

Tab 1

**DESCRIPTION:** These are three excerpts from a Choose Your Own Adventure mission that I've written as fanfiction for the *Dragon Age* universe following the release of *DA: The Veilguard* in 2024. Location and character names have been changed, and some passages briefly edited, for this stand-alone sample.

This story was developed with these core objectives:

- To blend the second-person, present-tense voice used in popular CRPGs (Disco Elysium, Balder's Gate 3) with the setting and story of the *Dragon Age* games
- To explore how a companion character with limited screen time (Lucanis, "the Assassin,") might benefit from additional mission content that is tied closely to canonical events and the world setting
- To replicate the flow of tension and release through balancing expositional moments with gameplay
- Spoilers Ahead - And to foreshadow or hint at important events:
  - The protagonist Rook's unaddressed memory loss surrounding the death of their mentor (Varric, "Warwic")
  - The companion Lucanis' history as a survivor of physical and mental abuse
  - The companion Lucanis' inexperience with romantic relationships
- The writing follows some small stylistic nods from *Fallen London* by Failbetter Games.

---

## EXCERPT I

### 1.0 - Prologue: Birds on a Wire

In the twilight hours, wind blankets the harbor in gauze-grey fog. But the city of Riva does not sleep. Instead, it hums. Like the swell rising from the orchestra pit as the house lights go down. The air vibrates with cricket-song and the throaty caws of birds. The brassy din of street vendors. The low toll of bells.

This tuneless reverberation carries through the city: street markets, cafes, theaters, bistros. Into private opera boxes where politicians conspire, and dim back alleys where assassins lie in wait.

It is indiscriminate. From grand street blocks of pewter and travertine to the tangles of crude pinewood barricades. The rhythm of the city thrums through the fine web of canals - a defiant heartbeat.

On the edge of the city, the Numinous Spire casino sits on the dark water of the harbor. A fat jewelry box on a black lacquered vanity.

Two cloaked figures climb atop a high balcony railing and step off the ledge. One after the other.

They sail along a steel cable across the narrow waterway. Against the light of a full moon, they dive, just two drops of dew gliding down spidersilk.

[\[Click to CONTINUE to 2.0\]](#)

---

## 2.0 - A Smooth Landing

Wind roars in your ears.

Riva is a dim blur of cobbles and waterways. Below you, tableaux of nightlife fly past in miniature. Lit windows seem to strobe as you rush by - flickering afterimages that burn onto the insides of your eyelids.

A cresting wave of rooftops rushes towards you. You hold your breath.

It's time to let go.

The trolley handles slip through your fingers as you drop from the zipline cable. You land on the roof with a buoyant *whoop!* as the soles of your boots find purchase.

Your companion, the Assassin, lands a moment later - in neat, practiced silence. He does not whoop. He has long forgotten how.

Like a pair of stray cats, you amble along the ridge of the steeped slate roof. Loose shingles plink under your instep. A gloved hand ghosts the empty space between your shoulder blades, prepared to steady you, if need be.

Still, you manage to keep your footing. Good. Warwic always said you were quick on your feet.

A sudden breeze ripples through both of your cloaks. Pithy top notes of cypress - hints of lake algae. Leather and clove tea and damp stone.

The Assassin straightens, head skyward, soaking in the night. The first real breath he's taken in hours.

[\[Click to CONTINUE to 3.0.\]](#)

---

## 3.0 - Risks

You knew it was a risk: going back to the Spire, the seat of the Guild of Daggers, in his current state. It would only have taken a moment. Just one slip. If he were to lose control, well...

Letting a demon out in a hall of assassins could have gone exquisitely sideways.

Slate pebbles plop into the canal below as your foot skims the edge of the rooftop. Anxiety pricks at the nerve-endings in your hands as you teeter to regain your balance.

The Assassin gives you a brief, chiding glance: *Bad time to be lost in thought.*

You exhale shakily. "So, ready to head back?"

Your companion squares his shoulders as your eyes meet. His posture is pin-straight, disciplined, but something in him folds inward-small, hidden, brittle in ways he cannot name. An unspoken apology tugs at his mouth.

"Almost." The Assassin stares intently. "I had plans for one last stop."

While he adds up the mounting debts he already owes you... he hopes you'll agree to this.

Affable: "Let's go then." [\[Continue to 3.1.\]](#)

Flirtatious: "Like. . . a date?" [\[Continue to 3.2.\]](#)

Stoic: "It's late." [\[Continue to 3.3.\]](#)

---

### 3.1 - "Let's go then."

While you consider, you find yourself shifting your weight - over one foot, then the other, then back. A little rooftop shuffle.

As long as you can remember, it has always been easier to keep moving. Besides, the night is still young.

"All right." The answer he was hoping for, delivered by you with a benevolent shrug. The words came easily. Whether because this is who you are, or because he is the one asking, who can say?

You tilt your head in towards his. The same way you would to share a secret. The cool wind has whipped both of your faces red.

"So, what's the plan?"

[\[Click to CONTINUE to 4.0.\]](#)

---

### 3.2 - "Like. . . a date?"

"If you're inviting me out for a drink, well, I wouldn't say no."

You bite down on the inside of your cheek as the Assassin's ears go pink. He stares intently at the toe box of his boot and tries to suppress a smile. Unsuccessfully.

"I'll have you know, the Waterfront has a very good breakfast roast," he tuts, before adding, "but I have different plans."

Of course he does.

You smooth your hair in mock indifference. "Why don't you fill me in, then?"

[\[Click to CONTINUE to 4.0.\]](#)

---

### 3.3 - “It’s late.”

The night is already half-spent. You’re unable to fight the weariness from seeping into your voice as you protest:

“It’s well past midnight. What’s still open at this hour?”

“Not much,” he admits, stirring his hands in his pockets. “Which is why I have this key.”

The Assassin produces a bright bit of metal with a small flourish. Its gleaming, gapped teeth smile back at you from the palm of his gloved hand.

Whatever it is, the errand is an inconvenience. It’s late and the promise of a warm bed pulls you towards home. But curiosity tugs harder.

Damn him - he knows it too. The Assassin almost smirks.

You throw your hands up in concession. “All right, all right. I’m listening.”

[\[Click to CONTINUE to 4.0.\]](#)

---

### 4.0 - The Ask

The Assassin nods by way of a thank-you.

“I still need to pay my respects. The cemetery isn’t far from here.”

His wary eyes meet yours, anticipating a response. A change of heart, perhaps? Or a quick remark about assassins and death - a cruel joke at his expense.

He waits. Steeling himself for a sharp blow to the ribs that doesn’t come.

Everyone dies.

*Isn’t that enough?*

You wouldn’t add to that. That’s not who you are. It’s why Warwic picked you to lead. Whatever misery the Assassin expects you to deliver, you don’t.

You nod back in solidarity. “Lead on.”

It’s all the permission he needs. He sets off without a backwards glance, dropping down from the rooftop in a liquid swirl of leather. Trusting you’ll follow him down into the dark.

“This way.”

[\[Click to CONTINUE to 5.0.\]](#)

---

## 5.0 - Resting Places

The courtyard is a small study in gothic opulence. High walls encase the garden in an embrace of intricate stonework. In alcoves, soft curtains of ivy drape from grids of bone-white lattice. Manicured hedges frame walkways paved in smooth basalt tile.

In these ways, it could have been any other Rivan courtyard - if not for the grave niches that ran the length of the courtyard's walls and snaked around free standing columns.

Plaques of darkened iron cover many of the niches. Those left vacant resemble pigeonholes; small, narrow shafts where a bird might return home to roost.

You catch the soft metallic click of the gate as the Assassin draws it shut behind him.

"So," you clear your throat uncomfortably, "which ones belong to your family?"

The Assassin narrows his eyes placidly as he reads your expression. "All of them."

[end of Excerpt 1]

---

## EXCERPT 2

After discovering the Assassin's cousin has been drunkenly loitering at the family grave, the Player can choose to challenge the Assassin's casual dismissal of his family member's behavior.

## 8.0 - Pairs Well With Loss

With lingering reluctance, the Assassin steps off the path, wading through manicured flower beds to reach you.

Kneeling beside you, he brushes away the loose topsoil until he has unearthed a dozen bottles of black glass from their shallow grave. The Assassin turns a bottle over in his hands, tracing his thumb over the weathered label. Lost in thought.

Crouched low under the hedges, the seconds stretch on in silence.

Your legs tingle in peevish protest. You shift uncomfortably. "You don't seem all that surprised," you press, eyeing the empty wine bottles with disdain.

"Iago has always been like this." There's an unmistakable fondness tucked into the way he says it. The Assassin shrugs. "His indulgences rarely hurt anyone but himself."

You rise to stand, wiping your hands off on your trousers. "It sounds like you're making excuses for him."

"Look." There is a gentle scolding cradled in that syllable. He puts the filthy bottle down.

The Assassin shakes his head knowingly and looks up at you. Still crouching over the balls of his feet, he laces his gloved fingers together in front of him, balancing his elbows on his knees.

Suddenly, you feel very small. Like a child being told their aging pet has gone to live on a farm. Your stomach drops and your mouth goes bone-dry.

He weighs the words carefully. “There is no shame in grief. Better to face it than to let it poison you slowly.” The Assassin surveys you, looking for...something. A crack in the facade. “Everyone deals with loss,” he concludes softly, “One way or another.”

[end of Excerpt 2]

---

## EXCERPT 3

After sharing some vulnerabilities with the Player, the Assassin retreats to a withdrawn state. If the Player has chosen to express Romantic interest through previous choices, this option is available.

11.0 - Choice: *Comfort him.*

Wordlessly, you reach over to the Assassin and give his shoulder a reassuring squeeze. Through the protective padding of his leathers, you can feel his breath catch. His dagger hand twitches idly at his side. Then he reaches up and rests his hand over yours with a small press of warmth.

A pale blush has crept into the Rivan sky and the braziers have mostly burned down to embers - it's nearing dawn.

With great effort, the Assassin turns his head away from the wall of graves to face you. Dark shadows cling to the hollows of his eyes as they trace a woeful line from your brow to your chin.

Light fog rolls in off the canals. Bathed in the half-light of early morning, everything here has taken on the hazy glow of a dream. You both stand there, breathless and dizzy and very still.

Something flutters in the space between your lungs.

[end of Excerpt 3]