

Doug Van Horne Writing Samples

Character Banter

Banter excerpts from an Interactive Fiction game set in the time of the Greek gods. The player is a modest young woman from a farm who wakes in Athens with amnesia. Her only ally is a young orphan girl, and lying beside her in the dirt is a fantastic sword crafted for the gods.

Sword Scene

Girl: Why would a shepherd possess a sword of such greatness?

Narrator: Your gaze fell upon the sword on the ground at your feet. A weapon without equal.

Narrator: Yes, {Player}, I wondered the same thing for so long. How did your gentle hands find the sword of a god?

Narrator: This was as much a sword as an undebatable argument for peace. Pure intimidation in the shape of a weapon. Anyone facing off against the warrior wielding this sword was asking to die.

Narrator: It was light as a feather and felt like an extension of your arm. Somehow radiating into your bones, the energy from the sword made you think of the chaos of an angry sun and the steel of a thousand anvils.

Girl: Can I hold it?

{Player}: Wait, who are you? What's your name?

Girl: ...Alina.

Alina: But I hate my name. It's dreadful.

{Player}: Dreadful? I think it's beautiful. It means "light".

{Player}: Well, my dear Alina, this weapon is far too dangerous for a child. I'm not even sure I should hold onto it... I'm rather certain it belongs to someone else.

Alina: Well, it's yours now. You found it. The universe wants you to have it.

Narrator: Oh, Alina, our innocent little thief. Only you could make a crime sound precious.

Adonis Intro

Adonis: Faces sear into my mind, and you I have seen before. Always the little one smiling in the shadows. Ready for a bit of mischief.

Narrator: He knelt before Alina and flashed a bright grin her way.

Adonis: A little mischief never hurt anyone, now, did it?

Alina: Nope. Never.

Narrator: He winked, then stood back up, eyes trained on you.

Adonis: But you...

Narrator: After his eyes followed the curve of your cheekbones, they got lost looking deep into your eyes for a moment too long.

Adonis: ...you, I would remember. New to our fair city?

{Player}: It seems so.

Adonis: What brings you to Athens?

{Player}: Something tells me suddenly waking up in Athens is my penance for some past indiscretions.

Adonis: You don't recall traveling here?

{Player}: Asleep in bed and when the morning sun found my face, I'm here. In Athens. Lying on the ground beneath Athena's enormous statue feet.

Narrator: He furrowed his brow for a moment and glanced down at Alina.

Alina: I know the woke up here part is true. Saw it with my own eyes.

Adonis: Quite the mystery. Are you the type of person who deserves penance?

{Player}: I'm simply a lost soul aching for passage back home.

Adonis: So, lost far from home. I assume you two are not related.

{Player}: Well, we have the same sense of humor. Does that count?

Alina: That counts.

Narrator: Adonis spied the sword's hilt protruding behind your shoulder and bent around you to get a better look at it.

Adonis: The artisan of your blade is of the highest skill. Where does one get a weapon of such brilliance?

{Player}: I'm a legendary warrior. Surprising you haven't heard of me.

Adonis: Oh, is that so? I love legends. Tell me one of yours.

{Player}: Well...I'm certain it would bore you.

Adonis: Try me.

{Player}: So...there's the... the time I...uh...slayed the...Minotaur.

Adonis: Oh, the Minotaur! Yes, of course. And how did you escape its maze after you slayed it so heroically?

{Player}: I'm...well, I don't want to boast...but I'm rather skilled at mazes.

Adonis: Interesting. See, our King - King Theseus - his wits conjured a solution of using string. He laid a path of thread on his journey into the maze, then followed it back out after killing the Minotaur.

Adonis: The *one and only* Minotaur.

{Player}: That Minotaur must have had a brother.

Alina: She raises sheep.

{Player}: Alina!

Alina: She found the sword today.

Adonis: There it is.

Alina: You can't lie to Adonis!

{Player}: Not with you around, apparently!

Eris (The Goddess of Discord) Intro

Narrator: You walked over toward Eris, whose eyes were locked on yours. She hopped down off the roof. The two-story fall could shatter the bones of any mortal, but Eris took it in stride.

{Player}: Hasn't anyone told you it's impolite to stare?

Eris: Numerous times.

{Player}: You must understand how unnerving the relentless eyes of a stranger can be.

Eris: You want to escape this madness? This commoner scene is rather...common.

Narrator: Damn you, Eris. We demand you distance yourself from the situation, and your first instinct is to sprinkle in a dose of chaos.

{Player}: We just met. You can't be serious.

Eris: I never jest about fun.

{Player}: Sorry, but this commoner needs to stay here and sort a few things out.

Eris: Oh, you're far more than that. You just haven't realized it yet.

Eris: You possess a natural...charm.

{Player}: Charm? Sure. I'm stranded far from home, wearing what feels like someone else's discarded rags and carrying a sword designed to split a statue in two. Yes, the allure is rather obvious.

Eris: This "life" is beneath you. Let me take you away.

Narrator: Eris steps dangerously close. Almost face-to-face with a playful grin. She smelled of citrus, and that sting felt pleasant.

{Player}: Can you back up a little? You're getting clinginess all over my nice new sword.

Eris: Clever. I like that. But it's not yours.

{Player}: How would you know?

Eris: It's like watching a dove try to carry an anvil.

{Player}: You know its owner, don't you?

Eris: Maybe.

{Player}: Who does it belong to?

Eris: Let's just say I wouldn't even mess with them.

Eris: *(laughing)* What am I saying? Of course I would. But you... you wouldn't dare.

{Player}: You're not going to tell me, are you?

Eris: Aren't mysteries more fun than the truth?

{Player}: Depends on the truth.

Narrator: Boldly, Eris reached out her hand and rested it against your cheek. You didn't even flinch.

{Player}: Why am I not afraid of you?

Eris: No one fears fun.