



Figure 1 – Mission Inspiration Art from Web [1]

Quest Design Document: A Sorcerer's Tricks

A Quest for *The Witcher 3* by Isaiah Everin

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Document Date: 05/23/2016

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Mission Overview

This is a quest for *The Witcher 3*, a single-player RPG developed by CD Projekt Red. It would integrate as a side quest tied to the main campaign of the game, taking place towards the end of that story. In it, the sorceress Triss Merigold requests Geralt’s help in investigating a magic user in a village nearby to the city of Novigrad. Expecting to find a mage—either a dangerous enemy or a potential ally in the fight against the Wild Hunt—the pair instead finds a teenage boy named Alterr. The teen tricks them into fighting a variety of monsters, doing this to investigate their own magical powers. They discover that the boy is a budding sorcerer with no training, and his fate lies in their hands.

Story Highlights

A Magical Mystery: With foreshadowing throughout, the quest begins like an unfolding mystery, the player under the impression that they are about to encounter a powerful and dangerous mage. As the quest goes on, it turns out nothing is as Geralt and Triss assumed, but the story still concerns fascinating aspects of magic users in *The Witcher* universe.

Through the Eyes of the Youth: The quest turns assumptions on their heads with the revelation that the magic user is just a teenager. Youths in *The Witcher 3* are generally small children, but this quest offers Alterr, a clever and curious teen coming into his own as he experiments with his latent magic abilities. Magic users are also always shown to be adults, well-trained and established characters, and so exploring the concept of a mage in training offers ripe story opportunities.

Featured Characters

Character	Description
Geralt of Rivia	The game’s protagonist and playable character, Geralt is a Witcher trained in taking down monsters and other magical threats. He is Ciri’s ward, a father figure to her, and him and his friends are trying to protect her from a dimension-hopping horde of specters called the Wild Hunt. [Full Bio on Witcher Wikia]
Triss Merigold	Friend of Geralt and co, Triss is a sorceress with a heavy stake in protecting Ciri from the Wild Hunt. [Full Bio on Witcher Wikia]
Alterr	A teenage boy living in the wild, Alterr is well educated, coming from a noble family in the North. Precocious and strangely intelligent, he began to notice his propensity for magic at an incredibly young age, but kept it well hidden from an abusive family that he thought would exploit him given any chance. Eventually he decided he would rather fair for himself in the world, running away from home to travel, following clues of other magic-users to learn to wield this power on his own. He feigns the accent of a peasant while he is in the wild to protect himself from prying eyes.
Johan	A teenage village boy who befriends Alterr, easily won in by his charms and intelligence. Alterr ends up accidentally killing Johan in his experiments to learn to wield magic. Geralt finds evidence of this in Alterr’s cave hideout.

Mission Locations

Area	Description
The Rosemary and Thyme	An inn that is run by Geralt’s friends, Dandelion and Zoltan.
Small Village	A rural village in the woods, across the water from and near to Novigrad.
Griffon’s Nest	Sits resting on a clifftop overlooking either water or forest.
Forest Cave	A cave deep in the forest near to the village, used as a hideout by Alterr.

Context

This optional side quest takes place towards the end of the main story of *The Witcher 3*, as the group of Ciri’s allies is searching for members of the Lodge of Sorceresses—mages who are in hiding due to the Church of the Eternal Flame’s rabid witch-hunts. The group’s hope is that powerful magic users can assist in taking down the leader of the Wild Hunt, Eredin.

When Triss hears rumors of a magic user terrorizing a village outside of Novigrad, she thinks it worth following up on in case it is another mage in hiding. What she does not expect is running into a young potential sorcerer vying for survival in the countryside.

In *The Witcher* universe, magic users come under many names—druids, mages, sorcerers, priests. Some may have a latent talent for it, but all must train to fully wield their potential. The only other young magic user in the game is Ciri, and she is a special case—something called a “Source” with access to a much deeper pool of power than the typical mage. Alterr is not quite like this, but he is a young man with an innate talent for magic that goes well beyond the norm.

Objectives

- **Receiving the Quest from Triss** – Geralt receives the rumors of the sorcerer from Triss; if he takes the quest, he meets her at the village in question.
 - *Meet Triss at the Rosemary and Thyme*
 - Quest Failure: refuse to take the quest from Triss
 - *Meet Triss in the village (during the day)*
- **The Griffon’s Trail** – Triss and Geralt run into Alterr, and Geralt agrees to deal with the teen’s griffon problem in exchange for information about the sorcerer.
 - *Investigate the site of the attack using your Witcher Senses*
 - *Follow the blood trail to the griffon’s nest*
- **Return to the Village** – After the griffon is dispatched, Geralt is forced to escort Alterr back to his village. Meanwhile, Alterr takes an interest in Geralt’s magical Signs.
 - *Escort Alterr to the village*
 - *Defeat all of the nekkers and protect Alterr*
 - *Escort Alterr to the village (cont’d)*

- **Finding the Sorcerer’s Hideout** – With Alterr guiding them, Triss and Geralt explore a forest cave to seek out the sorcerer. Alterr tricks them into fighting rabid rock trolls and disappears.
 - *Travel to the forest cave*
 - *Use your Witcher Senses to seek evidence of the sorcerer*
 - *Defeat the angered rock trolls*

- **Unraveling the Mystery** – After following the boy out of the cave, Triss and Geralt must save him from Witch Hunters. Alterr surprisingly uses magic at the start of the fight.
 - *Use your Witcher Senses to find Alterr’s trail*
 - *Follow the scent trail out of the cave*
 - *Defeat the Witch Hunters*

- **Conclusion** – Geralt and Triss learn that Alterr is a latent sorcerer and runaway noble who has tricked them to observe their use of magic. Triss decides to take him in for training.
 - *Confront Alterr*

Aftermath

As this side quest has connections to the main campaign of the game, there is potential to introduce Alterr as an ally in the game’s final events (defeating Eredin on Skellige in their last confrontation). Additionally, Alterr stands as a character with a strong personality and a notable agenda of his own (to grow in power as a magic user), so there is also plenty of potential to extend this into a longer quest line exploring Alterr, his past, his family, and/or his development as a mage. Were that potential seen as a strong avenue to pursue, the side quest introducing him could easily be moved earlier in the game’s campaign.

Quest Description

Receiving the Quest from Triss

“Meet Triss at the Rosemary and Thyme” – Triss asks for Geralt’s help in investigating magical happenings in a village nearby to Novigrad. There are rumors of peasants dying to a dark sorcerer.

- 1) Triss would normally dismiss the rumors, but the descriptions of a portal left open in a cave given by witnesses sound accurate.
- 2) Triss is worried that if the Church of the Eternal Flame’s Witch Hunters get there first, Geralt’s friends might lose a valuable ally in the fight against the Wild Hunt.
- 3) Both Triss and Geralt speculate that it could be a member of the Lodge of Sorceresses, or the disbanded Brotherhood of Sorcerers, though neither knows why a mage would terrorize villagers.
- 4) Both also acknowledge that it is a long shot, since there is so little evidence as to whom it could be, leaving this open to be an optional undertaking.
- 5) If Geralt takes the quest, they agree to meet in the village, if not, the quest is **failed**.

“Meet Triss in the village” – If the player travels to the village during the day, Triss will be waiting near the signpost. Walking through the village, Geralt and Triss encounter an upset teenage boy named Alterr asking for help. At the start of the quest, Alterr has an aggressively exaggerated peasant accent.

- 1) Alterr claims that his parents were killed by a griffon and begs for the pair’s help.
- 2) When initially questioned about rumors of a nearby sorcerer, Alterr expresses confusion.
- 3) Geralt asks about a reward for the griffon—not about to do charity work while he is already busy—and Alterr changes his tune, saying that he knows where the sorcerer might be hiding, but he will only tell them if they help him.
- 4) Geralt consults with Triss. As this is their only lead so far, Triss thinks Geralt should follow it up. While he does so, Triss will ask around the village for evidence.

The Griffon’s Trail

“Investigate the site of the attack using your Witcher Senses” – Geralt looks around behind the hut where the boy claims the griffon assault took place.

- 1) Finding the griffon’s trail proves strange, as the blood and viscera left at the site of the attack appears to originate from an animal and not a human.
- 2) *Clues that Geralt finds:* claw marks in the earth from the griffon, a frayed rope with animal hairs, blood splatters and animal fur on the ground, and a trail of blood.

“Follow the blood trail to the griffon’s nest” – Picking up a trail, Geralt follows it into the woods.

- 1) Following the griffon’s trail to its nest on a cliff top leads to a fight. Before the fight starts, Geralt notes that the griffon seems to be in a rabid rage, tearing at the ground and roaring ferociously.
- 2) The fight ends with a cutscene of Geralt using Yrden to slow the griffon just as it swoops on him, then crouching and gutting it.

- 3) Brushing himself off and looking around, Geralt remarks that there is no evidence that the griffon recently attacked or ate any humans. However, he finds remainders of an herbal mixture that the griffon ate, driving it to the rabid frenzy that he observed.

Return to the Village

“Escort Alterr to the village” – As Geralt leaves, he stumbles upon Alterr watching him from the tree line. Alterr’s exaggerated peasant accent relaxes a bit throughout this conversation.

- 1) Geralt mentions that the griffon ate something that made it rabid. The boy, uninterested in these details, rushes to ask Geralt about the magic Signs he used, and Geralt explains that he is able to do them because he is a Witcher (which is not entirely true, as others can use them as well).
- 2) Geralt scolds Alterr for following him. The boy says that he wanted to see a hero slay a beast.
- 3) Geralt mentions that the griffon did not kill any humans. Alterr changes his story, admitting that he has long been an orphan and made that up for the sake of the villagers. This is believable, since there was at least evidence of livestock being taken, but Geralt still doubts him.
- 4) Geralt thinks it best if he escorts the boy back to his village. Alterr agrees excitedly.

“Defeat all of the nekkers and protect Alterr” – The two pass by a cluster of Nekkers on the way back. Alterr screams unnecessarily, drawing their attention and frustrating Geralt.

- 1) The fight ends in a cutscene of Alterr being attacked by a Nekker—he does not appear particularly distressed, dodging and jumping away with some ease. Geralt watches curiously, and when Alterr notices, he shouts out for Geralt to help.
- 2) Geralt sighs and acquiesces, dazing the Nekker with Axii and cutting it down in one quick swipe. Wiping off his blade, Geralt’s back is turned as the boy mimics the hand gesture of Geralt’s sign. On the third try, the boy’s hand seems to glow slightly. Geralt turns and prompts him to leave.
- 3) As they walk, Alterr asks about the Axii sign. Geralt explains curtly that it is just a useful tool, but the teenager begs him to explain it further, sighing with heavy sadness when Geralt refuses.

“Escort Alterr to the village (cont’d)” – Triss stands outside the boy’s village hut as they arrive, and Alterr tells them to wait as he goes inside.

- 1) Triss says that the villagers were vague in their stories, with most sightings taking place in the night and folks just seeing strange glowing in the woods. The most concrete evidence is a story of another teenage boy named Johan going missing recently, but there are few details.
- 2) Alterr returns dressed for travel with a bag, and he says he will take them to the sorcerer. Geralt reveals suspicion and skepticism that Alterr is now certain of where the sorcerer is. Alterr brushes this off, saying that he simply forgot he saw a suspicious figure in a nearby cave.
- 3) Geralt also expresses that they cannot trust Alterr because his parents were not killed by the griffon, but Triss shows understanding to Alterr’s story of wanting to help the village.
- 4) Geralt can choose to go to the cave immediately with Triss and Alterr or meet them there later.

Finding the Sorcerer's Hideout

"Travel to the forest cave" – If Geralt chose to travel immediately, time passes and the three arrive at the mouth of a cave in the forest. Otherwise, if Geralt chose to meet them later, a waypoint leads him to the mouth of the cave where Triss and Alterr wait.

- 1) At the cave, Geralt suggests that Triss and Alterr remain outside, but both insist on entering with him. Alterr's excuse is that he knows the cave network well and can identify exactly where he saw the sorcerer camping. The group walks inside with Geralt taking the lead.

"Use your Witcher Senses to seek evidence of the sorcerer" – Deeper into the cave, Geralt searches for clues of the sorcerer's presence.

- 1) The group finds an abandoned campsite, but there is no evidence it was owned by a magic user.
- 2) *Clues that Geralt finds:* A recently used campfire and cooking supplies, a bed pad, a deck of cards resting on a rock, and an empty bottle with a strong herbal smell.
- 3) A loud clamor of rocks falling sounds from behind, and Geralt and Triss turn to find themselves cornered by two infuriated rock trolls. Alterr is nowhere to be seen.

"Defeat the angered rock trolls" – Geralt leads the fight against the rock trolls and defeats them.

- 1) Once the rock trolls are dispatched, the pair realizes that their exit has been caved in. Geralt and Triss shout out for Alterr, but he seems to have vanished.

Unraveling the Mystery

"Use your Witcher Senses to find Alterr's trail" – Geralt and Triss need to escape the cave.

- 1) Triss immediately shows concern for the boy, wondering if the sorcerer was responsible for the madness in the rock trolls. Geralt expresses skepticism, feeling this scenario has gotten too fishy.
- 2) Inspecting the bodies, Geralt connects an herbal smell on their breath to that he sensed at the griffon's nest and to the empty bottle that he found in the campsite.

"Follow the scent trail out of the cave" – Geralt's Witcher Senses pick up a scent trail from the herbal mixture and they follow it deeper into the cave.

- 1) On the way, their trail is barred multiple times with piled up rocks, boards, and refuse. Geralt is forced to use his Aard sign to telekinetically blast away these barricades.
- 2) As him and Triss talk during their hike, Geralt expresses immense impatience with this situation. Triss speculates on why Alterr would poison monsters, wondering if he is working for the rumored sorcerer or has some other reason to try to dispatch her and Geralt.
- 3) At one point on the trail, Geralt can find Alterr's dropped rucksack. Inside is **Johan's Journal**, written by the missing boy and revealing his friendship with Alterr. Johan was enraptured with Alterr's knowledge of the world, and he was planning ask to follow Alterr in his vagabond travels.
- 4) The cave network loops back around and they find their way to the open entrance only to hear masculine shouting nearby.

"Defeat the Witch Hunters" – Geralt and Triss find Alterr cornered by Witch Hunters. Alterr's peasant accent is completely gone at this point, traded for that of a young noble.

- 1) Hiding in the mouth of the cave, Geralt and Triss overhear the Witch Hunters shouting at Alterr. The Hunters have been watching the cave for signs of a sorcerer, and they demand to know where the Witcher and sorceress went, though they acknowledge these two were not the initial targets.
- 2) Alterr's accent has notably changed to that of a young noble, and he is petulant in his responses. The Hunters become abusive, knocking Alterr around to try to get the truth out of him. Triss insists that Geralt help, but he whispers for her to wait so that they can get to the bottom of this.
- 3) Alterr claims to be the son of nobles who will punish the Hunters for their indiscretions. This has no effect, though, and the Witch Hunters threaten to jail Alterr for "obstructing justice." They reveal their intentions to imprison or kill Triss, as well as any sorcerer they can get their hands on.
- 4) Alterr shouts for them to let him go, and when they refuse, his hands start to glow and he suddenly uses the Aard sign to telepathically knock away his captors. Seeing this work, Alterr grins almost manically, and with another hand gesture, he casts Axii on one of the hunters, dazing him. He shouts with glee, but the other Witch Hunters become furious and ready their attack.
- 5) With this, Geralt finally grunts with annoyance and joins the fray to protect Alterr and Triss from the Witch Hunters.

Conclusion

"Confront Alterr" – Geralt and Triss question Alterr after defeating the crew of Witch Hunters.

- 1) Geralt expresses confusion at Alterr's accent and his casual use of Signs, and Triss immediately recognizes the teenager as a latent sorcerer. Signs are simple spells that theoretically anyone can learn, and Alterr's natural gift for magic allowed him to easily learn them by observing Geralt.
- 2) On Triss asking about the missing teen, Johan, Alterr is forced to admit that they were friends, but his experiments with alchemy and magic led to Johan accidentally perishing. Alterr becomes angry and emotional as he tells this story, showing true remorse for what happened.
- 3) Through interrogating Alterr, Geralt pieces the story together easily. It turns out the teenager is a runaway of noble birth who decided to try to teach himself magic and alchemy. Learning that Witchers and sorceresses were in Novigrad, Alterr hoped to draw out these magic users to the village in order to observe their practices and learn more. Driving the griffon and rock trolls rabid would easily force the hand of a Witcher.
- 4) Geralt grimly suggests they should have left Alterr to the Witch Hunters for his reckless behavior, but Triss scolds him for this.
- 5) Triss expresses that she has not met a young sorcerer in some time and their systems for handling this are uncertain since the Lodge of Sorceresses is in hiding and only recently reconvened. She recognizes that Alterr is strangely talented for his age and lack of training, making him a potential asset. She recommends that they bring him in so that he could learn magic in safety.
- 6) Alterr worries that they will turn him back over to his family, but Geralt successfully convinces him that it is in his best interest to train with other mages. For the boy's safety and that of others, he must learn magic with those who are more knowledgeable of it.

Quest Writing

Dialog Examples

As with any quest in *The Witcher 3*, most dialog takes place in cutscenes that offer periodic choices. Some dialog also takes place between NPCs and Geralt as he walks between locations.

Dialog Cutscene: Receiving the Quest from Triss, "Meet Triss in the village"

MAIN BRANCH 1

Geralt and Triss walk through the small village. They are halted by a teenage boy running up to them breathless and emotional. His face is streaked with dirt and fresh tears, and he pants as he shouts.

ALTERR: A Witcher! You have to help me, please!

GERALT: Woah, woah, slow down. What's wrong?

TRISS: Is it the sorcerer?

ALTERR: Sorcerer? No, no, a griffon...it came and it...it ate my parents! I swear it, you must help. It could strike the village again at any moment.

GERALT: A griffon, huh. They're not liable to attack innocent villagers on a whim.

ALTERR: And why not? They're bloody monsters, aren't they, and Witchers kill monsters.

GERALT **[STORY CHOICE 1: Maybe, for a price.]**
(CHOICE): **[STORY CHOICE 2: No time right now.]**

STORY CHOICE 1: Maybe, for a price.

GERALT: I'd consider it for a fee, time permitting.

ALTERR: I ain't got no money...it killed my family, Witcher, what else would you take from me?

GERALT: You've gotta give me something.

TRISS: Do you know anything about the sorcerer terrorizing this village?

ALTERR: Yeah, sure...I've heard about him. Hey, maybe I've seen him!
(To Main Branch 2)

STORY CHOICE 2: No time right now.

GERALT: Not for free, I don't. Besides, we have other business here.

ALTERR: More important than a beast murdering innocents?

TRISS: It could be much worse, actually.

ALTERR: Oh, a sorcerer, then. I've heard about him. Hey, maybe I've seen him!
(To Main Branch 2...)

MAIN BRANCH 2

GERALT: Really now? Alright, talk.
ALTERR: Yeah, yeah, I have. A dark man, hooded cloak, real mysterious. He was hiding out, but...I'll only tell you where if you help. Or are you going to let a monster roam free with...with the blood of innocents fresh on its claws?
TRISS: Would you give us a moment?

Triss and Geralt step aside and talk outside of earshot of Altterr.

TRISS: Maybe he can help. He seems desperate.
GERALT: It might be a fair trade if this gets us to the sorcerer faster. It could also end up being a waste of time.
TRISS: At least you would be protecting the village from a griffon.
GERALT: And for no coin.
TRISS: Consider it a favor to me. If the mage turns out to be an ally, it will ultimately help Ciri as well.
GERALT
(CHOICE): **[CONTINUE CHOICE: Better get going.]** I'll get the details from the boy. *(To Main Branch 3)*
[EXPOSITION CHOICE: What about you?]

EXPOSITION CHOICE: What about you?

GERALT: What will you do while I track the griffon?
TRISS: I'll ask around the village, hopefully I can get a clearer story of this supposed sorcerer.
GERALT: Have you thought further about who it could be?
TRISS: With so little to go off of, it's hard to be sure. Mages don't often consort with rural town folk, let alone harass them. Based on those rumors alone, it's impossible to guess.
(Return to Main Branch 2 choices)

MAIN BRANCH 3

Geralt walks back to Altterr.

GERALT: Alright, I'll track down your griffon.
ALTERR: Really...? Of course, of course you will!
GERALT: Now, where did the attack take place?
ALTERR: Behind our house, just over there. The...the blood...it's still fresh.
GERALT: Good, should be a trail. I'll be back soon.
(End of cutscene)

Dialog Cutscene: Return to the Village, "Escort Alterr to the village"

MAIN BRANCH 1

Geralt leans and looks past a bush, noticing Alterr has been watching. He calls for him to come out, and Alterr scrambles up onto his feet and brushes his knees off. Alterr's exaggerated peasant accent relaxes a bit throughout this conversation.

GERALT: What were you doing?
ALTERR: Ah, just watching a mighty warrior slay a most wicked beast.
GERALT: The griffon was poisoned, something made it frenzied.
ALTERR: Poisoned, huh? Didn't seem to stand a chance against you. I always knew Witchers were heroic, but you also wield such spells!
GERALT: My Signs? They're not much, just help with the fight.
ALTERR: Not much?! Try telling peasants such magic isn't much, they find even the look of your cat eyes terrifying.
GERALT
(CHOICE): **[CONTINUE CHOICE: You lied about your parents.]** You lied to us. The griffon attacked livestock, so if your parents are gone, this one didn't do it. *(To Main Branch 2)*
[EXPOSITION CHOICE: You don't seem scared.]

EXPOSITION CHOICE:

GERALT: And you? You seem pretty confident.
ALTERR: I can take care of myself...I have to.
GERALT: Shouldn't have come. If the griffon saw you, there wouldn't be much I could do. You got lucky.
ALTERR: Couldn't help my curiosity...and, uh, desire to see revenge, of course.
GERALT: About that...
(Return to Main Branch 1 choices)

MAIN BRANCH 2

ALTERR: Oh...right well...*(Sighs)* It's true. My family died long ago...but I saw the griffon take the townsfolk's livestock. I thought it just to help them. The village has taken me in and been kind to me...
GERALT: Hm, sweet story. For some reason I'm not sure I buy it.
ALTERR: What else have I to gain? Besides, I'll help you find the sorcerer now. It's a fair trade, isn't it?
GERALT: I'll know soon enough. Come on, I'll escort you back to the village.
ALTERR: Really...? I mean, yes, of course you will! You're a hero, after all.
GERALT: Right...
(End of cutscene)

Passive Dialog: Unraveling the Mystery, "Follow the scent trail out of the cave"

Geralt and Triss make their way through the cave, following the herbal smell Geralt picked up.

- TRISS: Why would a village boy go through so much trouble? Poisoning monsters just to make us fight them...
- GERALT: I knew this would be a waste of time.
- TRISS: Maybe he's under the sorcerer's influence.
- GERALT: The kid seems too clever. Something doesn't quite fit together here.
- TRISS: I don't know why someone would try to trap us, unless somehow this is connected to the Witch Hunters...
- GERALT: It's too convoluted for them.
- TRISS: Maybe a sorcerer really has taken some kind of interest in us. We know better than anyone how tricky mages can be.
- GERALT: Whoever's behind this, I think we'll find out soon enough.

Item Text Example**Johan's Journal**

Discoverable during the objective **"Follow Alterr's trail out of the cave,"** this journal is found in an Alterr's abandoned rucksack in the tunnel Geralt and Triss use to escape. It belonged to the missing villager, Johan, who befriended Alterr before meeting an accidental demise.

My new friend is fantastic! Mum said I should stay away from him, that orphans bring bad luck, but we have so much fun together. He's shown me around a cave, we go on adventures together like real heroes. He can do magic! I swear it. The other villagers are scared, they seen the lights of his spells in the woods and they think it's a sorcerer come to take their children, but Alterr says these are silly folk who don't know better.

He's much smarter than me. I think he was a noble, but look, he picked me to be his friend. He says I'm smart, too, but I think maybe he's lying. I want to learn magic spells like him, and together we can use them to get whatever we want! But it never works when I try it. Even so, he's showing me how to brew potions. We're gonna test them on some dumb cave trolls and see what happens. Alterr can keep us safe with his magic.

Maybe if this works, Alterr will take me with him on his travels...

References

- [1] D. U. (Pelindor), "Deviant Art," 2015. [Online]. Available: <http://emkun.deviantart.com/art/Fan-art-The-witcher-3-535591587>. [Accessed 20 May 2016].