

# Quest Design Document

## Quest Title

The Hunger of Ash

## Quest Summary

The player encounters an emaciated woman, 'The Hollow Mother,' sitting in a ruined chapel. She begs the player to retrieve 'Ashen Bread' from nearby crypts to feed her starving children. Her children, however, are revealed to be malformed shadows feeding on the addict's soul.

## NPC Profile

The Hollow Mother is deceptively kind, with soft but desperate dialogue. Her tone shifts to madness if the player refuses her requests. She symbolizes the addict's guilt over neglecting loved ones while consumed by addiction.

## Dialogue Options

Player may respond with: 1. Agree to fetch the bread. ('I will help your children.') 2. Refuse directly. ('Your children are not real.') 3. Question her. ('What truly are these children?')

## Branching Paths

- If the player brings the bread: The shadows grow stronger, and the Hollow Mother becomes a mid-boss.
- If the player refuses: The Hollow Mother attacks immediately, enraged.
- If the player questions her: She reveals fragmented truths, opening a hidden path to lore notes before transforming into her monstrous form.

## Alternative Endings

1. **\*\*Corrupted Ending\*\***: Feeding the shadows strengthens them. Later enemies become harder, symbolizing enabling destructive habits.
2. **\*\*Direct Ending\*\***: Killing the Hollow Mother immediately removes her influence, but the player loses access to lore fragments.
3. **\*\*Truth Ending\*\***: Questioning her uncovers lore and grants insight into the protagonist's guilt, rewarding the player with an item tied to the true ending.

## Design Reasoning

This quest reflects themes of guilt, denial, and enabling destructive patterns. By offering multiple solutions—help, refusal, or investigation—the quest teaches players that not all choices are straightforward. Consequences ripple through difficulty, lore, and endgame narrative, showcasing depth and professional quest branching design.

## Quest Branching Diagram

