

Dead in the Water – Quest Design Doc

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Name: Dead in the Water

Tagline: As all Backwater residents are expected to contribute to the port's survival, a drunken man shirking his duties is given one last chance to shape up or get out. In assisting him, the player learns firsthand the harsh realities of life in and around Backwater.

Location: Hawezar – Coast Subzone – Backwater

Theme: All must band together to survive against all odds. No room or sympathy for those who get in the way of this mission. Scarcity of resources. Practicality over emotion.

Quest Start:

- In Backwater, you come across a man and woman who appear to be arguing.
- Upon asking what's wrong, the woman says she is fed up with the man – Tomaj – not pulling his weight, claiming she always picks up the slack in their shared duties.
 - She gives the man an ultimatum: do both his and her portion of their current tasks, or she'll go report him to "the boss." After which, she departs.
- The evidently drunken Tomaj turns to you and implores you help him complete the work, thereby saving him from being kicked out of "the only place" he has left to go.
 - In exchange, he offers to make an introduction and put in a good word for you with this "boss."
 - *Optionally: he can be questioned regarding why he doesn't just do his job – to which he sheds light on the emotional and mental difficulty of knowing many of the deceased personally.*
 - *Alternatively/additionally: he might attribute his choices to a lack of loyalty or support for the guy in charge.*
- He explains they're responsible for regularly combing the coast for any recently deceased. Bodies they find, they search for any usable resources, then burn to prevent them from becoming Drowned.
- He asks you to cover the region south of Backwater, while he takes the north. Afterwards, you're to rendezvous with him back here.
- **Objective: Loot and burn X (TBD; likely 3-5) bodies**

Part 1:

- Search the region south of Backwater for human corpses. At each corpse:
 - (Gizmo) interact with the corpse to "loot" resources for the town.
 - Afterwards, torch the body.
 - *Alternatively, this could be one interaction, with the player "torching" the bodies automatically after loot the corpse.*
- **Vignette** – Near the southernmost target corpse (north of Fens transition), we find a lone, washed-up sailor clinging to a ship mast (*or similar, elevated wreckage*). Drowned surround him on the ground below.
 - The man calls out for help.
 - We initially find the Drowned encircling him, but they attack us on approach.
 - **Objective: Save the man from the Drowned**
- We take out the Drowned encounter, after which the man descends safely.
 - The man – mildly injured and clearly shaken – thanks us, introduces himself as Ervin, and asks us where he might find refuge to rest and recover.
 - We offer to take him to Backwater, and he agrees, becoming a follower NPC.
 - **Objective: Escort Ervin to Backwater**

Part 2:

- Return to Backwater. Along the way, Ervin tells you how his ship was overtaken by Drowned before crashing to shore. As far as he knows, he was the only survivor.
 - *Optionally: Ervin's ship was sent from Kingsport, exiling the latest round-up of criminals and ne'er-do-wells. This would help set up the history of Backwater with relevance to subsequent quests.*
- **Objective: Return to Tomaj**
- When you find Tomaj, he is being actively questioned by the woman from earlier.
 - Upon seeing you, he tells "Szilvia" he completed their work. She is clearly suspicious.
- When you engage them, Szilvia acknowledges having seen you before, asks what you're doing here/what you need and who Ervin is.
 - By way of questioning, she accuses Tomaj of enlisting your aid, thereby circumventing her intentions.
- The man swears he's never seen you before in his life.
 - [Choice] Reveal his deception or cover for him.

Quest End

- Lie route:
 - Szilvia leaves, somewhat peeved but apparently placated for now.
 - Tomaj thanks you for saving him. As promised, he says to let him know whenever you're ready to be introduced to the "boss."
- Truth route:
 - Szilvia addresses Tomaj with disdain, telling him he's effectively "done" here.
 - Tomaj leaves defeated. She thanks you for your honesty and generosity.
 - Szilvia encourages you to speak with "the boss," saying they could always use more people like you. She says to let her know whenever you're ready for an introduction.
 - *Optionally: the woman could be asked and concede that their work isn't easy but they must all do what's necessary to survive.*
- Both routes trigger the availability of the next quest, "The Greater Good." Your choice determines which NPC becomes the questgiver.