

SUNKEN ARCHIVE INVESTIGATION

Narrative & Quest Design Sample

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Original Indie Fantasy RPG • Active R&D • Portfolio Adaptation

CONTEXT

This sample is adapted from an unreleased indie RPG in active development. It is curated to demonstrate quest structure, gameplay to narrative transitions, companion conflict, environmental storytelling, combat integration, branching resolution, and implementation awareness without publishing the full internal game bible or later story outcomes.

Role & Scope

Field	Detail
Role	Narrative Designer / Quest Designer
Quest	LUST-MQ-002 • Story Quest / Archon Quest
Quest Chain	Echoes of Lustaria's Past
Authored / Planned	Quest concept, narrative structure, objectives, character beats, environmental narrative, moral choice, rewards, progression states, cutscene intent, and implementation notes.
Indie Production Lens	The document communicates the playable narrative clearly enough for a small multidisciplinary team while preserving the design reasoning behind the quest.

Portfolio Boundary

The sample intentionally omits the complete nation bible, later quest outcomes, unreleased story revelations, and unrelated R&D material. Where a production-ready scene would require finalized dialogue not present in the source, this document uses implementation direction rather than inventing canon dialogue.

Quest Summary

After securing Lustarian Nobility Passes at a high-society gala, Kanae sends Princess Excella and her companions beneath Yuta's dairy district to recover a High Elf banquet ledger. The archive contains geographical markers leading toward a lost ancient city, but its lower levels are overrun by Void-tainted Holstaurs and guarded by the vengeful spirit of a former High Elf Matriarch. Exposure to ancient runes triggers Excella's unstable berserk state before the party reaches the guardian. After the boss encounter, the player must choose whether to purify or bind the spirit, then recover the ledger and extract the coordinates.

Design Goals

Goal	Design Intent
Narrative	Advance the investigation into the lost High Elf civilization without resolving the larger mystery.
Character	Escalate concern about Excella's volatile Ancient Were-Sheep souls through a mandatory midquest event.
Companion	Turn Momiji and Vita's opposing approaches to the Matriarch into a player-facing moral choice.
Gameplay	Make Void corruption mechanically relevant by resisting standard Succubus charm and encouraging alternate party abilities.
Environment	Use the descent to transition from modern Lustarian industry into decayed High Elf architecture and overt Void corruption.
Progression	Recover the ledger, reveal coordinates, unlock the sealed passage, and continue the quest chain.

Player-Facing Objectives

- Navigate the bioengineered chambers beneath the dairy district.
- Fight mutated Holstaurs affected by Void corruption.
- Survive a berserk surge triggered by ancient magical runes.
- Confront the spirit of a former High Elf Matriarch.
- Choose to purify or bind the spirit.
- Retrieve the High Elf banquet ledger and extract the coordinates.

Golden Path

This section presents the intended critical path at a level useful for an indie team: what the player does, what narrative beat occurs, and what changes in the quest state.

01 • QUEST START	Speak with High Madam Kanae at the Moonlit Throne gala after completing the prerequisite quest and surviving the public noble challenge.
02 • ACCESS	Receive / use the Lustarian Nobility Pass to enter the restricted dairy district and archive route.
03 • DESCENT	Navigate modern bioengineered chambers while environmental storytelling establishes increasing Void contamination.
04 • COMBAT RULE	Fight feral Void-tainted Holstaurs. Charm-based solutions are deliberately unreliable.
05 • DISCOVERY	Reach older architecture and encounter ancient magical runes connected to Excella's Were-Sheep lineage.
06 • CHARACTER EVENT	Trigger the mandatory berserk-surge cutscene. Party members restrain and ground Excella.
07 • DEEP ARCHIVE	Continue into decayed High Elf ruins overtaken by purple and black Void corruption.
08 • BOSS	Confront the ancient spirit of a former High Elf Matriarch guarding the ledger.
09 • MORAL CHOICE	Momiji advocates binding the spirit for necromantic knowledge; Vita advocates purification and rest.
10 • PAYOFF	Recover the High Elf banquet ledger and extract the coordinates.

11 • RETURN	Return to Selphina / Kanae. Selphina explicitly checks on Excella's mental state.
12 • UNLOCK	Open the sealed passage toward the ancient city outskirts and unlock Beneath the Crimson Veil.

PACING INTENT

The critical path alternates social setup, traversal, combat, discovery, a forced character interruption, boss combat, player choice, and debrief. The goal is to keep exposition attached to changing player activity rather than clustering it into a single dialogue-heavy block.

Playable Treatment • Quest Start

LOCATION • YUTA / THE MOONLIT THRONE / HIGH-SOCIETY GALA

Prerequisite: Welcome to Yuta—The Entertainment City completed; public noble challenge survived.

Quest Start: Kanae

Kanae tasks Excella with retrieving a specific High Elf banquet ledger from a sunken archive beneath the dairy district. The ledger contains geographical markers that may lead to the lost ancient city.

QUEST PROVIDED ITEM

Lustarian Nobility Pass — grants access to the restricted dairy district and archive route.

QUEST UPDATE

Travel to the dairy district's sunken archive and locate the High Elf banquet ledger.

Production / Implementation Notes

- QUEST: Gate the start behind the prerequisite quest and public challenge state.
- WORLD: The Nobility Pass functions as the fiction-facing explanation for access to the restricted district.
- LEVEL: The route should move from the public-facing entertainment city into increasingly restricted industrial spaces before the underground descent.
- NARRATIVE: Keep the lost-city objective clear, but do not reveal the later contents or full significance of the ancient site.

Source Quest Progress Line

IN-DUNGEON PROGRESS TEXT

"The air in these bioengineered chambers is thick with Void corruption. Keep your guard up—the Holstaurs here are completely feral. We need to find that ledger before the corruption destroys the archive entirely."

Playable Treatment • Archive Descent

GAMEPLAY • MODERN INDUSTRIAL LAYER

Player control resumes in the bioengineered chambers used by modern Succubus agricultural industries. The first spaces should still read as functioning contemporary infrastructure, but contamination increases as the player moves downward.

GAMEPLAY • FIRST VOID-TAINTED ENCOUNTER

The party encounters feral Void-tainted Holstaurs. These enemies have extremely high resistance to standard charm magic.

Narrative → System Integration

Layer	Implementation
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World Rule	Void entities are immune or highly resistant to Succubus charm.
Encounter Rule	Charm-centric strategies become unreliable against the dungeon's corrupted enemies.
Player Adaptation	The source calls for heavier reliance on Excella's vector manipulation and Momiji's necromancy; the internal note also references Haruka's celestial fire for applicable party configurations.
Narrative Payoff	The player experiences the Void as a mechanical threat rather than receiving the danger only through exposition.

Conditional / Reactive VO Opportunities

The source does not provide finalized lines for these triggers, so the portfolio sample identifies the implementation opportunities without inventing canon dialogue:

- First failed charm attempt against a Void-tainted enemy.
- First defeat of a corrupted Holstaur.
- First visible transition from modern construction to High Elf ruins.
- Optional examination of Void growth or ancient runes.
- Party reminder if the player moves away from the critical archive route.

INDIE PIPELINE NOTE

For a small team, these callouts can live in the same quest treatment as the golden path until dialogue, scripting, audio, and level implementation are split into separate task documents.

Playable Treatment • Berserk Surge

TRIGGER • ANCIENT RUNE CHAMBER

Midway through the dungeon, Excella views ancient magical runes related to her Were-Sheep lineage. The encounter triggers a mandatory dramatic cutscene before the boss fight.

CINEMATIC BEAT

Excella's eyes dilate as she attempts to resist a violent berserk surge. Her party members must physically restrain and ground her until she regains control.

Narrative Function

- Turns the investigation inward by making Excella herself an immediate source of danger.
- Connects the archive discovery to Excella's bloodline rather than treating the ruins as detached lore.
- Escalates the instability that Selphina will address during the postquest debrief.
- Places a vulnerable character beat immediately before the guardian confrontation.

Cross-Discipline Callouts

Discipline	Need
QUEST	Trigger once when the player reaches the designated rune chamber / threshold.
CINEMATIC	Show the physical onset of the surge and the party restraining / grounding Excella.
VFX	Ancient rune response and mana escalation should visually distinguish the event from ordinary environmental magic.
AUDIO	Use a rising magical cue to signal the loss of control before the scene fully interrupts gameplay.

NARRATIVE	Do not resolve the underlying condition here. The event should increase concern and carry into Selphina's postquest dialogue.
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CHARACTER BASIS

Excella's character material establishes that she fears a dangerous berserk state tied to ancient souls sealed within her, and that these episodes threaten both her and people she cares about. The quest uses that established vulnerability as an active gameplay-story beat.

Environmental Narrative Design

The dungeon is structured as visual archaeology. The deeper the player travels, the more the environment shifts from present day Lustarian infrastructure toward decayed High Elf architecture and finally overt Void corruption.

Environment Stage	Narrative Function
Zone A: Modern Industrial Layer	Bioengineered chambers used by modern Succubus agricultural industries.
Zone B: Transitional Descent	Modern infrastructure gives way to older construction and increasing contamination.
Zone C: High Elf Archive	Ancient architecture becomes dominant as the player reaches the historical core.
Zone D: Void Corruption	Purple and black corruption overtakes the ruins and visually signals danger.
Boss Chamber	The conflict between ancient High Elf legacy and modern Succubus history culminates in the Matriarch encounter.

Environmental Storytelling Intent

The player physically moves backward through Lustaria's history as the quest moves downward. The environment reveals the relationship between present day industry, the older High Elf civilization, and the corruption now consuming both.

Playable Treatment • Guardian & Moral Choice

BOSS • ANCIENT SPIRIT OF A FORMER HIGH ELF MATRIARCH

The guardian is a vengeful spirit who despises the modern Succubus transformation and tests Excella's worth before the party can claim the ledger.

POST-BOSS CHOICE

After the encounter, the party must decide how to resolve the Matriarch's spirit. The source establishes two companion positions and two affinity outcomes.

Player Choice	Advocate	Position	Supported State Change
Purify the Spirit	Vita	Lay the Matriarch's anger to rest.	+ Affinity with Vita
Bind the Spirit	Momiji	Bind the spirit to extract necromantic knowledge.	+ Affinity with Momiji

Why the Choice Works

- It grows from an existing disagreement between companions rather than appearing as an isolated morality prompt.
- It forces the player to decide between release and preservation / extraction of dangerous knowledge.
- It changes companion affinity and can be stored as a persistent narrative state.

- It occurs after combat, reframing the guardian from enemy target into a historical person whose fate must be decided.

Dialogue Implementation

The internal quest material defines Momiji and Vita's positions but does not contain finalized scene dialogue. A public portfolio version should therefore either include a separately authored dialogue excerpt or leave the scene at this treatment level rather than presenting invented lines as shipped canon.

Playable Treatment • Resolution & Follow-Through

QUEST ITEM ACQUIRED

High Elf Banquet Ledger

QUEST COMPLETION TEXT

COMPLETION

"The ledger is secured. We now have the coordinates to the sealed passage leading directly to the lost High Elf laboratories."

WORLD STATE CHANGE

Unlock the sealed passage to the ancient High Elf city outskirts, reveal the path toward Avani's Cradle, and unlock Beneath the Crimson Veil.

POSTQUEST CHARACTER FOLLOWUP

Selphina's postquest dialogue should explicitly check on Excella's mental state and express growing concern about the volatility of her Ancient Were-Sheep souls as the party moves closer to Avani's Cradle.

Reactive State Opportunities

These are supported by the quest structure and can be implemented as dialogue conditions or state checks:

- Spirit resolution = Purified or Bound.
- Vita affinity adjustment if purified.
- Momiji affinity adjustment if bound.
- High Elf banquet ledger acquired.
- Sealed passage / next dungeon unlocked.
- Postquest mental-state followup available after the berserk event.

Rewards & Progression

Field	Detail
Quest Reward	High Elf Banquet Ledger
Currency	8,000 Grazia / Gold
EXP	14,500 EXP
Reputation	+500 Lorewalkers; +200 Succubus Council
Difficulty	Hard at level 25; Medium at level 30
Map	Yuta Underground → Sunken Archive, Levels 1 and 2
Next Quest	The Succubus Council's Decree

Environmental Narrative Design

The dungeon functions as visual archaeology. The deeper the player travels, the more the environment shifts away from modern Lustarian infrastructure and toward the civilization beneath it.

Stage	Visual / Spatial Direction	Narrative Function
A • Modern Layer	High-tech bioengineered chambers used by modern Succubus industry.	Establish the present-day civilization.
B • Transitional Descent	Contamination increases as contemporary infrastructure gives way to older construction.	Signal that the player is moving beneath the public-facing nation.
C • High Elf Archive	Decayed ancient High Elf architecture becomes dominant.	Reveal the buried historical layer tied to the ledger and Excella's investigation.
D • Void Corruption	Purple and black Void corruption overtakes the ruins.	Make the external threat increasingly visible and hostile.
E • Guardian Chamber	Ancient legacy and present corruption converge around the Matriarch.	Stage the historical conflict as the quest climax.

ENVIRONMENTAL STORYTELLING INTENT

The player physically moves backward through Lustaria's history as the quest moves downward: modern industry → buried High Elf civilization → Void-tainted historical core. This lets level progression carry part of the exposition.

Small-Team Production Value

This environmental progression gives narrative, level design, environment art, VFX, audio, and encounter design a shared target without requiring separate long-form documents for every discipline during early indie production.

Appendix • Beat Sheet & Implementation Snapshot

Beat	Player Action	Narrative Function	Gameplay Function
01	Speak with Kanae	Establish ledger and lost-city stakes	Quest activation
02	Enter restricted district	Move beneath Lustaria's public face	Exploration
03	Fight corrupted enemies	Demonstrate Void threat	Combat adaptation
04	Inspect ancient runes	Connect ruins to Excella's lineage	Environmental storytelling
05	Berserk surge	Escalate character instability	Mandatory cinematic
06	Enter deep archive	Reveal older High Elf layer	Environment transition
07	Confront Matriarch	Personify historical resentment	Boss encounter
08	Purify or bind	Externalize companion disagreement	Branching choice
09	Recover ledger	Deliver investigation payoff	Quest item
10	Return and debrief	Carry character consequence forward	Quest chain transition

What This Sample Demonstrates

- Quest structure and pacing for an RPG critical path.
- Gameplay-to-narrative transitions rather than dialogue in isolation.
- Narrative rules expressed through combat behavior.
- Character vulnerability embedded in progression.
- Companion-driven moral choice and affinity states.
- Environmental storytelling tied to level progression.
- Implementation awareness suitable for a small multidisciplinary indie team.
- Clear separation between supported canon content and portfolio-facing presentation.

Implementation Snapshot

Implementation Field	Portfolio Summary
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Prerequisite	Complete "Welcome to Yuta: The Entertainment City" and survive the public noble challenge.
Required Party	Excella, Momiji, and Vita for the specific spirit choice dialogue.
Quest Item	High Elf Banquet Ledger
World Unlock	Opens access to "Beneath the Crimson Veil" and reveals the path toward Avani's Cradle.
Affinity States	Purify: Vita affinity. Bind: Momiji affinity.
Difficulty	Hard at level 25, Medium at level 30.
Map References	Yuta Underground to Sunken Archive, Levels 1 and 2.
Next Quest	The Succubus Council's Decree

Suggested Persistent Narrative States

The source explicitly supports tracking the spirit resolution and companion affinity outcome. A production implementation could represent these as state flags, though exact variable names are engine dependent.

- Spirit resolution: Purified or Bound
- Vita affinity adjustment
- Momiji affinity adjustment
- High Elf banquet ledger acquired
- Next dungeon access unlocked

What This Sample Demonstrates

- Quest structure and pacing
- Narrative integration with combat mechanics
- Companion driven moral choice
- Environmental storytelling
- Quest chain continuity
- Character development through gameplay
- Designer facing documentation and implementation awareness

PUBLIC R&D DISCLOSURE

This portfolio case study is a curated adaptation of active development material. It intentionally omits the complete game bible, later story outcomes, unreleased revelations, and unrelated production documents.