

# The Forest Has Ears: A side-quest pitch for The Witcher II

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**Proposal:** An optional side-quest for Act II (Iorveth's Path) with branching narrative outcomes.

**Summary:** Geralt's bardic buddy Dandelion was shot at in the forest outside Vergen. He suspects it may have been a rogue Scoia'tael. Geralt - with Scoia'tael commando Iorveth's help - investigates the mysterious shooter. Uncovering clues and tracking down the shooter, they discover the Aen Seidhe leader of a small Scoia'tael unit called Eilinn. Her warriors have been taken hostage by Kaedweni scout troops trapped on this side of the mist (the cursed battlefield) and kept under guard nearby.

There are three major choice/action-based options for the player to choose from: fighting the Kaedweni scouts head-on, attempting to negotiate a prisoner trade for the hostages, and a semi-secret stealth sequence approach. These paths yield varying narrative outcomes - some more successful than others - and corresponding XP rewards.

## Aims and purposes:

- To bolster the existing central story thread and narrative tension in Act II. Vergen (Geralt's chosen/allied side) does not have the numbers it needs to win against Kaedwen's imminent siege. This side-quest would strengthen this story thread, adding an important beat between the beginning of Act II (where Vergen's leaders express dismay at having too small an army) and its final chapters (where Iorveth leaves to recruit more Scoia'tael warriors from over the mountains because he knows Vergen can't win as is).
- To bolster Iorveth's characterisation: the Scoia'tael commander is restless in his drive to achieve freedom and peace for nonhumans in the Pontar Valley. A side-quest that centres his efforts to seek more support for this cause before the siege of Vergen would strengthen the player's sense of who he is and what he wants.
- To make maximal use of existing characters, POIs, mechanics, and other assets to deliver valuable new narrative content with minimal resource cost across other departments.

## Characters:

- **Geralt** - Player character
- **Dandelion** - Quest-giver NPC
- **Iorveth** - NPC ally / quest-follower
- **Eilinn** - Scoia'tael leader / NPC ally / quest-follower (choice-dependent)
- **Aicher** - Kaedweni scout troop leader / antagonist NPC / final boss
- **Corcan** - Kaedweni scout / prisoner of Vergen (path-dependent)
- **Generic Scoia'tael, Kaedweni troop, and bandit NPCs**

## Rewards:

- XP (amount varies, path-dependent)
- Sword of Midaëte (path-dependent)
- Narrative: Allies for the Battle of Vergen (path-dependent). *Allies gained will stay in Vergen and adopt a day/night cycle around the Scoia'tael buildings during the remainder of Act II.*

**Items / assets:**

- Prison key (inventory view-only; existing/completed asset)
- Bandit 'trophy' (inventory view-only; existing/completed asset)
- Sword of Midaëte (inventory-view and weapon model - *asset required*)

**Locations:**

- Vergen town - interiors and exteriors (existing/completed)
- Vergen outskirts (existing/completed)
- Kaedweni hideout/Dwarven ruins - *Required (assets from Act I ruins could be repurposed)*

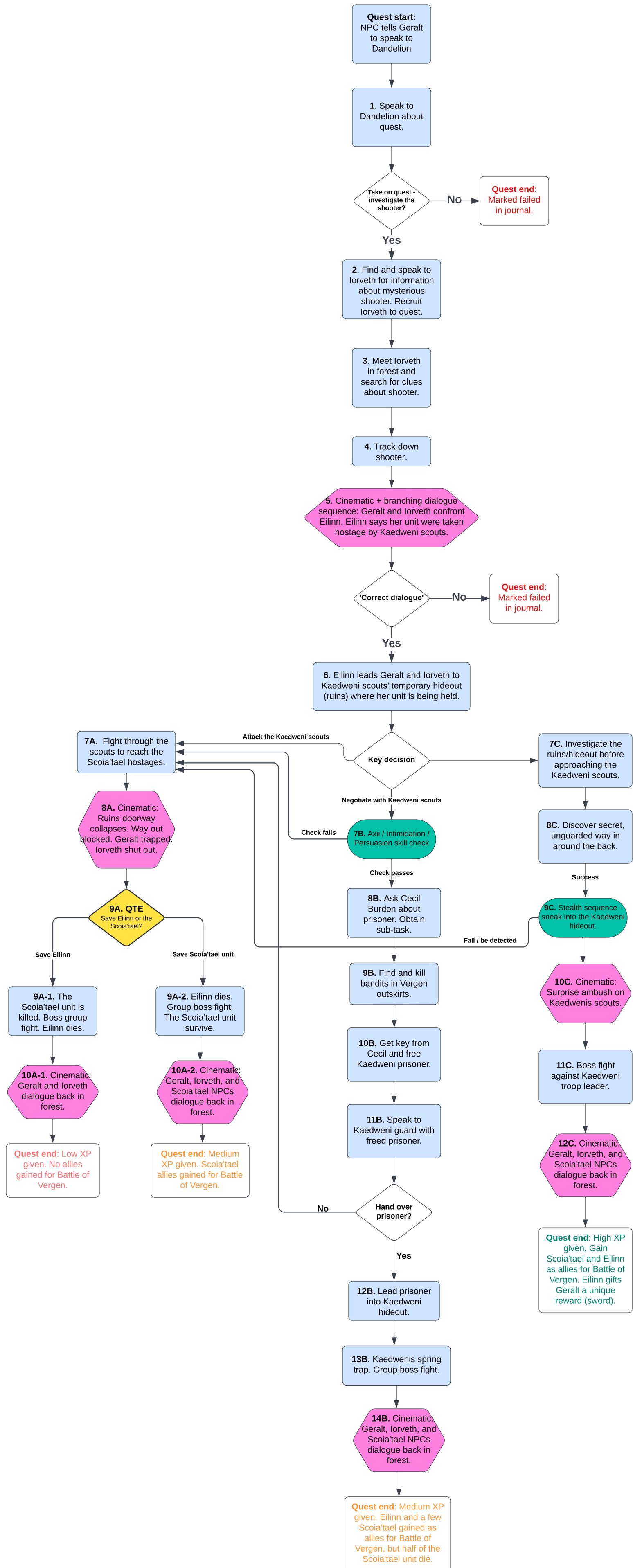
**Conditionals/constraints:**

- Becomes available after The War Council main-story quest (when Act II's game world opens up).
- Must be completed before main-story quest Royal Blood concludes (as Iorveth leaves to gather more Scoia'tael and is absent/unavailable for the rest of Act II).
- NPCs' movements will adhere to their regular day/night schedules.

**Design notes:**

- This quest adheres to The Witcher II's quest design philosophies, which typically have combat-oriented approaches yield shorter quest pathways to completion and fewer rewards (gameplay and narrative). The player will receive 'better' outcomes and greater rewards for more considered approaches to completing the quest.
- Given the explicitly oppositional relationship between the Kaedwenis and the Vergen side at this point in the game (as enemies on the brink of war), this quest does not offer a true pacifist solution. It would not make sense that such a solution would be achievable within this narrative context.

# Quest design flowchart



# Quest design and content

**Quest start** - A dwarven NPC approaches Geralt near The Cauldron inn in Vergen. The NPC tells him he should check in on his friend Dandelion, who was “yelping about a near-death experience or some codswallop”.

## 1. Speak to Dandelion about quest.

- a. Find Dandelion at The Cauldron and initiate dialogue.
- b. *Branching dialogue sequence: conversation-progressing + flavour options for the player to glean additional information.*
  - Dandelion tells Geralt he was shot at in the forest outside Vergen. It almost pinned his foot to the ground.
  - The shooter was a female with red hair and a necklace of teeth.
  - He suspects the shooter was Scoia'tael.

## DECISION: Take on the quest - Yes/No?

- a. Agree to investigate Dandelion's mysterious shooter to progress the quest.
- b. Turn Dandelion down and tell him to stay in Vergen to reject the quest. This marks the quest as failed in the in-game journal.

## 2. Find and speak to Iorveth for information about the mysterious shooter. Recruit Iorveth to quest.

- a. Find Iorveth by the Scoia'tael buildings in Vergen.
- b. *Non-branching dialogue sequence:*
  - Geralt tells Iorveth about the shooter and asks if she's part of his unit.
  - Iorveth tells Geralt the mysterious shooter is not known to him.
  - Iorveth tells Geralt the Vergen side needs all the fighters it can get for the looming battle. He offers to assist Geralt's investigation so he can recruit the (possible) Scoia'tael shooter.

## 3. Meet Iorveth in forest and search for clues about shooter.

- a. Meet Iorveth at quest-marker location in the Vergen outskirts (forest area).
- b. Iorveth becomes a quest-follower.
- c. Search a small forest area for clues about the shooter (Witcher Sense mechanic makes clues glow while active):
  - Pit trap
  - Missing branches, clipped from trees (used to make arrows).
  - Snuffed fire.
  - \*Arrow hole in ground (\*appears only once the other three clues have been found).
- d. *In-gameplay dialogue exchanges between Geralt and Iorveth when each clue is discovered about what they might mean.*
- e. When final clue (\*) is found, Iorveth verbally notes the direction it was shot from.

## 4. Track down shooter.

- a. Iorveth leads Geralt in direction shot was fired from.
- b. Reach the next marker to trigger an in-game cutscene.

## 5. Cinematic + branching dialogue sequence: Geralt and Iorveth confront Eilinn. Eilinn says her unit was taken hostage by Kaedweni scouts.

- a. *In-game cinematic: An Aen Seidhe (elven) woman with red hair and a necklace of teeth appears on a tree branch above. Iorveth and the woman point their bows at each other; Geralt leaves his blade sheathed.*
- b. *Branching dialogue sequence: Geralt learns:*
  - This NPC is the shooter.
  - Her name is Eilinn.
  - Eilinn's unit was just taken hostage by some Kaedweni scouts trapped on the Vergen side of the mist/cursed battlefield. There were only a few of them.
- c. **'Incorrect' dialogue choices (antagonistic) lead to quest end. Eilinn runs off. Quest is marked failed in in-game journal.**
- d. 'Correct' dialogue choices progress quest. Geralt and Iorveth agree to help Eilinn recover her unit.

## **6. Eilinn leads Geralt and Iorveth to Kaedweni scouts' temporary hideout (ruins) where her unit is being held.**

- a. Eilinn becomes a quest-follower.
- b. Find the Kaedweni scouts' hideout: some old dwarven ruins in the forest.
  - A single Kaedweni scout waits, guarding, outside the entrance.

### **KEY DECISION - How to proceed?**

- a. Approach the Kaedweni guard to trigger a branching dialogue.
- b. There are two options to progress the quest via this dialogue:
  - [7A. ATTACK THE KAEDWENI SCOUTS.](#)
  - [7B. NEGOTIATE WITH THE KAEDWENI SCOUTS.](#)
- c. Investigate the Kaedweni hideout **BEFORE** speaking to the guard to make [QUEST PATH 7C](#) available.

## **7A PATH (ATTACK THE KAEDWENI SCOUTS)**

### **7A. Fight through the scouts to reach the Scoia'tael hostages.**

- a. Geralt, Iorveth, and Eilinn progress through the ruins to find the Scoia'tael hostages.
- b. They engage in combat with Kaedweni scout enemies throughout.

### **8A. Cinematic: Ruins doorway collapses. Way out blocked. Geralt trapped. Iorveth shut out.**

- a. *In-game cinematic: Geralt and Eilinn push into the final room but the old ruins archway collapses behind them. Iorveth is stuck outside, unable to get through. Geralt and Eilinn are trapped inside with the remaining Kaedweni scouts and Scoia'tael hostages. Eilinn is surprised by a scout, who grabs her and holds a knife to her throat. The other Kaedweni scouts hold knives to the Scoia'tael unit NPCs' throats.*

### **9A. QTE: Save Eilinn or the Scoia'tael unit?**

- a. A QTE timer and two 'dialogue' menu options appear. Choose between trying to save:
  - [Eilinn \(9A-1\)](#)
  - [The Scoia'tael NPCs. \(9A-2\)](#)

### // 9A-1. Save Eilinn - The Scoia'tael unit is killed. Boss group fight. Eilinn dies.

- a. *In-game cinematic: The scouts slit the Scoia'tael NPCs' throats. Geralt rushes Eilinn's captor, who releases her to fend off Geralt.*
- b. Fight the Kaedweni scouts and their troop leader Aicher (quest boss) alongside Eilinn.
  - Eilinn is always killed during the fight.
- c. Completing the fight triggers dialogue bark from Geralt acknowledging quest outcome (to effect of: "Dead. Damn.")

### // 10A-1. Cinematic: Geralt and Iorveth dialogue back in forest.

- a. *Non-branching in-game cinematic dialogue sequence: Iorveth and Geralt express frustration at the quest outcome. Iorveth leaves and goes back to Vergen.*

### // 7A / 9A-1 PATH QUEST END

- Low XP given.
  - No allies gained for the Battle of Vergen.
  - In-game journal text updates with outcome accordingly.
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### // 9A-2. Eilinn dies. Group boss fight. The Scoia'tael unit survive.

- a. *In-game cinematic: The Kaedweni scout leader Aicher slits Eilinn's throat. Geralt rushes the Scoia'tael unit's captors, who release them to fend off Geralt.*
- b. Fight the Kaedweni scouts and their troop leader Aicher (quest boss) alongside the Scoia'tael NPCs.
  - Some Scoia'tael are killed during the fight.
- c. Completing the fight triggers a dialogue bark from a remaining Scoia'tael NPC, who thanks Geralt coldly for helping them.

### // 10A-2. Cinematic: Geralt, Iorveth, and Scoia'tael NPCs dialogue back in forest.

- a. *Non-branching in-game cinematic dialogue sequence: Iorveth and Geralt express some frustration at the quest outcome. Iorveth recruits the remaining Scoia'tael NPCs to Vergen's side. Iorveth and the Scoia'tael NPCs leave and go back to Vergen.*

### // 7A / 9A-2 PATH QUEST END

- Medium XP given.
  - Some allies gained for the Battle of Vergen (small number of Scoia'tael NPCs).
  - In-game journal text updates with outcome accordingly.
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## 7B PATH (NEGOTIATE WITH THE KAEDWENI SCOUTS)

### 7B. Axii / Intimidation / Persuasion skill check.

- a. Geralt proposes a deal in exchange for the Scoia'tael unit.
- b. The Kaedweni scout guard is reluctant to negotiate with a mutant/'freak'.
- c. The player must pass a dialogue-based skill check to successfully convince the guard to negotiate. They have a choice of Axii / Intimidation / Persuasion.
  - Failing the skill check triggers the Kaedweni scouts' hostility. They attack Geralt, Iorveth, and Eilinn. Quest path changes track to **7A PATH (ATTACK THE KAEDWENI SCOUTS)**.

- Pass the skill check to progress the **7B QUEST PATH**. The guard suggests a trade: the Scoia'tael unit for Corcan - a scout from their group who was captured, and is imprisoned in Vergen. Eilinn says she'll wait and meet Geralt back here when he's done.

### **8B. Ask Cecil Burdon about prisoner. Obtain sub-task.**

- Speak to Cecil Burdon in Vergen.
- Non-branching dialogue sequence: Cecil will give Geralt the key to free Corcan if he rids the Vergen outskirts gulleys of bandits that have been killing passersby.*
  - Find and speak to Corcan in the prison (optional/not suggested in quest log) to yield a hint about the existence of **PATH 7C**. Corcan will make a comment giving 'advice' to Geralt and Iorveth to the effect of 'you shouldn't deal with our face when our back's exposed.' (Prompt for alternative options on future replays/reloads).

### **9B. Find and kill bandits in Vergen outskirts.**

- Find the group of bandits at the quest-marker location in Vergen outskirts.
- Non-branching dialogue sequence: Bandits are hostile to Geralt and Iorveth. Triggers combat.*
- Geralt collects 'trophy' to prove bandits' death to Cecil Burdon.

### **10B. Get key from Cecil and free Kaedweni prisoner.**

- Give bandit 'trophy' to Cecil.
- Collect prison key and free Corcan.
- Freeing Corcan triggers gameplay cut: loading screen takes Geralt, Iorveth, and Corcan straight into dialogue sequence with Kaedweni guard outside hideout/ruins.*

### **11B. Speak to Kaedweni guard with freed prisoner.**

- Dialogue sequence leads to branching decision: **DECISION - Hand over prisoner?***
- Hand Corcan over → Progresses quest with **12B**.
- "You first." (Refuse to hand Corcan over first) → Changes quest track to **7A PATH (ATTACK THE KAEDWENI SCOUTS)**.

### **12B. Lead prisoner into Kaedweni hideout.**

- Lead Corcan through hallways of the ruins into the 'main room' where the Scoia'tael are being held.
- Iorveth expresses concern that they're walking into a trap, telegraphing the next beat.

### **13B. Kaedweni scouts spring trap.**

- In-game cinematic: The Kaedweni scouts trap Geralt, Iorveth, and Eilinn in the room and attack.*
- Fight the Kaedweni scouts and their troop leader Aicher (quest boss) alongside Iorveth and Eilinn.
  - Half the Scoia'tael hostages die during the fight.

### **// 14B. Cinematic: Geralt, Iorveth dialogue back in forest.**

- Non-branching in-game cinematic dialogue sequence: Iorveth, Geralt, and Eilinn express some frustration at losing some Scoia'tael. Iorveth recruits Eilinn and*



remaining Scoia'tael NPCs to Vergen's side. Iorveth, Eilinn, and Scoia'tael NPCs leave and go back to Vergen.

## // 7B / 12B PATH QUEST END

- Medium XP given.
  - Some allies gained for the Battle of Vergen (small number of Scoia'tael NPCs and Eilinn).
  - In-game journal text updates with outcome accordingly.
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## 7C PATH (INVESTIGATE THE RUINS/HIDEOUT BEFORE APPROACHING THE KAEDWENI SCOUTS)

### 7C. Investigate the ruins/hideout before approaching the Kaedweni scouts.

- a. Explore ruins' exterior with Eilinn and Iorveth as quest-followers.
- b. Eilinn will voice a bark as the player approaches a 'trigger area', hinting at somewhere significant nearby.

### 8C. Discover secret, unguarded way in around the back.

- a. A back entrance to the ruins lies half-obsured by trees/bushes.
- b. Iorveth suggests sneaking in (in-game dialogue).

### 9C. Stealth sequence - sneak into the Kaedweni hideout.

- a. Stealth mechanics kick in. Geralt must sneak through hallways, avoiding and knocking out Kaedweni scouts, to reach the 'main room' where the Scoia'tael hostages are being held.
- b. Failing the stealth sequence by being detected changes quest track to [7A PATH \(ATTACK THE KAEDWENI SCOUTS\)](#).
- c. Succeeding stealth sequence progresses quest to **10C**.

### 10C. Cinematic: surprise ambush on Kaedweni scouts.

- a. *In-game cinematic: Geralt, Iorveth, and Eilinn ambush the Kaedweni scouts, killing them (out of gameplay). The troop leader Aicher (quest boss) attacks.*

### 11C. Boss fight against Kaedweni troop leader.

- a. Geralt, Iorveth, and Eilinn fight the Kaedweni troop leader Aicher (quest boss).
- b. Once the boss is downed, the Scoia'tael (all alive) voice their thanks as barks.

### 12C. Cinematic: Geralt, Iorveth, and Scoia'tael NPCs dialogue back in forest.

- a. *Non-branching dialogue sequence: Iorveth, Geralt, and Eilinn express their satisfaction about the quest outcome. Iorveth recruits Eilinn and the Scoia'tael NPCs to Vergen's side. Iorveth, Eilinn, and the Scoia'tael NPCs leave and go back to Vergen.*

## 7C / 10C PATH QUEST END

- High XP given.
  - Sword of Midaëte quest item reward given.
  - Allies gained for the Battle of Vergen (Scoia'tael NPCs and Eilinn).
  - In-game journal text updates with outcome accordingly.
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Carrie Talbot