

# Narrative Design

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PATRIOTS AND TRADERS

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HW 3 – VIDEO GAME WRITING, PART 1

# INTRODUCTION

This is a follow-up project that draws from the game world of [Merchants of Kaidan](#) and the original set of characters created in the previous assignment. Here, the goal is to outline a plot for that character and to describe the associated gameplay.

For each character, you should consider the following:

What adventure are they going on? What is their ultimate goal? What stands in their way and how do they deal with it?

Develop a plot concept, pitch the structure that would fit best (traditional, multiple ending, branching, or modular, but NOT emergent) and explain your choice.

Strive to create a structure with more player agency as opposed to less.

## Patriots and Traders

**Main Player Character:** Anders Bibelow

**Intrinsic Goal:** Legacy

**Summary:**

Anders reluctantly becomes a merchant and begins questing for historical and cultural artifacts to pursue a more lucrative trade in these items.

It starts as a thrill, but becomes a way of creating a legacy (for himself and others). He uses his wealth and connections to fund the recovery of these artifacts and make sure that they only wind up with people or institutions that valued them.

### A. PLOT

**Some additional backstory-**

#### 1. Overthrow of the Orlivaan Peninsula and the Moot of Marymorte

Life in this corner of the world – and perhaps in most others at this time – is a story of conquerors and the conquered. There are many waves of invasions, and not all achieve their victories through men at arms. Some invaders manage their ends with religion, others with culture or trade.

When the *Selvan* armies invaded the *Orlivaan Peninsula* over 250 years prior, *Prince Gerstoff* accomplished all of them virtually simultaneously. A united Peninsula was a valued trading partner and Council troops provided safe and secure passage to the ports in the south.

However, once the region became factious and the borderlands considered an official and more permanent affiliation with their *Selvan* neighbors, *Selva* figured that it was time to act. *King Olan III* sent his eldest son, *Prince Gerstoff* to lead the invasion. The armies secured the ports, the major trading centers, and rounded up the lords of the Great Clans. While the *Orlivaans* were spirited and defended their lands bravely, they realized their best hope of survival was under the control of the *Selvan King*.

After five years of war and facing famine, the Orlivaan lords capitulated to their new master. The terms were set out in the *Treaty of Aensmire Hill* and each of the clansmen sealed the document with their signets.

Under the treaty, the local lords would retain their lands and titles, but swear fealty to Selvan kings. The kingdom had other interests and wars to fight, so set out in the Treaty that Orlivaans could govern their own lands and retain claim to it so long as they obeyed their rulers to the north and paid tribute to them.

However, Prince Gerstoff was ambitious and saw opportunity in a new undertaking. The Orlivaans were at their weakest now, and saw nothing but unrest delayed if they were left to rule themselves. The prince, along with several High Lords and Generals of the Southern Armies, conspired in the *Moot of Marymorte* to seize the lands completely. With promises of great wealth and membership in the Great Houses, several members of the clans betrayed their lords and masters, delivering them to the prince and his men. The lord's titles were stripped from them and their land seized, the baronies and duchies were parceled out amongst the High Lords who had assisted the prince. The lands would be ruled by a regional governor answerable only to the King and the language and culture of the north were to be the only ones given legitimacy; Orlivaan was to be an arm of Selva, both in land and tradition.

After the Moot, it was thought that all records of the Treaty, documents detailing the initial intentions for the Peninsula and much of the First Tributes were either destroyed or lost to history. As it turns out, several caches survived. Some remain unfound, left to rot in cellars or buried beneath overgrown ruins. Others were parted from each other and found their way into private collections and the few royal institutions dedicated to learning and preservation of the past.

## **2. Secrets of the Bibelow Family**

A great secret lies in the past of Anders' family, passed only from father to eldest son. Their family is not of Selvan lineage, but is actually descended from one of the traitors who betrayed the Clans to Prince Gerstoff.

However, Anders' father Horace is not without secrets of his own. Unbeknownst to the family, the small House Bibelow has fallen on hard times. The Registrar of Lords has threatened to de-charter their House if they can't weather the significant losses of the family trading business which has left them heavily indebted to the Crown. Horace has squandered much of Yustoff Bibelow's fortune in mostly-failed attempts to expand their House's renown. The manor house, the opulent lifestyle, all a glittering façade to hide the dark truths on which House Bibelow resided.

## **3. Originalists**

Only smoldering resentment has survived the centuries of Selvan rule into the present. Just a small fraction of the rich and lengthy history continues to exist, with any expression of their history considered illegal. However, so far from the capital, many still practice the old ways and look to the past for guidance and sources of comfort.

The lazy days of summertime were often filled with such casual 'treasure' hunts, looking to find even the smallest relic to reconnect with their past. A generation ago, the hope for deliverance briefly burned bright when one of these ancient caches was recovered. But

centuries of neglect had taken their toll on what was found. The documents within were mostly destroyed and only partially legible. While the trail was cold after nearly three centuries, the descendants of Orliwaan still had some hope that there was more of their history that could be recovered. The greater flame that was sparked was one of greed in the hearts of Selvans. With many years and many mouths, the tales of the ancient caches had evolved into great hordes of wealth rivalling even the Great Treasury of the King. Fearful that they had missed pillaging these riches during Gerstoff's conquest, an interest in antiquities grew out of this discovery.

A new movement amongst the Old Clans grew as well, uniting the disparate and diluted peoples. Under the title of *Originalists*, they could lay claim to preserving their past, pushing against the proscribed boundaries set by the Selvan rulers. But they could also use it as a way to organize behind another and more subversive purpose, regain control of their lands and restore local rule. In the meantime, they would bide their time and look for more of these lost treasures.

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*Side note: After the discovery seemed to yield little of historic value, Maarten Auldayl, an innkeeper from Oldare Loft, saw something within it worthy of reviving long-forgotten conspiracies of ancient treaties. Many scoffed at the old man's obsession and the discovery was soon derisively referred to as the Barman's Bailiwick.*

*To the few who still remembered it, and the fewer still who recognized the historic significance of the find, the discovery was referred to as the First Cache.*

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#### **4. Antiquities Trade**

Another byproduct of the First Cache discovery was a sudden and rapid evolution of the antiquities black market into a full-fledged trading ecosystem, profitable and ever-growing. It wasn't long before the trade exchanges were filled with treasures from every colony and province of the kingdom. Lost in the flood of artifacts, the Orliwaan caches were seemingly forgotten.

Amongst the many challenges and opportunities of this era was one of authentication; few possessed the talent and/or training in these fields and fakes and duplicates were abundant.

#### **Set Up -**

##### **1. Bibelow Family**

Grandfather:	Yustoff Bibelow
Father:	Horace Bibelow
Mother:	Ayda Bibelow
Older Brother:	Elias Bibelow
Younger Sister:	Elsa Bibelow

## **2. Friend(s)**

Childhood friend: Jonas Mairport

## **3. Anders' Youth**

Having made friends in the local communities, Anders also participated in some of the cultural events, at least with the detachment of his family's perspective on Orliivaanian history.

One of these lifelong friends was Jonas Mairport. Jonas' family has a long history in the region and was believed to have distant relations that were once a part of the Great Clans of the peninsula. They also held a decently-sized tract of land adjacent to the Bibelow estate, but did not have the resources to utilize it. Instead, many of Jonas' family were sharecroppers on Anders' family lands.

It was hoped that Jonas could one day join Anders at the Academy if he was able to bring together the necessary annual payments. To this end, Anders was very helpful, managing to persuade his father to pay Jonas for small jobs in his trading business as well as around the estate. However, Horace had an ulterior motive, he was trying to find out what he could about Jonas' family land.

## **4. Lead up to the Game**

Horace's troubles deepen. A member of Court has uncovered documents that seem to suggest the Bibelow family might not be Selvan after all. Threatening to reveal this information, the Lord has forced Horace to obtain Jonas' family land at all cost. Horace finds a seldom-used legal precedent detailing forfeiture of land and its title if it has not been worked in three generations. As Jonas is the third generation, his family would lose title to the land if he didn't stay behind to work it.

Horace does not mention the law and does what he can to indirectly assist Jonas in attending the Academy. Once Jonas and Anders are away at school, Horace hires an intermediary in another city and has them bring the suit to the local magistrate.

At first Jonas' parents don't mention the forfeiture, wanting their son to focus on his studies. Eventually, Jonas does learn of what had happened. Anders persuades Jonas to graduate so that he can help his family as a trader.

## **Events of the Story -**

The main developments in the game occur after Anders graduates from the Academy. Here, he is presented with multiple paths to take, but ultimately, he is destined to become a trader (as this game is about trading) and become involved in the buying and selling of ancient relics.

Along the way there will be many potential allies and enemies, some of whom will do their best to conceal their true intentions. Anders' father is one such antagonist, working counter purposes to his son, mostly out of necessity.

Jonas disappears for a while after secretly becoming involved with the Originalists and the black-market antiquities trade.

There are a lot of narratives to explore in this environment depending on the desired complexity (and budget) of the game.

Such an involved narrative necessitates an equally complex structure.

## **B. GAMEPLAY STRUCTURE**

Depending on how far back we choose to set the game, it's possible to build out the backstory involving Anders and his life growing up with his friend Jonas. These quests could nearly all occur in any order, and so a modular approach would probably work best. The only relevant event would be the time just prior to attending the Academy where Horace is trying to obtain the Mairport's land.

If this is meant to be a fixed event, then the modular structure of the early years would briefly be followed by a standard one, with a linear set of events leading up to the Academy.

However, if it is decided to give Anders significantly more agency, then the narrative could branch early on, providing a path where Anders helps his friend Jonas in retaining control of the land.

Events will unfold differently, with future interactions having different ordering and weighting depending on the choices made at this point.

### **Some must-have events:**

- i. Anders still needs to graduate and become a trader, finding his way into the antiquities business. Jonas will also become involved with the Originalists and the black-market trade.
- ii. Anders sees the brutality of those involved in the trade and learns of the political and cultural motivations behind the actors.
- iii. Anders learns of the history of the people of the peninsula as well as his own unique place amongst them.
- iv. Anders needs to utilize his skills learned in school and growing up to authenticate discoveries.

Beyond that, choices could let the narrative unfold to a single conclusion, or further split into multiple endings.

### **For example:**

- i. Anders could strike out on his own after his family's titles are stripped from them and the business folds. Then decide on how to best to deal with the Originalists, his father, and the history of the Clans.
- ii. Anders could side with his father temporarily in order to take over the business, using Horace's connections to find out more details of the conspiracy.
- iii. Anders could work with the Originalists to safeguard local history and culture.
- iv. Anders could work with the Originalists to try and restore local rule.