Narrative Writing Samples: The Wanderer's Way (Cutscene 3) | Mia Michel

Game Context: A high-fantasy action-RPG where the player can resolve encounters through combat or through the game's social and trust-based systems.

Scene Context: Salīa needs to travel to a new land with her longtime friend and guardian, Bazil, and they stop by a small tavern where they come across soldiers who had earlier run them off the road. The matter was resolved thanks to Auro, the extremely charming leader who has a fondness for coin and people.

Trigger: Their lodging places the player directly above the Tail-End Tavern following the earlier road incident.

Narrative purpose: Function as the game's optional side quest, "The Wanderer's Toast." It's a low-stakes social objective (earn Auro's trust) built entirely on how these characters interact. **NOTE: This cutscene shows the default, non-interactive version while the alternative Branching Dialogue version shows the same moment with player choices.**

Gameplay transition: Ends on Auro's farewell.

INT. THE TAIL-END TAVERN. NIGHT

A crowded tavern that is boisterous, busy, and constantly moving with foods and drinks circulating around. Laughter and games galore. BAZIL and SALĪA reach the bar. The BARKEEP ignores them. Salīa offers a smile and waves over several times.

Eventually they're served, leaving Bazil to roll his eyes. They then find a table one over from AURO. He's debonair, richly dressed, a gold scorpion sigil catching the light, entertaining his people.

AURO
(flipping through a book, to a bearded soldier)
The drawings aren't that mature. The artist's hand is still young, but the plot's unique. Words are sharp.

BEARDED SOLDIER
So you don't want it, old friend?

AURO
My *older* friend. I'm trying to save coin.

BEARDED SOLDIER
Why save today when you can spend all you have before tomorrow?

AURO
Keep spewing that and you might convince yourself those words have merit.

BEARDED SOLDIER
But it does.

AURO
Then why are your hands as tight as a crab's claw around your own coin?

The bearded man has no answer. A CHUBBY SOLDIER slams down his mazer.

CHUBBY SOLDIER
I desire coin plenty. It's my purse that makes a fool of me.

AURO
It's not your purse that makes you a fool. It's you. Isn't it foolish to blame your purse for having nothing in it, when it's *your* fault for not filling it?

He takes an apple from the table's fruit basket.

AURO (CONT'D)
If you have two apples, you could eat both. But then you'd have none left when you need one. Eat one, sell the other to a baker for his pie. Don't you now have coin for two more apples?

CHUBBY SOLDIER
Then it's the same as before. I've still got two apples to eat.

AURO
Actually, you now have one to eat, and another to trade.

At the next table, Salīa is openly fascinated, grinning. Auro catches her staring.

AURO (CONT'D)
(standing, dramatic)
Oh, I'm so sorry! Our hair is both golden, our eyes both blue, our spirits both sprightly. I suppose we could be cousins and so I must apologize, but I cannot bed you.

SALĪA
(laughing)
That's quite alright.

AURO
I'm so glad you understand. Being pretty is so hard, isn't it? You break hearts just by being. Not that my friends here would quite get it.

The soldiers cackle and shove him good-naturedly. Bazil looks around warily. CALVO, the soldier who had knocked them off the road earlier, nudges him.

CALVO
Get whatever you want. I'll pay it.

BAZIL
(suspiciously)
There's no need.

AURO
Oh, please. Let him. We mean no harm. Isn’t that right, Calvo?

CALVO
(stubborn, then relenting)
Yes, friend. I know what you want me to say.
(to Bazil)
We are soldiers, as you see. And what makes us a guardian is not by starting battles, but by stopping them before they start. Isn’t that so?

The soldiers drunkenly thump their fists to their chests. Bazil, despite himself, half-smiles. Later, drinks lifted, the whole table breaks into song.

AURO & SOLDIERS
(singing, off-key)
Wars are all fatuous, all warlords are fools! Since battles are bitter, what's sweeter than truce?

There’s nondescript chatter between them showing progress in their conversation. Salīa’s bird, HAWKING, crashes through a window, landing squarely on Salīa's head, parchment tied to its ring. Bazil nods toward the door. Time to go.

AURO
(standing, offering his hand to Bazil)
Come on, be good, friends. Thank you for joining us. If we never meet again, I'm glad that we met at all.

BAZIL
(shaking it, partially approving)
Travel true.

Auro reaches for Salīa's hand next, then snaps it back at Bazil's glare, tipping his hat instead. As they leave, the soldiers keep singing behind them.

FADE TO GAMEPLAY