

Game Writing Portfolio

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Practice

I write for worlds with their own internal logic — where a character's voice reflects the trade route they grew up on, and a line of dialogue carries the weight of a faction's memory of the player. I'm drawn to writing that earns its emotional moment through specificity rather than declaration.

This portfolio covers five forms: character brief with branching dialogue, combat barks, in-world flavor text, screenplay-format scene, and quest design.



01 — Character Brief & Branching Dialogue

Amachi, Harbor Factotum

Game: Koel (*narrative RPG, c. 1010 CE Indian Ocean port city*)



Visual

Mid-forties. Moves like someone who expects to be interrupted. Wears a guild-issue shoulder wrap over a sea-faded cotton sari, the shoulder wrap too formal for a dock worker and too practical for a guild official — she inhabits the exact gap between them. Her left wrist has an ink stain she stopped trying to remove years ago.

Role

Amachi manages the administrative layer between the Ainnurruvar Guild and the harbor's unofficial operators. She is not a mission-giver. She is a person who knows which mission-givers are worth trusting. She finds the player interesting in the way she finds a new cargo manifest interesting — potentially useful, possibly fraudulent, worth a closer look.

Voice

Dry. Short sentences with implied subordinate clauses she's decided not to say. She does not fill silences. She finds enthusiasm suspicious. Formal address is a power move — she uses it with people she hasn't decided about yet, drops it with people she has.

Ideal: Information properly held is worth more than information spent.

Bond: The guild is the only system she trusts. She has seen everything else fail.

Flaw: She confuses knowing things with having power over them.

Relationship to player: Variable. She is the player's most reliable source of contextual information about port operations. She is not an ally. She is not an enemy. She is an interested party.



Branching Dialogue: First Encounter

Context: Player has just arrived at the dock. Amachi is reviewing a cargo manifest at a counting table. She has been watching the player for approximately thirty seconds without acknowledging them.





[AMACHI — without looking up]

"You're not a merchant. You walk wrong for that."

[AMACHI]

"Come closer. I'm not going to shout at someone I haven't decided about yet."

[PLAYER OPTIONS]

- A) "What gave me away?"
- B) "Who are you?"
- C) "I'm looking for work."
- D) [Say nothing. Wait.]



[IF A — "What gave me away?"]

[AMACHI]

"Merchants watch the goods. You were watching the people watching the goods."

(beat)

"That's either very smart or very specific. I'm curious which."

[PLAYER OPTIONS]

- A1) "Habit."
- A2) "I'm careful."
- A3) "I work for careful people."

[IF A1 — "Habit."]

[AMACHI]

"Good answer. Honest ones usually are."

(she finally looks up)

"Amachi. I manage the administrative interface between the guild and everyone the guild doesn't officially acknowledge. You can want something now or you can come back when you know what it is."

[RELATIONSHIP FLAG: AMACHI_INTRODUCTION_HONEST — unlocks direct dialogue style in future conversations]

[IF A2 — "I'm careful."]

[AMACHI]

"That's not the same as habit. That means you decided to be. Which means someone taught you there was a reason."

(she rolls the manifest)

"You can tell me about the reason or not. The price of my attention doesn't change."

[RELATIONSHIP FLAG: AMACHI_INTRODUCTION_GUARDED — she keeps formal address longer]

[IF A3 — "I work for careful people."]

[AMACHI]

"Mm."

(a pause that means she's categorized you)

"Everyone who says that is either a spy or a contractor. Both of those are things I deal with."

[RELATIONSHIP FLAG: AMACHI_INTRODUCTION_PROFESSIONAL — skips small talk; goes directly to business in future conversations]



[IF B — "Who are you?"]

[AMACHI]

"Someone with a counting table and a better view of the docks than anyone else in a fifty-foot radius."

(a pause)

"You can get a formal introduction from the harbor office. They'll give you the title. It won't tell you anything useful."

[PLAYER OPTIONS]

B1) "I'd rather hear it from you."

B2) "I'll try the harbor office, then."

[IF B1 — "I'd rather hear it from you."]

[AMACHI]

"You're going to be trouble."

(this is not entirely a complaint)

"Amachi. What I do is ensure that the guild's interest in this port and the port's interest in continuing to function stay aligned. When those two things diverge, I correct the divergence."

[RELATIONSHIP FLAG: AMACHI_INTRODUCTION_DIRECT — she trusts directness; unlocks candid information in early conversations]

[IF B2 — "I'll try the harbor office, then."]

[AMACHI]

"Do that."

(she returns to the manifest)

(three seconds pass)

"Or you could save yourself the walk and tell me what you actually need. The harbor office refers everything interesting back to me anyway."

[RELATIONSHIP FLAG: AMACHI_INTRODUCTION_NEUTRAL — she'll deal with you, no warmth yet]



[IF C — "I'm looking for work."]

[AMACHI]

"What kind?"

(she looks up now, genuinely assessing)

[PLAYER OPTIONS]

C1) "Whatever pays."

C2) "Cargo. Moving things."

C3) "The kind that doesn't ask many questions."

[IF C1 — "Whatever pays."]

[AMACHI]

"Generalists are either very competent or very desperate. You don't look desperate."

(back to the manifest)

"Come back tomorrow. I may have something. I may not."

[STARTS mission: AMACHI_CONTRACT_01 — available next in-game day]

[IF C3 — "The kind that doesn't ask many questions."]

[AMACHI]

"Everyone who says that is asking me a very specific question."

(she sets the manifest down)

"The guild asks questions. That is what the guild does. If you're looking for work that doesn't touch guild infrastructure, you're on the wrong side of the harbor."

(a pause)

"The right side is across the channel. I'd start there."
[FLAGS: AMACHI_REFERRED_TO_PIRATE_CREW — opens crew contact if not already met]



[IF D — Say nothing. Wait.]

(Five seconds pass. Amachi continues with the manifest.)
(Seven seconds.)

[AMACHI — still not looking up]

"Patience is a skill. Most people who have it learned it from someone inconvenient."
(she sets the pen down)
"What do you need."
(not a question)

[RELATIONSHIP FLAG: AMACHI_INTRODUCTION_PATIENT — she respects this; skips one level of formal gatekeeping in future conversations]



02 — Combat Barks

Koel Port City Guards — Three NPC Types

Game: Koel. Setting: Indian Ocean port city, c. 1010 CE.

Three distinct factions patrol the port. Each has a different relationship to authority, danger, and the player. Bark sets follow Asset ID format for VO pipeline integration.



CHOLA IMPERIAL SOLDIER

Character notes: Career military. Absolute confidence in institutional authority. Violence is a formal act, not an emotional one. Speaks like a man executing a procedure. No improvisation; no banter.

NPC	Trigger	Line	Asset ID	Wordcount
Chola_Soldier	Pursue	"In the name of the Chakravarti — stand down."	CHL_PRS_1	9
Chola_Soldier	Pursue	"You are within Chola jurisdiction. Stop."	CHL_PRS_2	7
Chola_Soldier	Pursue	"Running changes nothing. The harbor has no exits."	CHL_PRS_3	9
Chola_Soldier	Attack	"Resistance is noted."	CHL_ATK_1	4
Chola_Soldier	Attack	"By the authority of the garrison—"	CHL_ATK_2	7
Chola_Soldier	Attack	"Submit or I will make this formal."	CHL_ATK_3	8
Chola_Soldier	Low Health	"The garrison will be notified of this."	CHL_LWH_1	8
Chola_Soldier	Low Health	"You've made an enemy of the empire."	CHL_LWH_2	8
Chola_Soldier	Low Health	"My report goes in regardless."	CHL_LWH_3	6
Chola_Soldier	Kill	"Documented."	CHL_KIL_1	1
Chola_Soldier	Kill	"You were a variable. Variables resolve."	CHL_KIL_2	7
Chola_Soldier	Kill	"The harbor remembers."	CHL_KIL_3	4
Chola_Soldier	Die	"The garrison—"	CHL_DIE_1	2
Chola_Soldier	Die	"Noted. Noted and..."	CHL_DIE_2	4
Chola_Soldier	Die	"Empire doesn't end with one soldier."	CHL_DIE_3	7



GUILD ENFORCER (Ainnurruvar)

Character notes: Not military — contracted. Cold, transactional, entirely uninterested in drama. The guild pays them per resolution, not per fight. They'd rather you stopped. But if you don't stop, this is also acceptable; it generates a billable event.

NPC	Trigger	Line	Asset ID	Wordcount
Guild_Enforcer	Pursue	"You've already cost the guild more than you're worth."	GLD_PRS_1	11
Guild_Enforcer	Pursue	"Running is expensive for you, not for me."	GLD_PRS_2	9
Guild_Enforcer	Pursue	"Stop now and we can call this a misunderstanding."	GLD_PRS_3	9
Guild_Enforcer	Attack	"This is a correction."	GLD_ATK_1	4
Guild_Enforcer	Attack	"You're making this very thorough."	GLD_ATK_2	6
Guild_Enforcer	Attack	"The guild will bill your employers for this."	GLD_ATK_3	9
Guild_Enforcer	Low Health	"This is... an unusual invoice."	GLD_LWH_1	6
Guild_Enforcer	Low Health	"The guild has other people. This isn't over."	GLD_LWH_2	10
Guild_Enforcer	Low Health	"Whoever hired you spent well."	GLD_LWH_3	6
Guild_Enforcer	Kill	"Balanced."	GLD_KIL_1	1
Guild_Enforcer	Kill	"Put it on the Pirate Crew's account."	GLD_KIL_2	8
Guild_Enforcer	Kill	"The guild thanks you for your patience."	GLD_KIL_3	8
Guild_Enforcer	Die	"Rate... dispute."	GLD_DIE_1	2
Guild_Enforcer	Die	"This goes in my contract. The next one costs more."	GLD_DIE_2	10
Guild_Enforcer	Die	"I want it noted: I said stop."	GLD_DIE_3	8

HARBOR WATCH (Local)

Character notes: City employees, not military. Overworked. Underpaid. Have been doing this for years and have very reasonable opinions about whether this particular thing was worth their trouble. They are not cowards — they're tired. They know everyone in the harbor and take it personally when the harbor gets dangerous.

NPC	Trigger	Line	Asset ID	Wordcount
Harbor_Watch	Pursue	"Stop! I know who you are!"	HBW_PRS_1	7
Harbor_Watch	Pursue	"Come on, don't make me do this."	HBW_PRS_2	8
Harbor_Watch	Pursue	"I have been on shift since dawn!"	HBW_PRS_3	7
Harbor_Watch	Attack	"I'm sorry, I really am!"	HBW_ATK_1	6
Harbor_Watch	Attack	"This is not what I wanted today!"	HBW_ATK_2	8
Harbor_Watch	Attack	"Stop making me hit you!"	HBW_ATK_3	6
Harbor_Watch	Low Health	"I have a family, you know."	HBW_LWH_1	6
Harbor_Watch	Low Health	"This is going to be a very long report."	HBW_LWH_2	8
Harbor_Watch	Low Health	"I liked you! I genuinely liked you!"	HBW_LWH_3	7
Harbor_Watch	Kill	"Gods. Why couldn't you just... stop?"	HBW_KIL_1	8
Harbor_Watch	Kill	"Tell that to the fish market, see if they care."	HBW_KIL_2	10
Harbor_Watch	Kill	"I'm going to be writing this up all night."	HBW_KIL_3	9
Harbor_Watch	Die	"Give my regards to the docks."	HBW_DIE_1	7
Harbor_Watch	Die	"I knew this posting was..."	HBW_DIE_2	5
Harbor_Watch	Die	"Tell Amachi I tried."	HBW_DIE_3	5

03 — In-World Flavor Text

Items from Koel

Game: Koel. Voice: matter-of-fact mercantile precision, carrying the historical weight of the trade world. The game does not editorialize about its own universe; the items speak in the register of people who assume the reader already knows the context.

AINNURRUVAR LETTER OF CREDIT

Category: Document / Currency Equivalent

A clay-and-wax sealed fold of palm leaf, stamped with the seated-tiger guild mark in red ochre. The text inside establishes that the bearer is owed the sum noted by any guild-affiliated merchant house in the Chola-controlled ports between Nagapattinam and Kaveripattinam.

The amount written on this one is enough to buy passage on a mid-sized trade vessel and leave enough for the port fees.

The seal can be broken once. After that it is evidence, not currency.

NATARAJA SEAL (CONTRABAND)

Category: Smuggled Goods / Quest Item

A palm-sized bronze disk, cast in the Chola panchaloha alloy — the five-metal blend that gives Chola bronzes their characteristic warm gold. The surface shows Nataraja mid-dance, one foot on the dwarf of ignorance, the ring of fire around him worn smooth by decades of handling.

This piece was removed from a temple dedication before consecration, which means it is legally an unfinished religious object rather than a completed idol. The guild lawyers who argued this distinction in the garrison hearing were reportedly very good at their jobs.

The man who needs you to move this does not want to know the destination. You have learned from experience that this is more reassuring than the alternative.

CHAMPA EAGLEWOOD (BUNDLE)

Category: Trade Goods / High Value

A cloth-wrapped bundle of agarwood from the Annamite mountain forests — the resinous heartwood of aquilaria trees infected by specific fungi over decades. The smell is difficult to describe to someone who hasn't encountered it: sweet, medicinal, with a depth that registers somewhere between incense and something older.

The bundle's origin stamp marks it as passing through Nagapattinam under a Cham trader's license that expired three months ago. This is a customs problem, not a quality problem. The wood is excellent.

Arab buyers will pay thirty *kasu* per tola. The Shaivite temple will pay forty and ask no questions about the paperwork.

DOCK CARGO HOOK

Category: Tool / Improvised Weapon



Iron. Long-handled. The hook end has been resharpened twice; the second resharpening was done by someone who cared more about edge retention than the original manufacturer did.

It belongs to a dock worker named Selvam who has been looking for it since yesterday morning and is going to be very annoyed when he finds out where it went.



04 – Cinematic Scene

The Weight of the Harbor

Game: Koel. Scene: Player's first evening in port. First encounter with Amachi.

Writing note: This scene is designed for a player who has arrived by sea, spent the afternoon navigating entry, and is now finding their footing in an unfamiliar city with unclear allegiances. Amachi represents the first character who treats the player as a known quantity rather than a newcomer — which is the scene's dramatic pressure.



INT. AINNURRUVAR COUNTING HOUSE – DUSK

The harbor-facing wall is open to the evening – no windows, just an archway above the dock line. The smell of salt and fish oil and the specific damp-timber rot of a working harbor.

AMACHI (45) sits at a broad counting table covered in palm-leaf manifests. Oil lamp. Writing implement made from a split reed. She writes without stopping.

The PLAYER enters. AMACHI does not look up.

AMACHI

You've been standing outside for three minutes.

She turns a page.

AMACHI (CONT'D)

Either come in or don't. The lamp makes the doorway visible from the pier, and you're a silhouette.

The player enters. AMACHI still does not look up.

AMACHI (CONT'D)

Someone described you to me this morning. They said "the one who came in on the Champa trader and didn't look like they were there for the cargo."

(beat)

I didn't need them to tell me

that last part.

She sets the reed pen down. Looks up for the first time.

AMACHI (CONT'D)

You have a letter of introduction from the crew's contact in Nagapattinam. I've seen better letters and I've seen worse ones. The seal was genuine, which is the only part that mattered.

She stands. Moves to the window. Looks down at the dock.

AMACHI (CONT'D)

The guild knows you're here. The garrison doesn't yet, but the garrison is slow in the evenings. You have until tomorrow morning to decide what kind of person you're going to be in this port.

She turns back.

AMACHI (CONT'D)

I manage things. That's what I do. What I don't do is manage things that become someone else's problem at my expense.

(shorter pause than expected)

Sit down if you want. I have another hour of manifests. You can ask questions or you can watch and learn things faster.

She returns to the table.

AMACHI (CONT'D)

The crew's contact said you were useful. That's a word that covers a lot of ground.

(without looking up)

Tell me which part of it you are.



05 – Quest Design

First Springs: The Ritual Gate

A full mission brief for the entry encounter of First Springs. Includes objective, NPC profiles, branching structure, NPC memory integration, and outcome table.

See Narrative Design Portfolio — Section 04 for the complete brief.

Playable StoryFlow demo of this scenario: in development, targeting July 2026. The demo will include full branching logic, NPC memory variables, and two full playthroughs to demonstrate divergent outcomes.



Summary of design approach:

The Ritual Gate is designed to resist one specific player instinct: the urge to find "the real solution." Most players encountering a locked gate will assume one route is the intended path and the others are less correct. The Ritual Gate is structured so that every exit works, but every exit has a specific long-term cost that the player does not fully understand until later in the game.

The player who bribes Saya doesn't fail. They pass through the gate. They simply lose access to a faction contact that would have been genuinely valuable. This is the design mandate throughout First Springs: **there is no correct solution, only chosen tradeoffs.** The Ritual of First Springs has six ways in. Each way through changes what you carry with you into the ceremony.



Projects with playable demos: Koel (StoryFlow, July 2026), UKoR (IGDC demo build, October 2026), Koel (full game demo, October 2026)

Full documentation available on request.

Portfolio: keian.org