

BOROUGH BOUND PRESENTS

ANCORA BAY

PART II





PART II: THE CONSERVATORY AND THE CONSORTIUM

A CONFLUENCE OF CULTURE

In the days of Transom rule, there was little room for the folk traditions of Roksunay's diverse peoples. Though the woodland elves, the Leukotheans, the Al Ibrani, and all of the other cultures of the world had their own rich musical conventions, the Transom way was to emphasize assimilation above all else. Whether in the city streets, the musical academies, or the courts of the various royals, Transom culture was monolithic and rejected outside influence.

Folk traditions, however, are sticky. It is not so easy to eliminate the idiosyncrasies of the indigenous musics of the world. Though they may have never shared the spotlight under Transom rule, bold practitioners kept these customs alive, honing their crafts in secret, refining their art on homemade instruments and passing their techniques down to younger generations.

In a post-Calamity Roksunay, there are no governmental limits on free expression. Without these limitations on what art is considered "acceptable," there has been an explosion of innovation. As cultures collide in cosmopolitan Ancora Bay, new hybrid musical forms have flourished, joining together the epic ballads of hibouroc vocal traditions, the abstract aquasonic Leukothean sound paintings, irregularly-metered Markitan dance structures, and so on. The streets

of Ancora Bay are constantly rapturously abuzz with new sounds from all the world over. Marketplaces hum with hurdy-gurdy drones and lively improvisations. Corian sergeants infuse their functional war drum patterns with unconventional elven-inspired ostinati to keep soldiers on their toes throughout training.

The fusion of soundscapes that permeate the Bay are an omnipresent reminder that the end of the Transom Empire was equally a birth of a new world free from cultural hegemony. There are those, however, who would seek to codify and stratify the "legitimate" means of musical expression.

THE ANCORA CONSERVATORY

Though most Transom elves died after the comet struck 80 years ago, their cultural imperialism lingered in the shadows of the new world. Many practitioners of Transom classical music—or *estille wyn* as it was known in high Transom—still consider the harmonies, rhythms, and forms of the former regime to be demonstrably superior to the various "lowbrow" traditions of the extant vassal cultures.

This is a view shared in particular by many members of Ancora Bay's Markitan elite who see the refined elegance of Transom music as an ideal to strive toward, a roadmap for a more perfect artistic hierarchy under which they can structure a new Roksunay global culture.

With this in mind, a number of wealthier Ancora Bay residents endowed the Ancora Conservatory to instruct in the ways of *estille wyn* and advance the mission of popularizing the form anew throughout Roksunay.

Aristocratic families send their children to learn the viol, the harpsichord, and the Transom *neleyathryl*, a duophonic ceramic wind instrument. Virtuoso performers give clinics open to the public and command a pretty penny for private events. At all times of day, harsh tutors hold their students to impossible standards, aiming to suss out the would-be phenoms from the casual enthusiasts. The Conservatory is a place of outstanding musicianship, but it is also a tool of the wealthy to place the music of a now dead Empire on a pedestal above the regional forms that proliferate the rest of the city.

DRYAVIN DELFAR: There is a certain breed of technical mastery that is particularly valued in *estille wyn* musicians: a degree of rhythmic perfection that those more accustomed to folk traditions would consider robotic in its inflexibility. Drayvin Delfar (he/him) is a performer who excels in this strict interpretation of the Transom repertoire. Drayvin is one of few gnomes in Ancora Bay, and though he can barely reach the upper frets, his primary instrument is the theorbo, a bass instrument in the lute family. Although the theorbo is rarely the first choice for soloists, Drayvin has popularized the instrument as its most prominent artist. Unlike many former childhood prodigies, Drayvin has been able to maintain a steady career well into adulthood. He now leads a new generation of young performers through the gauntlet of tireless practice and an exhausting concert schedule.

ENAKIAN THYSALL'N: One of few surviving Transom elves, Enakian (they/them) is the conductor of the Ancora Ensemble, a chamber group comprising the Conservatory's finest performers. Everyone in town including Enakian is abundantly aware that they are not the greatest conductor in Ancora Bay, nor a particularly skilled educator or public persona. They are, however, a true Transom elf, a supposed descendent of the royal family. This was hugely important to the wealthy board of trustees who have endowed Enakian's position. The Consortium believes that Enakian's elven heritage grants them a degree of legitimacy that no other resident of Ancora Bay could match. Enakian is painfully aware of their own musical shortcomings and is prone to frustrated outbursts directed at their mocking peers.



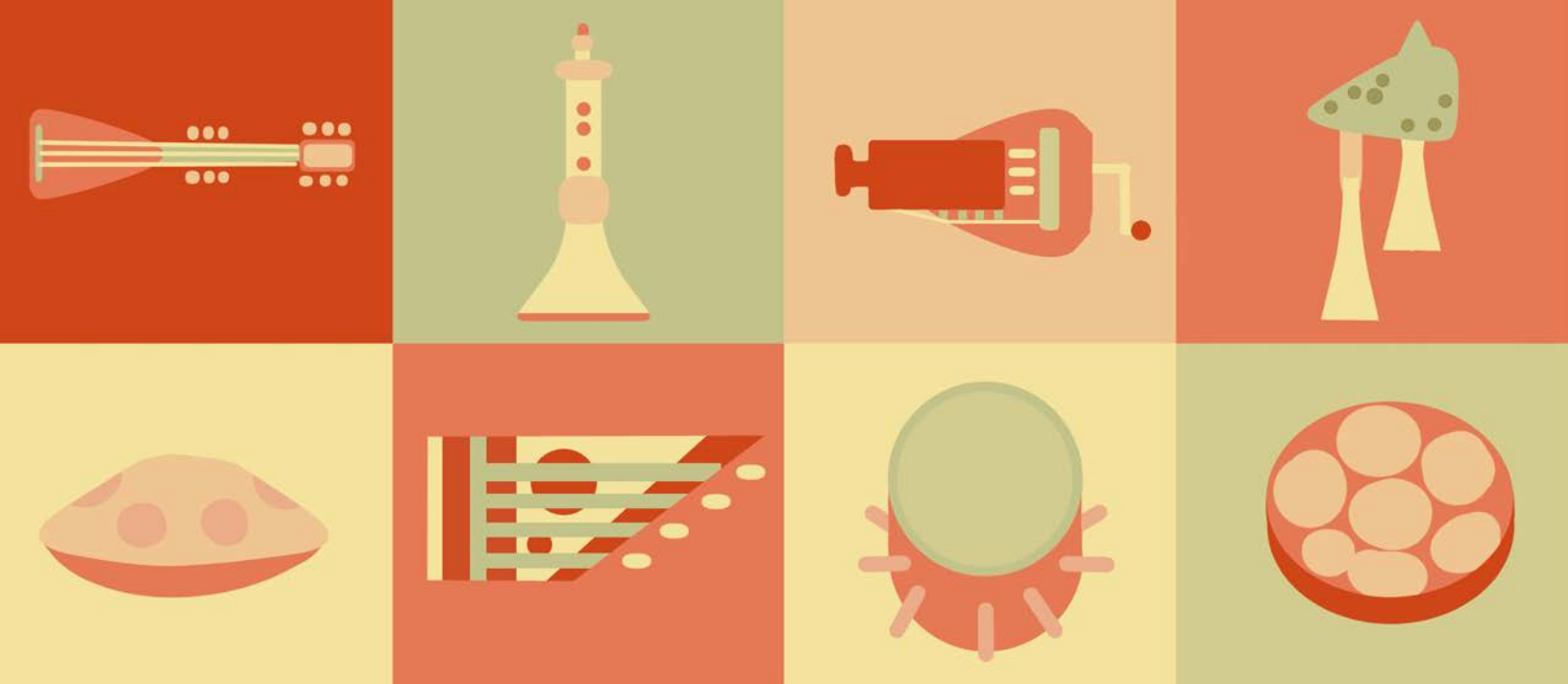
IGNATIUS "IGGY" FORTISSIMO

Son of Sebastian and brother of Sadie, Ignatius (he/him) is the black sheep of the exceedingly wealthy and powerful Fortissimo family. Once a multi-instrumentalist child prodigy at the Conservatory, Ignatius—or Iggy as most of his friends call him—caved under the pressure. The stress from his family, from his instructors, and from his overambitious peers (including Drayvin) was simply too much. He did not want to spend his life preoccupied with “scales” and “counterpoint” and “punctuality.” He wanted to jam.

Thus, Iggy fled Ancora Bay, leaving behind his familial wealth, his promising career, and all of the stress of the Conservatory. He bought one-way passage to the Bronze Coast where he spent nearly three decades hanging with other social castaways. He surfed, drank rum, partied in shoddy cabanas, and generally lived a carefree life. However, he never ceased honing his craft. No longer shackled to the chains of centuries-old performance practice, Iggy could finally begin genuinely expressing himself through his music.

Unfortunately, an outbreak of mankis fever (an insect-borne virus that the laidback Bronze Coast residents have no means to combat) has forced Ignatius to return home after all these years. The Ancora Bay he has returned to is quite different from the one he left behind: Corian rule has changed the city, and the xenophobia of his family seems to have only intensified. Luckily, the thriving music scene outside of the Conservatory has welcomed Iggy with open arms. He lives a humble life busking with buddies on busy street corners and lending an ear to any transient who seems to need a friend.¹

¹ Despite spending much of his time a stone's throw from his father and sister, Iggy does not speak with his family, nor do they speak with him.



He is middle-aged, he drinks too much, and Gods know he has a few regrets about how he has lived his life, but ultimately Iggy is a happy man. More importantly to a party of adventurers, Iggy always has his ear to the ground. Like many independent musicians, he is a magnet for gossip. If he befriends the party, he may share any of the following details that might help the party on their quest:

1. Before leaving the Bronze Coast, Iggy began to notice **dozens and dozens of Corian warships sailing into the eastern seas**. With his buddy's spyglass, he was able to confirm that these warships were carrying not only Corians, but also throngs of halflings as well as a number of figures hooded in Gatherer robes.
2. At least once a week, Iggy has caught sight of halfling prostitute Lola Minsk entering the home of Consortium board member Samuel Garvey. It seems likely that **Lola would have a good amount of dirt** on the notoriously corrupt business leader.
3. According to Iggy's pal Gikgok, there has been quite a bit more **traffic in the graveyard** as of late. Though Gikgok has been afraid to watch too closely, it seems one mausoleum is particularly popular with folks entering and exiting all day long.
4. Iggy got a good look at Qiliria soon after she arrived in Ancora Bay. While meeting with Commander Danglip of the Corian Fleet, **Qiliria removed her necklace**, which made the strange illusory effect that normally blurs her appearance briefly dissipate.

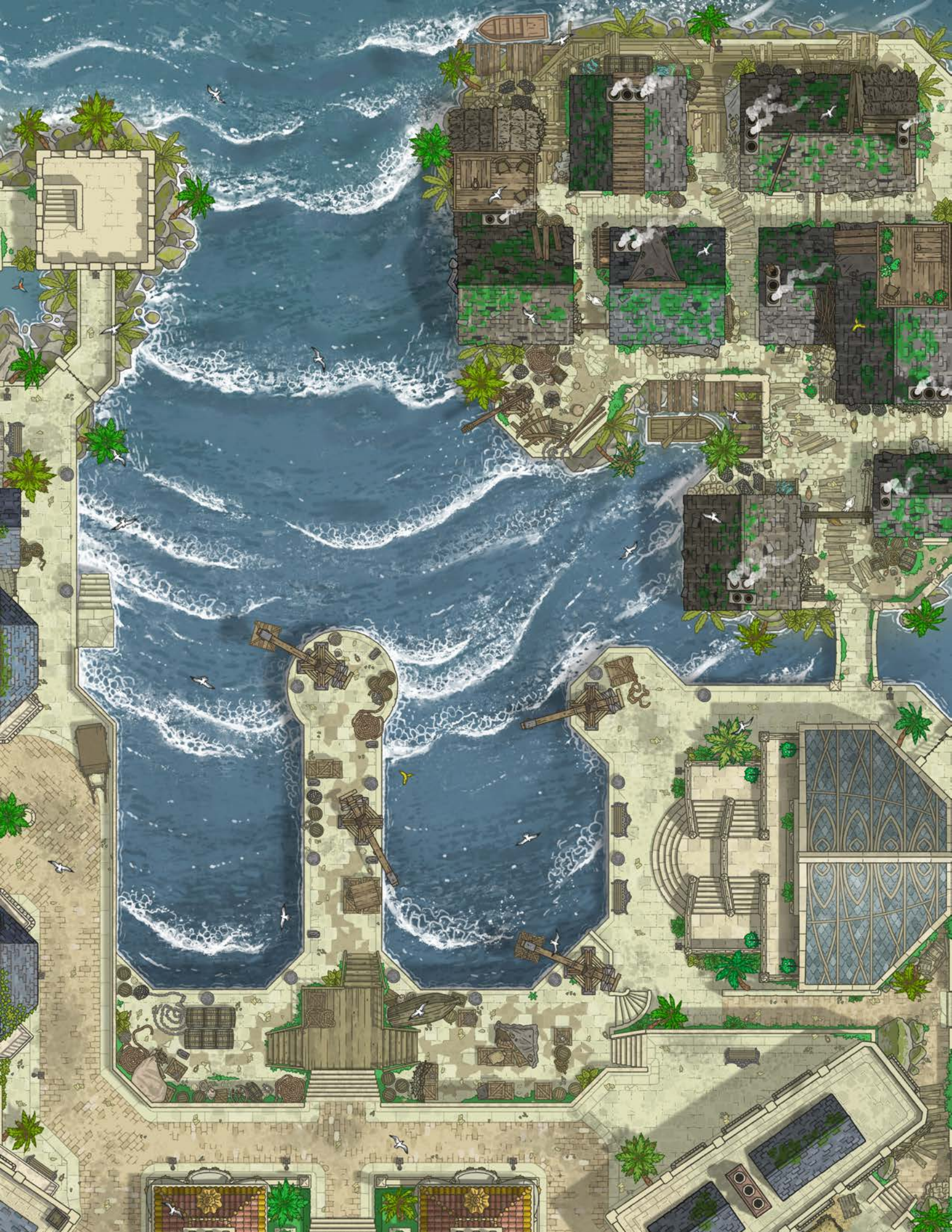
THE ANCORA COMPROMISE

The violence in Ancora Bay after the Calamity didn't *technically* end with a surrender. The Corians were handily defeating the accumulated forces that the Ancorans tried to assemble. The loose alliance of forces in the archipelago were no match for the sheer naval power of the Corians, but the people of Ancora Bay devised a strategy that they hoped would allow them to keep their home while still ending the war.

The allied forces penned the terms for a permanent ceasefire, terms that were perhaps overly deferential to the Corians. Per the truce, the Corians would become the military leaders of the Bay, and though it made no reference to an "orc-led government," it did strictly prohibit humans from establishing a formal government in the city. The Corians would be granted full autonomy over the surrounding seas, ownership over the massive new citadel constructed in the southwest corner of town, and broad jurisdiction over policing the city.

Though many on both sides objected to the compromise (Markitans believed it would lead to a ruthless occupation, whereas many Corians would have preferred to rid the city of humans altogether), the two forces ultimately agreed to the terms. This arrangement is known as the Ancora Compromise, and a number of unintended consequences have resonated throughout the Bay for decades.

First and foremost, the Corians quickly realized that military authority over the Bay does not translate one-to-one with total control. Commerce is still king in Ancora Bay, and so long as trade is controlled by Markitan-owned companies, the humans will be able to exercise quite a bit of influence.



Secondly, the humans notably *underestimated* the degree to which the Corians would quell their imperial fervor after mastering the seas around Ancora Bay. Put simply: other civilizations are generally either too difficult or too inconsequential to conquer. One day, it seems likely the Corians will extend into Al Ibra, Shima Isle, or perhaps all the way to New Emynora. In the meantime, it is far more pragmatic to slowly grow their forces while confidently maintaining control of Ancora Bay and its surroundings.

Thirdly, neither the humans nor the Corians were prepared for some of the changes that have befallen Ancora Bay since the truce was enacted. Intermittent flooding is now putting pressure on real estate development, religious conflict is causing tensions within both Markitan and Corian populations, and the sudden ascension of Qiliria has put everyone on edge. Although the peace enshrined by the Ancora Compromise persists, there are many unknowns as Ancora Bay enters its ninth decade.

THE CONSORTIUM

Iggy's father Sebastian Fortissimo is a member of the Consortium, a board of eight wealthy Ancora Bay residents who exert incredible political and commercial influence on the city. He and his seven partners are all fabulously rich Markitan humans, and each seeks exactly one goal: profit.

In the aftermath of the Ancora Compromise, there were widespread fears that monstrous rule would lead to rapidly diminishing trade as various economic partners started shipping goods through other ports. More worryingly, some feared that the Corians would begin expropriating goods and seizing control of companies. In response, a number of already wealthy businessmen founded the Consortium, a "union" that pledged to protect humans' rights while the city experienced economic strains with the transition.

The plan was simple:

1. Encourage merchants and artisans to join the Consortium, and charge them modest dues
2. Use the newly pooled resources to influence Corian policies: fund ships to encourage them to protect trade routes, offer them a cut of imports in exchange for prime real estate, etc...
3. Gradually amass greater and greater fortunes, consolidate any industries possible, raise the fees required to belong to the Consortium, and use Corian windfalls to squeeze smaller businesses out of the market

The plan was an overwhelming success and allowed the richest Ancora Bay humans to exponentially grow their wealth during the occupation. More money is now hoarded by the eight board members of the Consortium than by than by the bottom four-fifths of Ancora Bay. With so much income, they are able to simply pay the Corians whatever they want to make sure that their will is enacted in the port, and that they never suffer the actual consequences of a military occupation.

This may seem implausible. If the Consortium is so wealthy but also so small, why haven't the other Ancora Bay residents done anything about it? After all, the Consortium *isn't* the government, and such wild corruption could easily be punished with a bit of old-fashioned mob violence. And yet, the Consortium remains as popular as ever!

There is one simple trick that has helped the Consortium to remain in the good graces of—at the very least—Ancora Bay's Markitan population: racist populism. The Consortium is publicly hostile against any orcs, goblins, and other "monstrous" races. They frame their actions as specifically *pro-human*, encouraging non-Corian commerce as a means to thrive in spite of the brutes who rule from the military bases. They label those who stand in opposition to the Consortium "Corian sympathizers."

In turn, the Corians don't bat an eye. It is abundantly clear to them that the popularity of the Consortium is a boon to their occupation. The people of Ancora Bay view the Consortium as a league of pro-human business leaders that are fighting back at the occupation through economic superiority. This viewpoint merely placates the impotent masses. Meanwhile, the Consortium continues to pump funding and resources into the Corian Fleet, and the Corians in return help the Consortium to further consolidate their wealth. Mutualism at its finest.

Some recognize the hypocrisy at play, of course. While the Consortium does not openly publicize their collaboration with the Corians, it remains an open secret. Yet, the dissonance between Consortium talking points and their actions is lost on many. Young artisans and entrepreneurs see the success of the economic elite as aspirational and strive to attain their level of wealth and influence, oblivious to the fact that the game is rigged against them.

GM NOTE: Each individual member of the Consortium has only a minor role in the narrative of Ancora Bay as described in these documents. You may prefer to swap them out for any bigoted kleptocrat that better serves your narrative.



THE CURRENT BOARD

1. **SAMUEL GARVEY (HE/HIM):** Makes money from military contracting investments. The face of the Consortium (described in detail below).
2. **SEBASTIAN FORTISSIMO (HE/HIM):** A spice trader and cultural imperialist. Holds business contacts all the world over with nary a true friend among them.
3. **CONSTANCE BILLIHAN (SHE/HER):** Maintains a monopoly on Ancora Bay shipwrights. Shrewd, nasty, and nearly 80 years old. Fueled only by spite.
4. **TIMOTHY GARTHENT (HE/HIM):** The youngest member of the board, a real estate prospector who made a killing when floods forced the city's wealthy higher in the hills.
5. **EVA CAWLEY (SHE/HER):** Hordes a fortune with unknown origins, though presumably criminal in nature. A raging alcoholic known for violent outbursts and loose lips. An imminent PR nightmare for the Consortium.
6. **JULES CHEYNE (HE/HIM):** Works in "logistics," optimizing trade strategies and offering inventory solutions. A simple man, it's possible even Jules himself doesn't understand what this work entails.
7. **FLINTZ AUERBACH (HE/HIM):** Imports meat from what few islands are able to sustain scalable chicken, pig, and cattle farms. Tight-lipped and distrustful of his colleagues.
8. **DALE LINGER (HE/HIM):** Manages hospitality for the island, owning virtually every inn and roughly half of the taverns and other eateries. Prides himself on his elven blood, though which of his great-great-grandparents was Transom is anyone's guess.

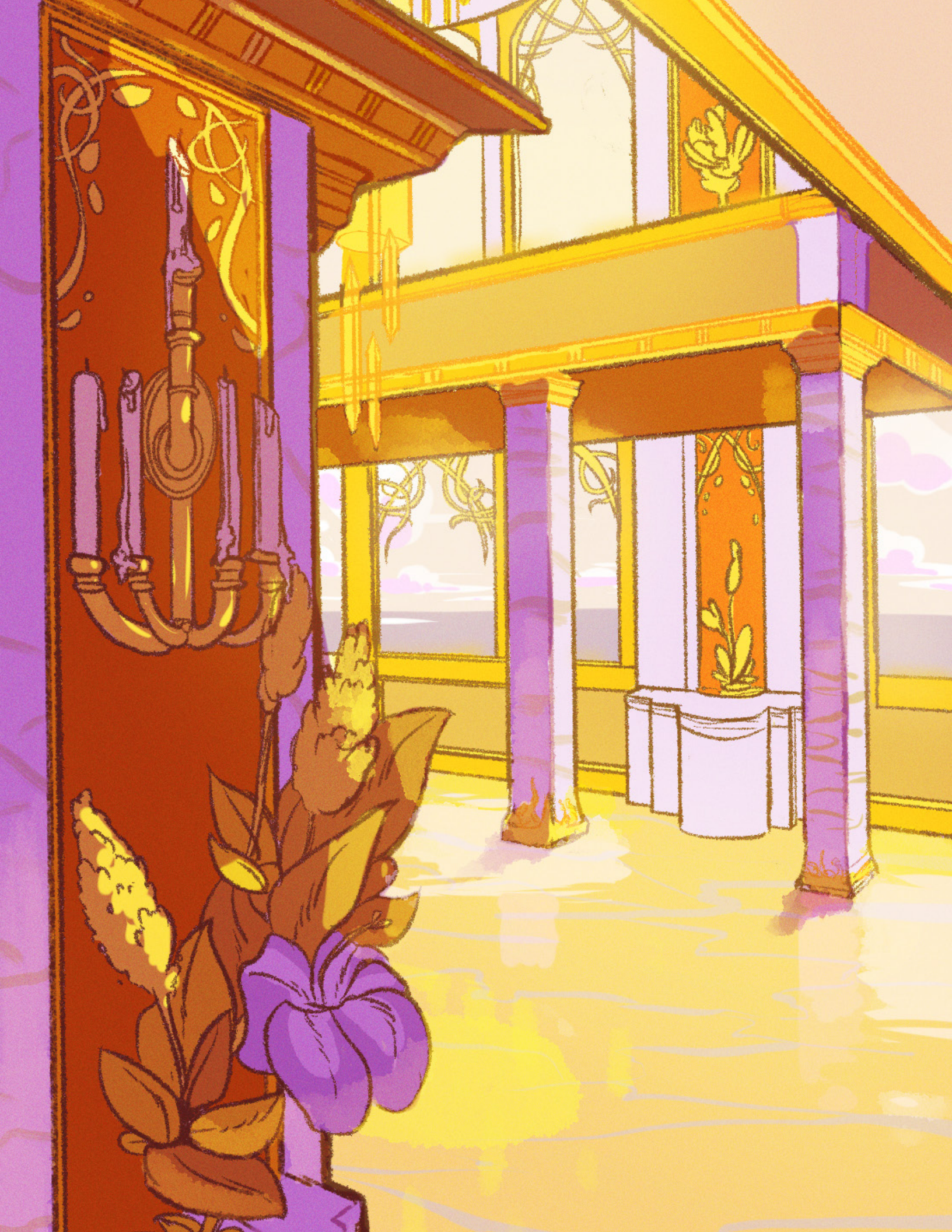
SAMUEL GARVEY

Although the eight leaders of the Consortium do not explicitly exist on a hierarchy, Samuel Garvey (he/him) is their public face. Unlike his associates, he is barely even a businessman in any practical sense; he inherited piles of gold from his family's business—a scavenging company that recovered and sold Transom goods using exploited shima kame labor. Now he merely "oversees" the wealth, which grows exponentially without his intervention thanks to some lucrative investments: namely a small handful of companies that sell arms to the Corians.

Samuel is a fear mongering rat, a snide hypocrite who stokes racial tensions in public forums to generate support for his business partners, riles up animosity toward the Corians, and profits from the weapon sales in the process. He is also a master of manipulation, as evidenced by the Markitans' unwavering support for their greedy corporate overlords. Much of his day-to-day schedule consists of various PR engagements. He visits local businesses to make sure they support the Consortium, he extols the virtues of human ingenuity while simultaneously glorifying the lost arts and sciences of long-dead elves, and most importantly he is always rubbing elbows with the upper echelons of the Corian Fleet. Though he describes orcs, goblins, and rungal in repugnant terms, painting them as subhuman filth, he seems to have no qualms making social calls whenever possible. He takes great pains to make sure his frequent communication with the various military leaders of the town aren't widely known, but there are only so many times he can visit the Corian Headquarters without raising eyebrows.

Make no mistake: Samuel Garvey *does* consider orcs, goblins, and the rest inferior beings. Yet he also takes great pleasure in surrounding himself with warlords, tyrants, and bullies. So long as he is never subjected to their violent world, he is happy to engage with military leaders who share his simplistic view of the world. Despite the racial tensions, the Corians agree that the strong have a moral imperative to dominate the weak.

Of course, the Corians are playing Samuel like a fiddle. They understand the game that's being played. Samuel likes feeling like a tough guy, and they're happy to let him roleplay as a gangster while accepting his bribes hand over fist. Everyone in this equation comes out a winner, except the Ancora Bay residents who are victims of the delusion that anyone in power cares about them.



THE PEOPLE'S PALACE

There is something particularly repugnant about the Consortium referring to their headquarters as “the People’s Palace.” On one hand, the people *did* pay for it in lost wages, Consortium dues, and monopoly pricing. But the palace is not public. The people reap no benefit from it aside from, perhaps, the joy of seeing it flooded in with seawater during the occasional violent tides. It is an ostentatious display of wealth that is supposed to serve as a rebellious exhibition of human ingenuity and strength. Instead, it comes across to outsiders as garish, needless grandstanding by corporate elites who have nothing left to spend on. Even the Consortium’s staunchest advocates may view it as little more than an embarrassing billboard advertising the board’s tacky aesthetic sensibilities.

The People’s Palace has dual purposes: as a social club for the Consortium and their aristocratic friends, as well as a place to conduct business free from the prying eyes of the plebeians. It features not one but two banquet halls, a gallery of salvaged Transom art (as well as numerous convincing fakes), and guest chambers for visiting magnates or sotted board members unable to walk home. Deals are conducted over drinks, and Corian “diplomats” (i.e. whichever admiral drew the short straw on a given day) promise various protections in exchange for tribute.

The People’s Palace is guarded diligently by platoons of the Corians’ elite warriors known simply as The Barbs (described in greater detail in a later chapter). In addition to the opulent wealth held within the palace, there are undoubtedly copious documents proving beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Consortium is as hypocritical as many fear. To gain access to one of their soirées, a party of adventurers would have to either be exceedingly stealthy, create elaborate disguises, or perhaps most unlikely, *truly* befriend one of the board members.

On any given day, the Consortium will be hosting any number of events, from strictly business to strictly pleasure or somewhere in between. The following list should serve as inspiration for creating your own Consortium galas, summits, and bacchanals.

1. Commander Danglip of the Corian Fleet is meeting with Samuel Garvey to **request a massive supply of iron ore**. It appears the Corian smithies have concocted a terrible new weapon that requires a huge amount of resources.
2. The Consortium is hosting a performance and post-recital lecture with Drayvin Delfar and his ensemble... or that’s what they’re telling people. In reality, **Drayvin is going to be kidnapped** and sold to the Hakim of Al Ibra who desires a new court musician.
3. Thanks to record profits this year, Samuel Garvey has paid for **an evening of debauchery** with every Ancora Bay prostitute he was able to find. A few (that is: two) Consortium members are wholly uninterested in engaging with these escorts and are instead conspiring about how to keep news of their revelry

from getting out into the public.

4. It’s all hands on deck for the Consortium. The **Leukotheans have sworn to lay siege** to the city in an effort to quell the perceived “Corian expansionary agenda.” The Consortium now must decide whether to back the invading Leukotheans or stand behind the city’s occupiers.
5. Eulesabella priestess **Alina Fewbador is providing blessings** to each member of the Consortium in exchange for a sizable donation. If the members of the Consortium are unable to notice any discernible effects of the blessing in the days to come, they will likely pursue legal action against the church.
6. Much to their dismay, the Consortium is hosting **a visit from Qiliria Tallrene**. She will be deciding their fate; it is unclear whether she will view the Consortium as useful potential allies or an impediment to her rule.

PLOT HOOK: TAKE DOWN THE CONSORTIUM

The only people who benefit from the Consortium are the board members themselves. If the Consortium were dissolved, competition would once again render Ancora markets fairer and more efficient. Resistance to the military occupation would become feasible, and the political and economic power held by everyday residents would increase drastically. Life in Ancora Bay is made demonstrably worse by the existence of the Consortium, and eliminating their stranglehold over the city would be a blessing.

That said, “eliminating the Consortium” is no easy feat. In addition to the board’s surprising public popularity, they also have powerful allies, elite security detail, and a rather gauche but undeniably well-guarded palace. Though players should feel free to approach this task however they like, here are six potential routes for removing the Consortium as a powerful influence in Ancora Bay. The following table presents those options, as well as potential obstacles.

Removing the influence of the Consortium will be a boon to Ancora Bay, but it will come with some major hurdles and growing pains. Simply eliminating these eight oligarchs will have an overwhelmingly negative impact on the economy in the short run, as their various business ventures make up a large percentage of total income for the city. Furthermore, any power vacuum will create the opportunity for bad agents to take control of the city. It’s romantic to imagine a version of Ancora Bay ruled by the Splintered—the primary pirate outfit in the region—but pirates are neither great legislators nor city planners.

Whatever the party does, they should be aware that the positive effects of an Ancora Bay rid of its parasitic aristocrats might take some time to develop.

d6	How to take down the Consortium	Obstacles
1	VIOLENCE: The board members are mortal and have few minimal combat abilities. If the party wishes to end their control over the city, the party could simply execute them.	a. The Consortium is well guarded. The elite Barbs are tasked with protecting them (one of the perks of paying off the Corians), and merely getting to them all before getting arrested would be a challenge. b. Though the board comprises eight individuals, there are other wealthy magnates in Ancora Bay. The current board could simply be succeeded by a new group of corporate oligarchs.
2	PUBLIC OPINION: The people have more power than they think, and if enough Ancorans turn against the Consortium, they could boycott their goods, vandalize their property, and shun them out of public life.	a. Despite their awful traits, the Consortium is currently quite popular. Turning the tide on public opinion will require a major leak. The party would need to secure and distribute irrefutable proof of grievous misdeeds. b. Altering perception takes time, and as soon as the party begins to make waves, the Consortium and their allies will try to put a stop to the daring adventurers.
3	DIPLOMACY: The Consortium is wealthy, but their true power comes from the way they are able to influence the Corians. Undermining this symbiotic relationship could drastically reduce Consortium power.	a. The Corians and the Consortium are both quite happy with their current arrangement. To poke a hole in this relationship, the adventurers will have to find a way to make the <i>quid pro quo</i> seem less alluring. b. To even get their foot in the door, the party will have to be incredibly bold. The Corians aren't exactly opening up their doors to any random travelers who seek an audience.
4	BLACKMAIL / INTIMIDATION: The Consortium is guilty of heinous crimes both legal and moral: corruption, exploitation, fraud, infidelity, etc. While they tend to be blasé about these infractions, a particularly egregious offense could be used against them.	a. First and foremost: the Consortium sees themselves as above the law. Threatening them with evidence of their crimes might not sway them as it would a normal citizen. b. Intimidation tactics might be met with an equal response. Unless the adventurers are truly blameless themselves, they might soon be facing a public tarring they were not expecting.
5	DISTRACTION: The influence of a squad of corporate leaders might be irrelevant given a large enough outside threat. Reframing the public narrative from "how can they help us" to "look at what's really important" might chip away at the Consortium's legitimacy.	a. The two largest threats to Ancora Bay are the increased rates of flooding, and whatever it is Qiliria is attempting. These are both threats that the Consortium might be able to argue fall under their purview (e.g. building new real estate or swaying the Corians). b. Ultimately, most sufficient distractions will be temporary. Even a foreign war that takes some attention away from the Consortium won't last forever.
6	REGIME CHANGE: The Consortium is powerful because the Corians allow them to be. If someone else were in charge, they might take a different tack with the monopolists.	a. Defeating the Corians and replacing their military government is no easy task. How do you destroy an army? Who do you replace them with? What happens to the Corians who get left behind? Staging a city-wide coup to undermine eight aristocrats might not be the strategic master stroke that the party thinks it is. b. No matter what happens, the Consortium already starts with a massive commercial advantage. What is to stop them from entering into a new pernicious collaborative relationship with the replacement government?