

# [PDF] Dragon Age: Asunder

## David Gaider - pdf download free book

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### Books Details:

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### Description:

**About the Author** David Gaider has worked for video game developer Bioware since 1999. He is the lead writer on the Dragon Age: Origins role-playing game and has previously worked on such titles as Baldur's Gate 2: Shadows of Amn, Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, and Neverwinter Nights. He also wrote the previous two Dragon Age novels, The Stolen Throne and The Calling.

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*I am the Ghost of the Spire.*

It was an unpleasant thought, one Cole had turned over and over again in his mind. They said ghosts didn't exist, that the dead didn't really walk amongst the living, but some people believed in them even so. They believed a dead man could become lost on his way to the Maker's side, forever adrift in a land of shadow.

Cole wasn't dead. Yet at the same time, he didn't exist, and he walked amongst the living. He'd overheard a pair of mages talking about him once, even if they'd no idea they were doing so. He'd discovered them late at night, huddled in one of the White Spire's dark hallways. There were many such hidden corners in the great tower, places where mages went to escape from the suspicious eyes of watching templars, and Cole knew them all.

Cole knew far less about the mages themselves. He knew, however, they'd taken a great risk sneaking out of their chambers. Few of the tower's templars were kind, and most believed that mages constantly conspired to commit unspeakable horrors ... when the truth was usually much more mundane. Most of their conversation consisted of gossip. The mages whispered secrets to each other, sometimes idle speculation about romantic entanglements and other times much more serious things they knew to be true but could never talk about in the open. Occasionally he came upon mages meeting for a romantic liaison instead. They secretly pressed flesh upon flesh, a desperate act of intimacy between people for whom such fleeting moments could only be stolen.

He'd found the pair who spoke of him only by chance, overhearing their muted whispers as he passed in the shadows. One was a homely woman with long hair the color of straw, the other a gangly elven boy. Both he recognized, but only by sight. They were older apprentices, the sort who had little talent for magic and who'd already spent too long preparing for the inevitable. Someday soon they would be called away by the templars for their final ordeal, and Cole would never see them again ... or he'd see them roaming the halls as emotionless Tranquil, stripped of their abilities and doomed to spend their lives in passive service to their tormentors.

Cole remembered the dread in their eyes. The homely woman sported a bruise on her cheek, its mottled purple already beginning to fade. From their hiding place the pair watched furtively for any sign of wandering guards, starting at the slightest sound. Even the skittering of a passing rat caused them to jump, yet they did not budge from their hiding place.

For all their alertness, they'd been completely oblivious to Cole's approach. Not that he expected anything different. He'd walked right up beside them, leaning in close to listen.

"I tell you I saw it," the woman insisted, her voice tinged with awe. "I was walking through the lower passages to get a book for Enchanter Garlen, and there it was."

"The ghost." The elven boy didn't bother to hide his incredulity.

"Oh, there can be dragons but not ghosts?" Her voice grew indignant. "The Chantry doesn't know everything! There are things in the Fade they couldn't possibly begin to—"

"It could have been a demon."

She paused, her face blanching in sudden fear. "But ... it didn't try to speak with me. I don't think it even saw me. I thought maybe it was a visitor, someone who'd gotten lost, but when I followed it around the corner it was just gone."

The elven boy frowned, his voice lowering to a whisper difficult even for Cole to overhear. "You know what they teach us. When a demon comes, it won't seem harmful at first. It'll be something to make you curious, until later when it begins to corrupt you...."

She stared off, her mouth pressing thin with worry. She looked right through Cole, but only a single thought ran through his mind: *Did she really see me?*

The elven boy sighed and hugged her close, murmuring comforting words about how he didn't mean anything by his warning. Maybe she was right. The woman nodded numbly, fighting back tears.

"What did it look like?" he eventually asked.

"You're humoring me."

"No, I want to know. Maybe it was a templar?"

"You think I don't know every templar in the tower by now? Some of them far better than I'd like."

She touched the bruise on her cheek, and the elven boy scowled but said nothing. "No, he wasn't in armor or robes. He was just a man, not much older than you. Shaggy hair, maybe blond? Leathers that looked like they badly needed washing. There have been others who've seen him, and their descriptions match what I saw."

"Perhaps he was a laborer working in the tunnels."

"When was the last time anyone did work down here?"

He was at a loss, and shrugged. "I know, it's just..."

"I got close enough to see his eyes." The woman frowned, thinking back. "He looked so sad, like he was lost down here. Can you imagine?" She shuddered, and the elven boy grinned reassuringly.

"So that's the infamous Ghost of the Spire. The others will be so jealous."

Her answering smile was faint. "We probably shouldn't say anything."

"Probably not."

They stayed there for a while longer, and Cole lingered. He'd hoped they might talk some more about what the woman saw, but they didn't. They held hands in the dark and listened to the muted sounds of the chant that floated down from the tower's chapel far above. When the midnight service ended there was nothing left but silence, and the pair reluctantly returned to their chambers.

Cole hadn't followed them. Instead he'd sat where they sat, letting the silence fill him. He knew he wasn't a demon. He'd never seen one before or spoken to one, that he knew of, and unless someone could be a demon and have no inkling of it, that just wasn't possible. A ghost, however? That he wasn't so certain of.

He remembered when he first came to the tower. Like every other mage before him, he'd arrived in terror, dragged through the halls by a templar's rough hands. He'd no idea where this strange place was, or even how long they'd traveled to get there. Much of the journey had been spent blindfolded and unconscious, and his unsympathetic captors refused to tell him anything. As far as he'd known, they were going to kill him.

He remembered being pushed down a dark corridor, empty save for a few apprentices who scurried to get out of the way. Most of them averted their eyes, and that only served to heighten Cole's fear. He was being brought to a dungeon, a black pit from which he was never going to emerge, for his crime of being a mage. The templars called him that word in curt, ugly tones when they needed to call him anything. Mage. Before that day it wasn't a word Cole had associated with himself. It was something he'd only heard on the tongues of priests, a watchword for those who had been cursed by the Maker.

And now that's what he was. Cursed.

They'd tossed him into a cell. He'd lain there on the damp stone floor, whimpering. He expected a beating but none came. Instead, the cell door had slammed shut with a deafening crash; while Cole was initially relieved, once the men were gone that relief evaporated. They'd left him alone in the dark with only the rats for company. The creatures scurried invisibly around him, nipping at him with razor-sharp teeth. He'd tried to crawl away from them but there was nowhere to go, nothing to do except curl up into a ball and pray.

There in the cold and the nothingness, he'd prayed for death. Anything would be better than waiting for the templars to return, anticipating whatever new torment they had planned for him. The priests said demons were drawn to mages, to transform them into terrible abominations—but Cole couldn't imagine anything more frightening than the templars themselves. He couldn't shut his eyes enough to block out the memory of their uncaring eyes.

He didn't want to be a mage. He didn't want to discover how one became a mage, and found nothing wondrous in the idea of magic. Fervently he prayed to the Maker, over and over again, for deliverance. He prayed until his voice was hoarse, prayed for the templars to forget he even existed. And then he'd gotten his wish. That's exactly what they did.

Perhaps he'd died there in the darkness, and forgotten. Maybe that was how ghosts came to be: they were those who passed on and refused to accept it. Thus they remained, lingering in a life that didn't want them anymore.

He shut his eyes tight. *Maker above*, he thought, *if I'm dead then give me a sign. Don't you want me at your side, just like the priests all said you would? Don't leave me here.*

But there was no answer. There never was.

If he was dead, why did he still sleep? Why did he still hunger, and breathe, and sweat? These were not things that a dead person did. No matter what they called him, he was no ghost and no demon.

But that didn't mean he was real.

Up above, the White Spire swarmed with people. There were many levels in the great tower, filled with sunlight and wide spaces. Cole rarely went up there. He was much more comfortable down below, among the things the templars had forgotten as well as the things they *wanted* forgotten. The bowels of the tower reached deep into the earth, and they were his home.

The first few floors of the tower's lower chambers were innocent enough. They contained the kitchen stores, as well as the armories, giant chambers filled with enough...

--This text refers to an alternate edition.

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