!

LORD/LADY

(Skeptical, deadpan)

A most fantastic tale. Get back to wor-

VILLAGER

(Hopeful)

You *must* persuade him to join us, my lord!

LORD/LADY

(Frustrated)

Calm yourself. At least let me speak to the fellow.

(Annoyed)

...And you are in no position to demand anything of me. Is that clear?

VILLAGER

(Determined)

He is making his way around. Go, go quickly!

LORD/LADY

(Resigned)

Lord, have mercy...

Step 01 - Find Leonard, Master of the Forge

LORD/LADY

Good day, sir. Are you Leonard?

LEONARD

(Confident)

Ah, you must be the lord of this holding. Good day to you!

(Sly, Playful)

And I do not believe we have met, yet you appear to know my name -
how curious!

LORD/LADY

Aye, we have not.

(Flat)

It was but a simple matter to pick you out - just follow the eager
whispers of my people. You are the talk of the town today, it seems.

LEONARD

(Triumphant, energetically)

Hah! I am honoured. I have never been one to pass by quietly.

LORD/LADY

(Flat)

So it would seem. I am rather intrigued by the tales my people have
spun of you.

Perhaps your services can be bought?

LEONARD

(Confident)

Ah. Apologies, my lord. But my skills are not so readily gained.

LORD/LADY

(Determined, matter-of-fact)

Do not concern yourself. I realise you have quite the reputation, but
I have quite the coin to my na-

LEONARD

(Triumphant)

Coin? Hah! I care not for such frivolities!

(Serious)

I seek something much rarer – a resolve that matches my own.

LORD/LADY

(Skeptical)

What do you propose?

LEONARD

(Determined)

Three challenges. Pass them, and I am yours.

(Determined)

But I must warn you, many a baron has tried and failed to succeed at
my test. You will have to be of strong will to prevail.

What say you, my lord/lady?

LORD/LADY

Choice 01: I have more important matters to attend to.

Choice 02: I accept your challenge.

Choice 01: I have more important matters to attend to.

LORD/LADY

(Annoyed)

Do I appear as someone who has time to partake in such trials? Either
you are bought with my coin, or not at all.

LEONARD

Then it seems you will not receive my services. Good day, my
lord/lady!

Choice 02: I accept your challenge.

LORD/LADY

(Determined)

I will partake in your little challenge, and have you the smith of my
holding in the blink of an eye!

LEONARD

(Big laugh, energetically) Marvellous, fantastic! Let us begin!

(Serious)

Your first task is this: bring me twelve lumps of iron ore.

LORD/LADY

(Skeptical)

You test my skill as a smith... by making me mine?

LEONARD

(Energetically, light chuckle, triumphant)

You are too eager, my lord! We cannot forge a tool without first gathering the finest materials wherewith to shape it.

(Serious)

The craft of forging the most perfect tool must be respected and honoured from the first stroke of the pickaxe to the final quenching of the steel.

(Serious)

That (Beat) is your first task.

LORD/LADY

(Matter-of-fact)

...Very well then.

LEONARD

(Triumphant)

I do hope you are swift! A man of my mettle does not have the luxury of standing idle for long...

LORD/LADY

(Mutter, sarcastic tone)

It appears you very much do...

Step 03 - Complete Challenge 1:

Upon mining 12 ore:

LORD/LADY

There, it is done. Let us see what Leonard has to say.

Step 04 - Mine 12 Iron Ore

LEONARD

(Triumphant)

Ah, you are returned!

(Determined)

Surely you have not yielded more than what I did as a young whelp,
back when I was being mentored by my father.

That was when I learned to mine the earth using only a spoon.

LORD/LADY

(Confused)

...Pardon?

LEONARD

(Nostalgic)

Ah - the axe was too heavy, you see.

LORD/LADY

(Flat, sarcastic tone)

... I fear that explains little.

(Sarcastic tone)

...At any rate, let us cease this mystifying chatter and inspect what I
have brought.

LEONARD

(Triumphant, energetic)

Hah, you seem eager to make use of my skills! As long as you pass, I
will not withhold them from you. Bring me your spoils!

(Pleased, energetic, reflective)

...Hm, very good, very good!

(Reflective, cheerful)

Perhaps fortune, or perhaps skill, that the vein used had a great
fraction of ore to stone. Regardless, this is a job well done - you
have passed!

LORD/LADY

(Determined)

Excellent. Now, what comes next?

LEONARD

(Determined)

The next step to forging a tool is to take your ore and smelt it into
usable ingots. You have collected enough for four. Let us see you
make them.

Step 05 - Smelt 4 Ingots

Upon smelting 4 ingots

LORD/LADY

(Triumphant)

There, all done! Back to Master Leonard.

Step 06 - Return to Leonard

LEONARD

(Determined)

There you are! I hope you are not averse to critique, as I imagine your skill with a hammer leaves much to be desired.

(Triumphant, Energetically)

One not attuned with the way of a forgemaster will *always* falter. You cannot simply smelt the iron - it must be mastered!

(Triumphant, Energetically)

You must learn to read the metal, let it speak to you, let it whisper its secrets into your ear!

(Leisurely)

Man and forge are but one bei-

LORD/LADY

(Sarcastic tone)

I understand. Become one with the forge... or something of that ilk.

LEONARD

(Big laugh)

I know, I know, a person of your calibre has much to attend to. You must tell me sooner that I am getting ahead of myself.

(Reflective)

Hm... These ingots are well-made. The form is consistent, the shape is smooth. Naught but a trace of slag, easily beaten away. They will work fine for the final step.

LORD/LADY

(Determined)

This is the last challenge, then? I shall see to it I do not falter!

LEONARD

(Triumphant)

Very good! Let us proceed: one final test - I want forged one iron hammer, and one sword.

Step 07 - Forge an iron sword and hammer

[No Dialogue]

Step 08 - Return to Leonard

LEONARD

(Serious)

You have returned. Good. We have a grievous matter on our hands.

(Serious, frustrated)

I have been told my caravan was pilfered during the length of our contest. Evidently by knaves who would defile the sanctity of a good challenge!

(Serious, Worried)

If you wish to have my service, I must reclaim my tools. They were my father's, and... very much dear to me.

LORD/LADY

(Serious)

Fear not, I shall take care of it, Master Leonard.

LEONARD

(Energetic, triumphant) Aha! It appears fortune smiles upon us - you can put your newly forged sword to the test!

LORD/LADY

(Stammering, uneasy, sarcastic tone)

Y-Yes, quite. Let's first focus on recovering your tools, shall we?

Step 09 - Defeat the Brigands and find Leonard's Tools

(No dialogue required)

Step 10 - Return to Leonard

LEONARD

(Triumphant, relieved)

I cannot thank you enough! And it appears your sword was forged to the finest quality to make quick work of those scoundrels. Allow me to inspect the hammer...

(Reflective)

The hammer has been forged well. The head strikes true, the eye sits firm upon the handle, and the timber is stout and straight.

(Reflective)

I must admit, I set these trials thinking no lord would see them through... yet here you stand.

(Serious)

That is it, then. I will settle within your holding.

(Triumphant, energetic)

You will have the use of me, Leonard, Master Blacksmith, at any moment you see fit!

LORD/LADY

(Relieved Sigh)

Wonderful... I am indeed exhausted.

LEONARD

(Skeptical, playful)

Come now, exhausted - you, my lord?

LORD/LADY

(Skeptical)

Pardon?

LEONARD

(Energetic, playful)

Hah, do not play coy with me!

(Reflective)

I have heard many tales of how involved you are in your land. Truth be told, I made the long journey here with the intention of settling down.

LORD/LADY

(Resigned, disappointed)

You do not mean... this challenge was all for naught?!

LEONARD

(Determined)

Nay, my fair liege! As I said, it was your resolve I was appraising you for.

(Determined, serious)

Forging a hammer is one thing, but subjecting yourself to hardship for the sake of your people is quite another. Verily, most barons would be capable of neither.

LORD/LADY

(Sigh of relief)

Well, I thank you for your praise, Master Leonard. But next time, please be more forthcoming with your intentions, yes?

LEONARD

(Triumphant, energetic)

How can I, when the people demand a show?! This was a thrilling competition, wouldn't you agree?

LORD/LADY

(Deadpan, sarcastic tone)

I can think of more thrilling ventures than smelting ore into ingots, Master Leonard...

LEONARD

(Energetic, triumphant)

I, for one, could not!

(Determined)

In any case, you have my hammer at your disposal whenever you require it. I am honoured to work for a lord who is able to match my own diligence.

(Determined)

I take my leave of you, as I must see that your forge meets my standards. Good day!

Hardwin:

Ledger text: Folk have been wondering why smoke rises near the holding, with one villager desperate for the lord to heed their words regarding the mysterious plumes - it may be time to investigate.

Quest Step 01: Speak to the Worried Villager (On the edge of the settlement)

VILLAGER

(Anxious, hushed tone)

My lord/lady, don't go near that smoke.

LORD/LADY

Why?

VILLAGER

(Anxious)

The one out there... (Hesitates) They're an old friend of mine.

(Reflective)

We lived in Le Mans years ago. He seemed to be a good man – quiet,
kind...

(Anxious)

But... (Hesitates) not like the others.

LORD/LADY

In what way?

VILLAGER

(Tense)

He never attended Church. He wouldn't kneel... [pause] or confess.

(Tense)

Folk whispered that something had taken hold of him... (Hesitates)
Something that had no place in the house of God.

(Determined, bittersweet)

But they were wrong. He was no monster. He was... my friend.

LORD/LADY

Then... what drove him into the wilderness?

VILLAGER

(Uneasy)

... That, I do not know for certain.

(Anxious)

I left there soon after. But as I did, accusations began to spread
of foul, violent deeds. I couldn't believe it – in truth, I still
don't.

(Anxious)

But I've seen him, my lord/lady, out there... in the woods.

(Tense)

If you are to handle this, be careful.

LORD/LADY

(Confident)

I will. Thank you for your warning.

Hardwin the Hermit: Quest Step 02: Locate the Source of the Smoke

Upon being 60m from the smoke:

LORD/LADY

(Tense)

There... the source of the smoke. I must be wary.

Hardwin the Hermit: Quest Step 03: Search the Area

LORD/LADY

(Reflective)

Hm, this place appears well-tended. If this *is* their hut, they know
how to fend for themselves better than most...

Hardwin the Hermit: Quest Step 04: Fight the Man

MAN

(Determined)

You have come to finish me off? Not if I strike you down first!

Hardwin the Hermit: Quest Step 05: Revive the Man

(No dialogue required)

Hardwin the Hermit: Quest Step 06: Speak to the Man

MAN

(Tense)

Stay back!

LORD/LADY

(Tense)

Halt! Is this your hut?

MAN

(Resigned, breath trembling)

... Aye. If you've come to end this, do it clean.

LORD/LADY

(Witty, softly)

To kill you here... after you fled judgement? That seems a poor end to
the tale, does it not?

MAN

(Tense, breath catches)

Wh- what? How do you know that?!

(Tense)

I thought here, in Normandy, no one knew my past.

Does it follow me still, after all these years?

LORD/LADY

(Calm)

No. A friend spoke of you – from your time in Le Mans. They were...
worried.

HARDWIN

(Melancholic)

That they still fret for me, even now... If only I could... (Sigh)
...My name's Hardwin. Forgive me. I've had cause to be wary... and I
don't take chances.

LORD/LADY

(Calm)

Hardwin, will you tell me what happened? What changed about you?

HARDWIN

(Uneasy)

(Pause) ...It's not a tale I tell lightly, or to those I do not
trust.

LORD/LADY

(Calm)

Then let me earn that trust. What do you need?

HARDWIN

(Reflective, matter-of-fact)

Well... A knight passed through not long ago. Didn't question me.
Didn't judge. Just... sat a while. Listened. Said he'd return.

(Fond)

He had a dog with him. Loyal thing... Never left his side.

If you would, bring me some meat I can give the dog when they come back.

LORD/LADY

(Reflective)

I see... Very well, I will take care of it for you.

(Playful, curious)

A knight who keeps his word... and a loyal hound.

(Playful, curious)

Strange pair. (Chuckle) ...But not an unfamiliar one. It can't be... can it?

Quest Step 07: Return with 5x meat

HARDWIN

(Grateful)

Many thanks. You've done me a kindness, so I'll tell you.

(Wistful)

Years ago, my wife and I lived out in the woods. It was a quiet life... a good one.

(Fond, yearning)

She was gentle, kind in a way the world rarely is. The sweetest woman I ever knew.

(Regretful, ashamed)

One day, I was out hunting. I heard her scream — [Breath trembles] I remember the fear in her voice to this day. By the time I reached the hut... it was done. Brigands.

(Regretful, ashamed)

I was not there when she needed me, and... that is a failing no man outlives.

LORD/LADY

(Melancholic)

(Hesitates)

I see... I am sorry. What happened after?

HARDWIN

(Wistful, resigned)

I spent a long while wandering, directionless. But I decided to start anew in Le Mans... to make amends, as best I could. That's where I met my friend.

LORD/LADY

(Calm, serious)

They said you did not visit church. Are you a heretic?

HARDWIN

(Tense, loudly)

A heretic? No!

(Ashamed, quietly)

How can I stand before God... when I did not answer her when she called for me?

LORD/LADY

(Softly, calm)

...Is that why you left Le Mans?

HARDWIN

(Ashamed)

...Partly. I knew folk found it odd. I debated leaving many times. But
I stayed for my friend. They were... kind. Like she was.

(Tense)

But one day, livestock turned up dead. Torn apart. Caused a big
panic.

(Tense)

From my time as a hunter, I knew it was wolves, but they wanted
someone to blame.

(Tense)

That's when rumours spread. (Hesitates) Rumours that I was cursed.

LORD/LADY

(Suspicious)

Cursed?

HARDWIN

(Ashamed, matter-of-fact)

They believed it was the doing of a werewolf. The local lord needed little convincing. They finally had a reason to get rid of me - the outsider.

(Flatly, resigned)

Once I caught wind of it, I set off as soon as I could. Left all my belongings behind, even. I knew what was coming.

HARDWIN

(Melancholic)

...The things they said to me... You hear them long enough, and... you start to believe them. I see a beast where I once saw a man. A beast who failed the person who needed him most.

(Resigned)

...I deserve my fate.

LORD/LADY

(Determined)

No. Suffering is not a debt to be repaid, Hardwin.

(Determined)

You say you were not there when she needed you, aye. That pain may never leave, but it does not make you unworthy.

HARDWIN

(Breath catches) I... I cannot...

LORD/LADY

(Determined)

Your face lights up when you speak of your wife.

(Determined, softly)

Tell me, would she have wanted this for you? ...Or would she have wanted you to live?

HARDWIN

(Uneasy)

Then... what would you have me do?

Choice 1: You may return to my holding.

Choice 2: I shall leave you be.

Choice 01: Join my Settlement.

LORD/LADY

(Determined)

Come, Hardwin. Do not decide your own worth, let it be proven.

(Determined)

My people may question you. They may question us both. But no matter what they think... I would not have you face the world alone.

HARDWIN

(Gasp) Forgive me, my lord/lady - I didn't realise you held such standing. You do not speak with the same cruelty as the lords and barons I have known.

(Hopeful)

I believed I would never set foot in a village again. Yet, under your rule... perhaps things would be different.

(Uneasy)

...But what of my past?

LORD/LADY

(Determined)

Only your friend and I know. Tell them the truth - as you told me. Show them why they were right to believe you.

HARDWIN

(Anxious)

You ask much of me. But if I need not bear my burdens alone...

(Determined)

I shall try.

LORD/LADY

(Grateful)

Thank you, Hardwin. Do you require anything else before we depart?

HARDWIN

(Ashamed)

...I lost my bow earlier. I've had it for many years now. It's...
important to me.

LORD/LADY

(Playful, matter-of-fact)

Then, we will recover it.

HARDWIN

(Grateful, surprised)

...Many thanks, my lord/lady. I reckon it should be close by.

Choice 02: I shall leave you be for now.

LORD/LADY

(Softly)

I shall leave you be for now... But please, learn to be kinder to
yourself, Hardwin.

HARDWIN

(Grateful)

That you listened to my story was more than I could have asked for.

(Wistful)

Maybe one day... I'll find the courage to face my past.

(Resigned)

...Just not today.

Quest Step 09: Find Hardwin's Bow

HARDWIN

(Grateful, fond)

Thank you, my lord/lady. I shall not soon forget your deeds.

Kindness has been rare for one like me.

LORD/LADY

(Kind)

We shall be glad to have you. I am sure your skills as a hunter will
be put to good use.

HARDWIN

(Hopeful, determined)

Aye... you have given me a chance to atone. To stand before God
without feeling unworthy. I will not stray from this path again.

(Nostalgic, wistful)

I would like a moment to myself... then I shall join you at your
holding.

(Softly, bittersweet)

And... Thank you. I believe this is what she would have wanted.

Sir Topher:

Ledger text: Word has spread that a noble knight has become landless after a bitter dispute involving the Duke. Perhaps his services may be of use?

Step 01: Speak to a villager

LORD/LADY

Good day. I hear Sir Topher was seen nearby. Where might I find him?

VILLAGER

Hail, my lord. Aye, he and his retinue have pitched a camp by the holding entrance. Follow the smoke, you'll find him there.

LORD/LADY

Much obliged, I shall seek him out.

Step 02: Locate Sir Topher's Camp

[No dialogue required]

Step 03: Speak to Sir Topher

LORD/LADY

Good day. Do I address Sir Topher? I have heard your name often in recent days.

SIR TOPHER

Aye, you've found him - the man of the hour.

SIR TOPHER

You are the lord/lady of the nearby settlement, yes? A shame we have to meet under such unfortunate circumstances.

LORD/LADY

Indeed. You have my condolences, Sir Topher.

SIR TOPHER

Rumour seldom tarries, eh? If I had a coin for every condolence I've received, I'd have my land back - and my dignity besides...

...Nonetheless, I am grateful. I'd rather not show bitterness in your presence - my mouth has already cost me dearly once...

LORD/LADY

[Intrigued] I have not heard what stirred the Duke into revoking your land. Was it your tongue that cost you?

SIR TOPHER

...You could say that. (Chuckle) Though... my actions played their part as well.

LORD/LADY

(Intrigued)

I see... Will you share what happened?

SIR TOPHER

Of course, I have nothing to hide, after all...

...But first, a small favour.

LORD/LADY

What is it?

SIR TOPHER

I was forced to sell my arms, but my sword and shield are all that remain of the knight I swore to be.

Return them to me, and I'll tell you everything. God knows where they ended up. Probably found their way into some brigand camp.. [Sigh]

LORD/LADY

(Disappointed)

...Very well. I will fetch them, but then you must not stall further.

SIR TOPHER

Ha! I am doing no such thing. As I said, I have nothing to hide. Yet I am eager to have them back in my possession, as any knight would.

Step 04: Retrieve Sir Topher's Sword and Shield

[No dialogue required]

Step 05: Speak to Sir Topher

LORD/LADY

Here you are, your sword and shield.

SIR TOPHER

Ah, wonderful. I'm much obliged for your kindness, my lord/lady.

LORD/LADY

Now that's settled... How about we exchange a tale or two?

SIR TOPHER

You're not going to let this go, are you...?

...Very well, I shall regale you with my misfortune...

One month ago, I travelled beyond Normandy to visit Lord Robert de Tancarville. I had no business with there myself - but I was escorting Vi-(Cough) another.

LORD/LADY

...For whom?

SIR TOPHER

(Cough) It is... unimportant. We came upon a young boy fleeing a stall, a loaf of bread clutched in his arms. He fell, and the lord's men caught him. He returned the bread... but they beat him regardless. The boy's cries were hard to stomach.

LORD/LADY

Let me guess. You intervened?

SIR TOPHER

(Annoyed)

Aye... I'm aware it was rash, but my emotions bested me. I stepped in and told them to stop. They didn't... so I drew steel. Then word of my deeds reached de Tancarville.

LORD/LADY

And then... de Tancarville wrote to the Duke?

SIR TOPHER

Aye. Claimed I hindered him from upholding the laws of the realm.
Which, I daresay I did well enough, thank God. The weasel embellished
the tale enough for me to lose my land.

I should have foreseen the futility of it. I was not born to this
station - I earned it through battle and years of service to the
Duke. Yet birthright still weighs heavier than deeds.

Alas... If only... if only *they* had...

LORD/LADY

(Desperate)

If only "they"...? Who is "they"?

SIR TOPHER

(Faux-boredom)

Ah, let me not bore you with the details. I assume you are here with
a request?

LORD/LADY

...Aye. You are a man of virtue, Sir Topher. Whilst you recover your
footing, I offer you to stay within my settlement.

SIR TOPHER

Hmm... I have heard much about you from Vi...(Cough) that you are also
a leader who values the common folk and sees to their prosperity.

I concur that, in a world of *vipers* and *charlatans* and *weasels* and
brigands... we have much in common!

However, I shan't forsake my honour even in my time of need. I shall
only serve a holding that reflects noble dignity and can defend
itself well. In return, I shall offer you my services.

LORD/LADY

In that case...

Choice 1: You shall have to look elsewhere.

Choice 2: I shall see to your demands.

Choice 1

LORD/LADY

You shall have to look elsewhere.

SIR TOPHER

Then I shall do that. Many thanks for retrieving my sword and shield.
I shan't forget your kindness. Farewell, my lady.

Choice 2

LORD/LADY

I will ensure a Manor House is constructed in which you may stay,
and that guards are stationed and alert through the holding.

And...I suppose it would be only fair if you tell me the rest of your
tale once it is done, yes?

SIR TOPHER

You are truly relentless. Is this a condition of your hospitality?

LORD/LADY

I am afraid so.

SIR TOPHER

(Resigned chuckle)

There's no running from it, then. I shall tell you... as soon as you
have done as I asked.

Step 04: Build a Manor House Station and have at least 3 guards stationed

[No dialogue required]

Step 05: Speak to Sir Topher

SIR TOPHER

Your kindness knows no bounds, my lord/lady. I shall not forget this.
I shall go-

LORD/LADY

(Stern)

Sir Topher, you are yet to finish your story.

SIR TOPHER

Ah, well... There is not much else to say, is there?

LORD/LADY

You spoke of a woman. I won't let you omit that part any longer.

SIR TOPHER

(Annoyed)

Go on then, since you seem *desperate* to know. But do not mention this
to anyone. I am... humbled by my foolishness.

You see, I have lately been on good terms with Countess Vivienne de
Clare. I am sure you know of her. In fact, I recall she spoke of you
a few times.

LORD/LADY

(Suspicious)

...Aye, I know of her.

SIR TOPHER

Vivienne and I have been acquainted for some time. But lately, we grew close. She admired that I had earned my station through effort... that I would always try to do what was right - [Gritted teeth] or so *she said.*

We wrote to each other often, aided one another's holdings where we could. But it was not just a friendship of circumstance... it was something more.

LORD/LADY

(Intrigued)

Go on...

SIR TOPHER

(Offended)

My lord/lady, this is no petty gossip!

I... confessed my feelings to her, but she appeared troubled, as if some weight hung over her heart.

She spoke in half-measures, words like, "if only"... "I cannot". I could not discern the reason, so I respected her distance.

LORD/LADY

Do you know why, now?

SIR TOPHER

No. She was eager to spend time with me, yet it was as though she dared not speak plainly... even when we were alone.

It was with her I travelled that day. She had become quite distant since my confession, but I would not let her travel unguarded.

LORD/LADY

She witnessed the boy being attacked?

SIR TOPHER

Aye, even agreed that it was brutal. Yet when it came to my hearing, she said not a word... didn't even meet my eye.

I cannot say, even now, whether she was cruel, or... simply bound by something I don't understand.

LORD/LADY

You believe she wished to defend you, but something forbade her?

SIR TOPHER

Perhaps, but it's all guesswork. One day, I will know why she turned away... and what she hid from me.

And until the time comes to reclaim my land, I shall serve your holding, so I may repay your kindness.

LORD/LADY

You may stay as long as you wish, Sir Topher. We shall be glad to have you.

SIR TOPHER

And I shall be glad to serve.