Howdy, folks!

S3ctor asked me to share how I design/plan out quests, and I'm happy to do so.

Let's get started.

The tl;dr is that a quest mod needs the following:
- *Who* is giving the quest?
- *What* do they want?
- *Why* is the Player the one to help?
- *How* will the Player go about the quest?
- *What* are the consequences/resolution of the completed quest?

You don't need to answer these questions in order while you're putting the quest together. You can figure things out as you go (and I'm about to get to how I figure things out).

Step 1: Inspiration/Getting Ideas

So I get my ideas from a lot of places. Some examples:

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- *The Order of the Arcane Watch* came from 5e D&D's Paladin's Oath of the Watcher. I thought it was a cool oath and I wanted to build a faction around it.

- *Something in the Water*–I thought it was a neat phrase that would make a neat quest title. It made me think of pollutants, which made me think of sickness, which made me think of Peryite. So I decided that it was going to be a Peryite mod.

- *A Fowl Wish* was originally going to be called "A Foul Wish", but then I read this NWN fanfic and I really, *really* wanted to feature a chicken, and so I decided to do that:
  - https://archiveofourown.org/works/53740981/chapters/136041472

- *Dead Gardens* is the name of a Nightwish song. I really love the intro to the song and think it's very compelling and would make for an interesting NPC.

- *Blood and Faith* comes from the themes of one of the previous modathons. The theme was literally "Blood and Faith". I know, I know, super creative on my part.

Step 2: Thinking about the Initial Ideas

- *The Order of the Arcane Watch* is obviously a faction with the goal of limiting Daedric influences, so I had to come up with a few faction members. What do they do? Where are they from? What do they want?

- *Something in the Water* was a modjam mod with the theme "In the Shadows". So there's a shadowy figure related to Peryite. The first thing I came up with was "a shadowy cultist poisoning the well water on behalf of Peryite".

- *A Fowl Wish*–what is the chicken wishing for, and why, and how?

- *Dead Gardens*: the opening lines are "The story behind the painting I drew is already told / No more tear-stains on the pages of my diary / Tired but unable to give up / For I am responsible for the lives I've saved." So clearly, someone *wants* to go to rest or leave, but feels like they can't because they have lives that they feel that they are responsible for.

- *Blood and Faith* made me think of witchhunter type stuff. It reminded me of my favorite *Oblivion* quest mod called *Righteous Hitman*. So I decided to have a witchhunter type send you off to do witchhunter-y things.
  - *Blood and Faith* was originally a Baldur's Gate 1 and 2 mod. In Baldur's Gate 1 and 2, there are some heavy themes about whether or not you're a prisoner of fate/circumstance, or if you can somehow break out of that. This reminds me of themes of redemption/damnation, so I went with that. So we have a quest about a witchhunter type, with themes about damnation vs redemption.

Step 3: Thinking about Main Characters
- Who would be the leader of the Arcane Watch? I came up with a Dunmer named Azerain. I decided he'd be altruistic, selfless, and righteous. And then, for drama, I decided to make up an anti-Azerain.Clearly, this anti-Azerain had to be a Telvanni.

- *Something in the Water*–why would someone serve Peryite? I wanted to make him somewhat sympathetic, so I decided to give him a terminal illness. He's serving Peryite, because he made a deal. He'd make other people sick, and Peryite would cure him.

- *A Fowl Wish*–the birthday boy chicken's name is Horatio. He's a chicken, and doesn't need motivations beyond that. He just wants to vibe and have a nice birthday party.

- *Dead Gardens*–the obvious thing is that the main NPC is like a nice grandma or something who just wants to watch over people. But whenever I come up with something too obvious or too wholesome, instead, I ask myself: "You know what would be really fucked up?" If grandma didn't want the others protected and alive. What if she wanted them dead instead?

- The *Blood and Faith* NPC obviously must be a witchhunter type. But a righteous witchhunter type is kinda boring. So you know what would be really fucked up? If the witchhunter type was actually some kind of monster/bad guy themself. This is great too,

because it touches on the themes of damnation/redemption. Can the witchhunter be redeemed? They can certainly try!

Step 4: Thinking about Antagonists

- *Arcane Watch*–clearly, they want to limit Daedric/foul magic influences. Cool. So what do the Daedra/foul mages want? What are *they* doing that the Watch is responding to?

- *Something in the Water*–the main character is the antagonist, so there wasn't much thinking involved here.

- *Fowl Wish*–who would want to stop Horacio from having his birthday party, and why? "A Fowl Wish" sounds like someone doesn't want Horacio to wish for something.
  - Again, this was a Baldur's Gate mod originally, and whattya know, there's literally a "Wish" spell. But how did Horatio get a Candle of Wish?
    - A wizard did it, obviously. Oops. Must not be a competent wizard–an apprentice probably.
    - So Horatio has a Candle of Wish because of a wizard's apprentice. Obviously, the apprentice wants the candle back.

- *Dead Gardens*–who did the ghost/spirit/dead person originally save, and why did they change their mind? Why do they now want them dead? Clearly, they fucked up somewhere and became bad/evil.

- *Blood and Faith*–there's no shortage of monsters/bad guys for the witchhunter to send you after. But I still wanted to make the targets a bit sympathetic to touch the themes of redemption/damnation and let the Player have some RP opportunities

Step 5: Putting the Plot Together (quickly)

- *Arcane Watch*–some daedra/necromancer/foul mage did something bad/mysterious and it needs investigating. Repeat as needed to come up with more quests. Here's an example.
  - Who is the bad guy? A necromancer
  - What does he want? To raise the dead.
  - Where is he? Ald Velothi
  - Why does he want to raise the dead? Plot twist! He's just lonely
  - But why? I guess he's a lighthouse keeper.
  - Finally: We've got a lighthouse keeper who became a necromancer to raise the dead for company.

- *Something in the Water*–a cultist is poisoning the water supply in a desperate bid to cure himself. Do something about it.

- *Fowl Wish*–an apprentice accidentally gave a chicken a magic candle. Get that candle back, without anyone knowing it's magic.

- *Dead Gardens*–kill whoever the spirit saved originally, because those people are bad now. But you know what would be fucked up? If one of them was good, but the spirit wanted you to kill him anyway.

- *Blood and Faith*–some monster/bad guy is doing something. Kill them… or possibly redeem them. Repeat as needed to come up with more quests. To keep it from becoming stale and keep it nuanced, not everyone can be redeemed. Just some people. Here's an example:
    - Who is the bad guy? An ex-bandit
    - What does he want? To leave banditry behind
    - What's the problem/complication here? Well, you see, he did some violent crimes and maybe should be punished for them.
    - Finally: We have an ex-bandit who did bad things, but is seeking redemption. What do you do?

In order to flesh out the plot more, ask "But why though?" at every step of the way

Step 6: How the player does the quest
- *Arcane Watch*–fight your way through the lighthouse and below to the lighthouse keeper

- *Something in the Water*–find your way to the cultist and kill him

- *Fowl Wish*–break into the chicken's birthday party to find and return the magic candle

- *Dead Gardens*–find and kill the relevant people

- *Blood and Faith*–make a decision and follow through

Keep asking yourself "But how though?" *Fowl Wish* is a good example for this. *How* does the Player break into the party? What if they can't sneak or pick locks? What other ways are there? *How* does the player get the candle? Again, how many ways should there be?

Once I figure everything out, I like to write a Quest walk-through so I remember what I'm doing every step of the way.

Anyway, that's just how I do things. Hope it helps!