



# Nicolas Eymerich The Inquisitor: Book II - The Village REVIEW

## The Good:

Eymerich is still a fascinating anti-hero; some easy but fun puzzles; occasional tandem play; stylish cinematography; generally solid sound effects and voice-overs.

## The Bad:

Inefficient, buggy mechanics and poorly clued quests can waste hours of time; glitchy, dated graphics; uninteresting subplot; tiresome second protagonist.

## Our Verdict:

*The Inquisitor* loses its way through *The Village* with a poorly designed, technically weak sequel that fails to capitalise on the strengths of its brazen story and brutal, brilliant title character.



Scoring System - Editorial Policies

Written by [Shuva Raha](#) — May 15, 2015

The Inquisition resumes the morning after a night of tossing and turning for Nicholas Eymerich at the dingy inn of Calcares. Nibbled at by rats and haunted by nightmares of ferocious demons, he awakens with even greater resolve to hunt down the source of evil in the village. A glimpse outside reveals the ominous, purple-tinted landscape that serves as the setting for the second part of the socio-religious thriller set in medieval France, titled *The Inquisitor: Book II – The Village*. Although an isolated, mountainous place with little agricultural or economic activity, Calcares was clearly a thriving community before the seemingly-demonic plague decimated the population. A Cistercian abbey perched upon a rugged mountain seems to hold the key to the mystery, but now its massive doors are shut, and thick plumes of dark smoke billow out. The local church is also locked, and Eymerich's investigation is obstructed by the quiet, conspiratorial resistance of the villagers who mislead him with denials and lies. The addition of human malice to the previously-established supernatural plot creates initial interest, but things start to slide downhill in the

second half when matters of personal faith specific to Catholicism become the main narrative, pushing aside the original quest to decode the secret of the village.

The story picks up only a few hours after the end of [Book 1 – The Plague](#), but the sequel was in development for almost two years, though you wouldn't have guessed that from the number of both production and design issues on display here. There is *some* good news: *The Village* is longer, has more quests and puzzles, features tandem play between Eymerich and Fr Jacinto – the 'missing' priest of Carcassonne who is found soon enough – and the graphical styling is still engaging, with impactful visuals and interesting viewing perspectives as Eymerich explores the village's lanes and fields. But unlike the structured, austere abbey of Carcassonne, the fluid, rustic setting of Calcares exposes the inadequacy of the blocky three-dimensional graphics and erratic animation, compounded by pathfinding problems, interface issues, and visible physics glitches. Poorly-clued puzzles and unenlightening conversations further contribute to many situations where you have no idea what to do and must roam around hoping to trip over the next step. With these drawbacks, what could have been a tense thriller laced with Eymerich's incisive intellect and barbed wit is instead a meandering excursion through a dismal, decrepit village.

The second episode recaps the first by making you solve a smart little puzzle. The initial quarter of the investigation is restricted to the inn, with Eymerich downing a quick meal and then pottering about the sparsely-furnished establishment to unearth some clues about the insidious goings-on at Calcares. But once outside, the entire village opens up for exploration, and Eymerich is free to walk about and interact with various objects and persons of interest. This sounds more interesting than it actually is, however, because there are very few locations to visit, and even fewer people to talk to.

Apart from the innkeeper, a coarse woman full of secrets, and her sole customer, a bailiff who once served as a go-between for the assorted nefarious activities of villagers, there are only three other relevant locals. One is Dupont, the horribly-deformed, ailing captain of a band of mercenaries hired to defend the village. His team has perished from the plague and he too is all but a rotting corpse, but he is still the best source of information and does well to muster his meagre strength to help Eymerich. An old lady who pitches in with a vital quest item, and an accursed young mother whose predicament exposes the awful truth about Calcares, round up the supporting trio.

The overarching supernatural theme also continues alongside the shenanigans of the creepy villagers. In an odd twist of mythology, chatty manifestations of pagan goddess Demeter and her sensuously beautiful 'daughters' Medusa and Artemis hover outside the burning abbey, blocking the way into the obvious hotspot of trouble. The hefty Fr Jacinto is enlisted into the investigation around the midway point, and unwittingly dispels the tension created by Eymerich's grim discoveries with his bovine disposition. The devout priest's dual responsibility is to do all the heavy lifting, and humanise the crisis since the iron-willed Eymerich is impervious to emotional manipulation. We also spend several hours literally stumbling about the surreal landscape of Jacinto's distraught mind as he battles the horrors of temptation, guilt and fear, punishing himself on multiple occasions with self-harm. The pathways of Jacinto's personal Hell are paved with easy but fun puzzles, but it is a substantial, pointless detour from the task at hand to delve into the psyche of a man you have just met and don't care about.

As in part one, most of this game has Eymerich digging for clues, and the deeper he delves, the murkier things get. He quickly learns that there is a far more heinous problem at Calcares than the plague, and the explanation (at this time) seems to be a dreadful concoction of a scientific aberration and a twisted interpretation of faith. This, if true, would make for a far more compelling plot than a purely supernatural one, but there are few answers in this episode. Instead, searching for clues brings into focus the gameplay, which falls way short of the intended finesse due to inconsistent rules and weak technical execution. The point-and-click interface returns with the same inefficiencies as before, such as the multi-click inventory usage and the journal always opening on the first page. Objectives stump you with randomly varying rules of object collection and use, and inconsistencies like Item A being combinable with Item B, but not vice versa. One task requires you to find an unmarked tree in a forest by checking *every* tree; another involves stringing together floating dead bodies which keep getting entangled with each other; and a quest to bend a metal rod took me ages to crack simply because of repetitive, misleading feedback.

Meanwhile, standalone puzzles have little or no instruction, forcing you to first spend time working out their logic by trial and error before getting down to solving them. Most are variations of jigsaws, sliders, rotators and pattern match puzzles, and are visually attractive and amusing to solve once the logic becomes clear. Challenges include assembling keys and breaking codes to unlock objects and doors, reengineering an ancient catapult, and mutilating a rotting corpse. On occasion you can alternate between Eymerich and Jacinto to solve puzzles using their combined skills. Eymerich moves at a measured pace and never runs, but the heavy backtracking is simplified by the hand-

scribbled map which allows translocation between available areas. There are now twenty save slots instead of ten, while the points system for completing tasks and discovering Easter eggs has been retained as before, with deductions for using hints.

*The Village* has stylish cinematography which, combined with the choice to use atmospheric sound rather than music for most scenes, is the lynchpin of its aesthetic, working overtime to counter the drag of blocky graphics. Arty perspectives accentuate the sense of desolation of the sun-dappled, eerie village. There is a nice panoramic shot of Eymerich on a catapult tower, the sun blazing beyond him, and another memorable scene has him peering at the burning ruins of a building to the dramatic guitar riffs of theme music. There are many disquieting sights as well, like a heap of dead bodies in a blood-splattered ditch and another pile of raggedy corpses submerged in a scenic lake. Dupont's plague-infected visage and ornery actions, veering from exhausted resignation to maddened euphoria, are unsettling. Also impressive are the effects of light and shadow, like scenes darkening due to passing overhead clouds, sunlight streaming into rooms, and Eymerich's sharp green eyes glittering in candlelight.

There are minor improvements over the first episode, such as the subtitles now being easier to read, but overall the adventure is buggier this time, to the extent that it adversely affects the gameplay. A lot of time is wasted trying to navigate Eymerich and Jacinto around the screen as they keep getting stuck in the game's nooks and crannies, and it is difficult to find active areas amidst the backgrounds with no hotspot locator available. Worse, there are many mistakes in marking hotspots – labels appear where there are no objects and vice versa, and things go totally haywire in the seventh chapter where most objects are unmarked. There is some awful animation as well, with characters skidding across screens instead of walking, and passing through other people and objects. There are a few cutscenes, but even these fail to impress, being pixellated at high resolution.

Besides the theme track which amplifies the impact of key turning points, the understated ambient music, though modern, works well with the medieval setting. A range of sound effects like the raucous cawing of ravens, off-the-shoulder whispers, and the persistent buzzing of flies builds tension. A quiet, lilting dirge hummed by a young girl is a chilling reminder of the tragedies in the village, but there are many irritating instances as well, like the hammy overacting of a peasant couple and one woman's incessant wailing. As before, Eymerich's acerbic voice acting is excellent, and Dupont is effective as a maniacal plague victim who can still occasionally cut through the haze to draw from the strength he once had. The few other voices are serviceable. Conversations may be skipped entirely or a line at a time, but the annoyance of Eymerich repeatedly stating his objective even though it's noted in his journal continues unabated.

The script and localisation are also below par. There are many typos in the text (for example, the hint system is called 'devine' help), and the voice-overs often do not match the subtitles. While the story itself has a strong basis, the screenplay becomes increasingly insipid over time by dithering about with unimportant matters in an effort to prolong playing time. The game tries to compensate for this by upping the shock value – which isn't difficult since most characters, including the fanatical Eymerich, are self-serving and malicious – but the gasps are few and far between. The Inquisitor naturally gets the sharp one-liners and is especially entertaining when he is being willfully deceitful, but Jacinto carves a tiny niche for himself by assuming charge as the voice of mundane reason amidst the mayhem.

While *Book 1* also had many technical drawbacks, it was nevertheless intriguing due to the complex, brutal story and the unique caustic charisma of Eymerich. *The Village*, despite the lengthy interim between the two instalments, still has the same faulty gameplay mechanics and poorly-explained quests and puzzles. As a result, though effort has been invested in creating more puzzles and a longer episode, about half the 10 or so hours I spent playing was wasted simply trying to understand what to do or where to go. Also, while on paper it might have seemed like a good idea to have a second playable character, Fr Jacinto is a singularly dull individual who takes away a huge chunk of game time from Eymerich without making much difference. There are long stretches where nothing of consequence happens, and the plotline of Demeter and her daughters is uninteresting beyond the superficial salaciousness, especially since it affects only Jacinto and is just a mild hindrance for Eymerich.

There is little to recommend about *The Inquisitor: Book II* on its own merits, as *The Village* disappoints on most counts. I hope the series can regain this lost ground next time by returning its focus to the main mystery of the phenomena surrounding the plague at Calcares, improving the game mechanics, and putting Eymerich firmly back on the saddle as the sole lead.