

This is a cutscene sample for an urban fantasy RPG, where powerful mages walk the streets and organized crime is rampant. It takes place early on in the game, some time after the player gets acclimated with the controls. The player character is AUDEN, a mage involved with criminal elements. The choices made at character creation can determine AUDEN's initial motivations.

**** = denotes dialogue choice that moves the conversation forward***

CONTEXT:

After arriving in Aura City and while dealing with a greedy underboss of the notorious Odra Snakes gang, AUDEN found information regarding an upcoming heist on an Odra Snake lieutenant. The heist promises to pay well, and AUDEN hopes to investigate. They've arrived at the meeting place where they'll learn about the heist, where the heist leader – someone who goes by ESPER – is said to be.

INT. ZAP'S BARCADE – NIGHT

It's a weekend night, and while normally a combination bar-and-arcade would be alive with people, Zap's is strangely empty. A few arcade cabinets and pinball machines light up and play music, but most are silent and devoid of activity. AUDEN steps inside and looks around. Wasn't this the place to meet Esper? Was the information wrong? They continue to search for signs of life, and move toward the distant sound of someone on an arcade machine.

A woman stands in front of a SNAKES N' GORGONS cabinet, calmly pressing buttons and moving the joystick. When AUDEN gets close enough, the woman turns with just as much calm precision, the game all but forgotten.

AUDEN: Esper, huh.

ESPER?: Heard you were in town.

AUDEN: What are you doing here, Liv?

ESPER is LIV RAVEROOK, an expert on all forms of black magic and information acquisition. She walks to the bar, sits on a stool. Her fingers SNAP, and a DARK SPIRIT, a ghost-like figure, emerges behind the bar and begins to fix her a drink.

LIV: Working. What are you doing here?

AUDEN: Working.

LIV: Want a drink?

Dialogue options appear:

***A1:** Sure. Whatever you're having.

***B1:** I'm not here for that.

***BRANCH A1:** Sure Whatever you're having.

AUDEN sits on the stool next to her.

AUDEN: Sure. Whatever you're having.

LIV holds up two fingers to the SPIRIT, who continues to make the drink.

Exit branching. Go to Branches Converge.

***BRANCH B1:** I'm not here for that.

AUDEN sits on the stool next to her.

AUDEN: I'm not here for that.

LIV shrugs.

LIV: Suit yourself.

Exit branching. Go to Branches Converge.

Branches Converge

AUDEN: You sure this place is safe?

LIV: You wouldn't have made it past the prize counter if I didn't want you here.

AUDEN: So you knew I was coming.

LIV'S drink slides over to her. If the player chose to get a drink, one slides in front of AUDEN as well. The DARK SPIRIT dissipates and disappears.

LIV: I knew you were in Aura City the second you stepped off the *Chrysanthemum*. Word travels fast around here. How was the trip?

AUDEN: [shrugs] Big boats were never my thing.

Dialogue options appear:

A2: So you heard about the Odra Snakes?

B2: You're keeping tabs on me.

***C2:** What about the job? Know anything about that?

BRANCH A2: So you heard about the Odra Snakes?

AUDEN: So you heard about the Odra Snakes, then?

Her response changes depending on if the player chose to Kill or Spare Cassidy.

LIV [Kill]: Underboss Cassidy was a right asshole. Wasting him was the best thing you could've done.

LIV [Spare]: Underboss Cassidy was a right asshole. Running him out of town wouldn't have been my choice, but at least he's out of the way.

Branch A ends, back to choices B or C.

BRANCH B2: You're keeping tabs on me.

AUDEN: You're keeping tabs on me.

LIV: I know what every single mage within the city limits is doing at all times. It's how I make my money. Don't think you're so special.

Branch B ends, back to choices B or C.

***BRANCH C2: What about the job? Know anything about that?**

Exit branching.

AUDEN: What about the job? Know anything about that?

LIV takes a drink.

LIV: You killed the guy I wanted for this job. Would've preferred him, but I suppose you'll do nicely. Job's not for me, if you're wondering. I'm just the intermediary.

AUDEN: That doesn't answer my question.

LIV: Doesn't work like that. The folks who hired me want to make sure everyone on this job can actually do it. You've got to bring them a few things before they can give you the full details. Prove your loyalty, and such. Even on my word alone, all of you have to put the work in.

Dialogue options appear:

A3: Why the secrecy?

B3: You can tell me. [Prerequisites: Charming trait]

C3: This is a team job, then.

***D3:** What do I need?

BRANCH A3: Why the secrecy?

AUDEN: Why all the secrecy? Can only guess it's something big.

LIV: I always admired your ability to perceive the obvious. If the specifics got out to the wrong people, you, me, and anybody who's ever thought about robbing a liquor store will find themselves melted in etheric fire and poured down a drain.

Branch A3 ends. Back to B3, C3, or D3.

BRANCH B3: You can tell me. [Prerequisites: Charming trait]

AUDEN: You can tell me, Liv. Think I can't keep a secret?

LIV [If the player does not have Charm trait]: Sorry. That pretty face isn't saving you this time. Prove yourself to them and then we'll talk. Not before.

LIV [If the player has the Charm trait]: Auden, you know I should be charging you for this sort of thing. A big charge, no friendly discount. [BIG SIGH] Alright, fine: you're going to rob a morgue.

AUDEN: So now I'm a graverobber?

LIV: All I can say about it, for the time being. Seriously, don't press me any further. It'll be a dangerous job, but it's going to pay well.

Branch B3 ends. Back to A3, C3, or D3.

BRANCH C3: This is a team job, then.

AUDEN: This is a team job, then. You make it sound like I'm not doing this alone.

LIV: This one needs a group, yes. A few others besides you have already been contacted. You're going to need to play nice on this one. I trust you can do that.

AUDEN: What's my role in this?

LIV: Oh, I'd ruin the fun if I told you now.

Branch C3 ends. Back to A3, B3, or D3.

***BRANCH D3: What do I need?**

Exit branching.

AUDEN: What exactly do I need? How do I 'prove' myself?

LIV: They want you to grab some preliminary things that we'll need. For one, an ambulance. For another, an EMT ID. Don't worry if the person doesn't look like you. We have glamour spells for that.

AUDEN: Anything else?

LIV: A lot of Dust. Few kilos, in fact.

AUDEN: Dust? We planning on breaking into a vault or something? In the hands of a rookie that stuff'll turn you into a living bomb.

LIV: Don't be hyperbolic. It enhances your magic, and not even by that much. We just need enough in case things go wrong and we have to blow our way out, not that they will. I'll send all the relevant info about where to find this stuff to your phone. You bring everything we need – and you do it fast – and we can get started on the next phase.

Dialogue options appear:

A4: How've you been, Liv?

***B4:** Thanks for the info.

BRANCH A4: How've you been, Liv?

AUDEN: Works for me... how are you? You look good.

LIV: [laughs] Business done, huh. Trying to reminisce?

AUDEN: I guess. I haven't seen you since...

Time stops. Two menu options appear above LIV's head:

A.2: In a splash of purple smoke, an image shows AUDEN pointing to the laptop screen that LIV is typing away on. The following text appears: [Liv worked with you on many jobs before this one; your last job with her went bad and you both had to go into hiding]

B.2: In a splash of orange smoke, an image of AUDEN and LIV walking down the street appears. They smile at each other and grasp hands. The following text appears: [Liv is an ex-girlfriend; your relationship was energetic but fleeting]

BRANCH A4.2: [Liv worked with you on many jobs before this one; your last job with her went bad and you both had to go into hiding]

AUDEN:...since that last job. The, uh... well, you know the one.

LIV: You mean the one where I screwed up?

AUDEN: I wasn't going to say that.

LIV: You can, if you want to. I had bad info, yes. And as an information broker, that's bad business on my end. [beat] I don't beat myself up about it. What happened, happened. But I tightened that shit up since then. Closed all the leaks, as it were. Now, I'm better at what I do. I'm the best info broker in Aura City, and I'm not saying that to brag. It's... just a matter of fact.

Still. I think about that night often. Lost a lot of good folks on that job.

AUDEN: It wasn't your fault.

LIV: (beat) Yeah.

She takes a drink.

BRANCH B4.2: [Liv is an ex-girlfriend; your relationship was energetic but fleeting]

AUDEN:...since, well, y'know.

LIV: You can say it. Since we broke up. I look back on that, and all I can think about is how young we were. How *stupid* we were. Way out of our depth, I think. I don't date much these days. It's hard to, in *this* city, when you already know everything about a person before they even ask for your number. It's okay. I like focusing on my work. Keeps me grounded. How about you?

AUDEN: Just got to the city myself. Haven't really had the chance to meet anybody that doesn't want to shoot me or to pay me to do something illegal.

LIV: Our line of work does not mix well with the real world.

AUDEN: No it does not.

If the player had requested a drink, AUDEN and LIV clink glasses.

A beat.

LIV: You look good too, by the way.

***BRANCH B4:** Thanks for the info.

AUDEN gets up from the stool.

AUDEN: Thanks for the information, Liv. I'll see what I can do about those requests.

LIV: Don't thank me yet. The people that want this job done are not ones to mess around with. They'll pay you well, but if you don't want to be wrapped up in some complicated shit then now's your chance to walk away. Could get ugly.

AUDEN: I'll think about it.

LIV: You do that. And don't hesitate to contact me if you want something that's a bit more straightforward. I have people all over the city looking for someone with your skills.

LIV stands from the stool. She walks back over to SNAKES N' GORGONS cabinet. She shoves a quarter into the slot. The game's music starts up and she begins to play.

LIV (looking at the game): I'll be seeing you real soon, Auden.

AUDEN nods, then leaves her to her game.

END SCENE