

Michael Bunning Writing Sample – Quest Dialogue (Project Calico)

Dialogue Overview/Explanatory notes

The following dialogues were written for the first quest in a gently humorous narrative plotline. The player takes on a contract to investigate Quicksilver Gate: a huge, half-built corporate space structure that's intended to be the gateway to another solar system.

In this quest, there are five party members – Adheya (the ship captain), Enrique (the gunner), Eloise (the ship's pilot and a communist), Morgan (a conspiracy theorist and engineer) and Benjamin (Adheya's teenage son and general worrier) – and one NPC quest giver: Mike Boda.

There were two kinds of dialogue in this game: "Picture in Picture" and "Interactive".

Picture in Picture dialogues played automatically during other gameplay (usually traversal) and the player had no agency over these dialogues. Our metrics were that PIP dialogues should be as short as possible, with a hard limit of 6 lines.

Interactive dialogues were longer and presented the player with some dialogue choices. These choices would impact combat gameplay through a mechanic where party members gained buffs depending on how frequently the player chose that character's dialogue option.

Metrics for each interactive dialogue were that they should have at least one choice, and that they should be around one minute of VO – approximately 155 words.

Dialogues

Dialogue One – Interactive

INT. Dive Bar, Seaview Station

MORGAN

Skeezy ambience, roughnecks, potent liquor. Awesome, this place has *everything!*

ADHEYA

Including this furtive, nervous specimen beckoning to us. You're Boda?

BODA

Shh! I'm incognito!

MORGAN

With *that* moustache?

ENRIQUE

You require our assistance, mysterious stranger?

BODA

Not me. *Humanity!* I'm with Safety Over Speed.

ENRIQUE

Sounds dull. Safety's overrated. Speed rules!

BODA

We're a, uh, pressure group working to expose the dark secret at the heart of Quicksilver Gate!

[CHOICE ONE]

MORGAN

Nobody understands how it works because the plans were sent to us by extraterrestrials?

BODA

What? No. Safari are cutting corners when it comes to safety protocols!

MORGAN

Boring!

[RETURN TO MAIN BRANCH]

[CHOICE TWO]

ENRIQUE

(hopefully)

It's a death ray Safari intend to use to subjugate humanity?

BODA

Worse! Safari are ignoring safety protocols!

ENRIQUE

How disappointingly prosaic.

[RETURN TO MAIN BRANCH]

[CHOICE THREE]

ELOISE

They're underpaying and overworking their employees?

BODA

That's not a dark secret. Hell, it's not *even* a secret! No, they're ignoring safety protocols!

ELOISE

That's bad too, I guess.

[RETURN TO MAIN BRANCH]

[MAIN BRANCH]

BODA

We'll blow this wide open!

ADHEYA

How, exactly?

BODA

By scanning key structural interstices!

MORGAN

Scanning? I like a good scan as much as the next girl - probably more - but I'm more about the thrill of the chase.

BODA

This isn't a joke! They've *killed* to protect their secrets.

ENRIQUE

Who hasn't?

BENJAMIN

Our corporate Loyalty Points will plummet if we help. We've nearly earned a Chucky Charger bobblehead!

BODA

Will five thousand Bricks buy you a bobblehead?

BENJAMIN

Not a Chucky Charger one...

ADHEYA

It'll buy supplies. We're in.

END

Dialogue Two – Picture In Picture

NOTE – The player then traverses the game world to reach Quicksilver Gate, being attacked en route.

EXT. Space, Quicksilver Gate

ENRIQUE

Hostile ship spotted, captain. Permission to engage?

ADHEYA

Do it.

END

NOTE – The player reaches Quicksilver Gate and begins scanning the designated areas.

Dialogue Three – Picture In Picture

EXT. Space

BODA

There are four dangerous areas in the superstructure that need scanning. I'll mark them for you.

ELOISE

Targets confirmed.

ADHEYA

If these safety protocols fail, how bad could it be? A few worker bees get vented into the void?

BODA

Paraphysics isn't a place where you want to round down and call it close-enough.

END

Dialogue Four – Picture In Picture

EXT. Space, Quicksilver Gate

ELOISE

First scan complete. Stresses on that junction point look high.

BODA

You don't want any structural weaknesses when you're measuring tens of centillions of quantum threads per second.

END

Dialogue Five – Picture In Picture

EXT. Space, Quicksilver Gate

ELOISE

Target point scanned. Compiling data now.

[REPEAT FOR REMAINING WEAK POINTS, WHILE ENEMIES ATTACK]

END

Dialogue Six – Interactive Dialogue

EXT. Space, Quicksilver Gate

ELOISE

That's all the targets scanned.

ENRIQUE

And all hostiles neutralized. They were no match for our martial prowess!

BODA

I'm just glad it's over. I don't think I could take any more of your maniac cackling.

ENRIQUE

A man should enjoy his work!

BODA

I generally prefer my work to be more sedate than this.

[CHOICE ONE]

BENJAMIN

My dad's an office worker. He might know of some vacancies.

BODA

I've seen how fiercely those people fight over stationery. I'd have a longer life expectancy with you lot.

[RETURN TO MAIN BRANCH]

[CHOICE TWO]

MORGAN

Roosti's Chicken Shacks always have openings in R&D...

BODA

Haven't you ever wondered why? I've heard of multiple fatalities caused by explosive poultry. No thanks!

[RETURN TO MAIN BRANCH]

[CHOICE THREE]

ELOISE

What did you do before this?

BODA

I was a producer on *Celebrity HeadSwap*. Never again! I still get night terrors. So much backstage cattiness!

[RETURN TO MAIN BRANCH]

[MAIN BRANCH]

MORGAN

I've collated the scan data. That superstructure will break up if it's subjected to any more stress.

BODA

What sort of stress? Explosions?

MORGAN

Sure, but there's nothing there that could explode.

BODA

(disappointed)

No? Hmm.

(beat)

Well, this is helpful information to confront Safari with.

ELOISE

How will you confront them?

BODA

Not sure. I'll bomb that bridge when I come to it.

BENJAMIN

It's 'cross' that bridge.

BODA

What? Oh, yes, of course. Thank you all. Drop me anywhere. I'll transfer your Bricks now.

END