

PA DARIR

CITYBOOK



Nigel Findley

PAADARR CITYBOOK

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*This book is dedicated to the memory of Nigel Findley.
He will be sorely missed.*

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INTRODUCTION

It was one cold bastard of a night — *another* cold bastard of a night — down by the docks. The moonfog was rolling in off the Coldmere, and I could taste the taint of the swamps in the back of my throat. It was one of those nights when the only thing that could stop me from thinking about a warm bed — *anybody's* warm bed — would be a gun to the head. No matter what you may read in the penny-dreadfuls, a trench coat and a felt hat *won't* stop the onshore wind they call “the Needle” from chilling you to the bone.

Behind me and to the right, down the road they call the Widow's Walk, I could hear muffled sounds of merriment rolling from the doors of several dockside taverns. From my vantage point, I couldn't see the glowstone light washing warm across the flagstones, but I could sure imagine it. (A strong imagination's one of my weaknesses, I've been told.) It wasn't too long ago that I'd sworn to myself I'd never set foot inside one of those stinking holes. Of course, I'd been warm when I'd made that oath. Now I was starting to rethink things. By the Teeth of Ajara, right about now a nice, friendly fist-fight with the locals would be a small price to pay to warm my aching bones. I wouldn't take that option, of course; I'd been hired to keep watch here, and by all the gods, keep watch was what I'd do. Maybe my ex-husband was right — *on this* point, at least — when he said I was too conscientious for my own good ...

I set that thought aside. Something was starting to happen, it looked like. For the first time since the sun had vanished behind the sullen clouds, there was activity down on the wharf a dozen meters in front of me. Lights were moving on the deck of the Elandro schooner *Garath* — small, hand-held glowstones, their light muted with cheesecloth. I'd been starting to figure that the same “economic downturn” — as the newscallers labeled it — which was degrading the quality of the whiskey at my favorite watering hole had extended its effects to informants too. Maybe not, after all.



"Martha."

I turned quickly at the whispered voice behind me ... let my hand drop away from my gun butt as I saw who it was.

Jaken, his name was, "executive assistant" — read, "menial go-fer" — to the man whose business I was conducting here on the docks. "Ajara," I swore. "What the hell are *you* doing here?"

Half in the shadows, half out, he was walking toward me slowly. His hands were empty, palms raised in a patronizing, calming gesture. His teeth gleamed in a *very* insincere smile. "Nothing to worry about," he answered softly. "Just seeing if you're okay ..."

And that's when my instincts kicked in, and the sentinel-bells went off in the back of my brain. "Oh, *crap*," I gasped, as I went for my gun.

An instant too late. The two new figures seemed to materialize out of the shadows that half-cloaked Jaken. Thin, they were, like a Big Rich's compassion, and faster than anything living has a right to be.

Up came Baby, and a runeslug blew the first figure a second navel the size of a fishbowl. I brought the big revolver around to bear on the second, even though I knew I wouldn't have time to squeeze off the shot.

Something slammed into the side of my head before the pistol was anywhere near on-target (sometimes I hate being right ...). My last thought turned off the glowstones as it left ...

ALL THE BASICS

PADARR

Official Population: 101,900

Per Capita Income: 30,000 ooses per annum

Major Imports: Wood and other building

materials; staples (other than fish); technology

Major Exports: Fish; enchanted items; tin; dreamstones

Many people would describe Padarr as a bleak, depressing hell-hole ... and those people are its inhabitants. People who've shaken the cold mud of Padarr off their feet wouldn't be quite so generous in describing it. And then there are those who call it "Paydirt." Like most other cities on Marl, Padarr is a small oasis of what its rulers laughingly call "civilization" in the dangerous wastelands that are the Wilderness.

Since the Godwar, the inhabitants of Padarr — Padarrrens, they call themselves — typically view the rest of the world with an attitude that ranges from "Live and let live" to "I'm all right, Jack!" Certainly, Padarr has its problems, as does any city: crime, poverty, corruption, the ongoing guerrilla war between Big Business and Big Government. But along with the rest of the planet, the city has been happily untroubled by echoes of the Godwar for the last several centuries.

But all that's starting to change. The "Troubles" are about to begin again ... and how they'll end this time, no one can guess.

THIS VOLUME

The *Padarr Citybook* is a supplement for *Bloodshadows*, describing the port city, its people and the surrounding region. Much of it can be read by both players and gamemasters, though how much you wish your players to know about the city before they visit there is up to you.

To gain the most pleasure from this book, you should have both the *MasterBook* and the *World of Bloodshadows*.

CHAPTER ONE

PADARR PAST

According to ancient records, there's been a settlement on the site of modern Padarr for more than a millennium — since before the Godwar at the very least, and perhaps even further back. (For obvious reasons, records dating back *before* the Godwar are rare ... and often suspect.) The earliest confirmed mention of a settlement at the mouth of the Coldmere dates back about 1,100 years.

“THE FIRST AGE”

In the days before the Godwar, Padarr was very different from the city we see today. According to myths and legends widely accepted there, the city was originally founded by a band of pirates who terrorized the trade routes along the western coast of Eln. In this era — Padarren historians often refer to this time, rather grandly, as “The First Age” — there were two relatively large cities along the northwestern stretch of Eln’s coastline. Much smaller than Galitia is today, these two cities, Jeboa and Manteth — 300 kilometers south of the Coldmere, and 100 north, respectively — were loaded with the rich and influential. A tremendous amount of trade flowed between them, an irresistible temptation to any pirate with a ship and even cut-rate cannon.

A particularly effective — and ruthless — band of pirates was led by a woman named Gayle Vecuren. Vecuren’s followers cut such a swath through the trade route between Jeboa and Manteth that the cities turned out their navies to put a stop to this plague. Unfortunately for the merchants of both towns, while the two cities were quick enough to take each other’s goods and money, in general, they couldn’t stand one another. Their admirals out and out refused to work together, each out for the glory of sinking the pirates on their own. Thus, though the forces arrayed against Vecuren should have been



overwhelming, the half-assed approached to the operation taken by both navies allowed the wily pirate to slip through their net again and again (and rob to her hearts' content).

Eventually, this feud began to grow expensive and the money men put their feet down. The Jeboa and Manteth governments would get their respective militaries to work together, the merchants warned — or the cities might be getting new governments.

Vecuren had known this day would come, and she'd already made her plans. Over the preceding year or so, she had — so the legends claim, at least — established a fortified settlement in the midst of the Coldmere Marsh. The swamp and its denizens protected her fortress from attacks by land. The Marthak Bight, choked as it was by silt, proved an effective defense to seaward. (Apparently, the few navigable channels were known only to Vecuren and her captains, and easily defended against would-be attackers.) Although both navies knew where Vecuren's stronghold was, they simply couldn't mount an effective campaign against her. Instead, in an attempt to "bottle up" the pirates, they concentrated on blockading the Bight. Let them cower in the middle of their swamp — or so went the official line — and may they *starve* there!

The blockade was great public relations — very visible and enough to convince the average man in the street that something was being done. Unfortunately, it didn't convince Vecuren, at least not completely. Her band was still able to sail out and harry trading vessels, though admittedly not as often before.

CRISIS

And just when the merchants thought it was safe to go back in the water, along came the Godwar.

Vecuren was long dead by this time, of course, and her successors weren't half as bright as she'd been. As the war spread across Marl, the pirates melted away, doing their best to hide from the havoc. They stopped raiding — trade between Jeboa and Manteth had slowed to a trickle anyway — and adopted a "siege mentality." For all intents and purposes, Padarr disappeared for the duration of the Godwar.

In fact, what happened was that the leaders

of the settlement decided that isolation was the only defense that made any sense. No strangers were allowed into Padarr; refugees and other would-be "immigrants" were barred from the town, driven away, and sometimes killed.

It was at this time that two "traditions" — still in effect — came into being: an entrenched prejudice against Unnaturals, and a monolithic "official" religion. Looking back, neither step made very much sense — but they seemed like the right things to do at the time.

Reports and rumors from elsewhere on the continent continually linked flare-ups of violence with the appearance of Unnaturals. The conclusion — attractive, even if it was wrong — was that the Unnaturals caused the violence. Padarr's "civic government" — already they'd started calling themselves the City Fathers, possibly in an attempt to legitimize themselves and seem like something other than ambitious rabble — declared that Unnaturals were henceforth forbidden from the city. Many Unnaturals left Padarr in response to this edict. Those who didn't, who tried to stand on their "rights" as citizens, soon discovered that among their rights was the right to be beaten senseless and left to die.

Similarly, the City Fathers also concluded that the cults springing up across Marl were also direct threats to "civic stability." As with the Unnaturals, it seemed that wherever cults showed themselves, violence quickly followed ... hence the conclusion that the cults *caused* the violence. To prevent the same thing from happening to Padarr as was happening to too many other cities, the City Fathers declared that one and only one religion would be allowed within the walls of Padarr. This would be the worship of a "local" god known as Ajara. Professing any other faith — in public or in private — would be grounds for expulsion from the city ... or execution, at the discretion of the City Fathers.

Of course, neither initiative spared Padarr from the scourge of the Godwar. While "overt" Unnaturals might be expelled from the city — or simply slaughtered — there were all too many who could successfully "pass" for Human. (Granted, only the most daring of these stayed in the city anyway; the risks of slipping up in the "masquerade" were too serious for many.) Also, there were many "pure-breed"



Humans who'd gladly drag the city into the heat of the Godwar.

The "sanctioned religion" laws were empty gestures as well. This kind of legislation just drives religions underground, and — all too often — persecutes "harmless" religions, while leaving relatively untouched the potential harmful cults it's supposed to control. Typically, the most dangerous cults are already covert, even where restrictive laws don't exist — in other words, they're *already* underground ...

"THE SECOND AGE"

Eventually, the Godwar ended. Emerging from their self-inflicted isolation, the residents of Padarr found that the world had changed significantly. Of the two great cities on which the pirates of Padarr had fed as parasites, Manteth quite simply no longer existed. Where once almost a million people had dwelt, now nothing lived. Jeboa still existed, but it hadn't weathered the Godwar unscathed. Much of the city had been razed to the ground, and perhaps half of its population had been slain, or fled.

Enough had changed for Padarr that the

pirate-town couldn't return to its old livelihood. With its major trading partner destroyed, Jeboa no longer shipped much in the way of goods along the coast near Padarr. What trade the city conducted was directed south, rather than north. For a few years, pirate captains sailed from Padarr, trying to intercept this new trade route, but eventually even the bravest corsairs realized it wasn't an effective proposition any more. Not only were the distances involved prohibitive, but the oceans themselves had become more treacherous than they were before the Godwar. The weather patterns seemed to have changed, and — more importantly — great monsters from the ocean depths sometimes hunted in the coastal shallows, threatening pirates and trading vessels alike.

THE LEGITIMIZATION OF PADARR

The City Fathers and populace of Padarr had little choice but to "turn respectable." While ancient chronicles record that there was a constant "population drain" — a steady emi-

gration of people who found Padarr to be inhospitable — within a century of the Godwar's ending, population growth and *immigration* had come to balance the trickle of emigration. Padarr began to grow. Seven hundred years ago, deposits of tin, and then dreamstone (see Chapter Six), were found in the rocky headlands to the north and south of the Marthak Bight. Business concerns established mines and began shipping raw metal and stone— and, eventually, manufactured goods as well — north to Guildsport. As this new trade opened up, the population of Padarr boomed. Those who made their fortune in mining started calling the city “Paydirt.”

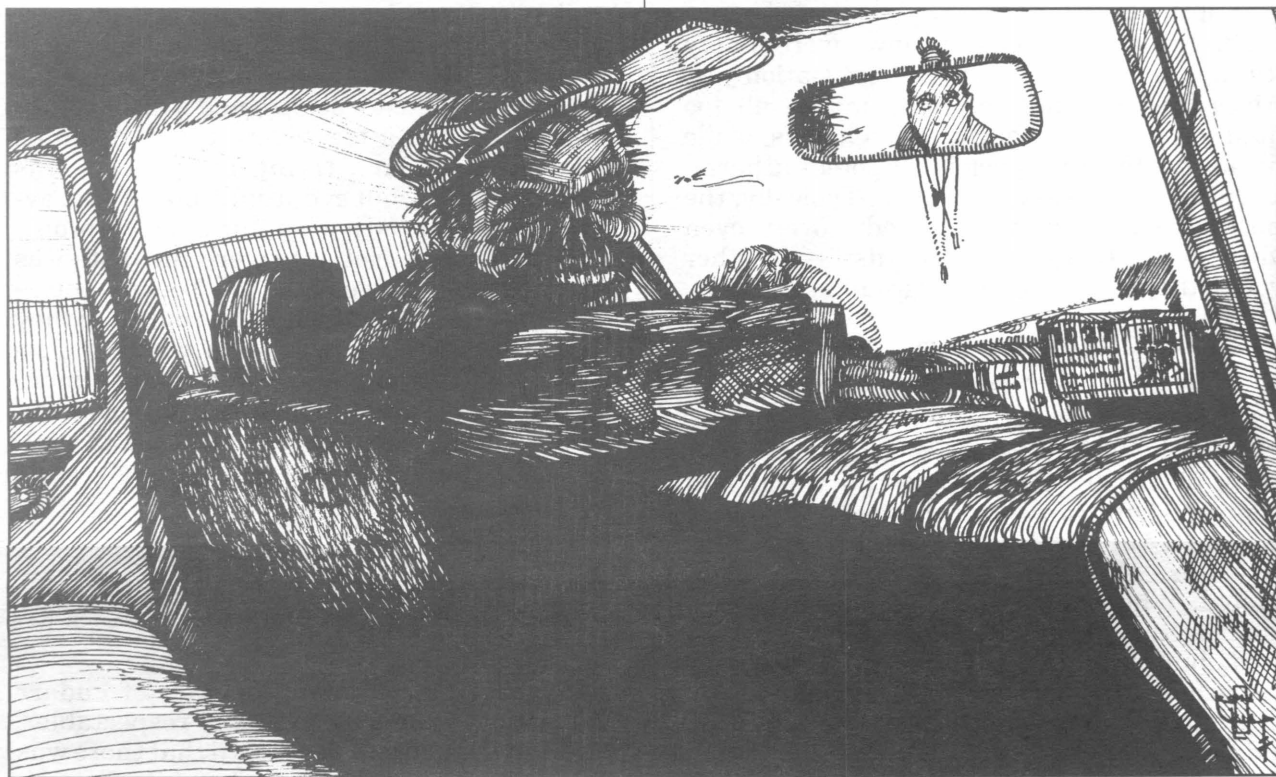
For more than a hundred years, Padarrens had given little thought to the city of Jeboa three hundred kilometers to the south. (After all, the locals had apparently reasoned, if we can't raid their shipping, what significance do the Jeboans have ...?) Now, however, Padarren businessmen were seeking new markets for their tin, dreamstone, and other trade goods. Padarren vessels sailed south again for the first time in decades, hugging close to the rocky shores, so as not to tempt fate and the voracious hunters from the depths. Eventu-

ally these pathfinders reached the headland that sheltered Jeboa from the storm-driven waves and found ...

Nothing. The city of Jeboa was gone, as if it had never been. Unlike Manteth, there were no blasted ruins, no signs of war, simply ... *nothing*. Those pathfinder captains must have doubted their charts and the navigational rutters that the pirates of old had passed down to them. The Padarren explorers pushed on south, another hundred kilometers, then two ... Still they found nothing except for a city on a continent that the natives called Caldov. While this opened up a new trade route for the Padarrens, the captains wished to continue on with their search for Jeboa. Eventually, even the bravest among the captains turned northward again, and beat for home. To this day, no one knows what happened to the great city of Jeboa, and it's a bad idea to bring the subject up around Padarr.

STEADY GROWTH

Over the nine centuries since the Godwar, Padarr has grown rapidly. It's now undeniably a *city* and an important center for trade on the



northwest coast of Eln. In many ways, it's unrecognizable as the "pirates' stronghold" founded by Vecuren in the First Age. In others, however, it still declares its heritage.

Firstly — as might be expected for a city founded by pirates — Padarr is in many ways a wide-open "free port." Legally and practically, the docks are distinct from the city as a whole. While laws restrict imports to the city — automobiles, for example, as described in an earlier chapter — there are no restrictions whatsoever on goods that pass *through* the

harbor. As long as the goods in question never leave the ships, or the "extraterritorial" warehouses, of trading companies, the law enforcement community of Padarr couldn't care less whether they're illegal — within Padarr itself, or in any other jurisdiction.

To take a concrete example, slavery is illegal within Padarr's city limits. This doesn't prevent various slavers from using Padarr's harbor as a "way-station" for their trade in human suffering. As long as slaves are confined to the slavers' galleys, or to "holding

JEBOA'S FATE

Whatcha goin' around talkin' about Jeboa for? Don't you know that it's not a ... wel-come subject, friend? You don't? Yeah, I can see that you're curious, so I'll tell you a little bit about Jeboa's fate. But only a little. Well, you know that it disappeared one day. Nobody really knows how. At least, *most* people don't know, but I have a good idea. Pops — you know, my great-great-great-great-grandad, who was nowhere near that good — was one of the seamen on the ship that went out looking for it.

It was a long trip by sea before the ships reached the spot where the captains thought the city should be. But what did they see? Nothin'. *Were the charts wrong?* they asked themselves. Maybe. But one captain wanted to make sure that this wasn't the spot. Perhaps there was some sign of a ruined city there that couldn't be spotted from the ships. So he and some of his crew went ashore to look around.

That's how Pops was able to walk around the area where Jeboa had once been. It was a ... well, weird is not the word for it, but I'll use it ... weird place to be. There wasn't a sign of the city. That wasn't the weirdest part, though. As Pops looked around, he noticed something peculiar. There were no trees, no grass, nothing at all that could be called livin'. Just solid rock and loose, dead dirt. Pops told this to his captain. "What could suck the life out of a place like this?" were his very words. Or so they tell me.

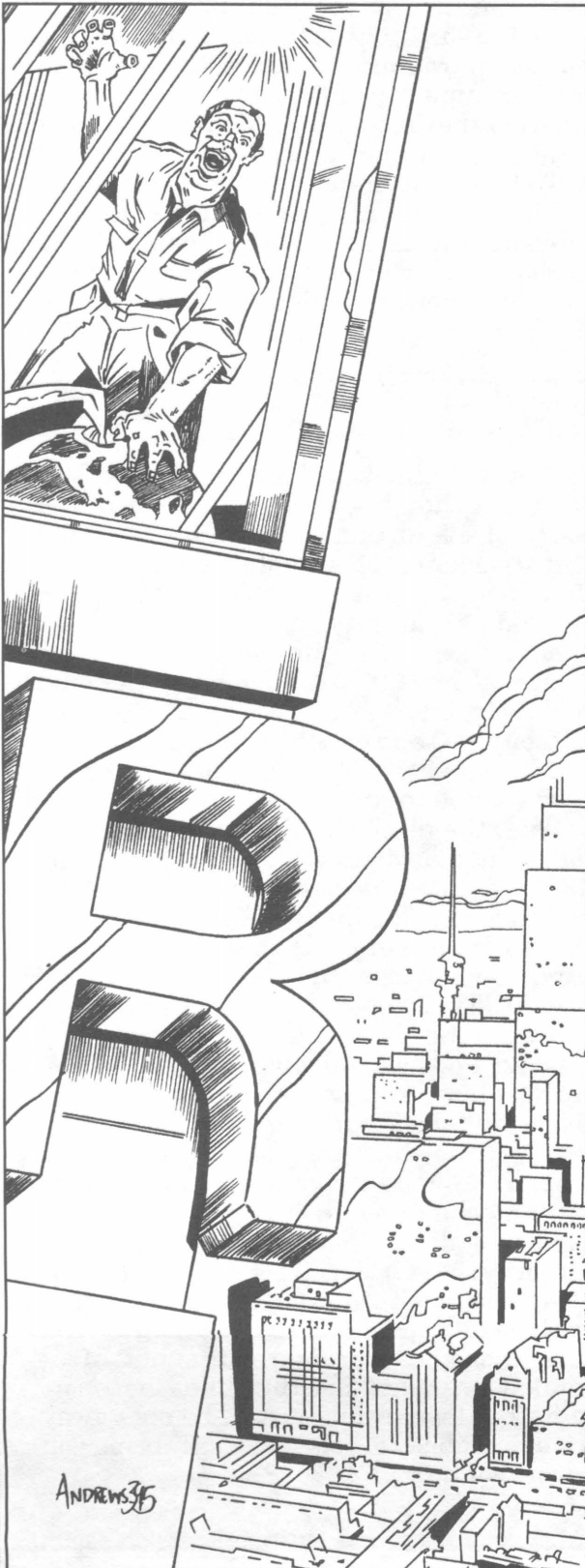
After lookin' around a little more and finding nothin' else, the captain and his

crew went back aboard their vessel. He and the other captains decided to go down the coast a little further. That night, while the ships anchored off the shore, Pops had a dream about his dame in Padarr. Then, in the middle of his dream, a horrible darkness came and seemed to hang over his real body, lookin' at him. It had no shape, but could see, hear, taste — and everything else — without eyes and ears like you and me. And you know what? Pops said that the blackness wanted to *eat* him!

Well, the black thing didn't eat Pops. It just drifted away like a black cloud of curdling nastiness. When Pops woke up the next mornin', he found out that one of the seamen on his ship had disappeared. That frightened Pops, but he didn't say anythin' about the blackness. Nothin' at all.

You've heard about the discovery of Caldov? Pops was involved with that, too. He has some interestin' things to say about that continent. Two nights before they found the city, the ships weighed anchor off the coast. Both of those nights, Pops had dreams of the blackness again. And you know what? That's right, two more seamen were lost. Eaten by the evil blackness, they were. Pops always slept with glowstones in his room — until he disappeared a few years later. You know, nobody's ever figured that out. Me, I think it was that black thing, but there's no telling. If I were you, buster, I'd stay away from the subject of Jeboa. It'll only bring you a world of hurt.





Marshall Andrews III

pens” in the “extraterritorial” warehouse district, no Padarren laws are being broken. Only if slaves are brought into the city “proper” will the proctors — the local version of the sentinels — step in. Of course, *all* goods brought through the Padarren docks are subject to taxation ...

Secondly, “the law” is considered and used as a tool, rather than held up as an ideal. Laws are convenient ways for those people in power to maintain their influence and get others to do what they say. In Padarr, the only people who consistently obey the laws are those who don’t have the “clout” to get away with breaking them. The people with influence — the aristocrats, the Big Rich and Big Government — obey the law when they have to, or when it doesn’t disadvantage them to do so. When they can rely on their “juice” to simply flout the law, they do. And in those situations that fall somewhere in the gray area between, they bribe the right people into turning a blind eye or granting some kind of “special dispensation”. A later section will discuss in more detail how this idea of “the law as a bargaining chip” has permeated Padarren society.

Thirdly, the two “traditions” promulgated during the Godwar — exclusion of Unnaturals and a single, official religion — still hang around today, although both restrictions have eased somewhat. Unnaturals are no longer expelled or executed on sight; exclusion has “softened” to oppression and exploitation. While “heretic” faiths are still officially illegal, the City Fathers typically turn a blind eye ... so long as the “upstart churches” pay their “taxes,” with interest, on time, and don’t cause trouble. (The proctors actually *value* the “heretic” churches. Easier to brand a mug a “heretic” then prove he cracked that bank, right?)

SOCIAL EVOLUTION

THE “CITY FATHERS”

Politically, Padarr has undergone many changes. When it was founded, what government it had was based on the concept of “might makes right”.

Although Gayle Vecuren apparently didn’t take the title herself, later records describe her as the first Mayor of Padarr. During the

"GRAY" TRADE

Bud, when I first came to Padarr and I saw the kind of goods that sometimes came through the harbor ... man, you could have knocked me down with a buffle-feather, let me tell you. Yeah, yeah, I know what they say — that "illegal" is a matter of geography; that if you visit the right place, you're going to find that *anything's* legal. Well, I don't know about that. There's some things I've seen ...

Anyway, you don't want to hear about my nightmares. The real point is that you can find *anything* in the harbor at Padarr. Anything. It might not be legal in the city itself — gods, it might not be legal *anywhere* on Marl — but you're *still* going to find it around the docks.

And you're going to find Harbormaster's thugs looking at it, whatever it is: weighing it, measuring it, totting up in their pointy heads just how much dough they can grind out of the trader carrying it.

early decades, the city was "governed" by a succession of dominant pirate captains or chieftains. There was no organized system for picking leaders, or "retiring" them. Whoever could get enough people to listen to him (or her) would become "Mayor," and would hold the position until the shaky alliance of conflicting interests collapsed ... or until an assassin got lucky.

Just before the outbreak of the Godwar, the Mayor was ousted by a contingent of five rivals, who'd decided to set aside their personal differences long enough to deal with the one thing they had in common — an abiding hatred for the incumbent Mayor. These five allies established themselves as a ruling council, and — in an attempt to legitimize and ennoble themselves — coined the term "City Fathers." Everyone—even the "Fathers" themselves — expected this situation to fragment into infighting almost immediately ... and, without the threat of the Godwar, it probably would have done so. As it worked out, however, with chaos breaking out across Eln, the "Fathers" realized that the principle of "hang together or hang separately" actually made a

lot of sense. A ruling council offered a degree of stability that a single, all-powerful Mayor could never match. While there'd be steady — and sometimes abrupt — turnover of members sitting on the council, the council itself would endure.

Throughout the height of the Godwar and for two centuries after its end, the size of the ruling council stayed at five. Seven hundred years before the present day, however, three influential traders who were excluded from the council by jealous rivals, joined forces and threatened to overthrow the civic government. The City Fathers at that time quickly decided it would hurt them less to allow the three newcomers onto the council than to throw the city into turmoil. Thus, the council expanded to eight members. Since then, much the same thing has happened on three other occasions, and currently there are fifteen City Fathers ruling Padarr.

THE RISE OF THE ARISTOCRACY

Some people consider it an axiom of sociology: give people enough time, and they'll generate an "aristocracy" ... regardless of the society's origin. Padarr is a good case in point.

During the "First Age" of the city, influence and power came largely from ruthlessness and physical prowess (and the instincts necessary to stay one jump ahead of would-be killers). This was a time when the "Mayors" and the "City Fathers" were still pirate captains... with all that that implied.

When the people of Padarr turned away — or, more correctly, were *forced* by circumstances to turn away — from piracy, business acumen became more important than simple bloody ruthlessness. The old pirate "dynasties" started to slip into obscurity. The true "movers-and-shakers" of society were those who tempered sheer acquisitiveness with business skill, reserving violence for use as an occasional tool, rather than as a day-to-day means of getting things done.

A couple of centuries after the Godwar, the descendants of the original "pirate dynasties" realized they'd become ever more marginalized ... and decided they didn't like it one bit. Their fortunes had slipped so far, however, that there wasn't much they could do about it. The Big Rich had cemented their grip on society.



There was no way these “old families” — even though they bore proud and ancient names like Vecuren — could shake their power.

So instead of trashing the current power structure, they established their own, parallel structure, based on the concept of heritage. In essence, even though the hot blood of their pirate ancestors had thinned over the centuries, these descendants of the old families started to consider themselves to be “aristocratic,” and to act like it.

What happened next was a fascinating kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. Over the next few hundred years, as the “aristocratic” families began to act as though they were special because of their heritage ... other segments of the population began to treat them that way, too! By the present day, all but the most cynical and jadeed Padarrens accept that the aristocracy is, somehow, different and special.

While some aristocratic families represent “old money,” not all are rich ... or even solvent, come to that. Place in the “pecking order” of the aristocracy has less to do with wealth than it does “historical significance.” For example, the Vecuren family — led, at the present time, by Sutcliffe Vecuren — is teetering on the edge

of bankruptcy. Yet, since it can trace its heritage right the way back to Gayle Vecuren, founder of Padarr, it remains the city’s most important aristocratic family, and members of all the other “old families” defer to Sutcliffe.

THE BIG RICH

As the aristocratic “old families” built up their (somewhat illusory) hierarchy, for the business leaders of Padarr it was business as usual. The business of Padarr *became* business, and a new social hierarchy developed to reflect this. While the aristocrats considered blood and heritage to be all-important, this new hierarchy — which came to be called the “Big Rich” — realized that it was money that made the world go round.

In the first couple of centuries after the Godwar, there was considerable “turnover” among the Big Rich. The business community of Padarr hadn’t quite “shaken out” yet. Seemingly successful businesses collapsed, while others emerged to take their places. Individuals and families made fortunes, only to lose them months, years or generations later. Eventually things settled down, however, and a

THE OLD FAMILIES

All right, I grant you that the aristos have got *some* things going for them — not many, but some. Take Sutcliffe Vecuren. He *does* own some of the most valuable real estate in the city: a great hunk of land on Snob Hill. Same with a couple of the other “old families.” The aristos, they seem to think it’s their “due,” or some crap. What was it really? An accident of history, that’s what.

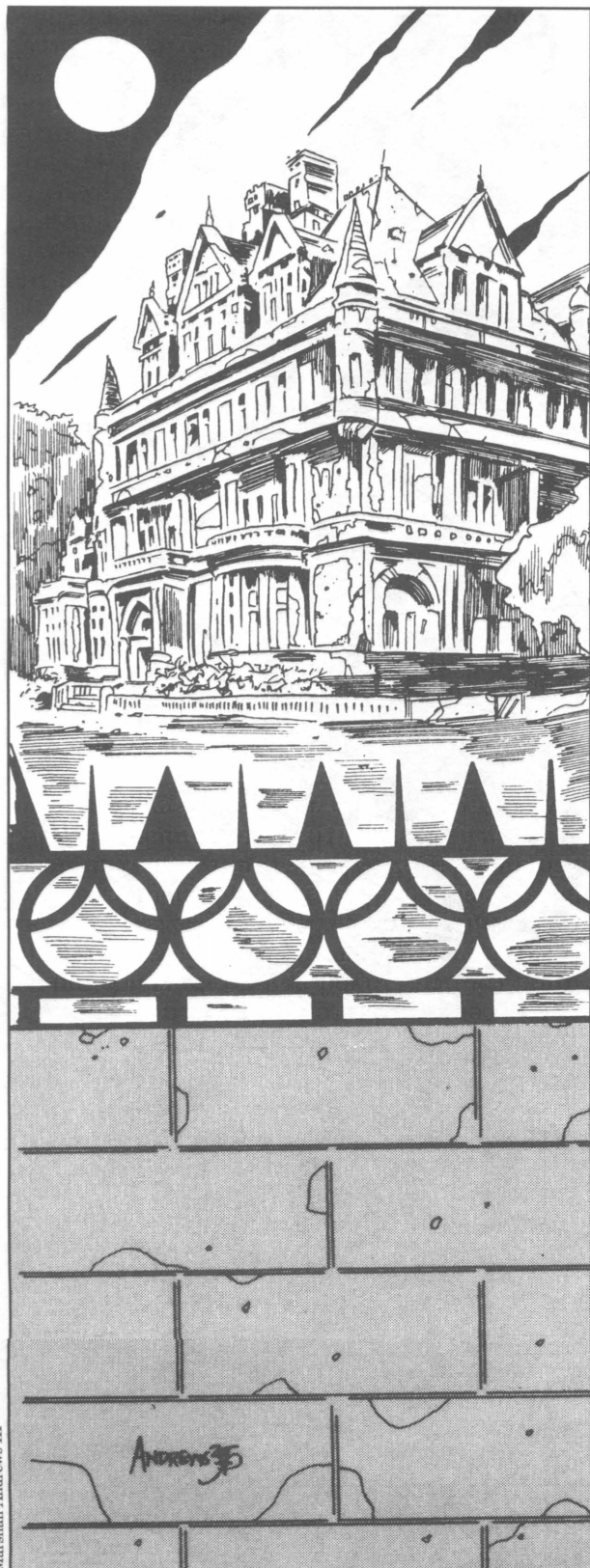
Those old families: a lot of them glommed onto that land back when Padarr was young, back when what they owned was just a tract of swampland, little different from any other swampland in these parts. The Vecurens’ land, for example: you look at some of the old maps, and it was a real nasty parcel of peat bog back when Gayle Vecuren claimed it for her own. (Good pirate captain; crappy judge of land, if you ask me ...) The Vecuren family hung onto that land ... mainly because nobody would take it off their hands.

Then Padarr grew, and along came the earthmages and watermages, and they reclaimed dry land from the swamps. The city spread out ...

And lo and behold, it spread out until it surrounded the Vecurens’ spread, and the land owned by some of the other “old families.” Now it was dry because the water had been diverted ... and it had turned from a peat bog into prime real estate.

Of course, with a lot of these families, they’ve got land and *that’s all*. They don’t have the money to maintain what they own — not without selling the property they need the money to maintain, and where’s the sense in that? And that’s why it’s easy to spot the aristo area of Padarr. Look for the best and most valuable real estate ... covered with “stately homes” that look like they’ve had the crap kicked out of them.





Marshall Andrews III

relatively stable hierarchy of wealth emerged.

Today, you can think of the Big Rich as “old money” who’ve had money for generations, and have accrued all the influence and reputation that goes with it. Unlike the aristocracy, the Big Rich doesn’t hark back to a “glorious past.” For members of the moneyed class, it doesn’t matter how long you’ve had money: it only matters how much you have *now*. Theoretically, this means that new families and individuals can bootstrap their way into the Big Rich ...

But in practice, this almost never happens. Business in Padarr is exceptionally well-entrenched; all the standard markets — food, entertainment, services, utilities, magic, automobiles, etc. — are mature, and already “locked up” by established businesses. The Padarren business community is an “old boys’/girls’ club,” in which personal relationships are of vital importance. Newcomers who try to compete with the old, established Big Rich family-businesses are generally ignored ... until they get big enough to really be noticed. Then the established Big Rich squeeze them out — by fair means or foul — or simply destroy them.

The only segments newcomers to the market might come to dominate are those that aren’t already being addressed by the current plutocrats — in other words, something totally new, that scores of generations of Big Rich haven’t already thought of ...

THE GUILD UPRISING

The guilds were a relatively recent addition to Padarren society. The first official, organized guilds set up shop only 150 years ago or so. (Before then, there’d been “benevolent organizations” and “craft halls” dedicated to fellowship — and jobs — for and among members of certain trades, but none of them had been big enough or well enough organized to qualify as true “guilds.”) Some social historians think that the guilds *were* actually started by professional “organizers” who moved into Padarr from Guildsport; there’s no direct evidence of this, however, and the current Guildmasters deny it, claiming the Padarren guilds are entirely a local creation.

The newly-formed guilds grew quickly, their ranks swelled by the many tradesmen who weren’t aristocrats or Big Rich, but desper-

MOVING UP, BREAKING IN

Opening a business in Padarr, huh? Well, you've come to the right place for advice. I hope you've got no problem with keeping your business small — small time, small profit, small exposure — because that's all the old boys are going to let you get away with. Trust me, I've been there.

Moved to Padarr fifteen years back, I did, come down from Guildsport. While I was up there, I met a gunsmith who had this great new way of improving the autoloader mechanism of an automatic handgun. Faster action, fewer misfeeds ... well, the details don't matter. I bought him out — got his prototype, his notes, and the license to manufacture. I figured Guildsport wasn't a big enough market, so I moved on south.

Mistake.

I set up my manufacturing plant, and I went to work. First year, nothing: I was selling onesey-twosey, to people coming in off the streets. Second year, things started looking up: word had spread, and some aristos' bodyguards were dropping by. Third year, I heard rumors that someone high up in the proctors was pushing to have my autoloader accepted as standard-issue firearm for the city.

And that's when the sky fell on my head — that's what it felt like. I guess it was the interest from the proctors that did it. What happened was, I'd attracted the wrong kind of interest from the big shot who "owned" the handgun market in Padarr.

That's right — *the big shot*. Don't be

fooled, buddy: just because it looks like there's two or three smaller outfits in balls-out competition, doesn't mean that there's not *one guy* behind the scenes pulling the strings ... and raking in the profits. That's the way it works in Padarr, all too often.

That's the way it worked in the handgun market. All the other businesses in town closed ranks against me. See, I wasn't "one of the boys" — I wasn't in the right clubs, I didn't go to the right church, I didn't hang out with the right people. Don't be fooled: it's not what you know that counts. It's not even *who* you know — it's who knows *you*. Nobody knew me, except as some out-of-towner crapping in the big boys' nests.

Suddenly I couldn't buy iron. I couldn't get tradesmen to come in and maintain my factory. I couldn't buy replacement tools. Then three-quarters of my work-force ups and quits on me — no notice, one day there, the next day gone. My business collapsed, my debts got higher than a Sketh on rotgut. When a personal representative of a Big Rich magnate offered to buy me out at a penny on the osee, I didn't have much choice. He bought out my license on the autoloader too. You can buy guns using the technology from Gradyarmaco ... if you're willing to pay the tab.

Buddy, I was getting too big for the comfort of the Big Rich. I got too big, so they cut me down to size.

And they'll do the same thing to you...

ately wanted *some* sense of belonging. Initially, only smaller companies were targeted for guild organization (because the management of these companies didn't have the clout to keep the organizers out). For a hundred years or so, the city's larger businesses — specifically, those owned and run by the Big Rich — were ignored by the guilds. The Big Rich themselves settled into a state of security — false, as it turned out — believing that the guildhall organizers wouldn't dare come after *their* workforces.

About fifty years before the present day, the

Big Rich were proven wrong. The seven major guilds that had grown up in the city — Civic Services; Drovers & Stablemasters; Enchanters; Elementalists; Smiths; Shipwrights; and Laborers — backed by half a dozen smaller groups, staged a sudden organizing drive targeting the workforces of major Big Rich magnate's businesses. Among the key targets were essential services like Janas City Transport, Padarr Transit, Grady Motor Works ... and the city proctors force! So well-planned and -executed was the organizing drive that the guilds managed to recruit most employees

of these key targets before their senior managers even knew what was going on.

When they *did* know, however, the fertilizer hit the ventilator. The Big Rich moved fast. At their “polite suggestion,” the City Fathers decided that the time was ripe to expand the proctors force. “Coincidentally,” all of the new proctors — hired on a couple of hours’ notice, without training or even personal interviews — were bodyguards, enforcers, “expeditors” and generic leg-breakers who, again coincidentally, had just been laid off by the Big Rich and their cronies. These newly-hired proctors were formed into “anti-insurgency squads” whose job was to clamp down — hard — on the “insurgents” and “terrorists” who were (according to the official news releases), “threatening to paralyze the economy and manufacturing base of Padarr.” Strike-breakers by a more palatable name, these anti-insurgency squads rampaged through the city for five days, splitting skulls and rupturing kidneys with impunity.

Today, no official records catalog exactly what happened during the “Week of Fire” — the Padarren version of the “guild war” in Guildsport. The city archives gloss over the events of that week, explaining simply that “the loyal proctors force put down the threatened insurrection and re-established peace”. After the “Week of Fire,” of the original Guildmasters and organizers there was no trace. (Even today, city officials guilelessly suggest that the “rabble-rousers” realized that the game was up, and fled back to Guildsport. There is no official comment on the fact that Guildsport has no record of the “fugitives” arriving there ...)

When the “insurgency” was settled, the guilds still existed ... but in a considerably different guise. The philosophy of the original Guildmasters — the ones that had challenged the Big Rich — was to “take back the workplace”: to enforce a kind of “workers’ bill of rights and privileges” on which all employers must sign off. The Guildmasters would form a kind of “labor court” to which employees could

bring complaints and grievances, and the guilds would fight for the employees’ cause against management.

Well, if you were to believe the current Guildmasters’ protestations, little would seem to have changed. In fact, however, *everything* is different. The guilds have been co-opted and dominated by the business interests they initially tried to challenge. Guildmasters and their cronies aren’t laborers like those they claim to represent, and never have been; they’re guild bosses, and that’s all they’ve ever been and ever *will* be. For all their talk of “fighting for employee rights,” they typically seem to accede to employers’ demands in any confrontation that occurs. The way it actually works today, is that the supposedly “independent” guilds are just an adjunct to the Big Rich: people under the thumb of big business and the Big Rich, serving *their* interests, not those of the workers.

Guild independence is a convenient fiction. Anytime workers start thinking — probably correctly — that they’re being exploited, the Guildmasters get up on their hind legs and complain to the employers. The Big Rich appear to listen to the guilds and then make some (meaningless) concession. The guilds then go back to the workers, pointing to the “victory for employees’ rights” that they’ve just won. The workers are pacified — for the time being, at least — but nothing substantive has changed.

Over the last couple of years, rumors have made the rounds about a new organization of secret guilds — “freeman guilds,” they’re called — that truly are independent of the Big Rich. If these freeman guilds actually do exist, then their members — and, even more so, their organizers — are at grave risk from the Big Rich of Padarr. Many workers who’ve heard the rumors don’t believe them, however; if these freeman guilds actually do exist, cynics claim, they’re just as much in the pockets of the Big Rich as the standard guilds ... or they soon will be.

CHAPTER TWO

PADARR TODAY

GEOGRAPHY

The city of Padarr is located on the western coast of Marl's major continent, Eln, roughly 750 kilometers southwest of Guildsport, and almost 1,200 kilometers northwest of Galitia. It's right on the coast, straddling the mouth of the Coldmere River, surrounded by the grim Coldmere Marsh. Inland from the Marsh, the land rises in rocky foothills, eventually towering up in the Jalan Range of mountains.

The Coldmere River empties into the Marthak Bight, a narrow and shallow bay. Silt carried down from the foothills by the slow-flowing river constantly threatens to choke the bay, and the Padarrens must constantly keep the Bight dredged to provide channels navigable by their typically shallow-drafted boats.

A kilometer or so offshore, in the middle of the bay, is the island known to the locals as The Sentry.

GETTING THERE

The easiest and least treacherous way of getting to Padarr — or, more commonly, *of leaving* the city — is by sea. During the summer months, when the northern ice cap has retreated and the storms are in abeyance, trading vessels round “The Tusk” to and from Guildsport. Padarren vessels also sail southward to trade with other cities along Eln's western coastline and the lone city on the continent of Caldov, although this trade is much less vigorous than the northern route. (Theoretically, the southern trade route should be much preferred — after all, it's not blocked by ice and storms for eight months of the year. All but the most aggressive Padarren traders, however, shun trade with



the “Southrons,” claiming that the passage is too dangerous and the profits are too small. True, perhaps one in five of the ships that set sail southward never returns to Padarr’s harbor. Those captains who do return, though,

TALL TALES

There’s some seafarin’ fellas out there who have an ... aversion to taking jobs on certain ships. Oh, it isn’t the ship or its captain that these folk dislike (in most cases). Why, a job’s a job, I say — and so do they for the most part. Nay, it’s the destination that scares these fellas off. Until last year, I held these seamen in a kinda contempt because of this fear. Aye, they hinted at something dark and nasty at the end of their route, but I just sneered and told them nothin’ could be worse than Old Missy off the northern coast. Yeah, got some good tales to tell about *that* fish, mister. But they’ll wait, they’ll wait.

Anyways, it’s the southern route that messes these fellas up. They’re afraid of that Caldov route for some reason. Heard tales about some o’ the people in that city. The uppity-ups keep to themselves. Don’t talk to anyone directly. Work through underlings and all that. I thought Padarr had some of the snobbiest and most ornery aristos, but in that city, you don’t even *see* the aristos. Well, it takes all kinds ...

As to why these people are afraid of the Caldov route, well, there’s some talk about missing seamen. You’ve heard about the missing ships. That happens even on the northern routes — probably because of Old Missy. But around Caldov, seamen go missing. Sure, there’s taverns and the like there, but that don’t explain how a seaman up and disappears on you before you get to the city or after you set sail from it. Those Caldovians don’t let anyone into the city proper. If you’re caught trying to sneak in, then your mates never see you again. No, there’s somethin’ eerie goin’ on around that continent. I lost my brother to it last year. His mates tell me that he went missing the night before they docked in that city. Weird, that.

typically sell their goods at prices that should make the southern trade very attractive. Why isn’t it, then? The traders rarely discuss it — even among themselves — and when they do, their concerns seem to comprise more superstition than solid fact. These superstitions seem to hint at the strangeness of the continent of Caldov more than any other area.)

Couriers and traders sometimes travel to Padarr by land. Several passes through the Jalan Range exist. Most are blocked by snow and ice during the winter months, but one — the so-called Rocnest — is open year-round. Two causeways — low and narrow — traverse the Coldmere Marsh, reaching from the city to the foothills. These causeways were built, so rumor says, in the early days of Padarr, soon after the city as such was founded. Over the last century or so, however, the City Fathers have been unable — or unwilling — to maintain these causeways, or keep them clear of various swamp-dwellers that threaten travelers.

There is a “semi-permanent” gate in the foothills, perhaps 40 kilometers from the walls of the city. The gate is “semi-permanent” in that it’s always in the same spot — in a small hanging valley, next to an ice-cold tarn — but it doesn’t always take travelers to the same spot. Self-styled “experts” will gladly — for a hefty fee, of course — explain how to predict the vagaries of this gate. Since two “experts”

THE RUMOR MILL

- Old Missy the sea snake is supposed to be located a days’ sail to the north of Padarr. It’s said that the bay that she issues forth from is where a small trading fleet from Manteth got beached before the Godwar. The goods that the fleet was carrying included white gold, silver, and various gems that Manteth was trading to Jeboa. It is also rumored that there is a map to the *lost mines of Manteth* somewhere in the booty.
- There is a temple on the Coldmere Rapids that is rumored to contain the largest unfractured dreamstone known to Padarr. Imagine how much such a stone could go for on the open market!

will often disagree, however, trusting your life to their expertise is a case of *caveat emptor* — let the buyer beware. To reach this gate, characters must successfully ride a set of rapids, detailed below.

THE COLDMERE RAPIDS

The semi-permanent gate can be found in a hanging valley reachable by only one route — the Coldmere Rapids. Unless the characters can fly, they're going to have to raft the white water down to the valley.

- **Beginners' Luck:** The Coldmere Rapids start with a fairly easy series of rapids named Beginner's Luck. It's a gentle ride with only a few jagged rocks on the far right to worry about.
- **Whailer Falls:** Things go downhill quick. The next set of rapids run right over some one-meter falls. And waiting at the bottom are a whole lot of whailers.
- **The Funnel:** The pace slows down for a while before you get to this next rapid. You'll know it when you see it. There's only one way to go, right between two 30-meter boulders.

The characters' raft will get funneled between them, then drop about four meters to a series of smaller rapids.

- **Temple Rocks:** After a half-hour or so of lesser rapids, the characters will see an ancient temple ruin on the right-hand side of the rapids. The characters should bear left, then right, then left again. There are some Undead on the banks near the temple, so hope your raft shoots by fast.

TEMPLE UNDEAD

AGILITY 8

Maneuver 12, stealth 12, swimming 12, unarmed combat 13

DEXTERITY 8

ENDURANCE 10

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 11

INTELLECT 3

Perception 6

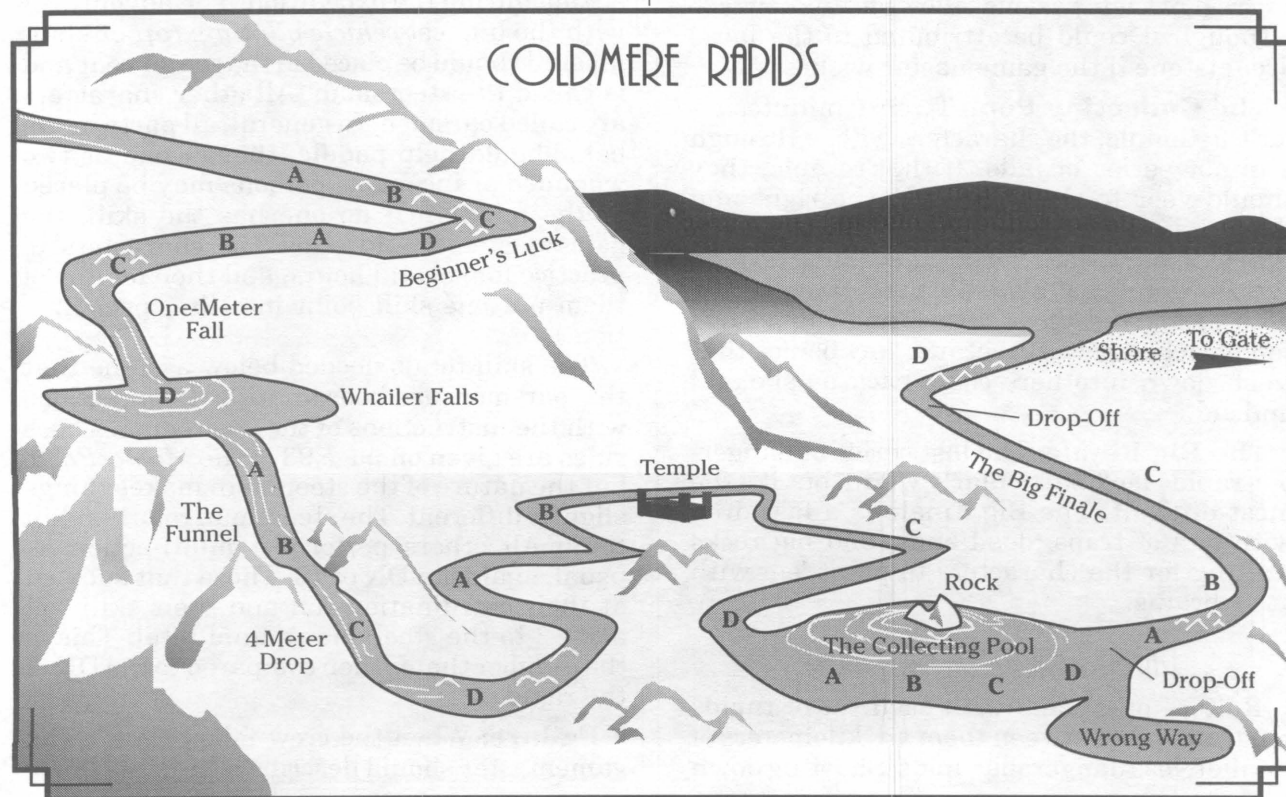
MIND 3

CONFIDENCE 6

Intimidation 7

CHARISMA 6

Charm 8, persuasion 8



Life Points: 0

Natural Tools: Bony claws, damage value STR+3/13; immune to shock and KO damage.

Roleplaying Notes: The Undead at the ancient temple are mysterious leftovers from some forgotten civilization. They are centuries or possibly even millennia old, and draped in bright purple clothing with beautiful, sparkling dreamstones that clash with their taut, slightly greenish skin. The Undead are harmless unless threatened. If someone should investigate, the creatures will take them back to their city and try to show them what once was. They cannot, or will not, speak, but they will eagerly show an explorer carvings, statues, and architecture from their forgotten world. The gamemaster will need to develop this lost civilization on his own, and figure out why some of them have turned mad. Also, if the gamemaster wishes, she can place a 3,000-osee dreamstone in the main altar area that the Undead will proudly show off. This particular dreamstone is about the size of a Hugor's fist.

Those Undead that are noted as "insane" are violent and will attack anything they believe is a living being. Why these differ from the rest of their passive fellows is unknown — although it could be attributed to the large dreamstone if the gamemaster wishes.

• **The Collecting Pool:** Twenty minutes after the temple, the characters will go through a minor series of falls. If they're able, they should veer to the left. Go to the right and they're in for some trouble. At the bottom of the right-hand path is a large, swirling pool. In the center juts a greenish slab of stone, coated with sickly red blood. The thing must have some wicked powers, because any bodies that wash down into here come back as skeletal undead.

• **The Big Finale:** The last series of dangerous rapids isn't particularly weird, but it's the most difficult. The Big Finale is a fast drop with lots of traps, dead ends, and big rocks waiting for the characters to paint 'em with their brains.

RAFTING THE ROARING RIVER

Rafters must deal with each set of rapids separately. In between them are kilometers of smaller, less dangerous rapids. Shooting down

the river without rest can wear out even the toughest party, so characters are encouraged to put in on the banks to rest a while before tackling the next series. Adventurers might even discover other areas to adventure when they put in. The Coldmere Rapids are long and arduous, so the gamemaster should have plenty of opportunity to add more distractions than those provided in this book.

GAMEMASTERING THE RAPIDS

The rules in this section make white water rafting as realistic and dramatic as it should be. This section can get a little rules heavy, but you can use what you like and wing the rest.

Making it through each series of rapids is a use of Dramatic Skill Resolution. Each of the rapids described above is listed again with the difficulty number for each step of the Dramatic Skill Resolution. A brief description is also included so that you can easily describe the scene to the group.

• **Preparation:** To begin with, draw a diagram of a raft or make a copy of the one provided on the previous page. Each player can then tell you where their character is sitting during the expedition. The adventurer with the highest *vehicle piloting: raft* or similar skill should be placed in the center rear and is called the steersman. All other characters are called oarsmen. In general, all party members should help paddle, though one or two wounded or incapable persons may be placed in the middle. (If no one has the skill, the gamemaster should allow the characters to practice for several hours, and then let any of them put one skill point into the specialization.)

The skill totals needed below assume that the oarsmen are coordinating their actions with the instructions of the steersman. These rules are given on page 93 of the *MasterBook*, but the nature of the steersman makes things slightly different. The steersman rolls his skill total. All others perform a multi-action as usual, against a DN of 10. Those that succeed at their coordination roll and their skill roll add +2 to the steersman's final total. This is the number that is then compared to the DN of the rapid.

• **Failure:** When the crew fails a check, the gamemaster should describe it as going down

THE COLDMERE RAPIDS

BEGINNER'S LUCK

Step A: 12, rolling rapids

Step B: 12, a few sharp rocks

Step C: 13, a tricky turn through some boulders

Step D: 12, a quick ride out

WHAILER FALLS

Step A: 14, an easy start

Step B: 15, the river picks up

Step C: 16, a fast, tricky turn through some rocks

Step D: 17, a run through the whailer pool; there are always 1–10 whailers here waiting for characters who fall out

THE FUNNEL

Step A: 10, the funnel approaches

Step B: 18, the drop through the funnel

Step C: 15, a fast ride down the chute

Step D: 14, a few fast but easy turns

TEMPLE ROCKS

Step A: 16, a fast left

Step B: 17, a faster right

Step C: 18, a harrowing, hard right

Step D: 16, zigzag through the rocks

THE COLLECTING POOL

The river pulls everything to the right, towards the Collecting Pool. Rafters will want to go left. Anytime a step is attempted and failed, the rafters are on a course toward the Collecting Pool. Getting the raft back on course requires the successful completion of the next step by more than three points.

Step A: 18, the river pulls to the right

Step B: 18, the river pulls to the right

Step C: 18, the river pulls to the right

Step D: 18, the river pulls to the right

THE BIG FINALE

Step A: 19, a strong undercurrent tries to pull the raft off course

Step B: 21, a steep drop-off narrowly avoiding jagged rocks below

Step C: 17, a fast, tight turn to the left

Step D: 22, the final drop, fast through the rocks

the wrong path, backing up, or getting caught on a rock.

• **Possible Setbacks, Complications, and Critical Problems:** Difficulties during a fast run through the rapids can be fatal. Use the effects below whenever a *possible setback*, *complication*, or *critical problem* occurs during Dramatic Skill Resolution.

Possible Setback: Instead of the usual procedure, this result means that some sort of outside influence has appeared. In the Coldmere Rapids, it could mean that two or three whailers are encountered.

Complication: The water threatens to force the raft down a less sure path. If the roll is failed this turn, the DN of all subsequent steps is increased by +1.

Critical Problem: If the skill roll for this round isn't made, the raft takes a bad hit on a rock and threatens to spill. Every character must make an *acrobatics* (or *Agility* at -3) roll versus the DN of the current step. Those that fail by 1–2 points are thrown out but manage to

hold on to the raft. Those that fail by three points or more are swept into the river. A rafter who is thrown out can hold on to his paddle with a *Dexterity* total of 10 or more.

Rafters who are swept into the river are in big trouble. Each round carries the character through the next part of the rapid (and further steps of the Dramatic Skill Resolution.) The victim must make *swimming* (or *Agility* at -3) totals equal to or higher than the DN of each remaining step — starting with the one that washed him out and tackling the others in subsequent turns. Every point that the character falls short of the DN is read as damage. If a roll is missed by eight points or more, the rafter is drowning (see the *MasterBook* rules, page 101.) Once all steps have been completed, the swimmer can grab hold of a rock somewhere in the river and begin looking for his companions.

If everyone falls out of the raft, the game-master should be kind and have it get caught on a rock near one of the characters.



CLIMATE

Padarr has its own “microclimate” that is subtly but significantly different from the land that surrounds it. Part of this is due to the way the mountains disrupt the weather patterns; most, however, is caused by the Coldmere River and the surrounding marsh. The water moderates the temperature range, making the winters warmer and the summers cooler than they would otherwise be.

Winter temperatures typically range from a daytime high of 40 degrees to a nighttime low of 32 degrees. Sleet and freezing rain are relatively common, particularly at night, but snow is a rarity. (When snow does fall, however, the city is more or less paralyzed. The City Fathers never seem to budget for snow-removal or -clearing, either magical or technological.) Summer temperatures range from daytime highs of 72 degrees down to nighttime lows of 40 to 45. The highest temperature on record was 81 degrees, during a two-week heat-wave more than a decade ago.

Annual rainfall is relatively high — about 165 centimeters in an average year — and varies little with the season. Heavy, beating rainstorms — known to the locals as “gods’ tears” — are relatively rare and usually occur at night. Most of the time the rain is light, little more than a cold, steady drizzle.

Prevailing winds are easterly during the winter, steady and piercing. (Padarrens call this winter wind “The Needle” because of the way it can penetrate just about any protective clothing.) Since it blows down from the foothills over the Coldmere Marsh, it carries with it the sharp, pungent reek of the swamp: the tang of alkali mixed with decay. Native Padarrens are so accustomed to this reek that they don’t even smell it — or *claim* that they can’t, at least.

During spring and fall, the winds are unsettled and gusting, switching unpredictably from easterly to westerly and swirling over the marsh and around the bay. In the summer months, however, the wind shifts to a steady, gentle westerly, carrying with it the crisp smell of salt from the ocean.

Storms lash the Jalan Range throughout the year; it’s impossible to predict when a major storm will hit, closing all but the Rocnest pass. During spring, summer and fall, these

storms are limited to the higher peaks, rarely reaching even down into the foothills. In the winter, however, storms roll down into the lower elevations, lashing the foothills and the margin of the swamps. The area of Padarr itself and the Marthak Bight generally are untouched by these storms; further off-shore, however, and elsewhere along the coast, the winter storms make ocean travel dangerous in the extreme.

POPULATION

According to civic records, the population of Padarr is just over 100,000 souls, making it considerably smaller than Selastos and Galitia. This is the *official* figure, however; the actual population is considerably larger. Unofficial estimates put the figure at closer to 200,000, or even higher ... depending on who you believe.

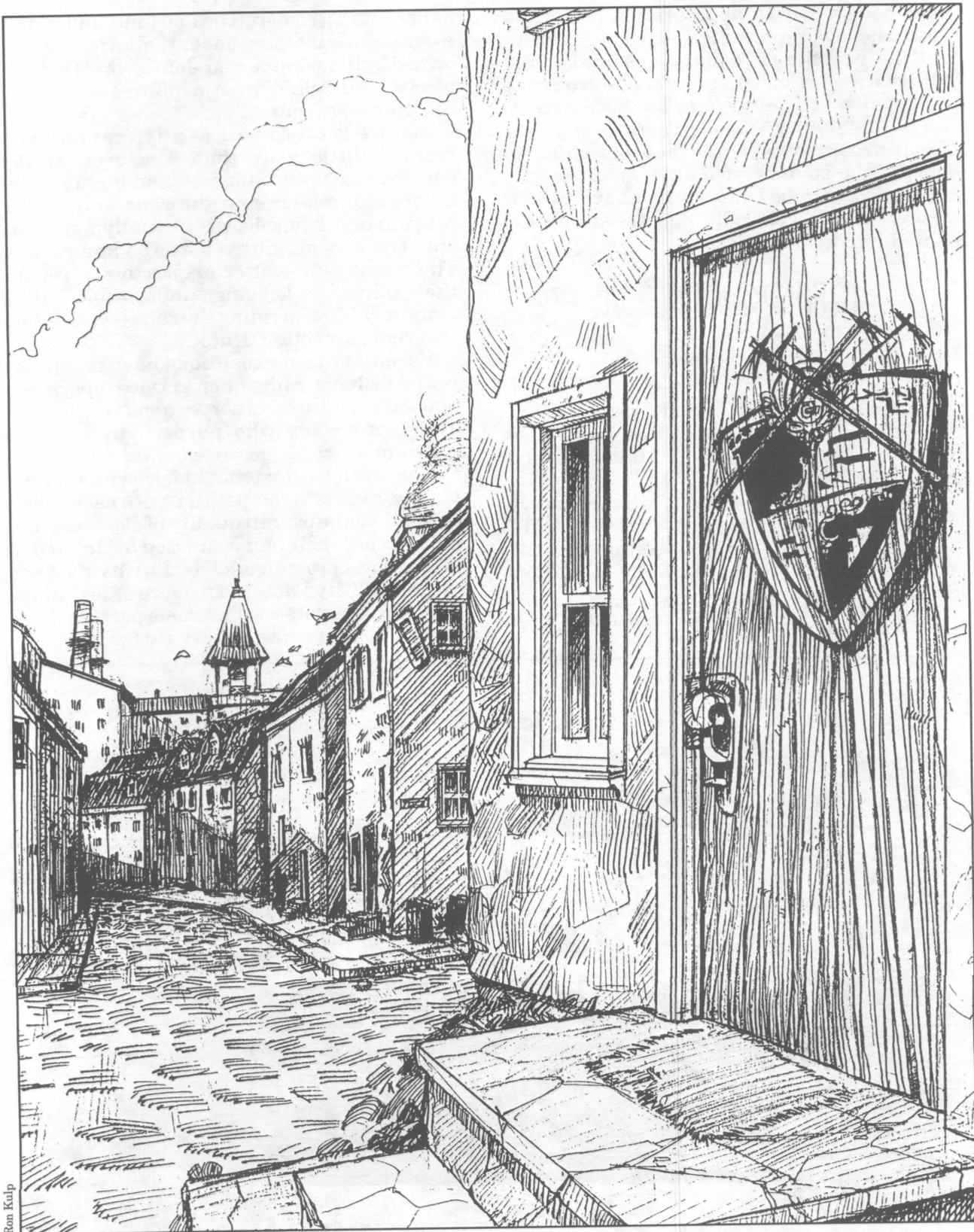
The official records also have something to say about the proportion of Unnaturals in the population: apparently, very low, on the order of one percent or even less. Padarr, the City Fathers would have people believe, just doesn’t have enclaves of Unnaturals, like the Taxim quarter in Selastos. The truth is very different. There *are* Unnaturals in Padarr... *lots* of them: Taxim, ‘Shifters, breeds, Vampires and all the rest. Unofficial estimates put the Unnatural population at close to 20,000, or even more. Since they have no “official existence,” of course, they simply don’t count as far as the city government is concerned. The City Fathers claim, oh so earnestly, that if there *were* Unnaturals in Padarr, they’d qualify for the same rights and privileges as Humans: they’d

WEATHER

The weather in Padarr? One word, chum — *gloomy*.

You’ve got winter, which is cold, gray and wet. Then you’ve got summer: warmer, gray and wet. Ah, *but* then you’ve got yourself spring and fall ... which are — you guessed it — gray and wet. *Not* a good vacation spot ... but you can always be guaranteed of moody cloudscapes and dramatically glistening streets.

Any questions ...?



Ron Kulp

enjoy health care (if appropriate), protection under the law, representation in government, and the benefits of “equal opportunity” and “affirmative action” programs, and would be protected by the city’s (almost nonexistent) “social safety-net.” Since there *aren’t* any Unnaturals, however, the Fathers go on to explain, the point is moot anyway ...

In practice, the Unnatural inhabitants of Padarr form a generally oppressed and exploited underclass.

TRANSPORTATION

RAILRUNNERS

Padarr has limited railrunner service within the city walls. There are three companies providing this service, each with its own line (or, in the case of Janas City Transport, a whole *three* lines). Predictably, all these serve only the wealthier areas of town: “Snob Hill,” “The Circle” and, to a much lesser degree, the “upper” areas of the docks, where the larger businesses can be found.

Although the three service providers —

Janas City Transport, The Red Line, and Dary’s — are officially independent, all are actually owned by the same person, Jon Jevik ... through a network of “blind” intermediaries and “shell” companies, of course.

Service is overpriced — a typical fare is 8 ooses (a little more than 5 selasts, at the current rate of exchange) — and highly unreliable. Maintenance on the rails and on the railrunners themselves is virtually nonexistent. The cars are filthy, battered and rusted. The conductors — often ex-proctors, hired for their talents at keeping “undesirables” (like Unnaturals) from riding the rails — are sullen and rude, and often drunk.

Various citizens’ coalitions have fought for years to have railrunner service upgraded, and extended into other regions of the city. The figureheads who purportedly run the railrunner companies frequently claim that they would *love* to extend their services — and, ideally, to go into competition with each other, to improve the overall quality of service — but lament that their hands are tied by draconian zoning laws promulgated by the City Fathers. (Since the City Fathers are more or less in the Big Rich magnates’ voluminous pockets, however, only real dopes believe this ...)



Marshall Andrews III

A VIEW FROM THE STREET

Where to, buddy?

Yeah, sure, I know the place. No worries, I'll get ya there in time. Just let me set the meter.

Huh? Nah, I don't mind if ya talk to me. Sometimes conversation's the only thing makes this job worthwhile. Come to think of it, if you're into conversation, it's a good thing ya flagged *this* cab, not one of those freakin' independents — "pirates," we call them, or "rats."

Why? You know who've they've got driving some of those pirates — or, rather, *what?* *Taxim*, that's what. *Dead* guys. (Huh, I can't call them "metabolically challenged" and keep a straight face ...) Yeah, that's right, dead guys. They work cheap, and they don't stop for coffee breaks. Sure, take a pirate and ya can save yourself a handful of osees ... but tell me, what's your neck worth? Me, *I* wouldn't put *my* life in the hands of someone who's already lost *his* ...

And what the freakin' hell can a *Taxim* tell ya about the town — places to go, places to avoid — answer me that? Maybe if ya wanted a guided tour of the graveyards ... but if it's *nightlife* you're after, I'm your boy. *Taxim* taxis. Only in Padarr.

Out of town, huh? Yeah, sure, I can spot 'em a mile away. When your business is out of the way, give me a call, and I'll show ya the hot spots. Hack drivers, we know *everything*, buddy. It's our job ...

"HACKS"

A single company — "coincidentally" co-owned by Jon Jevik — has the only official concession for taxi service in the city. This concession grants Jevik's firm — Padarr Transit — the right to put a total of 80 licensed "hacks" on the streets of the city. Padarr Transit sells these licenses to "independent owner/operators," who are entirely responsible for all maintenance costs on their vehicles ... and then "claws back" the majority of all revenue (*not* profit) generated. These "independent owner/operators" are free to set their own

rates, which of course leads to cut-throat competition between them. Maintenance costs, annual license fees and other "extraordinary expenses" ("squeeze" and bribes) are grindingly high, which means that owner/operators have to keep their rates verging on the extortionate (a trip from The Circle to the docks might cost 30 osees, or even more). Even so, most licensees are barely making ends meet. (Of course, this means that maintenance gets *very* short shrift indeed ...)

Padarr Transit cabs have technomagical "trip-meters" installed — and frequently checked — by technomancers on Jevik's payroll. Most owner/operators will find ways of "skimming" — taking fares with "tripping the meter," for example — since that's all too often the only way of turning even a meager profit. Punishments for people caught skimming are extreme, however ... and only rarely enforced within the law. While some hack drivers are charged, convicted and imprisoned for fraud, most "skimmers" who are caught see the inside of a hospital room rather than a law court.

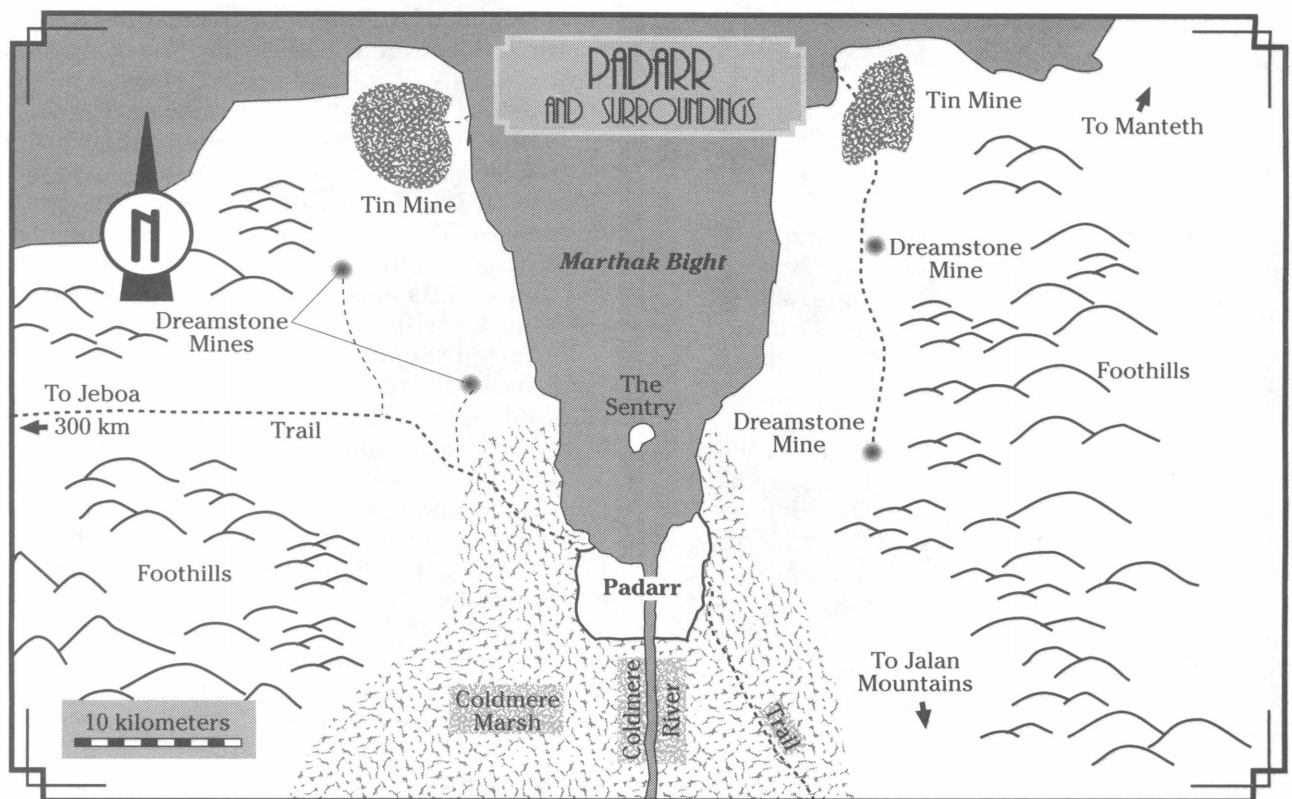
Predictably, unofficial "hacks" roam the streets. Their owner/drivers turn a fair trade, and avoid the "claw-backs" that bankrupt so many official license-holders. On the downside, Jevik and his "boys" do *not* take kindly to "independents." The harsh justice meted out to unofficial hack drivers sometimes extends to their passengers as well. (After all, those passengers are accomplices to criminal activity, aren't they?)

PRIVATE VEHICLES

The newer areas of Padarr — specifically, "Snob Hill" and The Circle — have streets wide enough for heavy vehicular traffic. (In contrast, the older parts of the city have narrower streets. Vehicles — whether private or "hacks" — can and do traverse them, but with difficulty, particularly when pedestrians are out in force.)

The private cars favored by the "fat cats" are *big* — huge, lumbering boat-like things, plusher inside than most people's homes. They don't handle worth a damn — they're just too big for that — but that's okay: image is more important than function, after all (for *this* socioeconomic class, at least). As in so many facets of Padarren life, technology is considered





déclassé, while magic is the *sine qua non*. Thus, all the fat cats' vehicles are driven by elemental forces, or some other form of magic.

A step or two down the socioeconomic ladder, the would-be fat cats also drive private cars, just as big and impractical as those of their betters. These people generally can't afford the price required to buy magically-driven cars, however, so they're stuck with lumbering, hissing contraptions run by steam, or even by internal combustion engines.

It is categorically illegal to import any self-propelled land vehicle into Padarr; only vehicles of Padarren manufacture are allowed. The official reason for this dates back to a regrettable incident two dozen years ago when something unpleasant "hitched a ride" in the elemental engine of an imported car, got out and terrorized the city for a couple of days. Since then, the City Fathers have gone to great lengths to prevent a similar occurrence by outlawing vehicles built elsewhere in Marl.

That's the official rationale. The *real* reason is that imported vehicles would cut painfully into the monopoly enjoyed by Grady Motor Works, the sole manufacturer of built-in-

Padarr vehicles, both magically- and mundanely-powered. And competition, after all, might force Barad Grady to drop his (extortionate) prices or improve his (execrable) quality ... which, in turn, would greatly displease Mr. Grady.

The City Fathers *can* grant a kind of legal dispensation, exempting an individual from the "no imports" law, but — for anyone but the highest rank in the Big Rich — dispensations are rarer than a hospitable queskworm. Predictably, magnates like Jon Jevik, Lara Finnelle and their ilk flaunt their imports. Even with a dispensation, the cost of an imported vehicle is usually prohibitive. First the would-be owner must buy it — elsewhere, of course — and then have it transported to Padarr.

A visitor unaware of this law who brings her own automobile to Padarr, will find it "temporarily impounded" by the gate guards on her arrival ... if she's lucky. When she leaves the city again, she can claim her vehicle, at a cost of 10 osees per day for "safekeeping" (plus whatever "squeeze" the gate guards can extract, of course). If she *isn't* lucky — if the

guards think the vehicle might be used to smuggle contraband, or if they're just in a pissy mood — she might find it confiscated. (She *might* be able to buy her vehicle back — at list price, plus “handling charges” — but the gate guards are under no obligation to give her this option.)

THE SENTRY

This is the name that Padarrens have given to the small, haystack-shaped island that rises out of the Marthak Bight about a kilometer offshore. Over the years, silt carried down from the hills by the Coldmere has built up around the Sentry, and there has never been any persuasive reason to dredge the area. Within a hundred meters or so of the Sentry, the water averages less than a meter deep at high tide. At low tide, “sandbars” of sticky, treacherous silt can be seen above the water. This silt means that only those boats with the shallowest of drafts — one-man skiffs and the like — can actually reach the Sentry. (It *might* be possible to “beach” a vessel at the edge of the “sandbars” and then walk to the Sentry through the shallow water... but this isn't a good idea for two reasons. First, the consistency of the silt ranges from that of thin oatmeal to something like quicksand. Second, the silt is home to a species of tiny “sandworms.” Normally, sandworm bites cause nothing but itchy, irritating rashes ... but rumor holds that larger specimens, rare but *out there*, are *considerably* more venomous ...) For this reason, “conventional wisdom” holds that the Sentry is desolate and deserted, and that there's no reason to visit it.

Of course, various rumors take issue with this claim ...

SECURITY

THE WALL

Like most cities in Eln, Padarr depends on reinforced walls to keep the nastier realities of the world safely outside.

Padarr has multiplied in size several times since its founding. Each increase has, predictably, required new walls to enclose the city's expanded area. As the city spread beyond its

STANDING SENTRY

Oh, aye, there's nought out there on the Sentry. Just a godsforsaken hunk of rock. No value to anyone. That's what they tell you, at least.

You ask any of us, though — us fishermen — and we'll tell you different.

Look at it. Really *look* at it. See how there's traces of sea-fog around its base? Now look at the rest of the Bight. Go on, *look*. Where else is there any fog ...?

It's always like that. Every day for twenty-thirty years I've sailed by that thing, and every day I've not wanted to look too deeply into that fog that surrounds it ... just in case one day I finally see through it. See something I didn't ought to see, if you take my meaning.

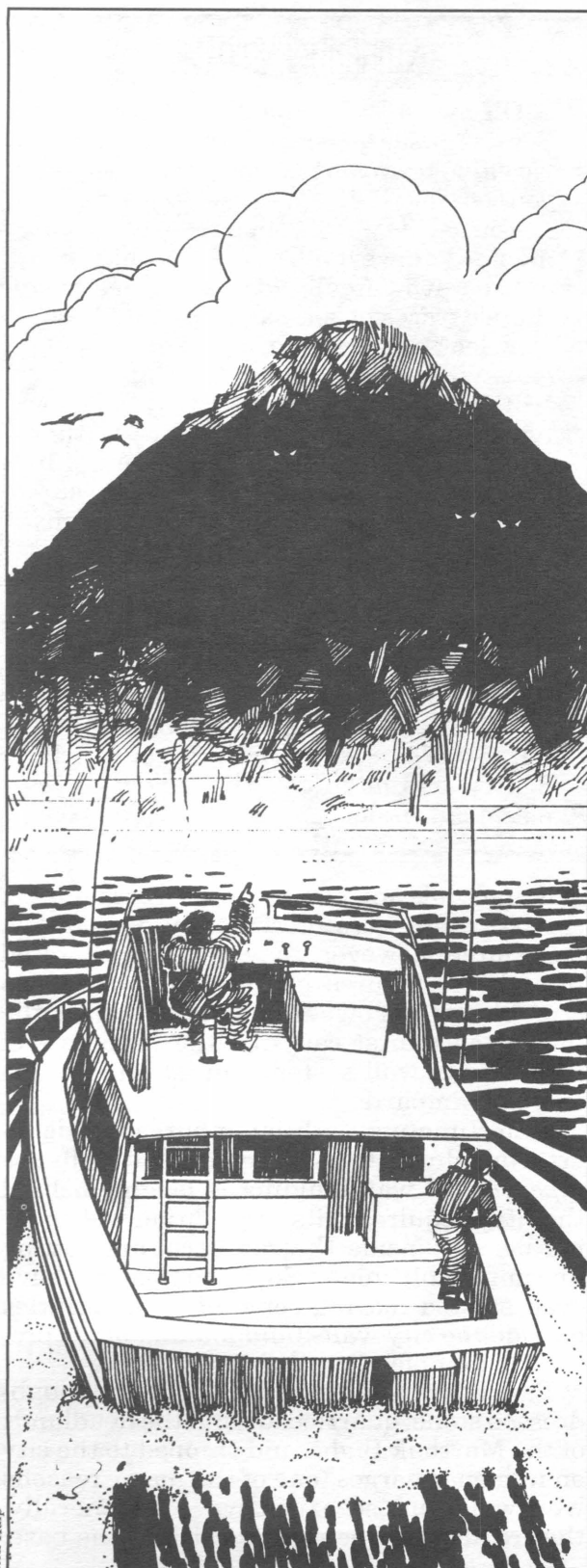
Oh, aye, we drink when we're at sea. Rum's cheaper than heatstones, and you need *something* to keep your blood flowing out there. But we can *hold* our rum, too, forget what the landlubbers might tell you. When we see the lights out on the Sentry, of a midnight, they're *out there*, not in our minds.

existing walls and new defenses were built up, the old walls were occasionally dismantled; more often, however, they were incorporated into the structures of buildings, or left to crumble on their own. Throughout Padarr, the interested tourist can spot the remnants of five distinct wall systems, in addition to the current ramparts.

Unfortunately — through bureaucratic inertia and due to the simple fact that walls are *expensive* — wall-building is lagging behind the city's requirements. Population and building density inside the ramparts are getting uncomfortably high. Some companies have even started moving some of their facilities outside the city walls (and making other provisions for defending them, of course).

Padarr's ramparts are built of heavy, rough-dressed stone, quarried around the headlands of the Marthak Bight, and shipped to the city on immense barges (one of the major reasons why walls are so expensive ...). Generally, they're about three meters thick at the base,





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narrowing to two-meter-wide walkways along the top, ten meters or so above the ground. Crenelated battlements rise another two meters along the outside edge.

With some of the earlier walls, the builders cut corners on foundations. Since the ground is relatively soft, this caused embarrassing “quality control” problems. The current set of ramparts are set on heavy stone-and-mortar foundations sunk a full two meters into the earth. (Incidentally, this makes it more difficult for creatures to burrow under the walls, or to undercut and collapse sections.)

GATES

Padarr has two gates, on opposite sides of the city. Their official — if prosaic — titles are “Sunrise Gate” and “Sunset Gate.” Only tourists and government functionaries use these terms, however. “Sunset Gate” is more commonly called “Dead Man’s Gate” because public executions are performed just outside it. “Sunrise Gate,” in contrast, is “Rats’ Nest Gate” or “Warren Gate,” because of its proximity to the poor neighborhood.

Both gates are big, double-span structures — six meters high, and ten wide — built of thick and heavy wood. Elemental steam-driven mechanisms open and shut the massive gates, controlled from one of the watchtowers that flank the portals. (On the frequent occasions when these mechanisms are broken, it takes five strong men — or three Hugors — to open or close each segment of the gates.) The City Fathers have requested tenders from various companies to install portcullises behind the gates, but nobody seems interested in taking the contract.

The gates are opened at sunrise. When the limb of the sun touches the horizon in the evening — or at the discretion of the gate guards, on those frequent occasions when the sun’s hidden by clouds — large steamwhistles sound. When the sun finally vanishes below the horizon, both gates are shut and locked. Officially speaking, the gate guards are supposed to open the gates in case of emergencies — to let refugees from the Wilderness into the safety of the city, for example. In practice, though, after dark the gates are opened solely at the guards’ discretion ... which means they almost never are.

Although nobody will officially deny or confirm it, it's an open secret on the streets of Padarr that the City Fathers have hired technomancers to install some nasty little surprises in the sections of causeway leading up to both the city gates. According to these rumors, small metal "inclusions" in the causeway surface actually have *rain of razors* spells charged into them. When someone yells the command word — presumably, one of the gate guards — the spell triggers, firing a shower of sharp metal directly upwards, spreading out in a 30 meters wide cone, to a maximum height of 25 meters (damage value 18). (While this will play merry hell with anyone walking nearby at the time, its main function is probably to shred the tires of any vehicle either trying to make its getaway or trying to ram the gates.) Predictably, only the gate guards know the command words for these "land mines" ... and probably not all of them.

WALL GUARDS

Up until fifty years ago, the creatures of the Wilderness made no major assaults against the walls of the city. Occasionally, a solitary creature would slink out of the marsh and try to climb the wall — or perhaps dig under it — but this was a rare occurrence. Guards would patrol the walls near the gates, but these were more concerned with human infiltrators — smugglers, perhaps, or illegal aliens — than they were with incursions by Wilderness "monsters".

Suddenly, this changed in a most dramatic manner. Assaults against the wall grew steadily more common: an attempt every month, then every week, then one or more each night. Even more disturbing, the assaults seemed to be better organized. Rather than one single, solitary creature trying to breach the walls, whole bands of shadows and other creatures assailed the walls, gibbering and howling madly. The wall guards simply weren't numerous enough or well enough equipped to fight off the most determined of these attacks. When a slashtor breached the wall defenses and ran rampant through the streets, the City Fathers decided this had to stop.

Digging deep into the city's coffers, the government drastically expanded the defensive

forces that patrolled the wall. Ex-proctors, adventurers, even mercenaries recruited from elsewhere in Eln accepted the city's offer of employment. The new guard contingent was dubbed the Padarren Security Force, given flashy uniforms, and equipped with heavier weapons. The city even kicked in for magical support: lightmages for night work, technomancers to beef up the PSF's physical defenses, etc. So serious did the situation seem that one faction within the ruling council even suggested hiring Unnaturals to act as "shock troops." (Unfortunately, this voice of reason was quickly voted down.)

Within months of the establishment of the Padarren Security Force, the number of major assaults against the walls had dropped off drastically. In a year, it was back to its old levels: one half-hearted attack by a less-than-intelligent beastie every couple of months. The leaders of the PSF claimed the "enhanced safety of the populace" to be entirely due to their force's efficiency. The City Fathers agreed, of course, basking in the limelight themselves for their "perspicacity" in recognizing a need and taking appropriate action. Most Padarrens accept this official "take" on events.

Not all, however. While it's certainly true that the number of attacks against the walls *did* drop off, some cynics — they prefer to call themselves "realists" — point out that the change began immediately on the formation of the enhanced PSF. The new defense forces never had to fight off any major assaults; those assaults just didn't materialize. If the PSF was defending against Human attackers, that would make sense; the enemy force would learn through spies or scouts that the defenses had been upgraded, and would decide against futile assaults. But these were attacks by Wilderness creatures, and Wilderness creatures weren't intelligent enough to scout out an enemy and devise a rational plan of action ... *were* they?

There are still people in Padarr who believe that the increased tempo of attacks fifty years ago must have been orchestrated by ... well, someone or *something*. It was this instigating intelligence that recognized the increase in security and called off the attacks. All very reassuring in a way ... except that, presumably, that intelligence could *restart* the attacks whenever it seemed appropriate ...



In any case, there haven't been any major assaults on the walls in fifty years, and the PSF personnel manning the battlements have slipped into complacent confidence. Vigilance is nowhere near as sharp as it used to be. Watch-standers aren't conscientious; if the weather's really bad, sentries can all too often be found sheltering from the rain rather than walking their posts. Still, the PSF personnel *do* represent a significant defensive force. Wearing bulletproof vests and armed with rifles (often loaded with runeslugs), they're definitely a force to be reckoned with. If things get out of hand, "Special Squads" from the proctors department — armed with shotguns, submachine guns and even a few enchanted weapons — are on call, and can be on the scene within a few minutes.

STANDARD PSF GUARD

AGILITY 9

Dodge 12, maneuver 10, melee combat 15, stealth 10, unarmed combat 13

DEXTERITY 9

Fire combat 15, vehicle piloting: wheeled 10

ENDURANCE 10

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 11

INTELLECT 8

Perception 11, trick 9

MIND 8

THE RUMOR MILL

- There are some that say that the Sentry houses some evil fortress of doom. But then, there are some that say that a sad, but powerful mage resides there, mourning for some reason. Anyone who goes there never comes back — and that's a fact.

- It's true that those Wilderness creatures were quite a problem some time ago, but those problems are plaguing us even today. Fact is, there are catacombs below the city that were built long ago. Rumor has it, though, that there's still ways to get down to it — from outside the city as well as inside. People say that there is treasure to be had — if you like facing down those nightmarish creatures.

CONFIDENCE 8

Intimidation 10, streetwise 10, willpower 9

CHARISMA 8

Life Points: 4-6

Additional Skills: three at +1 adds

Equipment: .303 rifle, damage value 22, ammo 6; runeslugs, various; bulletproof vest, armor value TOU+6/22

Roleplaying Notes: PSF guards are among the few groups in the city's employ that are more or less "clean" and uncorrupted — not because they're personally any different from the proctors, for example, but mainly because few people find any reason to bribe the wall guards. (The customs inspectors who work the gates are another story entirely, of course ...)

THE RIVER

THE HARBOR PILOTS

Padarr's "first line of defense" from seaward is the shallow, silt-choked Marthak Bight itself. Various companies are contracted by the city to keep navigable channels dredged through the bay ... but those contracts *don't* include placing channel markers along the dredged routes. Only those captains who know the bay *exceptionally* well — and who've kept up to date on which channels have and haven't been dredged recently — can safely bring their ship to dock. In response to this situation, the Harbor Pilots Division of the Harbormaster Authority came into being (or, as some cynics claim, the situation was allowed to develop because the Harbor Pilots Division wanted more influence, and knew which strings to pull to get it).

Now, when a ship wants to enter Padarr's harbor, it drops its sails or cuts its engine near the headlands of the Bight — a couple of kilometers from the harbor proper — and raises a specific flag (the Padarren ensign, a red five-pointed star on a black field) to request a pilot. (Recently, ships have taken to reinforcing this traditional request with a call to the Harbormaster's office on a crystal set.) A harbor pilot, accompanied by two or three Harbor Police, then heads out to the vessel in a shallow-draft skiff "as soon as is expedient." (If the ship's captain is known for paying "squeeze" generously, this can be almost im-

mediately; otherwise, the vessel's master might have to wait for hours, or even days, before a harbor pilot "becomes available.")

Once aboard, the Harbor Police examine the vessel's cargo manifest, and crew and passenger lists. Officially speaking, the Harbor Police have the right — almost the duty — to search any vessel from stem to stern before the pilot brings it into harbor. Purportedly, this is to ensure that the manifest matches the ship's actual cargo. More often than not, however, the threat of this kind of search is used as a "bargaining chip" for a Harbor Policeman looking for a "personal gratuity" for his assistance. Whether the decision is based on the manifest or a detailed inspection of the cargo, the Harbor Police calculate "excise taxes," duties and other charges based on some arcane formula known only to them. The master of the vessel must pay this sum when the ship actually docks in Padarr. (Almost always, a small "voluntary gift" to the Harbor Police will reduce the amount of the overall bill ...)

Once the Harbor Police are satisfied, the pilot brings the vessel in, telling the helmsman how to steer to follow the dredged channels. For this service, the ship's master must pay a flat fee of 100 osees. Usually, however, he'll add a "personal gratuity" to this sum — an investment in the future, since a reputation for generous gratuities will guarantee fast service from the harbor pilots in the future.

When it's time for a vessel to leave harbor, much the same process occurs in reverse: a harbor pilot directs the vessel along the safe channels, receives his payment of 100 osees (plus gratuity), and then is ferried back to shore in a skiff crewed by Harbor Police.

STANDARD HARBOR PILOT

AGILITY 8

Dodge 10, melee combat 9, swimming 11

DEXTERITY 9

Vehicle piloting: boats 11

ENDURANCE 8

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 9

INTELLECT 8

Navigation: sea 13, perception 10

MIND 8

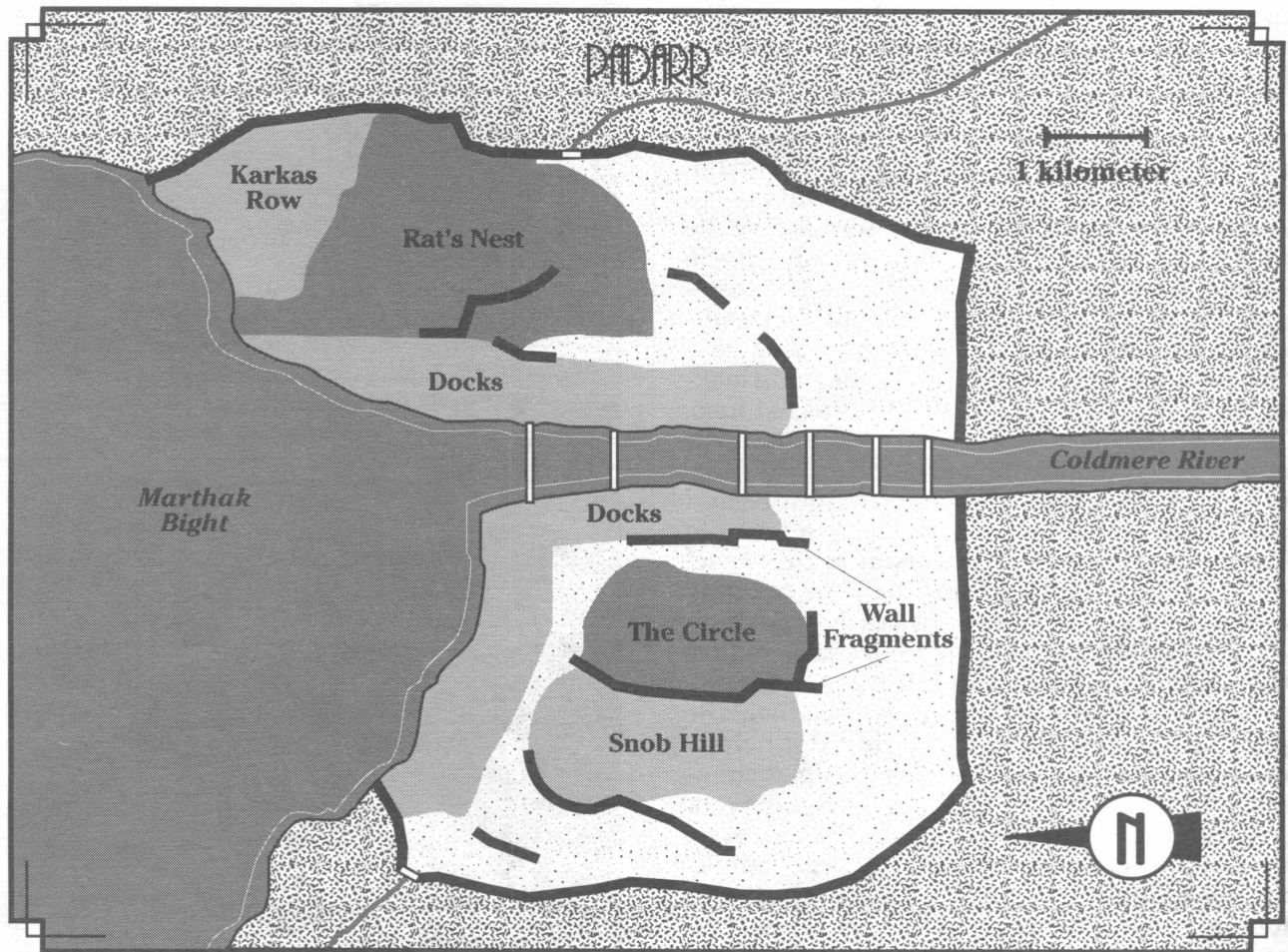
Business 9

CONFIDENCE 8

Streetwise 10



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CHARISMA 8

Life Points: 4-6

Additional Skills: two at +1 adds

Equipment: .22 pistol, damage value 15, ammo 6; club, damage value STR+5/20; leather jacket, armor value TOU+2/17

Roleplaying Notes: There are two general types of Harbor Pilots: born seamen who like the fact that they provide a very real service; and weasels who manipulate the bureaucracy to their own advantage, and took this job because it sure beats *real* work. Which type do you think will be more common ...?

THE DOCKS

Once an incoming ship has moored at the docks, or dropped anchor in the inner harbor, round-the-clock patrols of Harbor Police along the "Widow's Walk" make sure that there's no trouble. By law, Unnaturals who are regis-

tered crewmen of incoming vessels are restricted to the ships, or — if the Harbor Police are feeling particularly generous — to the "extraterritorial" warehouse area.

The Harbor Police's main duty is to make sure that "gray-market" goods — in this context, those cargoes that are illegal by Padarren law, and hence restricted to the extraterritorial area — stay where they're supposed to stay, and don't trickle out into the city as a whole. While enterprising captains would have little trouble slipping a bribe to one Harbor Patrol officer — or even to a small group — to "turn a blind eye," the level of scrutiny makes this very difficult. There are simply too many Harbor Patrolmen around to get away with this ...

On a small scale, at least. While a typical ship's captain can't personally bribe enough Patrol officers, more influential people — the city's Big Rich, for example — can certainly

make the right arrangements through the Harbormaster's office itself. Once these arrangements are made, the Patrol will just stand aside while illicit cargoes are offloaded for shipment into Padarr ... or they might actually help carry crates, if the payments to the Harbormaster were generous enough.

Considering how potentially "porous" security is down on the docks, it's fortunate that very few Wilderness creatures can make their way into the city via this route. (After all, no captain in his right mind is going to smuggle a queskworm in his hold, and a slashtor is a touch too big to stow away easily, unless he brings his own gate.)

GOVERNMENT

Traditionally, there are two "branches" or divisions in the government of Padarr: the City Fathers, and the bureaucracy or the "civil service." Theoretically, the City Fathers are the only ones with any authority, while the civil servants — as their name implies — *serve*, performing the basic managerial and administrative functions of the city. In fact, however, the civil service wields considerable power — even more than the ruling council of City Fathers, some cynics claim.

THE CITY FATHERS

For the last 700 years, the institution of the "City Fathers" has been comprised of fifteen individuals, sitting on a council. This council is — officially speaking — responsible for all policy-making decisions for all facets of life in Padarr. The council manages the city's finances, promulgates and repeals laws, manages "diplomatic relations" with other cities throughout Eln, monitors and manages trade, "protects the faith" (according to the council's ancient charter), and acts as ultimate court of appeal for everything from criminal matters to civil cases.

ELECTIONS

Initially, the "City Fathers" — like the "Mayors" that preceded them — were people who simply took and kept power. Although they *sometimes* claimed that they had some kind of "mandate" from the populace, only the most

gullible among the citizenry believed this sophistry. Mayors, then City Fathers, weren't elected. They claimed office — often by usurping the position from the incumbent, with or without bloodshed — and held it until someone came along to force them aside.

At first, these "benefactors of the city" — as they liked to style themselves — were more or less robber barons, the direct descendants (in philosophy, if not in blood) of the pirates who founded the city. As the city grew and moved away from piracy, however, the makeup of the City Fathers changed to reflect this. The power that put people on the council — and frequently ousted them — wasn't so much physical any more: not prowess in personal combat or superiority in number of henchmen. No, the power that came to count was *influence* — basically, financial power. While City Fathers occasionally took seats on the council through cold-blooded murder, the more common route to the council-table was through intrigue, favor-brokering, horse-trading, extortion and blackmail. Intrigue at this level costs money — even in Padarr, if you want to destroy someone's reputation so they slink off into exile, it'll cost you big money — so most of the City Fathers during the so-called "Second Age" of the city were those who'd later be labeled Big Rich. In other words, they were the business scions, the financial movers-and-shakers. True, they were still robber barons... but their robbery was progressively becoming more legal, if still rather doubtful ethically.

And then things changed again. Starting about 300 years before the present day, Padarr underwent another spurt of growth. Running the city started to turn into *real work*, which distracted the Big Rich from their true purpose — extracting the maximum amount of money from the growing populace. The Big Rich started to realize that overt power simply wasn't all it was cracked up to be. While it was unarguably fulfilling to chart the course of an entire city in terms of trade policy and fiscal management, day-to-day concerns — like handling bids for wall construction or dealing with recalcitrant garbage collectors — were galling, at best. The City Fathers often simply ignored such "administrivia" ... but then paid the price, when streets choked with garbage or incursions of Wilderness creatures put a crimp in their profitable businesses. Obviously, some-



COUNCIL "INDEPENDENCE"

You want the straight shimmy on the City Fathers? You've come to the right place. This is the story you'll never hear from the newscallers. (Don't look at me like that — I've *tried*. But Padarr's a guild shop when it comes to newscallers, and the Powers That Be are *very* selective about what news is fit to sing, okay?)

People ask me, "Johnny-boy, if the City Fathers are in the pockets of the Big Rich like you say, how come the council keeps crapping on their plans, huh?" Oh yeah, it happens. Look at the railrunner fiasco, the wall-building debacle, that kind of crap. The Big Rich want to do something — like open a new railrunner line — and they go hat-in-hand to the council. And the City Fathers tell'em, "Forget it, chum." Sounds pretty independent, doesn't it?

Well, that's just the way it seems. Take the railrunner issue. The transit companies say they want competition, but the City Fathers won't let'em have it. *Slashtor-shit!* The Big Rich, they don't *want* competition. Competition leads to decreased profits, and

that's Way Bad, get me? Of course, the *Peepul* — they want better railrunner service, and if they get pissed off enough, they're going to start making trouble and *demanding* it. How? Boycotts, that's one way. It's worked in other cities, I hear — brought Big Business to its knees, on more than one occasion. Obviously, the Big Rich don't want that.

So what do they do? They set up a "straw man" — the City Fathers. "I understand your concern about railrunner service, Mrs. Joan Q. Public," the Big Rich say, wringing their soft white hands, "and I'd *love* to help you. But the laws say I can't. So sorry, nothing I can do," and all that crap. Sweet scam, huh?

And what can the *Peepul* do about *that*? You can't boycott the council. You can't do *squat*, not unless you want the City Fathers to send the Proctors out to bust your skull.

Oh, oh, sorry... what you *can* do is vote out the council at the next election. That's the Democratic Way.

Too bad you don't have a vote, huh?

thing had to be done.

What that "something" was, was a shift from overt power to *covert* power. One by one, the Big Rich magnates resigned from the council ... only to make sure their seats were filled with people who both shared the outgoing Fathers' world-view, and owed them some large favors. (In other words, puppets and ward-healers.) These designates handled the day-to-day nonsense of running a city — making sure the sewers didn't back up *too* often, arranging for garbage collection, dredging the harbor, and the like — while deferring to their "patrons" any and all *real* decisions. The Big Rich had the real power — even though they *no longer* had the trappings of that power — without the grinding daily responsibilities. It seemed to be an ideal system.

Over the last few centuries, the system's been further refined. The Big Rich have — seemingly, at least — distanced themselves from the council. City Fathers no longer have any obvious connection to individual Big Rich magnates or

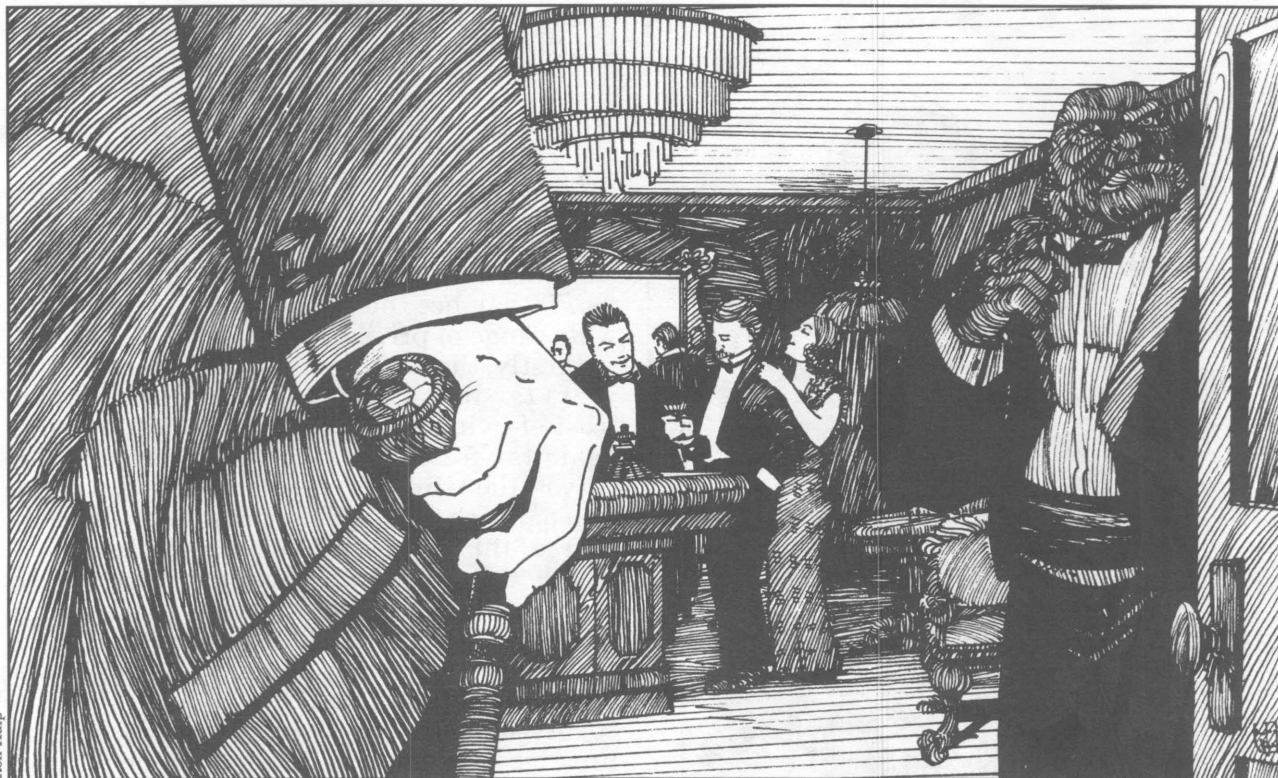
business cliques; publicly, they claim to be totally independent, "voting their consciences" on all matters that come before them.

Nonsense, of course. The ties between patrons and "bought men" are stronger than ever; they're just buried deeper. To conceal those links even further, a century ago the Big Rich brought in the concept of a "democratically elected" council. Qualified electors get to choose the City Fathers they want, and oust those who aren't doing a good enough job.

The key word, of course, is "qualified" ... and it's the Big Rich who decide who is and isn't qualified. Voter registration laws change like the weather. At the moment, only registered land-owners and business-owners are allowed to vote, their ballot "weighted" by the percentage of ownership they possess. Although this may sound fair enough, it leaves all the power in the hands of the Big Rich ... which is just how they want it.

Land-owners? Most of them are Big Rich themselves, or related to or behold to — or





simply sucking up to — the Big Rich. Little surprise when they vote the way the Big Rich want them to. And business-owners? In one way or another, they're doing business with the Big Rich, or with their subsidiaries or their shell and holding companies. If *they* don't vote the right way ... well, a shop can be a very lonely place when suppliers stop delivering, or commercial clients stop placing orders. (Or, for that matter, when a couple of Hugos "just happen" to pick the sidewalk outside the front door as the ideal place for a game of mumblety-peg with switchblades.)

Voter eligibility laws are, of course, set by the City Fathers...

NOMINATIONS

Purely and simply, any resident of the city can nominate anyone else for the next council election. Only the most naive ever bother. No matter how many nominees are on the ballot, all the votes go to the candidates to whom the Big Rich give the nod. (Except for a meaningless scattering of dissenting votes, just to maintain the illusion that the vote is somehow "free.")

People who are nominated and don't have the support of the Big Rich, typically decline or repudiate the nomination the moment they learn about it. Being seen as trying to balk the Big Rich isn't a healthy tactic in Padarr. Padarreans in the know recall the story of a newcomer to the city who let his name stand on a council ballot, and actually tried to campaign for a seat. Tragically, he was killed in a freak railrunner accident...

TERMS OF OFFICE

Currently, the term of office for a City Father is three years. Elections are staggered, with five councilmembers coming up for reelection every year. This guarantees a steady turnover of personnel and an influx of new ideas — *theoretically* — while also ensuring a high degree of stability. Two decades ago, the maximum number of terms a City Father could serve was three; now, however, this restriction has been eliminated.

Frequency of elections and maximum number of terms are decided entirely by the council, and can be changed at any time. If the system doesn't seem to be working right, for



Ron Kulp

whatever reason — from the viewpoint of the Big Rich, of course — changes are made quickly to bring it back into line.

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PRIVILEGES

Officially, the City Fathers are personally responsible to each and every resident of Padarr. That's quite a weight of responsibility. Running a city the size of Padarr is a full-time job. To balance this, the City Fathers enjoy a wide range of privileges.

Firstly, there's the salary: 80,000 ooses per year, tax-free. Secondly, there's an annual "cost-of-living" stipend: another 35,000 ooses, again tax-free. With this kind of income, the City Fathers live very well indeed — not quite on a par with the Big Rich, but pretty close. (Of course, this represents an incredible "lever" with which the Big Rich can make sure "their men on the council" toe the "party line." Once you've got used to 115,000 ooses a year, after tax, it's *very* hard to go back to whatever it was you were doing before ...)

City Fathers also enjoy a fair measure of prestige — something that counts more than the money, for some of them. Each has a car for his personal use — a Grady "Vesper" luxury sedan — and a driver-bodyguard. He has luxurious robes of state to wear at official events. They meet with the few diplomatic visitors who come to Padarr from other cities and are treated with respect — respect that generally isn't felt honestly, but at least the trappings and terms of address are there.

UNOFFICIAL PRIVILEGES

Most City Fathers have a single patron among the Big Rich; others are backed by a clique of business interests. In most cases, the money and lifestyle that comes with being on the council — coupled with the threat of losing both — are enough to make sure that the City Fathers do their patrons' bidding. From time to time, however — for various special services, perhaps — additional payments are received, either in currency or in less tangible forms. (For example, someone who's served his patron long and well on the council might be offered a well-paying sinecure so he can maintain his lifestyle even after a younger — and maybe more tractable — individual has taken his council seat.)

When an issue before the council concerns one or more of the City Fathers' Big Rich patrons, there's no doubt over how the councilmembers will vote. Many of the decisions that come before the council, however, have no real importance to the Big Rich. (For example, a small businessman — not in competition with any of the Big Rich's concerns — may want a variance to allow him to expand his warehouse operations.) In these cases, the City Fathers are free to "vote their consciences" without involvement from their patrons. They're also free — and more or less *expected* — to take "voluntary donations" from citizens who *do* have an interest in the outcome. The use of bribes — locally known as "squeeze" — to influence council decisions is an accepted fact of life in Padarr. Although strictly speaking against the law, this is one of the laws that's honored more in the breach than in the observance. It's a fact of life that squeeze is the only way to get things done in Padarr. City Fathers can sometimes pocket almost as much in squeeze as they receive in salary.

COUNCIL MEETINGS AND VOTES

Meetings of the City Fathers are generally closed affairs — *in camera*, to use the commonly-accepted term. Only those people with direct business before the council — and those who've paid the necessary squeeze to the various appointment secretaries who decide on the appropriateness of that business — are allowed in, and only then to plead their cases or hear the council's decisions.

Council meetings are chaired by the "First Speaker." Selected by free vote from among his colleagues, the First Speaker has no additional authority — except for what he might be able to squeeze out of his position of meeting chair — although he does traditionally speak first when discussing any issue. On all issues, the First Speaker has an equal vote with the other City Fathers.

On ceremonial occasions, the First Speaker wears the finest robes and sits in pride of place. To people who aren't in the know, he certainly seems to be the pre-eminent "ruler" of Padarr.

THE CURRENT COUNCIL

At the present time, the fifteen City Fathers are:

• **Millicent Venn (First Speaker):** In her late forties, Venn is in the middle of her seventh term on the council. She has a reputation as a cold piece of work, with an analytical balance in place of a heart. Nobody — not even her colleagues on the council — know who her patron is (or patrons *are*). They do know, however, that Venn's backer has a lot of clout.

• **Jeremy Laker:** Another member of the "old guard," Laker has eight terms under his belt. Even though just about everyone but Venn defers to him, his personality is too abrasive for him ever to hold the position of First Speaker.

• **Marcellus Brant:** Brant is one of Jon Jevik's four lap-dogs on the council. In his early sixties yet only in his first term, Brant looks like the archetypal aristocrat, with silver hair, high cheekbones, a hawk's eyes, and a voice with a snap of command. Appearances are deceiving, however, because Brant is almost senile.

• **Benjamin Claris:** A handsome man, Claris looks as though he's barely out of his twenties ... and has looked just the same since he first joined the council 24 years ago. Rumors claim that Claris is actually a 'Shifter, or maybe a 'Breed of some kind. Like Marcellus Brant, Claris is deep in the voluminous pockets of Jon Jevik.

• **Jeri Soban:** Looking like a matronly, motherly woman in her mid-fifties, despite her benevolent smile and gentle voice she's as ruthless and heartless as Millicent Venn ... if not more so. This is her third term in office.

• **Derek "Dirk" Valencian:** In his early forties, Valencian made his pile as an entrepreneur in Galitia. When he came to Padarr five years ago, public opinion gave him even odds of becoming the first "outlander" to bootstrap his way into the Big Rich. He started several businesses, all of them successful enough to shake the security of the Big Rich. Three years ago, however, he suddenly gave it all up ... and was elected to the City Fathers by a coalition comprised of Jevik, Barad Grady and Marcia Daile, another Big Rich magnate (the first time on record that those three had agreed on *anything*). People *know* there's a story behind this somewhere, but nobody has a handle on it.

• **Vincent Grady:** One of Barad Grady's sons, Vincent was named to the council two years ago ... and immediately disowned by his Big





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Rich father. Again, everyone wonders about the story behind this. Is the father-son tiff real, or is Barad Grady playing some kind of deep game?

• **Carmen Delbrynn:** Another first-term City Father, at 25 Delbrynn has the distinction of being the youngest person on the council. The Delbrynnns are one of Padarr's oldest aristocratic family; unfortunately, they've fallen on very tough times recently. Unlike most other City Fathers, Delbrynn is trying to establish a *modus vivendi* with the bureaucracy, rather than viewing them as "the enemy."

• **Fraser Woodworth:** Even though everyone knows he's just as corrupt as the other City Fathers, the populace can't help but like Woodworth's outgoing personality. He seems to view everything with a sense of humor — a pleasant contrast from the other City Fathers, who take everything (and particularly themselves) entirely too seriously.

• **Mitchell Eane:** In his late forties, Eane's been on the council for fifteen years — plenty long enough to realize just how meaningless the whole rigmarole is. While some of the other City Fathers seem to believe that they're *making a difference* — at least, on those issues where their patrons don't have vested interests — Eane just couldn't care less. He often sleeps through council meetings.

• **Lawrence Ranger:** A dark, intense man in his middle-thirties, Ranger seems to figure that his tenure on the council is his chance to line his pockets for later life, and he's taking the opportunity very seriously indeed. While other City Fathers seem content to let people come to them with offers of squeeze, Ranger goes well out of his way to seek it out. Rumors claim that he's planning to play Jon Jevik and Marcia Daile off against each other — *somehow* — to his personal benefit.

• **Kathryn "Kat" Hayes:** Quiet, and seemingly overawed by the other City Fathers, Hayes seems almost *out of place* on the council. She really seems concerned about the people of Padarr, and has actually petitioned her patron to let her vote on various issues in ways that will benefit the populace at large. Informed opinion guesses that this, her first term, will also be her last.

• **Jon Piers:** Handsome in a piratical way, Piers is probably the best dissembler on the

council. Nobody knows his true opinion on anything, and his persuasive skills are legendary. Because of this, he's much in demand among petitioners before the council. (Of course, he knows his worth and demands higher payments of squeeze than anyone else.)

• **Kirsten Medrwydd:** Medrwydd is another first-termmer who's not expected to remain on the council. She enjoys the lifestyle of the City Father a little too much, often overdoing the drink, drugs and sexual opportunities that always seem to flow her way. This makes her a prime target for blackmail ... and hence a potential liability for her patron.

• **Andrew Lykes:** Lykes is a small, almost wizened man who looks like he's only a year or two younger than the world of Marl itself. His mind is still exceedingly sharp, however, and he seems to take glee in intrigue for its own sake. He always seems to have some kind of scam going — either with (or against) petitioners before the council, or to undercut the influence of the other City Fathers. He and Ranger seem to consider each other kindred spirits and the closest that each has to a real friend.

THE BUREAUCRACY

And then there's the bureaucracy, otherwise known as the civil service or the "Administrative Branch." It came into being early in the "Second Age" of Padarr, when the city was growing rapidly and the responsibilities of the City Fathers were expanding beyond their capability — or willingness — to deal with them. According to the charter under which the bureaucracy was founded, its responsibility is to implement the policies decided upon by the City Fathers. As such, its members are truly "civil servants," with the accent on the word "servants."

That's the official story; the truth is quite different. As the bureaucrats like to say, "The council proposes; the Administrative Branch disposes." The bureaucracy can't originate policy ... but it certainly has a lot of say in how that policy is implemented. The civil servants can't initiate a new policy from scratch, but they *can* effectively veto one originated by the council ... simply by dragging their feet on putting it into practice. Observers of the city scene have lost count of how many policies

have been effectively killed when senior bureaucrats "referred them to committee for further study" — study that never ended until the City Fathers (and their Big Rich patrons) decided to take another tack that was more acceptable to the "administrators."

HISTORY

The bureaucracy wasn't always this powerful. Initially, it was created to handle the "administrivia" with which the City Fathers didn't want to bother themselves. It expanded rapidly, to keep pace with the growing city's infrastructure. The City Fathers, and the Big Rich in general, didn't realize how much influence the bureaucracy was developing ... until the council came into conflict with the administration for the first time.

Without the knowledge of either the Big Rich or the City Fathers, a couple of ambitious senior civil servants had "organized" the bureaucracy, turning it into something that was a "closed shop" guild in all but name. When the council realized that the administration was growing beyond its ability to control, it tried to bring the organization "to heel." In response, the entire administrative branch went out on strike!

The Big Rich responded instinctively, sending in their strikebreakers and setting the proctors on the "insurrectionists." Unfortunately for them, the bureaucracy wasn't a normal organization like a manufacturers' guild. In essence, it was the civil service that handled *everything* in the city. The City Fathers could make all the pronouncements they liked, but without the bureaucrats nothing would be done about it. Garbage wasn't collected, the gates weren't manned, the harbor pilots didn't escort ships through the Bight. Things deteriorated quickly.

Even more important than these functions, it was the bureaucracy that held the city's purse-strings. Everyone paid directly by the public suddenly found their pay envelopes either empty, or not turning up at all. This included not only the bureaucrats, of course ... but also the proctors, and the City Fathers themselves!

The Big Rich did their best, of course. They sent in "scabs" and "breakers" to do the work of the striking administrators. It didn't work



worth a damn. Over the centuries, the bureaucracy had become so complicated and labyrinthian in its workings that nobody could make sense of it. Even the filing systems seemed to be based on some kind of arcane code ... almost as if the bureaucrats had anticipated this day and taken precautions. To make matters worse, many of the striking administrators had taken key papers and files with them when they'd walked off the job.

To the credit of the Big Rich, it didn't take them long to admit defeat. They revoked the policies that had caused the strike, and let the administrators come back to work and put the city back in order. They weren't pleased with the situation, of course, but they were pragmatic enough to face reality.

LIMITED AUTONOMY

Today, the bureaucracy and the Big Rich exist in a kind of uneasy truce. Both are trying to increase their influence without provoking the other faction too far and precipitating something *really* unpleasant. The administration has become a bloated, hierarchical bureaucracy with considerable autonomy in the way it "does business." Senior bureaucrats have complete hiring-and-firing authority over the people below them. The City Fathers can — and do — make recommendations, but nobody pays much attention.

APPOINTEES

- **The Commissioner of Proctors:** Even though it's officially under the control of the bureaucracy, the actual head of the proctors force — the Commissioner is the proper title — is appointed directly by the City Fathers. This gives the council's Big Rich patrons a large measure of control over legal matters, but not *total* control. The Commissioner of the Proctors has hiring-and-firing authority over everyone in the department — from "beat" proctors, right the way down to his own secretary — but, traditionally, he can hire only from a pool of candidates proposed by the bureaucracy!

Obviously, this leads to a kind of balancing act. The bureaucracy proposes candidates who the administrators think will further their own interests within the proctors department.

If their "pro-bureaucracy" bias is too obvious, the Commissioner simply won't hire them, however. On several occasions, particularly militant senior bureaucrats have tried to "stack the deck" by proposing *only* candidates who were hard-core supporters of the administration. In all cases, the Commissioner fought back by simply not hiring *anyone* for the open positions. Eventually, on all occasions the stalemate was won by the Commissioner. Public safety and public order eventually deteriorated — much to the displeasure of the populace, of course. The bureaucracy itself requires a certain degree of public safety and order — it's hard to count beans when vandals are burning your desk — and even the most militant administrators eventually have to recognize the fact. At last, after much wailing and gnashing of teeth, the administrators included a couple of people in the candidate pool that the Commissioner would find acceptable.

The City Fathers — and, indirectly, the Big Rich — have to be *very* careful about who they appoint as Commissioner. A "bad apple" — someone with strong but hidden pro-bureaucracy leanings — could quickly hire a large contingent of *other* pro-bureaucracy personnel. While the council would quickly replace the "turncoat" with someone more amenable, the damage would already have been done: firing and replacing a significant portion of the clerical staff would cause chaos ... particularly if the replacements also had to come from a pool "approved" by the administrative branch!

At the moment, the Commissioner of Proctors is a hard-assed old bastard by the name of Galen Mews.

- **The Harbormaster:** In contrast, the Harbormaster — easily one of the most important people in the city — is appointed directly by the bureaucracy. The City Fathers can make "suggestions" and can petition the administration to replace someone the council considers unsuitable ... but suggestions and petitions alike are totally ignored.

The Harbormaster is responsible for hiring and firing all personnel who work in or around the dock area ... including the Harbor Police. Thus, the City Fathers/Big Rich and the bureaucracy each control their own, autonomous police force ...

THE HARBORMASTER'S GOONS

Brother, you think the proctors are bad? You ain't met the Harbor Police yet. The proctors are paragons of virtue and professionalism compared to the Harbormaster's private army of goons.

If you read the law books, you'd get the impression that there's never going to be any conflict between the two forces. They've got their own jurisdictions, right? And those jurisdictions don't overlap.

Yeah, right. Next time you crack a law-book, look up the sections on "Hot Pursuit" and "Probable Cause." The two big factions in the city — the Big Rich and the bureaucrats — use the proctors and the Harbor Police to keep their own little tiff going ... and they use the clauses on Hot Pursuit and Probable Cause to do it.

Here's how it works — generally; I'm not an advocate (thank whatever gods actually exist!) Harbor Police have jurisdiction over — you guessed it — the harbor and the "extraterritorial" area around it. They've got no authority outside that region. The proctors have jurisdiction everywhere else and no authority *inside* that region. Follow so far?

Okay, now the proctors have this special case called Hot Pursuit. If they're in pursuit of a suspect and he just happens to duck over into the harbor area, the proctors can pursue and make the collar ... even if it means leaving their jurisdiction. And you can bet that the proctors have a bunch of advocates on staff whose sole job is to figure out new ways of defining "Hot Pursuit" in broader and broader terms. So under that clause, you've got proctors playing on Harbor Police turf.

And then there's Probable Cause. Say there's some slub in the harbor area who might be a smuggler. He wanders out of Harbor Police jurisdiction and into the rest of the city. Now, as long as the Harbor Police have "Probable Cause" to suspect he's engaged in smuggling or — get this! — "smuggling-related activities," they've got the right to come after him, even if it means leaving their jurisdiction.

Two forces, each with a nice, legal excuse to go crap in the other's back yard. Backed by factions with real clout in the city.

Just a sheer joy, huh? Welcome to Padarr.

ECONOMY

Like most cities in Eln, Padarr is self-sufficient when it comes to food. (Otherwise its people would starve; it's irrational to depend on shipments of necessities from outside when those shipments could get diverted or delayed for countless reasons.)

CURRENCY

The official currency of Padarr is the osee. The osee is divided into 64 pennies.

Coins — all tin and related alloys — are available in the following denominations: 5, 2, and 1 osee; 32, 16, 8, 2, and the almost-worthless 1 penny. Padarr issues banknotes — large, intricately-printed things — in the following denominations: 1, 10, 25, 50, 100, 500 and 1,000 osees. (Some 32-penny banknotes are still in circulation, although they were officially discon-

tinued 10 years ago.) For larger sums, specialized bank drafts and letters of credit are issued by the various banks. Individuals can issue personal letters of credit, but no vendor is obligated to honor them. (Of course, refusing to honor a personal letter of credit from Jon Jevik is typically an unwise decision ...)

EXCHANGE RATES

Strictly speaking, it's illegal to conduct any business whatsoever in currencies other than Padarren osees and pennies. If the proctors witness any such transaction — and aren't paid off adequately, of course — both seller and buyer can be brought up on charges: the former for using an "illegitimate" currency, the latter for accepting it. It's illegal for Padarren citizens — as opposed to visitors — to even *possess* any foreign currencies.

Newcomers to the city are expected to ex-





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change their foreign currencies into local osees as soon as possible. The “nominal” exchange rate is 1.5 osees (1 osee, 32 pennies) to the selast. Of course, no banks or private money traders ever follow the “nominal” rate. Anyone dealing in currency exchange makes his money on the “spread” between the buy and sell rates, and the money-traders in Padarr are no exception. Typically, the “buy” rate for the selast is 1 osee, 25 pennies, while the “sell” rate is 1 osee, 39 pennies. (Underworld money-traders — those who aren’t going to ask embarrassing questions about identification and the like — will usually exchange based on an even broader spread.)

PRICES

In the following sections, all prices are quoted in Padarren osees, or where appropriate in Padarren pennies.

NECESSITIES

• **Food:** Padarr is self-sufficient with regard to food ... but without outside shipments, the

THE REAL ESTATE MARKET

Did I hear you right, bub? You want to buy? In Padarr? Whatever that blend is you’ve got in your pipe, I want some ...

Oh, okay, I can understand how you got confused. You look at the deeds and transferal records, and it sure looks like people are doing a fair whack of buying and selling. But you need to look further — look into *who it is* who’s doing that trading. Check it out: it’s all the freakin’ Big Rich, that’s who it is. Buying and selling to and from each other. As far as I can tell, all the property in Padarr’s already owned by the Big Rich. They’re either using it themselves, or renting it out.

So why sell it back and forth? See, there’s a little-known bylaw around here that links the maximum rent you can charge to the market value of the property involved. And, each time the Big Rich flip a piece of property back and forth between themselves, the price goes up higher ... or, at least, the price that appears on the paperwork. Now do you get it?

diet gets awfully monotonous in a big hurry. The city’s fishing fleet plies the Coldmere River and the Marthak Bight year-round, filling their nets with a dozen species of fish. During the summer season, farmers work fields “reclaimed” from the marsh outside the city walls. In addition, various food crops that can grow in un-reclaimed “paddies” have been magically bred. Throughout the marsh, however, the ground is quite alkaline, which gives a characteristic taste to all crops. (Native Padarrens claim they don’t taste the alkaline tang; visitors, however, find it makes local crops almost inedible.)

Local food is relatively inexpensive. If they limit themselves to local crops and fish, a family of four can get by on about 80 osees per week for groceries. Once you start to add

THE RAG TRADE

For a city of its size, you’re not going to find that many clothing stores in Padarr. Why? Because it’s only the middle class who actually *buy* their clothes. The poor make them; it’s cheaper that way. And the rich have them made — so much more exclusive. The middle class are caught in ... well, the middle. They can afford better than make-do rags, but they can’t pay the tab for the up-scale tailors the Big Rich get into.

Now take you — you’re an outlander (and *don’t* ask how I can tell, okay ...?) You’re going to have to go the off-the-rack route because you don’t have the necessary contacts ... and you don’t look like you’re the rags-and-bags type. So that means you can expect to drop between 100 and 250 osees for a pretty serviceable outfit. Good for day-to-day wear ... but not for crashing Barad Grady’s cotillion, if that’s what you’re into. For evening wear that won’t look *too* different from the Big Rich, you’re looking 1,000 osees for men, maybe twice that for women. (And can *anyone* tell me why a frock costs more than a motorbike ...?) Now, did you have anything specific in mind?

A *proctor’s* uniform? Now that’s a different story. Why didn’t you say so in the first place? I just so happen to know a guy ...



imported goods, however, the price skyrockets. As a rule of thumb, imported goods cost about twice as much as local produce, or even more in the case of real delicacies.

Padarr has a wide range of restaurants. On the low end, “greasy-spoon” establishments offer bland but nutritious meals for three osees and up. On the high end, gourmet establishments offer meals costing as much as 150 osees per person ... and that’s without booze! (Of course, most visitors will never see the inside of this class of restaurant. While they’re purportedly open to all comers, in effect they’re “closed” to anyone not part of the Padarren Big Rich. Reservations are necessary ... and often “accidentally lost,” if the name on the reservation doesn’t carry the appropriate “clout” with the *maître d’*.)

- **Lodging:** Hotels in Padarr run from rat-infested flophouses down by the docks (20 osees per night, with rates by the week), up to elaborate establishments on the outskirts of “Snob Hill” (250 osees per night and up).

For longer-term accommodations, it’s generally cheaper to rent a small apartment or a house. “Bachelor suites” and one-bedroom apartments range from 200 osees per month for a bare-bones place right the way up to over 1,000 osees per month for a larger (and generally more hygienic) place to live. Larger apartments cost proportionately more, of course, up to 3,000 osees or more per month for a 2,000-square-foot four-bedroom *pied à terre* in the heart of town. House rentals aren’t common, but they do occur; 2,500 osees per month is a good starting price, but four or five people can live comfortably in a house for this rate.

LUXURIES

- **Local Goods:** Generally speaking, luxury goods manufactured in Padarr are usually 20% or so more expensive than the same goods would sell for elsewhere. For example, conjurevids typically cost around 10 selasts in Selastos. In Padarr, a comparable conjurevid of local manufacture would cost about 18 osees (the equivalent of 12 selasts).

Most companies and business concerns that manufacture luxury goods are owned — directly or indirectly — by the Big Rich.

- **Imported Goods:** There are certain innate restrictions on the trade of necessities. Firstly,

no government in its right mind would *ever* let its populace become totally dependent on imports for necessities. One missed shipment — or a trading partner trying to apply a little pressure — can lead to widespread shortages and starvation ... and the associated food riots. Secondly, even if a population *did* become dependent on imported food, the traders doing the importing couldn’t get too enthusiastic about maximizing profit potential. “Ability to pay” is even more important when a misjudgment might lead to some of your clientele starving to death. (After all, dead men tell no tales ... but they don’t buy your goods either.)

Not so with luxuries. Luxuries generally travel very well, and there are no hard-and-fast limits on the price importers can charge for them. If prices are set so high that even the Big Rich can’t afford your wares, you can always hold out until you’re absolutely sure your prospects aren’t manipulating you into dropping your prices ... and then offer a healthy discount. People don’t die from shortages of emeralds or merkat-pelt coats ...

The price and availability of imported luxuries depends entirely on which traders have just come into town, with what cargo in their holds (or in their wagons). Prices for imported goods will usually be set to cover the trader’s cost of acquiring the goods in the first place, plus the expenses involved in transporting them, plus a healthy profit. As a rule of thumb, imported luxuries will cost 50% more in Padarr than the goods did in their city of origin. (Thus a *lightning* cane imported from Galitia will probably cost around 315 osees in the upper-tier stores of Padarr.) Of course, the most common price charged for luxuries is “all the market will bear.” Depending on supply and demand, imports can sell for *much* more than this 50% surcharge.

They can occasionally sell for less, too. Traders — those who do business with Padarr, at least — generally aren’t overly cooperative with each other, so it’s quite possible that a shortage of some good will be followed by a massive glut. During such a glut, traders might be forced to unload at a decreased profit — or, more rarely, at a loss — because of cash-flow requirements. If you need a particular item, and you’re willing — or able — to wait, you can often save a lot of money. (Of course, you might well be waiting a *long* time...)

VEHICLES

• **Land Vehicles:** Grady Motor Works manufactures a line of built-in-Padarr automobiles and trucks. They're similar in design to the standard models found elsewhere, but generally of much lower quality and reliability. The base price is for an internal combustion or steam model. An elemental model carries a 25% price premium.

Vehicle	Speed kmh/mph	Pass.	Tough.	Maneuver	Price
Grady Steam Wagon	30/18	13	1	-4	950
Grady "Zephyr" Speedster	280/175	2	13	+1	2000
Grady "Vesper" Luxury Sedan	250/150	5	15	+1	1850
Grady "Hauler" Truck	125/80	2	17	0	3450

WEAPONS

• **Firearms:** The major local manufacturer of firearms is Gradyarmaco, owned — no surprises here — by Barad Grady. Quality is generally high, but so are prices. The following table lists typical prices for Gradyarmaco products:

Weapon Type	Damage	Ammo	Range				Price/ Ammo
			S	M	L	E	
.22 revolver	15	6	3-10	15	40	140	30(3)
.38 revolver	17	6	3-10	25	40	140	40(2)
.44 Magnum revolver	21	6	3-10	25	50	150	85(3)
.45 auto	20	9	3-10	25	45	140	90(3)
.303 rifle	22	6	5-20	75	200	300	65(2)
12-gauge shotgun	21	2	5-10	20	40	80	36(2)
"Ripsaw" SMG	17	30	5-10	20	50	100	*(5)

* Highly restricted — illegal for sale, except to Proctors Department.

Firearms can be sold legally only to citizens of Padarr who have the appropriate licenses (see the "Law and Law Enforcement" chapter). Would-be purchasers must show both their

citizenship card and their license before they can buy themselves a gun.

• **Other Weapons:** Melee weapons and simple missile weapons are unrestricted and widely available. Prices generally match those in the rulebook (adjusted for Padarren currency, of course) for items of local manufacture. If a character's looking for something specific and special — a Galitian crossbow, for example —

prices can be anywhere from twice to six or seven times the listed figure.

MAGIC

As discussed in a later section, there are various stringent legal restrictions on the sale of enchanted items, magical "instruments," alchemical ingredients and certain spell components

(Hands of Glory, or grave earth, for example). All components and ingredients specific to necromantic magics are illegal — possession *and* sale. All other specifically magical items — from *pain* batons and smoke rings to mandrake and Padarr's own dreamstone — can only be purchased (legally, at least) from government-licensed stores.

(These stores kick back a percentage of their profit to the government for the privilege of having their licenses renewed.) This allows the government to control prices as it sees fit.

The following table lists typical magic-related items and the "premium" at which they sell in Padarr — both legally, and on the black market. (Example: A

smoke ring is listed in the *World of Bloodshadows* as costing 50 selasts. When purchased legally in Padarr, it costs 120% of the listed price — 60 selasts, which converts to 90 ooses.)



FIREARM PRICES

I was wondering if you'd ask. Yeah, there's a big discrepancy in the prices. I mean, check it out: a piddling little .22-caliber belly-gun's going to set you back 30 osees. For an extra six osees, you can get your mitts on a double-barrel shotgun capable of blowing a man in two. And a .45 autoloader costs almost half as much again as a .303 rifle. What gives?

Here's how it works. Gradyarmaco slaps a big, nasty premium on handguns, but not on long arms. Why? Because there's a move underway by the City Fathers and the proctors to restrict the possession of handguns — some kind of anti-crime bill, I hear. Handguns contribute to violent crime more than long arms do because you can't shove a .303 hunting rifle in your pocket when you visit your local bottle shop — that's how the Commissioner of Proctors explains it, at least. So Grady's doing his civic duty by putting a "financial disincentive" on small arms ...

Yeah, *right*. What he's doing is making a killing — no pun intended — on small arms before any kind of restriction comes down. And it's working like a hot damn. There's a

bunch of people out there who are buying pistols now, while they can, and are willing to pay the surcharge. (Hell, I'm one of them ...)

And there's something even more interesting. A bunch of the other Big Rich are behind the gun-control initiative, and they're pissed with Grady for his "profiteering." They'd be happier if he just stopped making and selling handguns *right now*.

Why? Because those Big Rich are afraid that a lot of those pistols are in the hands of people who'd like to use them on the Big Rich, that's why. Of course, when and if the laws come down, the Big Rich won't have a lick of trouble getting "variances" and "exceptions" for their own bodyguards (and enforcers).

And those submachine guns? Gradyarmaco's pretty hard-assed about the restrictions on sales. You can't pick yourself up a grease-gun through legal channels, sorry. (What you *can* do, of course, is find a proctor — maybe the local precinct's gunnery sergeant — who'll "misplace" one or two, for a healthy contribution to his retirement fund.)

Legal "magic-brokers" can sell their arcane wares only to Padarren citizens. Prospective clients must show their citizenship cards when making a purchase.

TAXES

The coffers of the city are kept full by three major types of taxation: sales tax, the so-called "transaction tax" (or "taxation tax", as many Padarrens label it), and various import/export duties. (There are also other minor taxes levied from time to time — like the "poll tax" with which the City Fathers were experimenting a couple of years ago — but these make only a minor difference to the finances of most Padarrens.)

City Fathers — and certain others with special dispensations — are exempted from sales tax and transaction tax.

• **Sales Tax:** By law, a 12% tax is levied on the sale of any tangible good. (For example, the

"list price" of a Gradyarmaco .22-caliber pistol is 30 osees. On top of this price, by law the seller must add 3 osees 38 pennies for tax.) At the end of each month, businessmen must remit all the tax they've collected to the Inland Revenue Office of the city government. Withholding any tax owed, or "cooking the books" to minimize the amount owing, is a major felony, punishable by massive fines, by flogging, by long terms of imprisonment, or a combination of those three penalties.

Note that "services" — transactions where no tangible good is transferred — are exempt from sales tax. The IRO *did* experiment a few years ago with a Goods and Services Tax — instantly renamed the "Gouge and Screw Tax" by many Padarrens — but discontinued it after massive public reaction.

• **"Transaction Tax":** Over the last century or so, the Padarren IRO has experimented on three separate occasions with some form of





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income tax to increase tax revenue. In all three cases, public outcry and rampant tax fraud forced the government to withdraw the new tax, and try something else. Five years ago, it found a “something else” that seemed to work: a “transaction tax.”

On each and every transaction involving a financial institution — a bank, a finance company, or whatever — the institution is required to withhold 1% of the transaction in tax. This 1% tax is levied on *every* transaction: deposit, withdrawal, loan, payment or whatever.

Since Padarren businessmen must pay their sales tax bills through registered banks, and since such payments are considered “standard transactions” for the purpose of the transaction tax, businesspeople find themselves paying an additional tax on the tax.

• Import and Export Duties: The Customs

PRICE “PREMIUM”

Item/Material	Legal ¹	Black Market ²
Enchanted Weapon	175%	150%
Enchanted Item (non-weapon)	120%	120%
“Offensive” Potion ³	180%	150%
“Non-offensive” Potion ⁴	130%	120%
General Alchemical Materials	140%	110%
“Necromantic-specific” Alchemical Materials	—	180%+

Notes:

¹ Before-tax prices.

² These figures are intended as guidelines, nothing more.

“Dealers may sell for less ... or much more.”

³ I.e., potions that can be used as weapons, such as *blind*.

⁴ E.g., *eagle eyes*.

and Excise Branch of the bureaucracy levies duties, tariffs and other payments on goods imported into or exported from Padarr, or just passing through the harbor. The Tariff Schedule, the document that specifies customs and



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duty rates for different goods, runs to more than a thousand pages and is currently undergoing revision. Effectively, then, nobody but the CEB's officers and the Harbor Police delegated by the CEB to enforce the duties knows precisely what rate will be applied to any given shipment. (In fact, many cynics believe the CEB officers and Harbor Police don't really know either and just make it up as they go along. After all, proving that the CEB made a mistake would involve finding the appropriate paragraphs in the Tariff Schedule and then appealing the CEB's interpretation of it. Usually, this is *much* too much trouble. Traders who feel they're being treated badly usually just slip the CEB officer and the Harbor Police some generous squeeze and hope for the best.)

As a rule of thumb, import duties run between 8% and 12% of the value of the shipment. Export duties, levied against goods being shipped *from* Padarr are lower: typically 3% to 5% of the shipment value. "Transshipment duties" — i.e., levies on cargoes that are "just passing through" Padarr's harbor, and not due for sale within the city — are usually around 2%. It's *not* a good idea to take these

"TAX TAX"

Transaction tax is why people like me don't keep our money in any bank. Hell, man, think about it: every time I put money in or take it out, the IRO whittles away a little more. One percent when I deposit it, one percent when I withdraw that same money later ... a couple of ooses here, a couple there, eventually it adds up to real money. I heard the City Fathers were talking about bringing in another new exemption, to make it easier on old people like me, but nothing's happened yet.

Yes, I said "another new exemption." There's already dozens of them in place — too complicated and *convoluted* for the likes of me to understand ... or you, most likely. The exemptions aren't written this way, of course, but what they come down to is, "If you're Big Rich, you don't have to pay the tax tax."

That's the way it works around here.

figures as firm when you're budgeting your business, however. While you might expect your incoming cargo to be assessed at 5% ("Plaiting materials, plaits and similar products of plaiting materials bound together in parallel strands"), you might find it suddenly assessed at 13% ("Plaiting materials, plaits and similar products of plaiting materials in sheet form"). In most cases, the judicious application of squeeze can persuade a CEB officer or Harbor Police that he's assessed your shipment under the wrong category.

"SQUEEZE"

Corruption and bribery are facts of life in every city of Eln ... everywhere on Marl, for that matter, and no doubt throughout the rest of the universe as well. What sets Padarr apart is that, while elsewhere bribery is considered "unethical" and somehow unacceptable — though it continues unabated — among Padarrens the use of "squeeze" is an overt part of getting things done. Everyone offers squeeze, and everyone takes it. Salaries for employees are set taking into account the amount of squeeze they're likely to receive while conducting their duties. (For example, harbor pilots' salaries are relatively low for their level of responsibility, simply because it's expected that they'll pocket more than enough squeeze to raise their take-home pay to reasonable levels.)

If you want to get something done in "Paydirt," you're going to have to pay squeeze. "Voluntary gifts" to officials in the bureaucracy speed your paperwork through channels. A handful of coins tossed to your taxi driver guarantees that he won't get "lost" and end up somewhere across the city from your destination. Some folding money pushed into the hand of a restaurant maître d' will make sure your table doesn't look out over the midden. A contribution to the "Proctors' Benevolent Fund" might get you out of a speeding ticket.

A couple of centuries ago, a group of City Fathers tried, on their own initiative, to stamp out the "pernicious poison" of squeeze. Their high-minded — but fuzzy-headed — drive quickly came to naught, of course. The bureaucrats had for too long depended on squeeze to supplement their income and reacted to the attempt to stamp it out as they would to a roll-back of their wages. While the bureaucracy

SQUEEZE AND OUTLANDERS

I hear it all the time: we Padarrens hate outlanders. We resent you coming to our city, and we'll make you pay for your intrusion by giving you lousy service. We'll make you wait half an hour for a table in an empty restaurant. We'll ignore you when you're ready to place an order, and when we *do* deign to show up at your table, we're surly. We look daggers at you when you try to book a hotel room, then we give you a "prime suite" complete with hot-and-cold running roaches, and a perfect view of the abattoir. Of *course* we hate outlanders ...

Not true, actually — at least, not the way you're thinking of it. Sure, outlanders get grunty service, but not because they *are* outlanders. It's because the slobs don't pay squeeze! Either they don't know about the customs, or they think they're too "honest" and "moral" to play along with the "corruption," or they think that somehow they're just "above" the local customs.

Some of us Padarrens, we make allowances. Me, for example. You didn't give me squat when you got in my hack, yet I'm still taking you directly where you want to go, rather than on the grand tour. And, of course, I'm explaining to you the error of your ways ...

Why, *thank* you, guv, *very* generous of you ...

would probably have gone on strike — as it did once before — to combat the "anti-squeeze" campaign, it didn't turn out to be necessary this time. A little "work-to-rule" — and sharp words from the City Fathers' Big Rich patrons, who also benefitted from the status quo — quickly brought home to the council that some reforms just shouldn't be contemplated.

Even in Padarr, all "corruption" isn't created equal. Padarrens consider squeeze to be a way of getting things done or a fact of life. This doesn't mean that they view *all* corruption with equanimity. A proctor who gives a warning instead of a speeding ticket in return for a couple of osees is just conducting business as usual, and everyone knows it. That same proc-



tor who accepts a bribe to let a murderer escape, however, has broken the “unwritten code” of squeeze, is considered a “dirty cop,” and may well find himself up on criminal charges if caught.

WHAT TO PAY?

Figuring out how much squeeze to offer in any given situation can be pretty problematical. Slide someone too much, and at the very best you’ve wasted money; at the worst, you’ve marked yourself as a pigeon perfect for later plucking. Slide someone too little, and you won’t get the response you’re after ... and you could well insult the person to boot.

As a general rule of thumb, it’s a good idea to offer squeeze representing about 10% of the value of the service you’re after. Let’s say you want a table at a swanky restaurant. If you expect the total bill for the evening to be 200

“THE UNWRITTEN CODE”

Once in a while, we get some real straight-laced, hard-assed moralists come to Padarr. It’s always a laugh to watch them try to make sense of the difference between squeeze and *real* corruption with their black-and-white, either-or view of morality. “Corruption is bad!” they think. “Therefore, *any* corruption is bad. Therefore squeeze is bad. Padarrens accept squeeze, so Padarrens are bad. But Padarrens arrest people for taking *too much* squeeze, so Padarrens aren’t bad after all ... bzzzt!” And then they wander away, smoke curling from their ears.

Look, it’s not that hard to understand, is it (for anyone but a hard-assed moralist, at least)? The “unwritten code” is pretty damn simple, really. Ask yourself, “Does this application of squeeze cause harm to anyone?” If the answer’s “no,” graft away. If the answer’s “yes,” it’s not innocent squeeze, it’s corruption.

If I slip a proctor a couple of osees so he doesn’t ticket me for speeding, is that harming anyone? No. But if I slip a nightwatchman a 50-spot to turn a blind eye while I burgle the building he’s guarding ... Get the point?

osees, then it’s reasonable to slip the maître d’ a twenty. If a proctor’s about to write you a 50 osee parking ticket, slipping him a five-spot is a good place to start.

But what about situations that aren’t that clear-cut? How much should you pay when there’s no direct monetary value associated with the service — when what you’re after is an appointment with one of the City Fathers, and his secretary says his schedule is full for the next 17 months? Characters can usually figure this out with the *streetwise* skill at a DN of 9. Newcomers to the city, regardless of their *streetwise* skill, will be at a disadvantage here, of course. To reflect this, assess a +5 modifier to DN for visitors to Padarr. This modifier is decreased by 1 for each month the character spends in the city. (**Note:** the modifier can never become negative, no matter how long the character stays in the city, however.)

Another note: the *streetwise* skill is used for “standard” squeeze situations. If a character’s trying to bribe someone into “breaking the code,” the situation’s determined using the *bribery* skill.

THE BANKING SYSTEM

The banking system in Padarr is almost totally unregulated. In essence, anyone can start up a bank at any time to take deposits or make loans. The major financial institutions, however, are the so-called “chartered” banks.

“CHARTERED” BANKS

There are four of these large institutions in Padarr: Coldmere Savings & Loan, Gradybank, Padarren Bank of Commerce, and Financial Services Inc. All are owned and operated by individuals or cliques of the Big Rich. (For example, Coldmere S&L is owned almost entirely by Jon Jevik; Gradybank is — no surprise — totally under Barad Grady’s control. The Padarren Bank of Commerce, however, is operated by five major Big Rich working in cooperation.) These chartered banks trade on the reputation of their principals; generally, the “credit rating” of a bank reflects that of its owner/operator. (Thus, Coldmere S&L benefits from the widely-held perception that Jevik is the richest man in Padarr.)

Most of these institutions trumpet their “chartered” status as if it conferred some real

benefit. In fact, it's basically meaningless. Theoretically, anyone capable of paying the required squeeze could get the bureaucracy to issue a "charter" for her bank. (In practice, however, it's not that easy: the Big Rich would definitely "convince" the bureaucracy not to issue a charter to a competitor, since that might lose them business in the long run ...)

A typical chartered bank will have five or six branches throughout the city. "A-class" clients can conduct transactions at any branch with full access to any and all of their accounts. "B-class" clients can only do business at their own branch, unless they've made specific arrangements in advance (and paid the appropriate squeeze, of course). The distinction between "A-class" and "B-class" depends on the total amount a client has on deposit, on his borrowing practices, credit rating ... and how much squeeze he slips the bank manager.

"INDEPENDENTS"

Currently, more than 100 so-called "independent" banks are operating in Padarr. (This number changes constantly, as new operations open while others disappear from the face of the earth.) Some of these independents — Blaye Savings, for example — have been open for decades, and seem almost as stable as the charter banks. Others, however, are as ephemeral as mayflies. (Predictably, there's no form of deposit protection for clients of independents. If your bank goes out of business, you're out of luck.)

Most independents are single-branch operations, sometimes run out of private homes or even apartments. Blaye Savings is the exception, in that it has two branches: one just outside "The Circle," the other near the docks.

INTEREST RATES

Chartered banks typically offer between 5% and 7% interest on deposits. Sometimes the rates can go higher for larger sums or if the money is "locked in" for extended terms. In contrast, interest rates on loans run from a "corporate rate" of 10% for preferred businesses, right the way up to 16% and up for unsecured personal loans. (By law, 16% is the maximum annual rate that can be charged on loans.)

Independent banks compete for business — with each other, and with the chartered banks — by offering better interest on deposits, and

lower interest on loans. Usually, the best combination of rates can be found at the smallest and most aggressive — and often the least stable — independents. While the rates are often very attractive, there's a real risk involved. A 12% return on investment is great ... as long as the bank doesn't vanish with your life savings. Similarly, a 3% interest rate on a loan is attractive, but there's always the risk that the lender will hit a financial snag and demand full repayment of your loan *right now*.

For comparison, Blaye Savings offers a base interest rate of 7% on deposits (this can be higher under special circumstances), while its base "corporate rate" is only 8.5% for loans.

MONEY TRADERS

To exchange foreign currency legally, a money trader must have an official license issued by the bureaucracy. Licensed money traders are restricted in the exchange rates they can offer; usually the allowable "spread" is 14 pennies on the osee between buy and sell rates. (Money traders can certainly operate on a lower spread, however, and many of the smaller outfits do so as a way of competing with the larger institutions.)

Chartered banks automatically receive licenses to exchange currency. Other institutions must apply directly to the bureaucracy, and renew their license each year.

THE FINANCIAL UNDERWORLD

The loanwurm "industry" is very healthy in Padarr. "Private finance consultants" can float you a loan of a few thousand ooses on an hour's notice, for the "bargain" rate of 25% and up ... compounded *weekly*. Most of these operators don't worry about such niceties as identification or collateral, but their repayment options for delinquent accounts are much less negotiable than at the banks. ("Collection agent" is one of the few jobs in Padarr where Hugors are in great demand.)

A new development in Padarr's financial underworld is an expanding group of semi-legal "finance companies." Strictly speaking, they abide by the law and charge interest rates no higher than 16% per annum. They tend to demand "bonuses" and other "extraordinary payments," however, which push the effective interest rate up into the "astronomical" range, while still staying within the letter of the law.



CHAPTER
THREE

SOCIETY

In terms of official policy, Padarren society can be broken down into three major categories: the aristocracy, the Big Rich, and “everyone else.” (In fact, of course, there’s a fourth category without any “official” existence: the Unnaturals.)

THE ARISTOCRACY

The aristocrats of Padarr are the descendants of the “old blood,” the “great families” that founded the city. (This is a classic example of self-delusion, since the “great families” were actually bloodthirsty pirates ...) Of the 100,000+ people in Padarr, fewer than 2% might be considered part of the aristocracy. (Various social-climbers and con artists may *claim* to be part of this social class, of course.) There are no more than two score “true” aristocratic families in the city, but most of their family trees are remarkably gnarled and interwoven, with many branches.

All are, predictably, Humans ... or, if they’re not, they’ve done very well at concealing the fact, and there’s a *major* story to be dug up ...

LIFESTYLE

WORLD-VIEW

A Padarren wag once wrote that the main pastime of the aristocracy is trying to convince themselves that they’re not irrelevant. There’s a lot of truth in this, as reflected in the aristocrats’ view of the rest of the world.

Basically, they tell each other and themselves — and perhaps even *believe* — that to concern oneself with money, business or political power is somehow

base and ignoble. Thus, the aristocrats claim, the Big Rich and the bureaucrats are deluding themselves when they consider *themselves* to be the most important facets of Padarren society. Those others may have the wealth, and the temporal power and political influence ... but they're just compensating for their innate baseness of birth. The Big Rich in particular are deluding themselves that the most important thing in life is what you *do*, what you *achieve*. The aristocrats, of course, understand that the most important thing is what you *are* ... and that if you're not born into one of the "great families," all else is more or less meaningless.

ACTIVITIES

One of the reasons that so many "great families" are down on their financial luck is that Padarren aristocrats believe (or *claim* to believe, at least) that a life of leisure is the only life worth living. The life of a gentleman or gentlewoman of the Padarren upper crust should be devoted to philosophy and poetry, art and music, and other similar diversions. To do something because you actually *have* to

do it — work to earn money, for example — is to sink to the same base, ignoble level as the Big Rich ... or, may the gods forbid, the class of the common tradesman. (It's interesting to note that there are some artists — painters, poets and musicians, typically — of some real talent among the aristocracy. Some of them could easily make a comfortable living — and shore up the sagging fortunes of their families — if they would only perform in public or sell the works of art. Of course, however, doing so — trading on one's gods-given talents — is just as ignoble to the aristocratic mind-set as becoming a butcher or scrap-iron collector ...)

HOMES

Most of the aristocratic families live in and around the "Snob Hill" area of Padarr. Although the aristocrats have tried to close ranks to keep out the "tradesmen" — the Big Rich, in other words — it hasn't worked. Whether they're of noble bloodline or not, aristocrats have to pay upkeep on their homes and grounds just like anyone else. When they can't handle the upkeep, they have to sell ... and the Big Rich are there with the money to buy. (Cer-

"THE DISPOSSESSED"

It'd be funny if it wasn't so sad ... or sad if it wasn't so funny, I'm not sure which.

See that street? Yeah, that one, Tanner Lane. See all those row houses? Pretty crappy-looking, right? Cracking plaster, grimy windows, crap in the streets ...?

Okay, now look at number three on the right side of the street. Yeah, that's the one — the one with coat of arms on the door.

Give me a break — a coat of freakin' arms! On Tanner Lane.

You know who lives there? It's Jaco Vecuren and family. Yeah, that's right, Vecuren. Like the Gayle Vecuren who founded this godsforsaken place. And Sutcliffe Vecuren, the aristo who lords it over everyone from his estate up on the hill. Jaco is Sutcliffe's second cousin twice removed, or some damn thing — I don't know exactly.

Anyway, the point is he fell on bad times and had to sell out or starve. He asked

Sutcliffe to take him in ... and Sutcliffe told him exactly what he could do with that idea, where, and how many times. These days, all Jaco can afford is *that* — that little row house. (And from what I hear, he's *this close* to not making the rent every couple of months.)

Still and all, he's still an aristo, is old Jaco. And that row house — it's the Vecuren Estate. That's what the coat of arms means.

And Jaco — he's never done a stroke of work in his life, and he's not about to start now, even though his wife's burning the books for heat. Amazing, isn't it? And throughout, Jaco's clinging to his bloodline, and claiming everything's going to turn around again any day now.

"Turn around?" *How*, I ask you? Only way I see it happening is if Ajara walks up one day and hands old Jaco a barrel-load of jewels. Hope Jaco's wife isn't holding her breath.



tainly, the neighbors of those who sell out scorn them for their “base” actions, but when the alternatives are scorn and starvation, there’s not really that much of a choice to make ...)

Those branches of the “great families” who’ve had to sell off their homes and lands have several choices. The most attractive is to move in with another branch of the same family — to blend what little is left of both branches’ fortunes and maybe hang on for another generation. That’s not always possible, of course. Maybe those who have fallen on hard times aren’t well-liked, or maybe their close relations have already filled their spare rooms with *other* down-on-their-luck relatives. In these cases, there’s little choice but to rent — a smaller house, if there’s enough money, or maybe an apartment.

To move out of the Snob Hill area is one of the most shameful things that can happen to an aristocratic family. If you’re still in the “aristocratic enclave,” you can at least pretend there’s a chance your fortunes will turn for the better in the near future. If you’ve been forced to move into the “tradesmen’s quarters,” however, it’s that much harder to pretend you’re only suffering a “temporary downturn”.

KEY FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS

The most influential aristocratic families are those that bear the name Vecuren, whether alone or hyphenated — e.g., the Bellic-Vecurens, the Vecuren-Nowleses and the Vecuren-Hales. (Two decades ago, there was a family with the name Vecuren-Vecuren — due to bloodlines diverging then converging again — but the last holder of that name died recently in a mental institution.) Of the interlinked Vecuren “clans,” the most influential is the one headed by Sutcliffe Vecuren.

Less influential by far than the Vecurens — but actually *almost* well-off — are several lines of the Holita family. As aristocratic families go, the Holitas are “johnny-come-latelies,” arriving in Padarr five hundred years ago. They weren’t as wealthy as some of the other aristocratic families at the time — the Vecurens, for example, hadn’t lost all their fortunes yet — but they *did* manage to conserve what they had. Although the more “noble” aristocratic families still tend to scorn the Holitas — particularly behind their backs — that doesn’t stop them from approaching the family for “short-term loans” from time to time.



"LEGAL ALIENS"

The aristocrats — they're not like you and me. Sometimes I wonder if they're even Human ...

No, that's *not* what I mean, they're not Unnaturals. What I mean is ...

Well, it's like this flight of fancy of mine. Like, creatures from beyond Marl — from another world — have come to Padarr, and they've tried to fit in ... but they can't do it right. They've got this totally screwed up view of the world, of the way life works. They *think* differently, see? You and I — we see something, and we come to the same kind of conclusion, the *logical* conclusion, about it. These other creatures — they look at what we saw, and they come to a *totally different* conclusion. Like they haven't been watching the same conjurevid as we have. Get me?

That's what the aristos are like. Freakin' aliens.

THE BIG RICH

LIFESTYLE

WORLD-VIEW

The Big Rich are the most important people in Padarr. They know it, they accept it, they relish it ... and they exploit it.

To a Big Rich, the aristocrats are laughable irrelevancies (except on those few occasions when they can be marginally useful). The bureaucrats are an occasional thorn in the side, a bunch of jumped-up peasants with delusions of grandeur who think they understand what real power is — potential hindrances who haven't made themselves aggravating enough to warrant removal ... yet. The City Fathers are pawns with the same ability to think for themselves as a group of hand-puppets. And the "great unwashed" — the general populace of Padarr — represents a pool of workers and purchasers, to be exploited in the most efficient manner possible.

Big Rich look on each other with a strange combination of enmity and fraternity. As a



Ron Kulp

socio-economic class, the Big Rich have a stronger sense of unity — a sense of “class” — than any group other than the aristocrats. They consider each other to be true “kindred spirits,” their similarities much more important than their differences. If, for example, the bureaucracy were to try to cause trouble for a single Big Rich, the odds are the administrative branch would earn itself the ire of the entire Big Rich social class.

Yet, conversely, individual Big Rich are often in direct competition with each other, and that competition can be fierce indeed! While the Big Rich might try to show a kind of “unified front,” the class is shot through with in-fighting, backstabbing, intrigue and political maneuvering. (Few Padarrens seem to understand this, however.)

ACTIVITIES

The major activity of the Big Rich is *business*, in all its manifold forms. The level of business as they conduct it is beyond the imagination of most smaller businesspeople, however. Small businesses typically deal in individual products, buying and selling tangible goods. Most Big Rich are several steps above this, however. When they buy or sell anything directly, it's usually entire *companies*, or even groups of companies.

Sometimes, it's difficult for individual Big Rich to keep track of exactly what companies they own or control. In some cases, this is simply because there are so many of them. (Barad Grady's business empire is a case in point. While Grady Motor Works and Gradyarmaco are the two organizations most commonly linked with him, he actually owns more than 500 companies.) In others, it's because the ownership or control is so indirect, through a maze of shell companies, holding companies, “blind trusts,” and the like (for tax reasons, because there's some competitive advantage in keeping the links hidden, or simply for the fun of playing at intrigue).

HOMES

Many Big Rich congregate in the Snob Hill district, happily buying up property and “stately homes” from aristocratic families that can't handle the maintenance payments any more. Over the last century or so, it's become *de rigeur* for the Big Rich to have smaller

places elsewhere in town: often sumptuous penthouse apartments.

Currently, Jon Jevik is spearheading a new development in “the Circle” — an enclave of exclusive “town homes.” Senior bureaucrats are trying to block the development because it's encroaching on what they consider *their* domain. Jevik has the necessary zonings in place, however — through cunning manipulation of a little in-fighting within the administrative branch, he slipped the rezoning plan through — and he has no intention of backing away from what will be a *very* profitable undertaking.

KEY INDIVIDUALS

The major Big Rich, and their primary areas of influence, are listed below:

- **Marcia Daile:** Import/export, shipping, food services.
- **Barad Grady:** Automotive, banking, transportation, weapons.
- **Delwin Harn:** Construction, light industry, real estate development, tin mining.
- **Jon Jevik:** Banking, dreamstone mining, import/export, food services, garbage disposal, magical fabrication, shipbuilding, transportation.
- **Poul Parras:** Communication, magical fabrication.

HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

Well, that's the key question, isn't it? Some of those Big Rich — they're so stinking rich they couldn't spend all their money if that's all they ever did, morning to night until they died: spend money. So why do they keep trying to claw in *more* money, more influence, more power? Hm?

Here's how you've got to look at it. For people like us, business is a way of making a living. For the Big Rich, it's a way of *life* — and there's a *big* difference.

You've heard that old line, “What you do is what you are?” The Big Rich, they buy into that all the way. And that means they buy into the corollary as well: “If what you do is what you are, when you don't you *aren't* ...”

- **Nico Flynn:** Entertainment, gambling, industrial construction.

- **Elaine Withers:** Alchemy, metalwork, tanning.

THE “GREAT UNWASHED”

LIFESTYLE

WORLD-VIEW

This is the most diverse group in Padarr — in terms of wealth, activities, and particularly world-view. Some go through life unaware of how they’re being manipulated by the various power groups: the Big Rich, the bureaucrats, even the aristocrats. Some understand *exactly* how the city really works and understand their true place in the scheme — i.e., right at the bottom. The majority fall somewhere in the middle. Similarly, some of the populace believe that the aristocrats are the key facet of Padarren society, while others think that the City Fathers are the real power in the city.

Few Padarrens have ever left the walls of their city — the same can be said of the natives of *most* cities in Marl, of course — and so they don’t have anything with which to compare their home. Rigid class structure, dominance of the business community by a few Big Rich, prevalence of corruption, constant infighting between the different facets of society — all are examples of “just the way it is.” It wouldn’t even occur to most Padarrens that other cities could be any different.

ACTIVITIES

Working to keep food on the table takes up the majority of time for most “common” Padarrens. Most people work for companies owned — directly or indirectly — by the Big Rich. With some notable exceptions, rates of pay are low compared to the cost of living. Few “common” Padarrens have much disposable income for luxuries.

For most working folk, the closest they come to entertainment is listening to the crystal set in the local tavern, while getting comfortably numb over an endless series of shots-and-beers.



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HOMES AND BUSINESSES

Few common Padarrens own their own homes or places of business. The vast majority rent ... which, of course, leaves them open to devastating rent increases when the Big Rich who own the property “flip” it for an inflated price. Some lucky slubs have longer-term leases, where their rent is locked in at a certain rate for a couple of years.

Among small businessmen, there’s a roughly even split between those who own their businesses themselves (the *businesses*, not the buildings in which those businesses operate), and those who license or “franchise” the business from some other owner.

UNNATURALS

LIFESTYLE

WORLD-VIEW

If “common” Padarrens are the bottom rung on the social ladder, then Unnaturals are the mud the ladder’s resting on. Officially, there’s no resident population of Unnaturals in Padarr. As far as the government’s concerned, any Unnaturals you meet on the street have got to be visitors, either legal or illegal (and probably the latter). Since they don’t exist, Unnaturals don’t enjoy many of the benefits of Padarren society: equality under the law, right to appeal, free (if borderline-incompetent) health care, etc ...

Generally, Padarr isn’t a good place to live if you’re an Unnatural with special requirements (a Vampire, for example). Unless you’re *really* creative, you’ll have no choice but to break some of the laws of the city. If you’re caught, you have no real legal rights — after all, presumably you’ve got to be an “illegal alien” — and the proctors will be justified in shooting you down in the street if they think you pose a threat to them or to the populace at large.

So why hasn’t there been an uprising among the Unnaturals? For several reasons. First, there simply aren’t that many of them: they’re outnumbered by the Humans by more than five to one. Second, many Unnaturals have innate weaknesses that more than compen-

sate for their advantages over humanity. And thirdly, all too often they’re too busy with their own rivalries, turf wars and squabbles — related to the Godwar or not — to get it together enough to challenge the status quo.

ACTIVITIES

Most Unnaturals — those who can’t pass adequately for Human, at least — typically work in the most demeaning, underpaid and outright dangerous jobs in Padarr: jobs that Humans wouldn’t do under conditions for which Humans wouldn’t stand. Taxims drive taxis, Hugors tote crates (and break the occasional knee), Succubi work the red-stone district, Ghouls and Zuvembie slave in the tanneries and fish-processing plants, or in the tin mines

BUY OR FRANCHISE?

There’s an upside and a downside to either route. (Kinda like life, huh?)

Say you set up your business from scratch. You’ve got to carve yourself out a rep, build yourself a clientele — lots of businesses *don’t* and go tits-up right there. If you do, you get to pocket all your profit. Of course, maybe you’re treading on the toes of another company owned by some Big Rich. (Or maybe one of the Big Rich sees your company doing okay, figures there’s a market, and then goes into competition with you.) Either way, you’re the little fish swimming with the sharks. Draw attention to yourself, and it’s goodnight Irene.

So say you go the franchise route. Some big advantages there: probably you “acquire” some rep — and maybe even some clientele — when you get the franchise. Also, since you’ve gotten the license off somewhere higher up the food chain, you’ve got *some* degree of protection. (Like, you license a franchise off Marcia Daile, at least you know Daile’s not going to squeeze you out later on.) But the downside — franchise fees, brother, they can be a real killer. I’ve seen a couple of people take out franchises then be bled dry.

Buy or franchise — it’s your choice ... and your funeral.



... For entertainment, they seek what suits their nature: a friendly fistfight for a Gris, "companionship" for an Incubus, lots of whiskey for a Hugor, etc.

HOMES AND BUSINESSES

Generally, Unnaturals live where no-one else would want to ... or wherever the proctors haven't roused them from yet. This often translates to "squatter towns" on ground the watermages haven't fully "reclaimed" from the swamp, in the bowels of disused warehouses, in condemned buildings or on vacant lots.

There's one particular region of the "Rat's Nest," up in the northernmost part of the town, that's become the unofficial Unnatural "neighborhood." Right up against the northern wall, this area is flanked by the Marthak Bight — hence the winter storms — on one side, and the marsh — hence the swamp reek in the summer — on the other. To add insult to injury, Elaine Withers' business "combine" built the city's largest "fleshmill" tannery one block directly to the south, inflicting on the

THE VAMPIRE'S DILEMMA

You know that policy about not giving Unnaturals any legal rights? It's got an unexpected consequence, at least as far as bloodsuckers are concerned, and the City Fathers simply didn't think it through. Simply put: in Padarr, Vampires are more likely to kill their prey than in other cities.

Why? *Think* a minute, warmflesh. In Selastos, for example, if a Vampire feeds but lets his victim live, what's the law going to do to him? Convict him of "malicious wounding" and toss him in jail, where he gets three bloodbags a day for the length of his sentence. Free room and board.

What about here? In Padarr, that same Vampire's going to eat a runeslug the moment the proctors catch up with him.

Much safer, then, not to leave behind any witnesses — particularly anemic ones with teeth-marks in their neck. Dead whatever's tell no tales ...



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residents the indescribable reek of rendering flesh. The Human population moved out, and the Unnaturals moved in. This area — known informally as “Gristown” or “Karkas Row” — is nowhere near large enough for the Unnatural population, however, and the majority have to make other arrangements.

In the “tonier” parts of the city, obvious Unnaturals aren’t welcome in any establishment, whether restaurant, bar, food store or bottle shop. Outside the Circle and Snob Hill, however, the restrictions aren’t quite so overt. Shopkeepers recognize that money’s money, whether it comes from a Big Rich or an Elkist. They’ll let Unnaturals in and even serve them ... but *certainly* won’t make them feel welcome.

No surprise, then, that some Unnaturals have opened their own establishments in Gristown — taverns, mainly, but a couple of liquor and food stores as well. Their businesses are illegal, of course; they don’t have the appropriate licenses from the bureaucracy, and the bureaucrats would never consider *issuing* such licenses to Unnaturals. When and if the proctors bother, they can close down any such business, confiscate its inventory, roust its clientele, even burn down its build-

ing. That’s why most Unnatural-run businesses are like floating crap games — never in the same place more than one day running. (There *are* a couple of taverns in Karkas Row that haven’t moved for months or years ... but you can bet their proprietors are paying a *very* healthy measure of squeeze to the Proctors.)

KEY FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS

For obvious reasons, most Unnaturals keep a *very* low profile. Still, there are a couple of “luminaries” in the Gristown area, known and respected by at least some of the city’s Unnatural population.

The most interesting of these is known as Diamond Jack — a Tulpa who lives somewhere in the heart of Gristown. Surrounded by so many Unnaturals who are oppressed by the Human majority, it’s no surprise that Diamond Jack’s most common “manifestation” is ... a Human. Padarr’s Unnaturals — those who’ll talk about him, at least — claim that Diamond Jack has no hidden agenda, that he’s just making out the best he can in a bad situation. Outside Gristown, however, Diamond Jack is a common “bugbear” used to

PRICE-FIXING

I used to run a little bottle shop down near Gristown ... oh, ten years back, now. (Got squeezed out, but that's another story.) Used to do good business — mainly with the Unnaturals, but who cares? Not me, bub — a person's a person, don't matter to me if he's got fur, his eyes glow, or he's freakin' *dead*. Used to treat my clientele fairly. Same price for anyone and everyone, Human or breed or whatever.

Not *some* of the places around here, let me tell you that. One price for the Humans, another for the Unnaturals. ("Make *damn* sure them freaks know their place ... and pocket some extra change at the same time" — that seems to be the storekeepers' attitudes.)

Now, see, that's illegal — preferential pricing, and all. (The law didn't go on the books to protect the Unnaturals, you can be sure of that. But on the books it is.) You can't bump the price up for any identifiable group.

So how'd the storekeepers do it? Easy — the price they charged the Unnaturals, that was the *list* price. That's what they'd say, at least. When a Human came in, they'd give him a "personal discount." Nothing against the law about *dropping* your prices...

frighten Human children and to represent — in Humans' minds — the "Unnatural peril." The current Commissioner of Proctors has used scare-stories of an "Unnaturals rebellion" masterminded by Diamond Jack to lobby for a larger departmental budget.

The other notable Unnatural is Auld Mary, a Werewolf spellslinger who lives somewhere in the heart of Gristown. Few outside the Unnatural "enclave" have even heard her name, but within Karkas Row she's something of a celebrity. Auld Mary claims she's been alive for more than three centuries. She doesn't have any direct proof — and claims she doesn't need any; if someone doesn't believe her, it's *his* problem not hers — but she *can* accurately answer questions about events and people

dating back at least 250 years. Many of the weaker Unnaturals turn to Auld Mary for advice — and sometimes magical aid — in time of trouble.

THE NEWSCALLERS

In Padarr, all newscallers (in Selastos, they'd call them streetsingers) are members of the Newsmen's Guild and work for an organization called the Central News Agency, or CNA. By guild regulations, newscallers can only report news that's been passed to them — and approved! — by the CNA. Each morning and evening, newscallers must contact their superiors at the CNA — either in person, or via crystal set — for the day's (or the night's) "official news." According to Padarren law, it's not illegal for a newscaller to disseminate "unofficial" news ... but if his bosses at CNA hear of it, he'll be fined, fired, or maybe even worked over (depending on the circumstances). The proctors turn a blind eye to this kind of "internal guild discipline," unless the "collateral damage" — e.g., innocents hurt by an overenthusiastic guild "enforcer" — gets out of hand. The guild and CNA are even more hard-nosed when it comes to freelance ("scab") newscallers, people doing the job without the blessing of the establishment.

Newscallers are paid a salary — usually a very small one — by CNA. They're free to collect whatever tips they can while working the streets, however. Many newscallers supplement their income by accepting squeeze in return for passing on "unofficial" scoops, but this is a very risky career move.

Both the Newsmen's Guild and CNA defend this system on various grounds. Firstly, advocates claim, it leads to a higher quality of news being distributed on the street. As well as newscallers, CNA employs reporters — also members of the Newsmen's Guild — whose job is to go out and collect the news as it happens. Reporters are assigned their specific "beats" — the crime beat, for example, or "society events" — and are generally free to follow up any leads they find that relate to their assignments. Every day, they return to the CNA offices — or report by crystal set — and pass their stories to the editors. These editors then distribute those stories to the newscallers ...

Theoretically, the way it works all too often

is that the editors squelch stories that are “unacceptable” according to CNA policy and put an “official” spin on those stories that do go out over the newscaller “network.” Many reporters are frustrated when a hot story gets squelched for “political” reasons ... but most don’t complain too vociferously. (They know where their bread is buttered ... and which way their knees are supposed to bend.)

The Central News Agency is officially an independent organization, supported out of civic funds. It’s an open secret, however, that Jon Jevik holds a controlling interest in the Agency — and in many individual editors and reporters.

HEALTH CARE

The City Fathers often boast about Padarr’s health-care system. This vaunted system guarantees that all citizens, regardless of wealth or influence, receive adequate care. City coffers support a number of hospitals, and pay a battalion of doctors — and even a few vitomancers — to help any and all citizens with their health problems. All a Padarren has to do is show his citizen’s card to be treated for whatever ails him.

SUBSIDIZED CARE

As is so often the case in Padarr, the truth is different from the City Fathers’ grand claims. True, there are two hospitals in the city — one near the docks, the other on the edge of the Circle — dedicated to providing subsidized care for the citizenry. Built a century or so ago, they haven’t been adequately maintained since then. Walls are crumbling; many glowstones are inert, never recharged; rats skitter and chitter in the walls. Stocks of bandages are depleted; racks that should contain potions are empty.

The doctors and other care-givers who work in these hospitals are underpaid — so much so that it’s almost impossible for the system to keep competent people in its employ. Vitomancers who are supposedly “on retainer” respond slowly to emergency calls, if at all.

The situation is even worse with regard to

the doctors and vitomancers with practices outside the hospitals — those who are supposed to provide free care in return for payment from the city. All have to supplement their income by charging for “private care.” Even those who really care about the citizenry can’t provide the service they’d like to. Patients who visit doctors expecting subsidized care have to wait — sometimes hours — in drafty waiting rooms while paying patients are treated. Subsidized-care patients have to make do with whatever medicines, potions and supplies are left over.

PRIVATE CARE

Those who have the money to pay for health care invariably do so. Paying cash for service guarantees better, and more timely, care. Flashing a roll of banknotes is all it takes to get to the front of the line at a doctor’s office, or even at a subsidized-care hospital. Only the penniless — or those who don’t know any better — depend on city-funded services.

The Big Rich, of course, have made their own arrangements. Near Snob Hill, there are a couple of small, private hospitals that aren’t part of the city plan. Some of these are open to anyone who can pay the fees — starting at 100 osees per day for a room, and going *way* up from there — but there are at least two restricted to the true Big Rich. If the person at the admitting desk doesn’t recognize you or your family name as part of the Big Rich, you’re not going to be let in ... even if you’re bleeding on the floor. In addition, the true upper-crust among the Big Rich often have their own private doctors or vitomancers on-staff, and thus available at a moment’s notice.

Recently, the Commissioner of Proctors has recognized — or acknowledged — the horrendous state of subsidized care and has established special medical service for proctors injured in the line of duty. The central precinct house has a well-equipped and well-staffed clinic and there are *more than a dozen doctors* throughout Padarr kept “on retainer” who’ll give proctors excellent medical service simply for the asking.



CHAPTER FOUR

RELIGION AND CULTS

The official religion of Padarr is the worship of Ajara, a “local” goddess originally worshipped by the pirates who founded the city. All other religions are, strictly speaking, illegal, and professing any other faith — in public, or even in private — is a crime.

AJARA

Before the Godwar, Ajara was a “minor” deity, worshipped predominantly by those who made their living on the sea — including pirates. Legends had it that the breath of Ajara was the wind, her tears the rain, her thoughts the fish, and her anger the storms that shattered the timbers of ships. Explorers, traders, fishermen and pirates all worshipped her, and offered her sacrifices — traditionally, wine poured onto the ocean — to placate and appease her. On returning from a voyage, it was traditional to offer public thanks to Ajara for sparing the voyager’s life. Today, Padarren fishermen still abide by these old traditions. It’s common to see members of the city’s fishing fleet pouring a glass of wine onto the sea’s surface before setting sail, to appease the storms and to entice the fish into their nets. When they return alive, they will typically face into the teeth of the wind and bow, to thank Ajara for sparing them and making their journey a success.

Outside the fishing community, however, the worship of Ajara has changed drastically. She’s still given “lip service” as the “Mother of Storms,” but “official” Padarren doctrine has drastically expanded her “portfolio.” According to the state religion, Ajara is the only true deity in existence, and hence responsible for *everything* — birth, death, health, sickness, success, failure, war, peace ... All other deities are, at best, delusions, and at worst, demons trying to tempt mankind from the path of righteousness. Thus, to worship any



other god is to be guilty of heresy of the foulest kind on a par with outright devil-worship.

THE CHURCH

The City Fathers are the nominal leaders of the Ajaran faith in Padarr. In fact, however, they're only figureheads — symbolic of the fact that, in Padarr at least, church and state aren't separated. It's questionable whether any individual City Father actually *believes* in the state religion. Some probably do; others almost certainly are secretly loyal to other faiths; and still others — possibly even the majority — are non-believers, with no faith whatsoever beyond their own personal wants and needs. As "Defenders of the Faith," however, all City Fathers must practice the Ajaran faith — or *appear* to practice it. They must attend regular worship services, observe holy days, "tithe," and generally drop Ajara's name wherever appropriate in political speeches.

CHURCH HIERARCHY

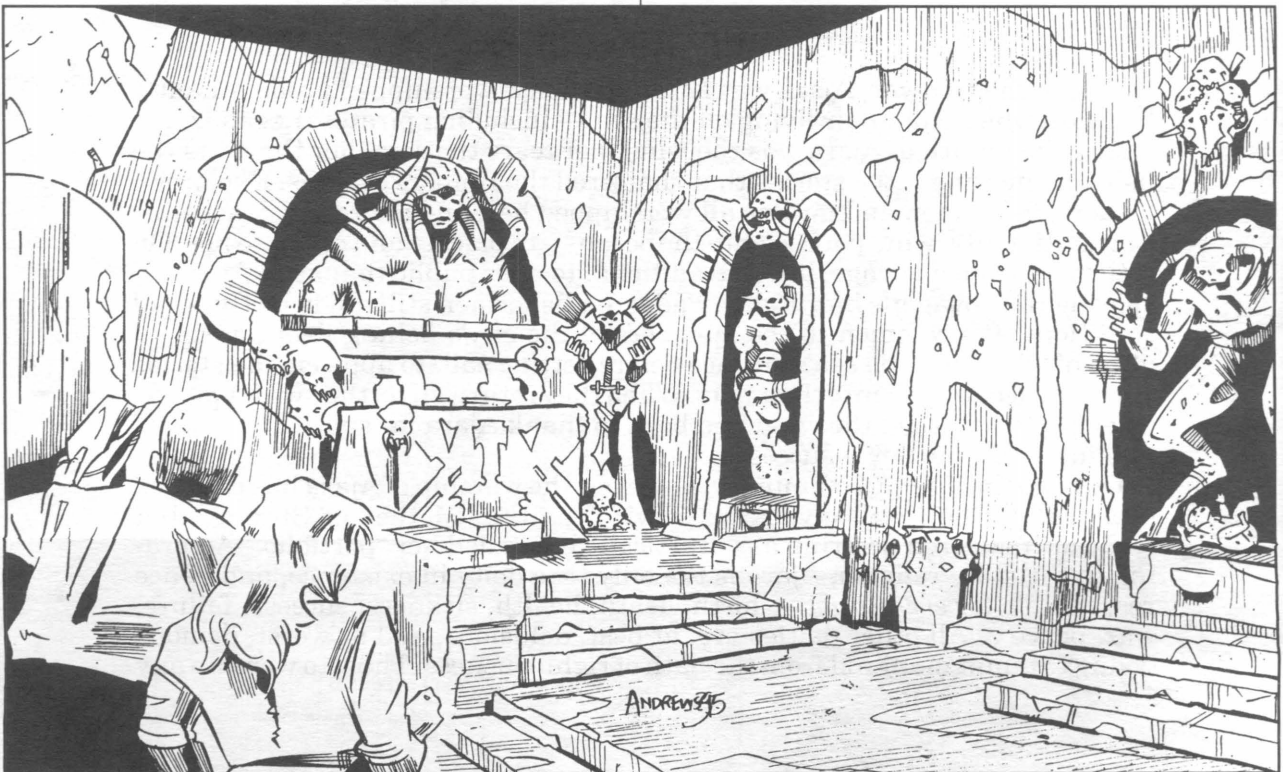
The real leaders of the Ajaran faith in Padarr are the "Praetors," a council of three "high

priests" who run the central church. The Praetors — all Human (of course!) and all female — live in the central church, called the *Aedificium*, which stands in the center of the Circle.

Below the Praetors in the church hierarchy is the College of Elders, a council of seven senior priests of the Ajaran faith. And under the authority of the Elders are the priests — again, all female — who conduct Ajaran services at small chapels throughout the city.

Praetors and Elders hold their positions for life. The Praetors select new members of the College from among the priesthood to fill vacancies in the College and to maintain its number at seven. When a Praetor dies, the College of Elders elect a replacement from among their number. The surviving two Praetors have no direct say in the election of a new member of their council.

The Praetors and the Elders are held in high esteem by the populace at large and live very well, supported by the church (and thus indirectly by the tithes paid by the faithful). Senior church officials enjoy a very comfortable lifestyle, so a seat in the College — and, even more so, among the Praetors — is the ultimate



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goal for many priests. The election structure guarantees that there'll always be a high degree of favor-brokerage and "horse-trading" among candidates for higher office.

THE PRIESTS

Any female member of the congregation can petition their local priest to join the priesthood. Candidates for the priesthood must be unmarried females (centuries ago, virginity was also a requirement, but over the years that criterion has been eliminated). Candi-

UNCERTAIN BELIEFS

You're going to find the same kind of range among priests as in the population as a whole. Some are true believers — they really buy into this Ajaran crap, *all* the way in. They figure they're on Marl to *make a difference*, to look after the souls of the people in their congregation. Sometimes they figure it's your choice whether you want your soul tended or not; other times, they figure it's their *duty* to keep you on the straight and narrow whether that's the road you want to follow or not. Nosy meddlers, some of them ... but with the best of intentions, which generally just makes it worse.

Then you've got the cynics. They don't believe in Ajara, they don't believe in the church ... Ison, they probably don't even believe that people have souls, for all I know. They couldn't make a go of it out in the real world. They couldn't get a job or make a living ... or they figured it was too much work to keep bread on the table. They got into the priesthood because it's a comfortable enough life — shelter, clothes, and four squares a day — and all you have to do for it is get up on your hind legs every week and rail about demons and sinners and heretics. Good work if you can get it ... and you can stand seeing yourself in a mirror.

And the College of Elders, and the Praetors? Same kind of range, I suppose. I don't know for sure, but I'd guess *some* of the higher-ups are "true believers." Most, though? Doubt it.

dates for ordination must sign over all their worldly goods — including any and all inheritances they may eventually receive — to the church, and take vows to live a simple and holy life, dedicating themselves to the spiritual well-being of their congregation. Priests are under no obligation to grant a supplicant's petition. Whether they do or not — and what additional criteria they use to determine the "worthiness" of a supplicant — is a personal decision on the priest's part and can't be appealed to any higher authority.

"Parish" priests live in spartan quarters in the churches or chapels where they hold services. Their personal requirements — food, clothing, and the like — are paid for by the church. Individuals sometimes receive personal "donations" from their congregation, particularly on or around holy days. (It's considered *exceptionally* bad form to call these donations "squeeze" ... even though that's what they often are!) They act as counselors for their congregation, conduct marriage services, and perform name-day and/or funeral services for those parishioners who want them.

Magic use is notably uncommon among priests of Ajara. It's not officially forbidden under the faith's precepts, but it's definitely not encouraged. (The rationale seems to be that spiritual guidance should be enough of a reason for people to be true to their faith. Offering some kind of tangible benefit — magical aid from the priests, for example — "cheapens" the faith.) Those few Ajaran priests who *do* practice magic typically learn *vitomancy*.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

DOCTRINE

The central tenet of the Ajaran faith is that Ajara is the only true deity. All others are pretenders, demons, or figments of a benighted imagination. All Human beings have souls ... but Unnaturals don't, and so are a "lower form of life." They have the potential for *acquiring* souls, however, so they're not beyond redemption.

The Ajaran faith preaches a kind of reincarnation and transmigration of souls. When you die, your soul travels to the Court of Ajara, somewhere beyond the west wind. There, your soul is judged based on your actions while



alive — mainly, on how well you've followed the strictures of the Ajaran faith. If you've lived a good and righteous life, you'll be returned to Marl in another body of a higher socioeconomic class. The highest form of life in which you can return is — predictably — someone who becomes a priest of Ajara. If, on the other hand, you've lived a sinful life, you'll come back as someone of a lower class.

Since they don't have souls, Unnaturals are treated differently in the cosmology ... although they're still subject to the judgment of Ajara. An Unnatural who's lived a "righteous" life — this includes accepting his "true place in the world," of course (i.e., putting up with oppression without complaining) — is judged well, granted a soul, and returned to Marl as a Human. (Anyone who thinks this through will notice the flaw in the logic ... but it's not a wise thing to discuss in public.)

Another major element in the Ajaran faith is obedience to lawful authority — both spiritual and temporal. To disobey the edicts of either the lawful government or the Praetors is a sin second only to heresy in severity.

SERVICES

Regular church services are held once a week. (The church calendar operates on a nine-day week, rather than seven-day "secular" cycle.) The Ajaran faith doesn't have a "Sabbath" or a day of rest. There's nothing innately "ungodly" about working the week round with no rest. Services are held at churches and chapels throughout the city, starting at sunset and lasting for perhaps an hour.

Members of the faith — in other words, everyone in Padarr — are expected to make best efforts to attend services on a regular basis. It's understood, however, that it's impossible to attend all — or even most — services. People who put in an appearance too rarely, however, are often pointed out by name at services and publicly shamed for their lack of faith. Since charges of "heresy" can lead to unpleasant consequences, even non-believers usually find it wiser to attend a bare minimum of services.

MARRIAGE

A marriage isn't binding unless it's been solemnized by a priest of Ajara. One of the few

secular tasks that a priest must perform is registering and recording official marriages, and passing those records on to the appropriate departments in the bureaucracy. Newlyweds must pay a registration fee of 100 osees to the priest who performs their marriage; all of this fee is passed on to the bureaucracy with the paperwork, and the priest receives none of it. However, it's become a tradition to accompany the fee with a "personal donation" to the priest. There's no set amount for this donation, but another 100 osees is a good starting point, modified up or down depending on the newlyweds' wealth. People who don't "donate" an amount that strikes the priest as appropriate may well find themselves held up in the next church service as examples of selfishness and ungodliness ...

The Ajaran faith doesn't allow for divorce. Marriage is forever, ended only by the death of one spouse. Someone who's already been married once can't be married again, of course, until his or her spouse dies. Predictably, then, there are many people in Padarr who've been living separate lives for years but are still officially married.

HOLY DAYS

The major holy days of the Ajaran faith occur on the vernal and autumnal equinox, and on the summer and winter solstice. The winter solstice is considered the beginning of the "holy year." Even these holy days are *not* official "days of rest," however.

TITHING

A requirement of all the "faithful" is that they tithe to the church — that is, donate to the church's coffers one tenth part of their annual income, no matter how large or small it may be. It's the tithes from the 100,000 "faithful worshippers" in Padarr that support the church, maintain the facilities, pay the stipends of the priests, and underwrite the comfortable lifestyles of the Elders and Praetors. Predictably, local priests are instructed to keep a close eye on who pays his tithes and who doesn't. Although not paying a tithe isn't considered *prima facie* evidence of heresy, it's certainly indicative. The church will turn a sharper eye on anyone who doesn't tithe, looking for further evidence of "backsliding" or outright heresy. People in default on their

tithes can't be officially married, or receive any of the other sacraments.

Of course, the church has no direct way of knowing exactly how much money an individual makes, so it's common enough to understate annual income when "donating" one's tithes. Under "special extenuating circumstances," the council of Praetors can exempt an individual from paying his tithes, either temporarily or permanently. To get an exemption, you have to petition the Praetors personally and explain to them — a rather hostile audience, understandably — why you should be let off the hook. About the only people who consistently receive this kind of exemption are the Big Rich. (After all, even the Praetors know where the *real* power in the city lies ...) The City Fathers, as nominal "Defenders of the Faith," don't have to tithe while in office.

"HERESY"

The official definition of heresy, as far as the Ajaran church is concerned, is "acting in a manner detrimental to the stability of the church, and to the spiritual health of the population." That's a pretty wide-open definition, of course, and the church leaders both know it and take advantage of it. The most common "heretical" act is to take part in any form of "unsanctioned" worship — i.e., membership in a cult, or any other faith. It's also officially heretical to describe any nonsanctioned faith as "the truth," or to cast doubt on the veracity of Ajaran doctrine ... although this is much harder to enforce, and thus a rarer charge.

A charge of heresy may be leveled by any member of the Ajaran priesthood. The charge is brought before the College of Elders. Depending on the circumstances, the accused may be "invited" to appear before the Elders to defend his actions, and to refute the charge. It's important to note that the burden of proof is on the accused, *not* the accuser: the principle is "heretical until proven innocent." When and if the College of Elders is satisfied of the truth of the charge, they refer it to the Proctors Department. In Padarr, although heresy is a spiritual matter, its punishment is handled by secular authorities. The Elders decide on the appropriate punishment — which can range from fines, flogging, imprisonment or exile

right the way up to execution — and pass that "recommendation" on to the proctors. Although the Proctors Department has the right to ignore this recommendation — to alter the punishment, or to set aside the charge entirely — they rarely do so, and only under the most exceptional of circumstances. There is a channel of appeal, even for heresy charges. Most appeals are heard by the City Fathers; appeals in heresy cases, however, are heard by the Praetors. Predictably, *very* few such charges are overturned ... and then only when the Praetors see a significant benefit in it to themselves or to the church as a whole.

THE CULTS

The City Fathers, the Praetors of the Ajaran church, the bureaucrats and the Big Rich would all like the populace to believe there are no cults in Padarr. They'd like to believe it themselves, for that matter, but they know better.

Although nobody's ever done an accurate census (for obvious reasons), it seems that there are more cults per capita in Padarr than in most other cities of Marl. Cynics claim that the whole "official religion" thing, with its suppression of other faiths, has caused the problem by breeding cults in the shadows and in the woodwork. It's probably true too, at least in part: many cult members probably didn't join their group of choice solely because they believed wholeheartedly in its precepts, but at least partially as an act of defiance against the church. In private, the Powers That Be in Padarr probably recognize this fact, but they argue — again, with some justification — that while there may be more cults, none of them is as powerful as the ones in other cities. (Suppression and the constant threat of a heresy charge does wonders for "persuading" cultists to keep a low profile.)

There are probably upwards of a dozen "major" cults in Padarr — that is, groups with more than a few dozen members. If you include the fringe groups, however — those with ten or fewer members — the number climbs into the scores. As the cities of Galitia and Selastos have discovered, of course, number of members and influence — or threat, depending on how you look at it — aren't necessarily proportional.



MAJOR CULTS IN PADARR

THE CULT OF BOLT

The Cult of Bolt is a Chaotic organization, dedicated to the proposition that strength and growth come only from conflict — that “what does not kill us makes us strong.” (The actual homily used within the cult is, “A kite rises against the wind, not with it.”) The purpose of life, so the “Boltists” believe, is to seek out challenges in all forms, and face them ... and to “assist” others in doing the same thing, basically by seeding trouble whenever and wherever possible. Stability is stagnation, Boltists believe, and it’s their god-given duty to stir things up to prevent that stagnation. Though Boltists don’t purposefully go out to kill people — it’s true, however, that occasionally people involved in their ploys fail so profoundly to “grow” that they die — the cult is considered more dangerous by the establishment than any other, even the Nallist necromancers.

Bolt himself is a fascinating mythological figure, a god represented by his worshippers as a Sketh. Bolt doesn’t actually exist; his worshippers openly acknowledge that, but consider their deity’s nonexistence to be just one more of those challenges that helps them to grow.

Worshippers of Bolt rarely gather in organized services or meetings. They worship their nonexistent god alone or in small groups.

If you look, you can find priests of Bolt who are trained in any and all schools of magic.

THE CULT OF GHAZERETH

The Ghazereth cult in Padarr has a larger membership than the “branch” in Selastos, but it’s nowhere near as influential as its “brother order.” Veneration of Ghazereth was brought to Padarr quite recently — in the past decade, apparently — by Oathbreakers who emigrated (or perhaps fled) from Selastos.

Many Padarren technomancers are followers of Ghazereth, although far from all are full-fledged “members in good standing” of the cult. In Padarr, the Ghazereth cult acts as a kind of “guild” for technomancers — a place to discuss technomantic theories, exchange spells, and coordinate research.

The cult keeps a very low profile, since it has

“THE CULT OF AJARA”

Made me a big mistake once when I was new to this burg. Came down from Guildsport, I did, and used to hang out with some smugglers who half-believed in Ajara. (At least, they’d pour wine on the waves before they set sail with their cargoes of contraband. Guess that qualifies.) Came south to Padarr, I did, and I heard people yapping on about Ajara. Made me feel a little bit at home.

Until I called the Ajaran faith a cult. Well, it *is*, at least in Guildsport. Big mistake. I got drug up in front of that there College of Elders — *man*, what a collection of frosty bitches they were! — on charges of heresy. I fed them the old silver tongue — just a stupid newcomer, didn’t know what I was saying, all that crap.

Guess it worked, after a fashion. I’ve still got my head attached to my neck, at least. Didn’t get away scot-free, though. And if you ask me real nice, honey, I might show you the scars from my flogging ...

two “strikes” against it, as far as the Powers That Be in the city are concerned. Not only is it “heretical” (of course!) but it deals with technomancy, which is considered by the upper crust to be the most *déclassé* form of magic.

Padarren followers of Ghazereth tend not to go in for the more flashy experiments — silver golems and the like — that so fascinate their brethren in Selastos. They’re typically more interested in theoretical pursuits — and in gizmos that are largely useless except as “demonstrations of techniques” — and so rarely attract enough attention to warrant the elimination of people who pry into their business.

THE CULT OF ISON

One of the major Order cults in Galitia, this is a relatively minor group in Padarr — in terms of numbers, at least. There are probably fewer than 60 Ison followers in the city, meeting in three different congregations. In terms of devotion, however, Ison’s followers are among the most serious worshippers in Padarr.



Marshall Andrews III

Ison worship has been extant in the city for several centuries, building up its numbers. About 100 years ago, the cult was almost wiped out when a particularly militant and influential priest decided that even *pretending* to honor the Ajaran faith was sinful, and a dishonor to Ison. The resulting outbreak of “heresy” brought the scrutiny of the Ajaran church down on the cult. Many of its members were exiled from the city, and most of its priesthood were executed. (They’re viewed in the faith as “martyrs,” of course.) Since then, the cult has been preaching subtlety and discretion. *Pretending* to follow a false faith isn’t a sin, the priests have decided, particularly when the alternative is the “extinguishing of the light” in Padarr ...

There are three congregations in the city — three places where the silver cauldron of the faith can be found. Two of these are hidden in basements in working-class regions. The third — and the one with the most exclusive congregation — is rumored to be in the home of Nico Flynn, one of the Big Rich. (As a group, it seems that the Big Rich are supporters of Order, since Order and the status quo go hand in hand.)

THE CULT OF MATRAX

To his worshippers, Matrax is known as the “Patron of the Pure Blood.” His followers are all Humans, and believe to a man that Unnaturals are all soulless Demons — “perversions of the natural order” to be driven from the face of Marl with fire, sword and pistol. Followers of Matrax feel some empathy with the Ajaran church hierarchy in its stance on Unnaturals, but feel the Ajarans don’t go far enough.

The cult — nominally associated with Order — is a closed, tightly-knit group. One of the requirements for membership is that the candidate must kill an Unnatural, and provide proof of his action to the rest of the cult. Cult members trust only other cult members. Most are openly paranoid, recognizing that many of the “demonic” Unnaturals can cloak themselves in Human-seeming flesh to hide their true nature from the righteous.

The cult of Matrax holds services every couple of days. Major celebrations occur on the dark of the moon, typically involving the ritual torture and murder of a kidnapped Unnatural. To prove their faith and dedication to their



fellows, Matrax worshippers will occasionally stage raids into the Karkas Row area, defacing property, and maybe setting a few fires here and there.

Every year on the vernal equinox, cult members congregate for a major ceremony during which the priests try to summon Matrax himself. When his worshippers have proven themselves truly worthy, they believe, the deity will hear their calls and lead them forth to sweep the Unnatural “perversion” from the city, then from Eln, and eventually all of Marl.

Priests of Matrax are often trained in *wizardry*, sometimes with a specialization in the arcane knowledge *enchanted*.

THE CULT OF NAL

Nal — if it actually exists — is a Chaotic Demon said to be “Master of the Dead.” Predictably, the Cult of Nal is made up almost exclusively of necromancers, their “fellow-travelers” ... and a fair number of animated corpses. The central tenet of the “religion” is unclear — members don’t talk about it, and non-members who show too much interest generally end up as unwilling (and *unliving*) members. It *seems*, however, to be that death is a “veil” through which one must pass to achieve wisdom. Nal cultists seem to believe that when they kill, they’re helping their victim “toward enlightenment,” and hence doing him a good turn. Potential victims must “earn” this enlightenment, however.

Nal cultists kill for three main reasons: to protect themselves; to supply themselves with “raw material” for their research; and to bestow enlightenment on those who are “worthy.” Killings for the first two reasons are by far the most common, since very few people — to the cultists’ minds, at least — have proven themselves worthy of enlightenment. Members of the cult believe *themselves* to be worthy, of course ... but they also see it as their duty to “shepherd others through the veil.” That’s why they don’t “enlighten” themselves in an orgy of suicide.

Nobody outside the cult seems to be able to understand just how Nal followers define this “worthiness.” Those “enlightened” by the cult include a couple of skilled wizards, an artist or

two, at least one aristocrat ... and a number of “street rats,” poor people living in sordid conditions down by the docks. What these people have in common, only the Nal cultists can say.

The life of a Nal cultist comes to an end when his fellows decide that he has “finished his work” — when he’s sufficiently furthered the ends of his demonic patron on Marl. With great reverence and ceremony, he’s allowed to take his own life at the height of a special ritual.

All followers of Nal are necromancers, and most are skilled in the arcane knowledge of *entity*.

THE CULT OF TORETH

Depending on who you ask, you’ll hear that Toreth is a god of Order who has come to join the Oathbreakers; a Chaotic demon tainted with the “perversion” of Order; a powerful wizard from another plane of existence; or ... something else. Those who follow Toreth will *not* talk about their personal conception of their deity with anyone, not even with one another. Worship of Toreth is considered to be a totally personal and private matter; to discuss it in any way is to cheapen and debase it.

As a whole, the cult of Toreth owes its allegiance to the Oathbreakers ... but apparently “by default.” Various precepts of the Torethite faith decry the eternal battle between Order and Chaos as a shameful waste of effort, time and suffering — a distraction from the “True Path,” which is the actualization of each individual’s potential.

The cult of Toreth is an egalitarian organization that makes no distinction between “priests” and “worshippers.” All who are true to the faith’s precepts are equal in the eyes of Toreth. Torethite worship, which typically takes place under the open sky, resembles a rambling philosophical discussion — or maybe a meeting of some religious “twelve-step” program — more than it does a structured service.

Torethites are bound to provide help to all those who need it — to help others achieve their true potential.

Many Torethites are vitomancers, with knowledge of *living forces*.



CHAPTER FIVE

COPS AND CROOKS

THE PROCTORS

The Proctors Department is the primary law-enforcement agency in Padarr, directly analogous to the sentinels in Selastos and Galitia, and the watchmen in Caldov. Like the sentinels, the proctors have “evolved” from the — largely unofficial — “standing army” which used to protect Padarr from outside threats in the early years of its existence. (*Unlike the sentinels, these threats weren’t so much Wilderness creatures as punitive forces sent forth by groups on which the Padarren pirates preyed ...*)

Today, the proctor force shows little relation to its military forebears. It’s a uniformed force — the black uniforms and silver-trimmed “skullcaps” are familiar to Padarrens — but its levels of training, discipline and armament are well short of even the weakest full-on military unit. Still, for a non-military organization, the Proctors are fairly effective. Even the “beat cops” are trained in the basics of criminology and investigation; if the circumstances of a crime scene are beyond their capabilities, at least they know how to go about preserving evidence until specialists arrive.

PRECINCTS

The city is divided into 10 precincts. Officially, each precinct has jurisdiction over its own area. Since criminal activity doesn’t always strictly follow precinct boundaries, however, there’s a fair degree of overlap ... which leads to “turf wars” and rivalries between precincts.

The major divisions of the city include the following precincts:

- **Snob Hill:** The 3rd and 7th Precinct share jurisdiction.
- **The Circle:** The 2nd Precinct covers most of this region.

- **The Rat's Nest:** The (massively underfunded) 9th and 10th share jurisdiction.
- **The Docks:** No precinct covers this area; it's under the jurisdiction of the Harbor Police.
- **Karkas Row:** Officially, "Gristown" or "Karkas Row" falls under the jurisdiction of the 4th Precinct. In fact, however, the proctors rarely bother patrolling the Unnaturals "enclave." When they do, it's generally at the request (or demand) of a Human citizen — often a Big Rich magnate — whose interests are at risk for whatever reason.
- **The other precincts:** The 1st, 4th, 6th, and 8th — handle the rest of the city: those areas that don't fall into one of the more familiar "districts".

INTER-PRECINCT RIVALRY

Over the decades, a kind of "pecking order" has developed among the different precincts — a hierarchy or "class structure." The 3rd and 7th are at the top of this pecking order, while the 4th is undeniably at the bottom. The others shake out somewhere in between.

Generally speaking, members of the 3rd and 7th Precincts consider that they've earned their position through good police work — a kind of reward for a job well done. Everyone else, however, considers them stuck-up egomaniacs with lips firmly attached to the butt of the Big Rich.

Conversely, "conventional wisdom" considers the 4th Precinct to be a purgatory for inveterate trouble-makers or screw-ups. Proctors assigned to the 4th tend to claim they're the only people doing *real* police work — out on the "front lines," where they can make a difference — while everyone else is coddled in some backwater.

DIVISIONS AND BRANCHES

In total, the Proctors Department employs almost 1,000 people (all Human, except in the rarest of extenuating circumstances). Of these, 250 or so are administrative personnel — paper-pushers, dispatchers working the crystal sets, low-level technomancers maintaining the cars, and the like. The other 750 are real "street-level" operatives.

"BEAT COPS"

The largest category of proctors is the constables — the "beat cops." Some actually still do walk beats — in the better neighborhoods, typically; a pavement-pounder in the Rat's Nest or Karkas Row is probably one dead cop — but the majority patrol in "police cruisers." The Proctor Department is experimenting with a new division riding elemental-powered motorbikes, but these "speed cops" are still very rare on the streets of Padarr.

Very few beat cops have more than the most rudimentary magical skill and knowledge.

Typically, if a beat cop's ever going to make the jump to detective — with its concomitant boost in salary — it's going to happen before he's been in the force for more than 10 years. If someone passes that 10-year "watershed" without being promoted, it's more or less a foregone conclusion that they'll still be on the street until it's time to collect their pension. That's why the 10-year mark on the force is often the dividing line between cops who are still trying to "make a difference" and those who are just marking time. (Predictably, the latter are *much* easier to bribe or suborn.)

DETECTIVES

Much less numerous than the beat cops, the plain-clothes detectives are typically promoted from the ranks of the constables. They undergo extensive training in criminology, evidence-gathering, interrogation and general psychology. Since the detectives were once beat cops, few of them come to the job with any relevant magical skills or knowledge. Various commissioners have agitated for the money to include magical instruction in the detectives' training program, but so far it hasn't been forthcoming.

Each precinct will have 10 or so detectives on staff. (Some have more, some less; but 10 is the average.) In general, detectives are less likely than constables to accept squeeze. (This isn't because of any moral qualms, but simply because it's easier to turn down an offer than to prove to the investigators of the Internal Affairs Division that the squeeze they took was "justified" and acceptable ...)

INTERNAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

The IAD, based out of the 3rd Precinct



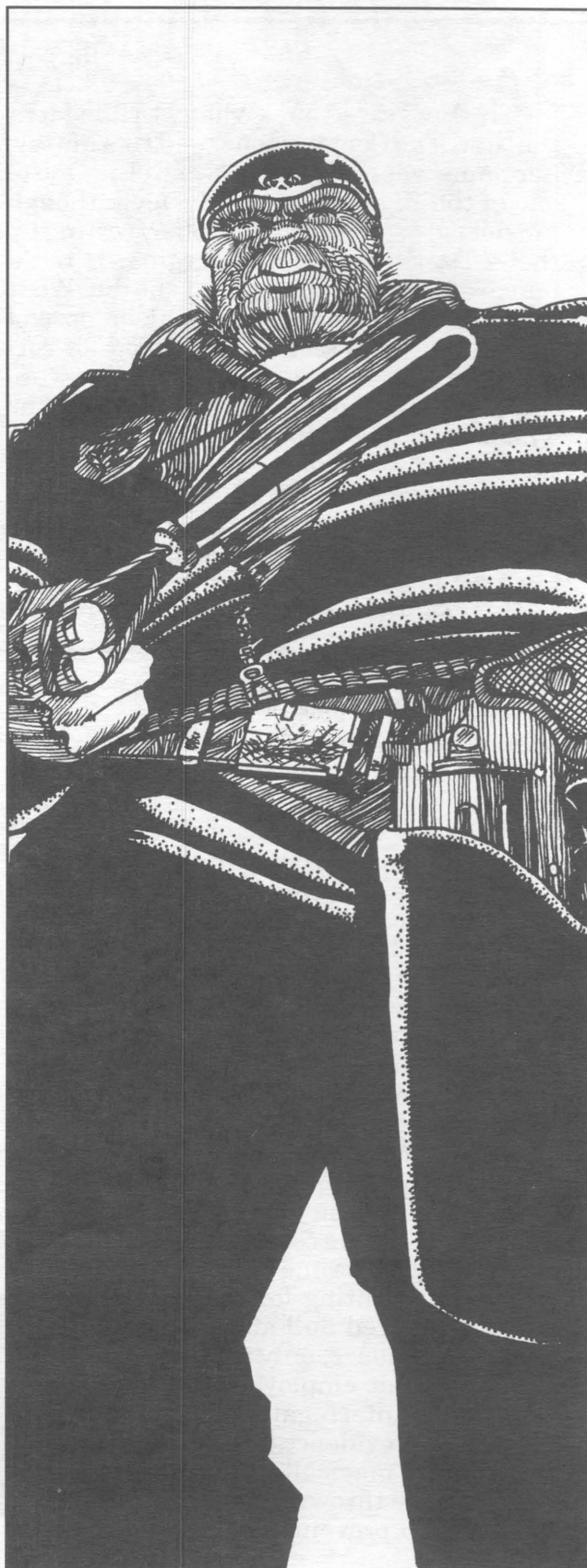
house, is the watchdog of the Proctors Department. It's a small division — maybe a dozen investigators and an equal number of support staff — but it carries a lot of clout within the proctors force.

Internal Affairs is a relatively new addition to the force. It was established 15 years ago in response to accusations — from both inside and outside the Proctors Department — that certain detectives were abusing their position, accepting squeeze for “services” that purely and simply “broke the code.” These detectives compromised major ongoing investigations — so the accusations claimed, at least — and shook down businessmen and even some minor Big Rich magnates on a regular basis.

It's IAD's job to scour the force for corruption. If all corruption were stamped out, there'd be no more need for the IAD. Thus, it's in Internal Affairs' best interest to keep finding corruption to combat ... even if it's not really there!

Detectives *hate* IAD investigators, and even a true straight-arrow detective fears an inquiry into his activities. To solve a case, a detective often has to “bend the rules” a little: play a game of “bounce the perp” in the precinct house's back room; bribe or intimidate an informer; or even cozy up to “dirty” cops because they know something vital to an investigation. For a detective, this kind of thing might be unpleasant, but it's part of his job — business as usual. That's not how an IAD vulture's going to see it, however. The vulture has a vested interest in finding corruption, and that's how he's likely to interpret any “peccadilloes” the detective might have committed. Inter-precinct rivalries be damned — detectives will almost always close ranks to protect one of their number who's attracted the unwelcome attention of IAD.

Although Padarren detectives don't like to talk about it, IAD investigators have to come from somewhere ... and that “somewhere” is from among the detectives' ranks. Some detectives “sell out” and request transfers to IAD (after all, the pay's better, and there's less chance you'll finish the day stuffed into a large number of very small boxes). Most detectives have too much pride, however. Sure, they're at risk on the streets, but at least they can look each other in the eye, and shave without cringing from the image in the mirror ...



IAD WITCH-HUNT

"The Purge" — that's what we called it at the time. The Commissioner — Erika Maray, her name was ... Now, she owed a Big One to one of the Big Rich, probably Jevik though I'm not sure, and she paid it off by setting up the IAD at her "patron's" urging. Hired a bunch of vultures, that's what she did. Went through the detectives ranks like a dose of the salts. One detective was exiled for corruption; two, including my captain, were tossed in jail. And then there were five of us who were kicked off the force. "Leniency because of our junior position" — that's what the courts said. If you ask me, any one of us would rather have gone to jail. Who's going to hire an ex-cop? At least in jail, you know where your next meal's coming from.

Anyway, the way Maray put the spin on

it, "The Purge" ousted a lot of bad apples who'd been shaking down the populace. Protection rackets, blackmail, that kind of thing.

Don't you believe it. We — the detectives that got the chop — were all on the same investigation. (That's something Maray never publicized, right?) We were following up on a ring of bodyleggers — black marketers whose stock in trade is organs and other "biological materials," often taken from people who weren't quite done with them ... if you get my drift. Nasty work.

And it got even nastier when we found evidence linking the bodylegging rings with Nico Flynn and some of his little friends. "Pure coincidence" that the IAD was established before we could collect incontrovertible proof of Flynn's involvement ... hmm?

MAGICAL ASSETS

Individual precincts don't have their own "magical assets" — bloodmages, "forensic alchemists," and the like. All this high-priced help works out of the Proctors Department's central headquarters down in the Circle. Precinct detectives and even beat cops can put in a call for magical back-up — either for crime-scene work or to help neutralize the wiggled-out wizard who's run amok downtown. Depending on the nature of the call — and on other details, like the caller's reputation, the number of other "situations" on the go, and even the precinct he's calling from — magical assets might be dispatched immediately, or in a couple of hours. The cop on the scene is expected to "contain" the situation until magical assistance puts in an appearance.

Even though some cops and detectives have magical skills, any crime-scene "work-up" they may do while waiting for the bloodmages to show is considered null and void for all legal purposes. In Padarr, only the Mage Division, the division that employs magical assets — can magically interrogate murder victims, or perform other evidence-gathering functions. Any evidence magically gathered by other "assets" may be thrown out of court. (Purportedly, this is to prevent a ham-handed "ama-

teur mage" from screwing things up at a crime scene and blowing a major case.)

"SPECIAL SQUAD"

Dispatched solely from Proctors Headquarters, the "Special Squad" is a paramilitary organization within the Proctors Department. Under the direct authority of the Commissioner, the Special Squad is a "big stick" the agency can use in emergencies where greater force is needed. Normal Proctors and detectives can handle most exigencies, but occasionally they'll find themselves in too deep — caught in a firefight with an entire crew of smugglers, for example. That's when a call goes out to the Special Squad.

The Special Squad isn't large — 24 officers — but what it lacks in size it makes up for in firepower and sheer *mean*. While standard beat cops pack .38 revolvers and wear no armor but reinforced leather uniform coats, members of the Special Squad travel armed for queskworm: SMGs, shotguns, bulletproof vests at the very least, with the Squad's snipers using runslug-loaded rifles. Although it's not part of the Squad's standard load-out — or its budget — many members make personal arrangements for "equalizers" of some kind. A member of the Special Squad might well be





wearing an enchanted leather coat over his standard-issue vest, and be packing something “special” in a belt-pouch: *razor wire*, perhaps, or a couple of *burning blades*.

The Special Squad is mobilized only when standard police procedure isn’t getting the job done. Its members know that and generally don’t concern themselves with niceties like arrest and detainment. They tend to shoot first and leave it to the coroner to ask the questions.

In addition to their police duties, the Special Squad may be mobilized to support Padarr’s wall guards or gate security detail.

Although they’re not officially on the Special Squad’s TOE (Table of Organization and Equipment), whenever the Squad mobilizes there are usually a couple of Hugors among their numbers. (This despite the fact that such Hugors would have to be “non-citizens”).

The Special Squad is typically ferried around in special, armored vans: Grady “Mudturtles.”

STANDARD PROCTOR

AGILITY 9

Dodge 12, maneuver 10, melee combat 14, stealth 10, unarmed combat 13

DEXTERITY 9

Fire combat 13, vehicle piloting: wheeled 10

ENDURANCE 9

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 9

INTELLECT 8

Perception 12, tracking 9

MIND 8

CONFIDENCE 8

Intimidation 11, streetwise 14

CHARISMA 8

Persuasion 9

Life Points: 4–6

Equipment: .38 revolver, damage value 17, ammo 6; runelugs, various; hand-held crystal set; baton, damage value STR+3/18, *pain* spell; leather jacket, armor value TOU+2/17

Roleplaying Notes: Padarren proctors range from “true believers” who put their skins on the line to “serve and protect,” to scumbags who view their badges as a license to collect squeeze.

STANDARD DETECTIVE

AGILITY 8

Dodge 10, melee combat 15, stealth 9, un-



Marshall Andrews III

armed combat 13

DEXTERITY 8

Fire combat 16, vehicle piloting: wheeled 10

ENDURANCE 8

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 8

INTELLECT 10

Deduction 13, perception 16, tracking 12, trick 12

MIND 9

CONFIDENCE 9

Con 10, interrogation 12, intimidation 13, streetwise 14

CHARISMA 9

Persuasion 10, taunt 10

Life Points: 4–7

Equipment: .38 revolver, damage value 17, ammo 6; runeslugs, various; hand-held crystal set; blackjack, damage value STR+3/18; heavy trenchcoat, armor value TOU+2/16

Roleplaying Notes: Thanks to the close scrutiny of the IAD vultures, a kind of “natural selection” thins the ranks of truly “dirty” detectives ... unless they’re *incredibly* good at covering their tracks. In general, Padarren detectives are a little cleaner than their fellows in other cities, for reasons of sheer self-protection.

STANDARD SPECIAL SQUAD TROOPER

AGILITY 9

Dodge 13, maneuver 10, melee combat 13, unarmed combat 12

DEXTERITY 10

Fire combat 16

ENDURANCE 10

Resist shock 11

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 11

INTELLECT 8

Perception 9

MIND 8

CONFIDENCE 9

Intimidation 12, streetwise 13, willpower 11

CHARISMA 8

Life Points: 4–7

Equipment: Submachine gun, damage value 17, ammo 30 (or .303 sniper rifle, damage value 21, ammo 6; or shotgun, damage value 21, ammo 2); runeslugs, various; hand-held crystal set; club, damage value STR+5/20, *pain* spell; bulletproof vest, armor value TOU+7/22; *smokescreen* potion (x2)

Roleplaying Notes: “The Few, The Proud”

... the brutal. The Special Squad is the Proctors Department's "blunt object," and its members reflect that philosophy.

CHANNELS OF APPEAL

Someone convicted by a standard triad — judge advocate plus two "volunteers" — can appeal his case to a higher court: the court of appeal. A court of appeal comprises three judge advocates — no volunteers. None of the judge advocates sitting on an appeal can have been involved in the original case. A court of appeal can overturn an earlier ruling, may uphold it as filed, or may even *increase* the penalty applied by the lower court. (Thus, going to appeal can be something of a gamble ...)

Appeals can't be frivolous. The accused — or her defender — must provide some viable reason for an appeal: some procedural irregularity in the original trial, new evidence coming to light, or a key witness recanting his story. The three judge advocates who would be assigned to the appeal are the people who decide whether grounds are sufficient.

The decision of a court of appeal can also be appealed — directly to the City Fathers. Again, there must be viable grounds for the secondary appeal ... and typically the City Fathers are *very* strict about what grounds they consider "acceptable."

A court of appeal has the right to bring charges of "frivolous use of court time" against an individual who calls for an appeal with insufficient grounds.

ADVOCATES

Advocates in Padarr are members of the so-called Prelates' Guild. This guild is one of the most closed "shops" in Padarr. Generally speaking, you'd have no chance of being accepted into the guild and trained unless you can claim one, or perhaps even two, ancestors who were guildmembers.

Advocates are trained in-house. Once accepted, they undergo three years of strenuous training. After they've completed this training, they can hire out their services. (During training, many guildmembers earn their keep by hiring out as clerks and the like.)

DELATORS

When a trial's coming up, the city approaches the Prelates' Guild and hires an advocate to be delator ("prosecuting attorney," more or less). Predictably, the fees the guild charges depend on the experience of the advocate. For important trials, where the city *desperately* wants a conviction, the bureaucracy will pay the ticket for the best. For less important cases, the bureaucrats will save a few osees by hiring advocates with less skill and experience.

Advocates are paid by the day. A top-notch advocate might pull down 500 osees per day to serve as a delator, while a novice fresh out of training might receive 75 osees per day or even less.

It's up to the guild leadership as to which advocates are "released" to consider a particular offer from the city. If, for some reason, the guild leadership doesn't want the city to win a particular case, they may restrict the contract to novices.

DEFENSORS

People accused of a crime are free to hire themselves the best defense they can afford ... theoretically. As with delators, anyone wanting to hire an advocate has to go through the guild leadership. It's up to the guildmasters as to who's available for hire. If the guild has a vested interest in a case, it might prevent the accused from hiring anyone but the rankest novice ... or might "request" the finest advocate on the rolls to take the case for a nominal fee of 50 osees per day. (In such a case, the guild itself would probably supplement the advocate's payment, raising the figure to the level appropriate to his or her competence.)

Standard rates for defenders range from 50 osees per day for the rankest novice up to 500 osees (or even more) per day for "superstars." Anyone accused of a crime has the *right* to a defensor. If the accused can't afford to hire her own defensor, one is provided for her by the city. (In other words, the city pays the tab for the cheapest advocate available — typically 50 osees per day for a novice fresh out of training.)

STANDARD ADVOCATE

AGILITY 9
DEXTERITY 8
ENDURANCE 8

STRENGTH 7
TOUGHNESS 9
INTELLECT 10

Deduction 12, perception 11, trick 13

MIND 10

Scholar: Padarren law 18

CONFIDENCE 8

Con 10, interrogation 11

CHARISMA 9

Charm 10, persuasion 10, taunt 11

Life Points: 4–6

Roleplaying Notes: Advocates typically fall into two categories: arrogant snots who are out to scam all they can from the world; and arrogant snots who really think they can make a difference. The entire advocates' training program is designed to convince candidates that they're the highest form of Human evolution ... and the program works like a hot damn. Padarren advocates would much rather talk than fight ... and would rather deal than talk.

THE JUDICIARY

The judiciary is recruited and paid by the bureaucracy. Judge advocates are recruited from the Prelates' Guild. They're paid only for those days when they work, judging cases. The rate of payment is fixed at 250 osees per day.

Generally, the bureaucracy will recruit only advocates with some renown within the Prelates' Guild — individuals who've earned themselves a significant reputation. Advocates who've earned renown and who are still highly competent can earn significantly more than 250 osees per day, however, and so will turn down the bureaucracy's recruitment offers. The only advocates who'd take it up are those who've started to "lose it" after the end of a long career. The outcome is that, due to the bureaucracy's tight-fisted attitudes, they're generally stuck with judges who were real firebrands earlier in their career, but that have gone senile, or at the very least started their decline.

And, of course, the upshot of this is often that the secondary judges — the "citizens of unchallenged repute" — have a very high level of influence over the conduct of a case ...

STANDARD JUDGE ADVOCATE
AGILITY 7

DEXTERITY 7
ENDURANCE 7
STRENGTH 7
TOUGHNESS 9
INTELLECT 9

Deduction 12, perception 10, trick 10

MIND 9

Scholar: Padarren law 17

CONFIDENCE 7

Con 8, interrogation 9, willpower 9

CHARISMA 10

Charm 12

Life Points: 3–5

Equipment: None

Roleplaying Notes: Judge advocates used to be young, arrogant firebrands. Though they're starting to lose it, most don't want to admit it. The most important thing for a judge advocate is her reputation, and she'll do anything to protect it. (This means she'll often go along with even the most outrageous "suggestion" from her Big Rich secondary judges if that suggestion will shore up her reputation.)

PENALTIES

Triads are free to apply whatever penalties they see fit, generally unconstrained by precedents. An extreme break from precedents — for example, sentencing someone to death for a minor theft — might be grounds for appeal ... but the deviation from accepted practice must be *very* extreme indeed.

A court will try to make the type — as well as the extent — of a punishment match the crime. Note that the punishment of "exile" gives a convenient middle ground between imprisonment and execution. For example, a court might decide that imprisonment is insufficient punishment for a serial abuser, while execution is too extreme. The judges might then decide to exile the individual, expelling him from the city's walls and forcing him to find his own way to safety (a cute way of saying "Drop dead.")

FINES

Fines can range from a few hundred osees to 500,000 osees and up for extreme infractions. Generally, a triad will levy a fine for crimes that don't cause personal and individual harm. Thus, if you're convicted of theft, embezzlement, or something similar, you might be

fined something like 25% of the “financial damage” you caused your victim.

IMPRISONMENT

If the damage you cause a victim is more profound than financial — physical or emotional — you might be tossed into jail for a period ranging from months to years. As a general case, imprisonment is the penalty of choice for “crimes of the mind” — crimes that involved forethought and planning, but little or no direct violence.

FLOGGING

In general, flogging is the penalty of choice for “crimes of the body” — crimes that caused physical harm, directly or indirectly. While an embezzler might be fined or imprisoned, a mugger or armed robber is more likely to be flogged. Sentences generally range from three “strokes” with a cat-o-nine-tails to more than a dozen for the most extreme crimes.

STANDARD “CITY LASHER”

AGILITY 9

Melee combat 10

DEXTERITY 10

ENDURANCE 8

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 10

INTELLECT 7

MIND 7

CONFIDENCE 8

Intimidation 10

CHARISMA 7

Taunt 9

Life Points: 2–4

Equipment: Cat-o-nine-tails, damage value STR+1 (increase damage by +5 if non-lethal rules are used)

Roleplaying Notes: Padarr employs only three or four “city lashers.” They’re typically more brawn than brain ... but they purely *love* their jobs. It is possible to bribe a city lasher to “lighten up,” but it’s a matter of pride that, no matter how much they’re paid to back off on subsequent swings, they’ll give the first stroke their best shot.

EXILE

Exile is a more common punishment than imprisonment, largely since it costs the city so



Marshall Andrews III

much less. (Keeping a convict in jail for a year costs the city something like 30,000 ooses; exiling them costs virtually nothing.)

When a criminal's exiled from Padarr, there's a term attached: from six months, up to "in perpetuity." A criminal who's sentenced to exile is taken to one of the gates to the city and released. He's given until the setting of the sun to leave the area. If any wall or gate guard spots him after this "free period" but before the period of exile is up, the guard is free to shoot him dead.

It's very rare for the shooting of an exiled criminal to be investigated very closely. Thus, it's relatively easy to arrange for a criminal to be "shot while trying to return" from exile.

EXECUTION

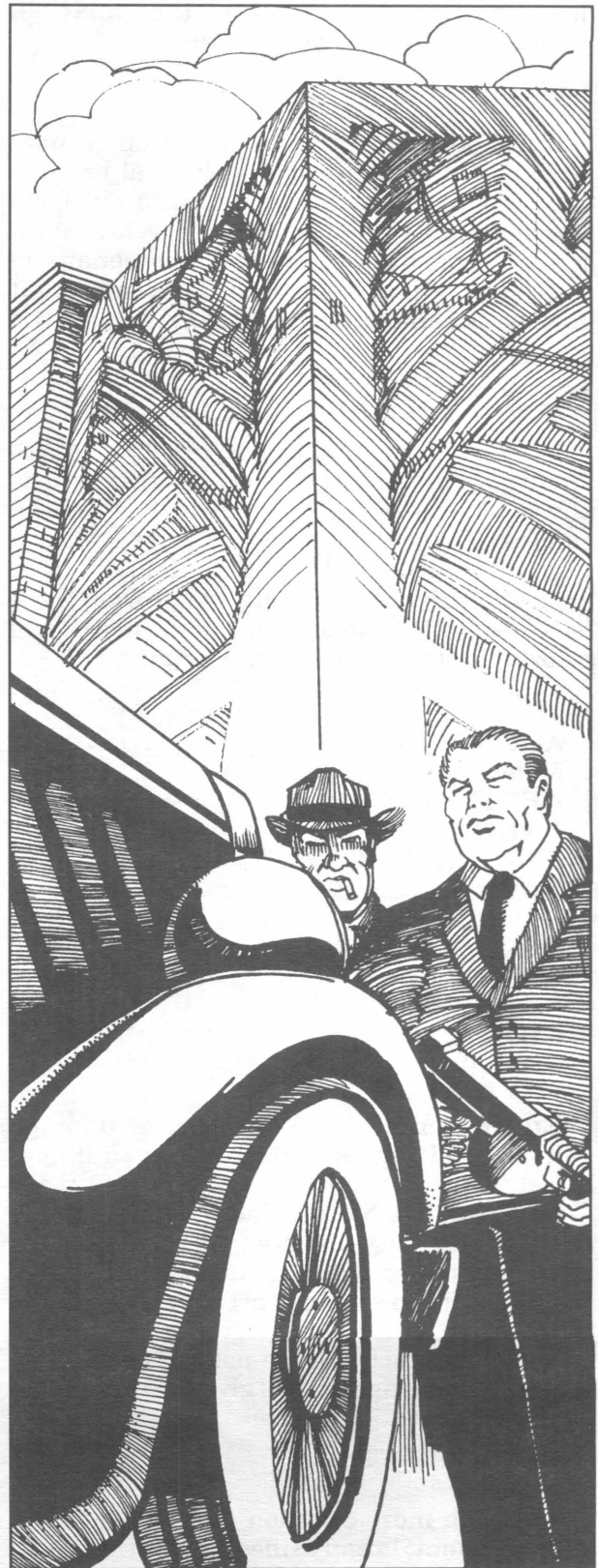
While the judiciary touts execution as a major deterrent, it's not used particularly frequently ... largely because, in Marl, it's hard to be sure that the dead will remain so. Criminals are sentenced to death only when there's some cogent reason to believe they're not going to come back as revenants or the like, or when provisions are made to prevent it. Whatever the situation, the bodies of executed criminals are burned to ash, then the ashes scattered far and wide over the Marthak Bight.

IMPORTANT LAWS

The City Fathers can create new laws or repudiate old ones with a simple majority of the council. Thus, laws have changed in the past, and they'll certainly do so again in the future. The following sections describe how various laws work at the present time. It's up to individual gamemasters as to how these law change in the future.

TREASON

By the accepted definition, treason is "the attempt, by overt acts, to overthrow the government to which the offender owes allegiance, or to betray the state to a foreign power." This is a relatively vague definition, giving the Proctors Department, the bureaucracy and the courts a lot of leeway. Second only to heresy, treason is an excellent "catch-all" charge for getting rid of troublemakers. Depending on the circumstances and the people



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involved, someone vigorously protesting a policy put forward by the City Fathers might find himself up on treason charges!

Death is the punishment of choice for treason cases, replaced by life imprisonment if there's some reason to think the "traitor" won't stay politely dead after his execution.

WEAPON LICENSES

Before buying a gun legally, you have to get the appropriate license. This involves going to the local Firearms Registration Office — a small subsidiary of the city bureaucracy — explaining to the clerk why you need a gun (i.e., establishing a "legitimate need"), then showing your citizenship card and paying the registration fee (100 osees for a handgun, 50 osees for a rifle or shotgun). Seven days later, you can pick up your license and go to your gun shop of choice. When you're buying your gun, you have to present to the seller both your license and your citizenship card ... plus whatever subsidiary identification the gun dealer might request. (Gun dealers often *will* request additional identification — largely to cover their own butts in case you do something stupid with "their" weapon ... like take a shot at a Big Rich.) Predictably, the judicious application of squeeze can streamline most steps of this process, most notably the one where you have to establish a "legitimate need."

A standard firearms license lets you own a gun and transport it between your home and a "place of legitimate use" — a shooting range for a pistol, for example, or outside the city for a hunting rifle. With a special "transport rider" on your license (another explanation of "legitimate need," another 150 osees and *another* seven-day waiting period), you're freed of this restriction. When carrying a weapon under a transport permit, it has to be in plain sight at all times — in a holster, uncovered on the rear seat of your car, or whatever. If you want to carry your pistol in a shoulder holster, you'll need a "concealed weapon" permit — requiring, again, an explanation of "legitimate need" and another 250 osees per year. (There's no waiting period for a concealed weapon rider on your license.)

All firearms licenses must be renewed yearly. Renewal is just a matter of paying the appropriate fees; there's no additional paper-pushing involved.

There are no legal restrictions on the possession of melee weapons, or muscle-powered missile weapons. Thus, any Padarren is free to buy a bow or blackjack without showing identification or acquiring a license. (The rationale is that the populace might be called on at any time to provide an armed militia capable of defending the city.) For the purpose of licensing, crossbows are classed as "muscle-powered."

WEAPON-RELATED OFFENSES

Possession of a firearm without the appropriate license is a serious crime indeed in Padarr. If the weapon in question is a rifle, the unlicensed owner could well go to jail for 5 to 10 years. If it's a pistol, the unlicensed owner might be flogged six strokes, *then* tossed in jail for 15 years or exiled for 10. (For reasons explained in an earlier chapter, the Big Rich are *much* more nervous about handguns than they are about rifles.) Possession of an autofire weapon — an SMG, for example — by anyone but a proctor is punishable by flogging and exile for life.

RESTRICTED ITEMS AND MATERIALS

As mentioned earlier, spell components and magical "instruments" specific to necromancy are illegal in Padarr. Possession of a "restricted" item or material is punishable by a large fine — 10,000 osees and up — or, more rarely, by imprisonment.

In the last few years, the City Fathers have brought in a law restricting possession of bulletproof vests. Now, only proctors or "authorized security personnel" can own vests. Anyone else caught in possession of a bulletproof vest is liable for imprisonment or short-term exile. (Predictably, the bodyguards of Big Rich are considered "authorized security personnel," and the Big Rich themselves are granted special dispensation to wear bulletproof vests whenever it strikes their fancy.)

MURDER, ATTEMPTED MURDER, AND ASSAULT

Murder and attempted murder are treated very much alike under Padarren law. (Why should someone get off lighter simply because they weren't competent enough to kill their intended victim, though they tried?) Depending on circumstances, a convicted murderer



may be executed or exiled from the city for life. Someone convicted of attempted murder is a little less likely to be executed for his crime.

Padarren law makes no distinction between “assault” (trying to harm someone else) and “assault and battery” (trying to harm someone else *and succeeding*). (As with murder, incompetence isn’t a mitigating factor ...) The most common punishment for assault is a severe flogging, although some convicted attackers are imprisoned or even exiled.

GAMBLING

Gambling is strictly regulated within Padarr — not for any moral reasons, but purely because it represents significant revenue for the government. Legal gambling can take place only in licensed casinos or gaming houses. Casino licenses put limits on the stakes for which patrons can play — in standard gaming houses, the maximum bet on a hand of blackjack is 250 osees, for example — and regulates the odds on games like roulette. Gambling houses must pay a set percentage of their revenue to the government if they want to keep their license; this percentage depends on the “class” of license involved ... and on how much squeeze the owner pays, and to whom.

Strictly speaking, even a penny-ante card game around an individual’s dining room table is illegal. Of course, the proctors don’t waste the time and effort involved in closing down each and every floating crap game or poker parlor. Only if the amount of money changing hands is significant — or if there’s some other reason to roust the participants — will the proctors move.

Running an illicit gambling operation is a serious crime under Padarren law. The organizer might be tossed in jail for 10 years, or exiled. Anyone patronizing an illegal gambling operation can be fined or flogged.

INCARCERATION

Officially, it’s illegal for the proctors to imprison anyone who hasn’t been convicted of a crime. There are ways of getting around this restriction, however — convenient ways of keeping “undesirables” off the street. Firstly, there’s no such thing as bail in Padarr, so someone accused of a crime stays in jail until his court date. Thus, even if the proctors *know*

that the accused will be acquitted, they’ve still kept the “perp” off the street for weeks or perhaps months.

Secondly, the proctors can “hold for questioning” virtually anyone they like, for a maximum term of five days. After this five days, the Proctors must either charge or release the suspect.

ORGANIZED CRIME

“BODYLEGGERS”

Wherever there’s a demand, there’ll always be someone willing to *meet* that demand. That’s certainly true with necromantic “raw materials” in Padarr.

Although the term “bodylegger” is commonly used, in fact actual bodies are only a small part of the business of the “necromantic suppliers.” Less “glamorous” but in the long run more profitable is the trade in minor necromantic

CORRUPTION

“The Rule of Law”? I hope you’re joking. This is Padarr, not Galitia. And in Padarr, everything runs by the Golden Rule: “Whoever has the gold makes the rules.”

It’s scary sometimes. Think about it: you’re accused of a crime — it doesn’t matter whether you did it or not — and you’re going to trial. Sitting behind that big carved judges’ bench, there’s the three people who’re going to decide your fate. There’s the judge advocate — usually some old fart who’s started to lose it, otherwise he’d be making more money as a straight advocate. And then there’s the other two judges: Big Rich, Big Rich. When they look at you, you can see them weighing you in the balance of their minds. “Guilty or innocent? Which is going to make me more money?”

Hell, bub, anyone with money can “buy the system” at just about any step of the way. Sitting in court, you know that ... and you wonder who’s paying *this* time, and what verdict they’ve purchased.



materials: grave dirt, brimstone, shapeshifter skin, and blood from numerous sentient and non-sentient species.

There are two major channels for necromantic materials. One, the most well-known (in appropriate circles) and well-established, is run by a shadowy figure known as Paco Franciscus. Franciscus is reputed (incorrectly, as it turns out) to be a necromancer in his own right, and rumors link him with the cult of Nal. His bodylegging “ring” is thought to comprise upwards of a hundred people, within Padarr and outside the city: smugglers, hunters, alchemists and — for “special orders” — killers-for-hire. If a necromancer needs a Sketh skull for some special working, Franciscus’ ring can provide it, for a price: perhaps from stock on hand, or maybe as a “special order.”

The fact that so many rumors mention Paco Franciscus by name implies that the Proctors *must* know of him too. The fact that he’s still free to carry on his business must mean that “the fix is in” — that he’s bribed the Proctors Department to leave him alone. (It isn’t wise to discuss the alternative — that the “hands off” order comes from the Big Rich, for reasons of their own — in public. Loose tongues often get cut out in Padarr ...)

A second, upstart bodylegging ring has recently sprung up to challenge Paco’s dominance. Run by a shadowy figure known only as “Darknight,” this new ring has already started to cut into Paco’s market. Darknight’s prices are lower, his service faster on “special orders,” his inventory more extensive. Rumors claim that Darknight’s people have even raided some of Paco’s storehouses, stealing his wares and then — adding insult to injury — selling the bodies of Paco’s guards at prices that undercut Paco’s!

Nobody seems to know who Darknight is — whether he’s Human or an Unnatural, or even whether Darknight’s male or female. Some of those who’ve claimed to have met him say he’s an old man; others describe him as a young woman. No one knows how to contact the upstart directly. People interested in making a purchase put the word out through various “rumor grapevines” and wait to be contacted. (Predictably, both Paco and the proctors have tried to lure Darknight’s people from hiding with false rumors, but with no success. Apparently, Darknight has either penetrated both

his competitor’s operation and the proctors, or he’s got some other way of checking out the *bona fides* of a request.)

A recurring, although totally unsubstantiated rumor, claims that Darknight is actually a powerful Demon of some kind.

AN OUTSIDER’S VIEW

For a big town, Padarr’s small-time when it comes to real organized crime. Sure, you’ve got your prostitution and numbers rackets, you’ve got bodyleggers and some semi-organized burglars and box artists. But compared even to Selastos, they’re real small potatoes.

Call me cynic — I’ve been called worse, trust me — but I think I know why. (Sometimes it takes an outsider’s eye to see things the locals are just too close to — forest-and-trees time.) In Padarr, it’s hard to separate the crooks from the Big Rich — the Big Crooks from the Big Rich. Here, you’ve got the Big Rich running scams that anywhere else you’d call “organized crime.” In Padarr, that kind of thing’s just business as usual. It’s like that old saying, “You never find a successful traitor ... because if he’s successful, nobody dares call him a traitor.”

PROSTITUTION

Padarr’s “red-stone district” is, predictably, down near the docks. That’s where you’ll find most of the city’s lower-priced streetwalkers, male and female. These sorry individuals troll for sailors, traders, smugglers, stevedores ... even Unnaturals, turning their tricks in alleys or in cheap and filthy hotels. Most of the prostitutes who work the docks are burned out and run down, addicted to alcohol or drugs, and many carry a nasty assortment of diseases. There are thought to be one or two Incubi and Succubi among the red-stone district trade, but they don’t draw much attention to themselves and their special needs.

The prostitutes who work the docks are generally “freelancers,” or members of small stables run by a pimp. Freelancers are hassled unmercifully by both the proctors and Harbor Police, unless they can make some kind of



private arrangement. (Since few dock-side freelancers can afford the appropriate amount of squeeze, this kind of arrangement is usually taken out in trade.) Some of the more successful pimps make arrangements with the proctors to leave their girls untouched. Others use the threat of “legal entanglements” as another lever over their talent.

Occasionally, people have considered “organizing” the dockside sex trade, but in all cases the trouble involved has outweighed the potential benefit.

Not all sex trade is limited to the dock area. Higher-priced — and higher-quality — “talent” walks the streets between the Circle and Snob Hill. Expensive call-girls and “escorts” provide out-call service for big spenders. Almost all of this higher-priced talent works — directly or indirectly — for a “flesh syndicate” run by Merriam Wells, one of the city’s few “crime lords.” Wells’ syndicate pays the squeeze necessary to keep the proctors from interfering, and protects its talent from abusive or otherwise dangerous clients. (Anyone who makes the mistake of slapping around one of Wells’ sex workers is likely to receive a visit from a couple of Hugos with clubs.)

Sex workers who are part of the Wells syndicate are paid according to a set scale. All make enough to live quite comfortably, if not affluently. Wells is, in general, a good employer, but she comes down *exceptionally* hard on anyone caught skimming.

Freelancers occasionally try to work the same areas as the Wells syndicate. This usually doesn’t last long. The syndicate makes a fair effort to recruit any such freelancers, and only rarely has to kill hold-outs as an “object lesson” to others.

GAMBLING

The big name in legal gambling in Padarr is Nico Flynn. He runs two major casinos and countless smaller gaming houses — all properly licensed, with all the correct squeeze paid into the appropriate pockets. Every year, his operations pour hundreds of thousands of ooses into the city’s coffers ...

Which is one of the reasons why nobody looks too closely at his *unofficial* gambling operations. It’s an open secret among certain strata of society that the place to find unregu-

lated, high-stakes games is in the private (*very* private ...) back rooms of Flynn’s casinos. Here, under the eyes of dinner-jacketed Hugor bouncers, Padarr’s brightest lights indulge their appetites for illegal gaming. Only familiar faces — or guests vouched for personally by familiar faces — are allowed in. Membership in this elite club includes most of the other Big Rich, a handful of the City Fathers, and the Commissioner of Proctors. (Flynn makes sure that the Commissioner is always a winner ... although never by too much. That way, the Commissioner has a reason to keep coming back, and to keep his proctors from looking too closely at Flynn’s operations.)

Flynn also runs smaller, lower-budget illegal gambling dens for “the common folk” of the city. The proctors occasionally raid these smaller establishments, but because of advance warning via the Commissioner’s office, the amount of money seized in raids is always very small. (Advance warning also means there’s never any incontrovertible evidence on the premises linking the operations to Flynn.)

Flynn does no business in Gristown and very little down in the extraterritorial area around the docks. The fact of the matter is that this Big Rich magnate hates and fears Unnaturals — so much so that he’s uncomfortable even taking their money, as though it’s somehow “tainted.” This leaves Karkas Row and the profitable docks areas as “open territory.”

Just as nature abhors a vacuum, so does the underworld abhor open territory. Seeing all the lucrative business *not* being done in Gristown and on the docks, a local operator by the name of Jonas Reetch has moved in and opened his own gaming establishments, catering to the “Unnaturals trade.” Most of the games are similar to those played in Flynn’s establishments, but there are the occasional “novelties” with specific attraction to different types of Unnaturals. (For example, there are certain games favored by Karkas where “throwing in your hand” takes on a whole new meaning ...)

Since entering the market ten years ago, Reetch has pretty well tied up the gambling trade on the docks and in Gristown ... and now he’s looking to expand his market. Various “unfortunate accidents” have been cutting into Flynn’s main gambling business of late — a



couple of fires, the odd case of a band of militant Skeths, and the like — while Reetch has been opening up new “back-door gaming houses” in the city proper. Under Flynn’s orders, the proctors have been doing their best to close down the interloper’s business, but so far they haven’t had that much success. Flynn is coming to conclude that a “heat-wave” by the proctors just isn’t going to do the job, and that more ... *direct* ... methods might be required. One of the few reasons that Flynn hasn’t acted already is that he hasn’t quite figured out if he fears Reetch more than he hates him, or vice versa ... since Reetch happens to be a Vampire.

There’s a real possibility of a bloody “gang-war” in the streets between the minions of Nico Flynn and the growing organization of Jonas Reetch in the very near future.

BURGLARY RINGS

There are two competitive burglary rings in Padarr. So far, the competition between the two seems to be polite, almost gentlemanly. Occasionally, members of the two rings might go after the same “score,” but the outcome is usually a case of “first come first served:” whoever gets to the mark first takes what they can get. There haven’t been any cases of one ring ratting the other out to the Proctors, sabotaging each other’s operations, or raiding each other (thieves stealing from thieves). This doesn’t mean it *won’t* happen, of course, just that it hasn’t occurred yet.

The larger of the two rings is run by Vincent Considine, a one-time lieutenant of gambling boss Nico Flynn. (When Considine decided to go out on his own, it seems that the parting was amicable on both sides. In fact, Flynn

seems to be protecting Considine, at least to some degree ... making some people wonder whether Considine has some kind of “lever” on Nico.) Considine concentrates his attention on “unaligned” businesses — that is, outfits that aren’t under the “umbrella” of Flynn’s business empire. Only rarely does he go after businesses controlled directly by other Big Rich, and when he does the targets always seem to be associated with individuals who’ve recently earned Flynn’s ire.

Considine runs his organization almost like a guild. He has criminals of all stripes in his employ, from con men to box artists to second-story men to simple alley-bashers. Members of the Considine “machine” are free — within certain limits — to set up and run their own operations, paying a kick-back to Considine out of their take. If they need specialized skills — a second-story man who realizes he needs a good cracksman for a certain job, for example — they can request help from Considine. If he figures it’s a good job, he’ll “second” the appropriate personnel ... and take a larger cut of the deal, of course. Sometimes it’s Considine who comes up with the targets and makes the plans, but he seems to prefer leaving the planning up to his subordinates ... basically, just sitting back and collecting money for nothing.

The second ring is smaller, and organized along more traditional lines. Its leader, a ‘Shifter by the name of Gwinnisholm, has access to fewer talented thieves than does Considine, but she makes up for the lack with more daring and audacity. Gwinnisholm also controls most of the fences in the city, buying and selling stolen goods of all kinds. She has close contacts with many of the smugglers who carry contraband into and out of the city.



CHAPTER
SIX

MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY

“TECHNO-SNOBBERY”

A kind of “technological snobbery” pervades Padarren society. “Pure” magic is considered vastly superior to any other form of transportation, power generation, or any other use to which it can be put. Technomancy is considered the least “acceptable” focus of magic, a “corruption of magic’s purity,” among the upper classes (and among the “wannabes”). Below technomancy — *way* below — is pure technology, considered by “anyone who matters” to be so *déclassé* as to be vulgar.

This prejudice against technology is most prevalent in the upper classes — i.e., the aristocracy and the Big Rich — but it extends into other facets of society. Even members of the middle class are likely to look for a magical solution to a problem, even if a technological “fix” is more convenient, more effective, and cheaper. (For example, magical doorlocks are common throughout Padarr. It doesn’t seem to matter that the kinds of magical locks most people can afford are much less effective at keeping out burglars than a simple deadbolt ...) This means that mages who know how to enchant small items and gewgaws — “lightsticks” and the like — will always be able to make a living.

It’s important that visitors to Padarr understand this prejudice, particularly if they’re intending to cozy up to, or infiltrate, the upper classes. It doesn’t take much to ruin your chances of being accepted.

Padarrens can be as hypocritical as anyone else, of course, and there’s one type of technology that is accepted without much question: firearms. Even the snootiest aristocrat will pack a rod if it seems necessary. (They’ll defend this decision to their peers by pointing out the array of runeslugs they carry, however ...)



THE ARCANUM

This is a “magical college” established a century ago by a confederation of Padarren mages to further the study of magic and push back the bounds of the Unknown. At its heart, the Arcanum is like a kind of magical “think-tank.” “Collegians” — full members of the Arcanum — get together to discuss the intricacies and trivia of magic, and to argue technical points that would matter only to anal-retentive theoreticians, with little concrete significance in the real world outside the Arcanum’s walls. Most “working” magicians see the Arcanum as an isolated, elitist — and ultimately marginalized — “ivory tower” environment ... albeit one with a pretty damn good library! Similarly, Collegians consider non-members to be “hacks” — oafs who don’t understand the pristine beauty of pure magic for its own sake.

COLLEGIANS

The Arcanum was founded by a group of 15 theoretical mages. When they established the college, they were very careful to entrench in the “Charter Arcane” — the document on which the college was based — that there could never be more than 15 full Collegians at any time. As it turned out, they needn’t have bothered. The number of full Collegians has been steadily dropping since the Arcanum’s founding. Old members have died off — or blown themselves up in tragic feedback-related accidents when their experiments went awry — and the survivors haven’t been able to attract enough “quality” candidates to keep the membership up. Today, there are only seven full Collegians ... and the average age for this group is pushing 80!

MEMBERSHIP

Any mage can apply for membership in the Arcanum, regardless of background, age, favored foci or arcane knowledges, etc. The problem is that candidates must then convince the Collegians that they belong among their august ranks. These ivory-tower academics have a very limited, almost twisted, view of what’s important. Couple this with the very Human urge to protect their elite status from “dilu-

tion” by those who aren’t worthy, and it becomes an almost insuperable barrier to would-be members.

Once accepted by the Collegians, membership is for life. Collegians can resign their membership ... but none ever do. Invariably, Collegians live within the Arcanum’s old, dusty residences, poring over books, arguing and discussing largely-meaningless issues long into the night, and fiddling around in their labs. As the perquisites of membership, all their basic living expenses — room and board — are paid from the coffers of the college. The only expenses Collegians must pay from their own pockets is the cost of magical ingredients, lab equipment and the like.

The coffers of the college are filled from the membership dues of the Collegians — a total sum of 20,000 osees per year — and from the income the Arcanum receives from tuition.

Collegians can be recognized by the simple black cloaks they wear at all times, over whatever other clothes they may chose to wear.

THE MASTER OF THE ARCANUM

The Collegians choose one from among their ranks to be the Master of the Arcanum — the leader of the college. The rank of Master is granted for life. The current Master of the Arcanum is a 75-year-old woman by the name of Min Raele.

“ASSOCIATE MEMBERS”

Four decades ago, the Collegians realized that they couldn’t keep the Arcanum quite as exclusive as they’d like. Their numbers were decreasing, they could never find enough candidates worthy of taking the black robe ... and they needed people to do the basic scut-work and maintenance that any large building required. Unwillingly, they established a secondary order of membership and accepted applications for “associate members.”

Associate members are definitely the “second-class citizens” of the Arcanum. They can’t live in the moldering old buildings. Their access to the library and to the labs is extremely limited; and associate members must petition the Collegians before being allowed to enter the library or set foot in the basement laboratories.

It's the associate members who cook and clean, who maintain the facilities, and who run the School of the Arcane — another relatively recent addition to the Arcanum. For the “honor” of being overworked and undervalued, associate members pay an annual fee of 10,000 ooses. Eligibility requirements are much lower than for full membership in the Arcanum, but still strict. New members are often required to pay two or three years of dues in advance ... just to prove their “true and loyal devotion” to the precepts of the Arcanum.

Currently, there are 35 associate members. They wear red cloaks to distinguish themselves from the Collegians. Average age among the associates is closer to 45 than to 80.

THE SCHOOL OF THE ARCANUM

Mages of all stripes can apply to the School of the Arcane for training. There aren't organized classes, as such; applicants approach individual associate members and arrange for training that matches their needs and the capabilities of the trainers. Training at the school is exclusively academic ... but dedicated students can — and do — take the theoretical

knowledge they gain and turn it to more practical pursuits.

ELIGIBILITY

The school will only accept students deemed to be capable of benefiting from the training. This means that an applicant must have a pretty good grounding in the magical arts before he'll be accepted. (In game terms, a student must have at least a +3 add in three different magical foci, and a +3 add in at least two arcane knowledges, before they'll be admitted.) Even with this level of expertise, the candidate still has to convince one of the associate members — possibly with the judicious application of folding money — that he'd be a suitable student, and would bolster the reputation of the Arcanum as a whole.

TUITION

Because of the academic focus of the Arcanum, most associate members will only be interested in teaching various arcane knowledges, rather than foci or magical skills. Associate members will typically have five or six adds in the *teaching* skill focused on one or



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two arcane knowledges. (Thus, an associate member who's a technomancer might have five adds in *teaching: metal*.) As a general rule, it will take one month of training to increase a student's level in one arcane knowledge by one add.

Tuition at the Arcanum isn't cheap. The standard rate for instruction is 3,000 osees per month of training.

FACILITIES

The Arcanum is a large, sprawling building in the Circle district. A heavily-built stone structure, it's seen better days. Walls and floors are cracked; stairways creak and settle. Dust collects in disused rooms.

RESIDENCES

Each Collegian has a small, spartan room in the residential wing of the old building. These rooms are usually littered with papers and moldering books.

LABS

Each Collegian also has a private lab, dedicated to his or her sole use. The building also boasts five "communal" labs, however. Collegians use these from time to time — when they're working on something too volatile to risk their own lab, for example — but most of the time they're used by associate members who've been granted permission to do so.

THE LIBRARY

At the heart of the building is the library, a huge repository for ancient tomes of magic. While most of the books are too academic and esoteric to be of much use to "working" magicians, buried among the stacks are occasional "finds" of great value: listings of spells, tables of alternative components, and the like. Access to the library is limited to Collegians and to those associate members able to persuade the Collegians of need. Students are *never* allowed into the library.

The great library with its vaulted ceiling is protected by many wards and traps ... or so the conventional wisdom claims, at least. The more cynical associate members doubt this — wards are too practical, and hence "ignoble," for the Collegians to trifle with — but they still don't

risk death (or worse) by testing the library's arcane defenses. Even if an interloper could get into the library without getting fried or frozen in the process, the filing system — or, more correctly, the *lack* thereof — is a pretty good impediment to the curious ...

SOMNIOMANCY

With the discovery of the dreamstone, many members of the Arcanum have become fascinated with a relatively rare "school" of magic: somniomancy, the magic of sleep and dreaming. While the body is asleep, the mind is freed of the distractions of the waking world and allowed to roam free — so somniomancers believe, at least. Unfettered by waking reality, the mind can plumb new depths of knowledge — mainly knowledge of the self, but also of reality as a whole.

While asleep, a somniomancer has unparalleled control of his own body. He can heal wounds and diseases; he can send his consciousness across great distances to view "dream images" of distant places ... even distant times, with sufficient skill. While awake, he can affect the sleep and dreams of others, whether physically in his presence, or far away.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE DREAMSTONE

Back when tin was first being mined, a miner by the name of Telan Dreir happened upon a vein of strange rock. What had first caught his eye was the way that the sunlight glinted off the rock, making it glitter. Upon closer examination, Dreir saw that the glitter had a gold quality to it. Thinking that he had found a gold vein, he chipped away at the stone, loosing a chunk about the size of his fist. When he held the chunk up to the sunlight, he discovered that the gold glitter was an integral part of a translucent stone that had a deeper, richer purple hue to it than anything he had ever seen outside of an aristos' evening garb. With this discovery, Dreir set forth a chain of events that would not only bring forth a new school of magic, but would also fill Padarr's coffers with a lot of money — once the stone's magical qualities were figured out.

THE NAMING OF THE DREAMSTONE

Dreir was no fool. He figured the the stone could profit him somehow, so he continued to



dig it up in secret during his brief lunch breaks. However, Dreir's activities did not go unnoticed. After following the miner out to his spot and watching him dig up the strange stone, the foreman made a report to the owner of the mining company. The owner was intrigued, so he sent some of his own men out with the foreman to check out Dreir's find. The sample that they brought back from the site impressed the owner so much that he decided to go ahead and start digging up some more. After that, it was only a matter of time before the stone was made into a marketable commodity.

At first the stone was sold as jewelry. Once it was shaped and polished, the stone had a sparkle to it that rivalled diamonds and other precious gems. As a result, it became the latest thing with the aristocrats and the Big Rich. Everywhere you looked amongst the elite you could find at least one piece of the fabulous "sparkler," as it was called before its magical properties were discovered.

DREAMS NOT SOON FORGOTTEN

During the first few months that the "sparkler" was popular, people started experiencing more vivid dreams than they had formerly experienced. In fact, about seven months after the "sparkler" became popular, one of the Collegians noticed this trend and started documenting it. After several months of careful study, this Collegian, whose name was Rana Teamon, was able to narrow down the possible causes of this phenomenon to the "sparkler." Rana presented her studies to the Arcanum for review. Her words convinced the Collegians to begin studying the stone. Their findings prompted them to rename the stone known as "sparkler" to "dreamstone" and also brought the school of somnancy into being.

WHAT THE COLLEGIANS DISCOVERED

The Collegians, in the course of their testing and experimentation, were able to find several ways to use the dreamstone in their magic. They are listed below.

- **Spell Component:** The dreamstone can be used as a straightforward spell component to aid in the casting of spells — especially if the spell uses either the focus of somnancy or the arcane knowledge of *dreams*.

- **Reduces Feedback:** If this stone is used in

the casting of a spell (as a spell component or not), the feedback value for the spell is reduced by three points.

- **Helps produce vivid dreams:** By keeping the dreamstone near the bedside, the sleeper can have more vivid dreams as well as a more restful sleep. (This is particularly useful for those who can't sleep well due to guilty consciences or the like.)

- **Traps dreams:** With the help of the *dreamtrap* spell, it is possible to trap a person's dream and keep it stored in a dreamstone. The dream can then be released whenever the owner of the stone wants to experience the dream. It is only recently that this application of the dreamstone has been commercialized to the extent that is seen today. Several companies, all traced back to Jon Jevik, have hired mages that specialize in somnancy so that they can charge dreams into the dreamstones. These charged dreamstones are not only marketed successfully in Padarr, but also in several other cities now. Padarrans who wish to earn a little extra money can sell their dreams in several clinics that the companies have set up throughout Padarr, if they so wish.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE DREAMSTONE

During their research on the dreamstone, the Collegians also discovered something else — the dreamstones have a limited lifespan. Over several years' studies, it was observed that the dreamstones' potency faded. First, the gold specks started to become dull and then disappeared entirely. Then, the rich purple slowly started blackening until it became an opaque black stone. Through further research, it was determined that the life of a dreamstone once it was pulled from the earth is about a year. When the gold starts to fade, though, there is a 50 percent chance that the dreamstone will not work. If it is being used to enhance a sleeper's dreams, there is a one percent chance that the sleeper will not be able to wake up. After the gold has faded and the purple stone starts to turn black, the dreamstone is effectively dead.

DREAMDUST

Because of the prohibitive prices of well-shaped dreamstones, the average Padarran





cannot afford to purchase more than the smallest of stones. For those on the street, however, dreamstones are even less accessible. There is an alternative out there, though. In the Rat's Nest, there are several street vendors peddling what they call "dreamdust." Basically, dreamdust is finely ground-up fragments of dreamstone. A "smear" of it goes for about 32 pennies on the street. After paying the vendor, the buyer will be allowed to touch a dampened finger to the vendor's stash of dust. Then, the buyer "smears" the dust on his tongue and swallows. The dust is tasteless and will not act until the buyer lays down to sleep. Then, once asleep, the dreams begin.

The charm of the dust is that it produces very vivid dreams and that it allows the user to fully control any dreams that she may experience — the first few times they use the dreamdust only. Once the body and mind develop a tolerance for the dust, then the dust dreams start becoming nightmares. The user loses all control over where the dream takes her. The only way to remedy this is to take two smears the next time she wishes to dust dream. As time goes by, the user must take more and more smears of the dreamdust to stay in con-

trol of the dreams.

Once the dust dreamer is addicted, there are only two ways to go. She must either continue taking more and more smears of the dust to escape the nightmares or stop taking the dust completely. The former way can get very expensive, very quickly. The latter, however, is worse. When a dust dreamer stops smearing the dust, then she also loses the ability to go to sleep. The more smears that she took per dust dream, the longer it will take before her body and mind will allow her to sleep. For example, if a user was using nine smears per dust dream, it will take that user nine days before she can sleep. People who only occasionally use a smear of dust might have a restless night or two, but they don't really have to worry about becoming addicted.

ARCANE KNOWLEDGES

Somniomancy has its own arcane knowledge: *dreams*. When a character purchases his first skill add in somniomancy, he automatically receives a free arcane knowledge add in *dreams*.

Dreams concentrates on images in the mind

of a sleeper — whether the caster himself, or another. While basically illusory, these images *can* have a physical effect on the “real world” — specifically, on the body.

SAMPLE SPELLS

ROUSE (O/OB-O)

Skill: *Alteration: somniomancy*
Most Applicable Arcane Knowledge: *Dreams*
Difficulty Number: 12
Feedback: 13
Effect Value: 16
Range: 5 (10 meters)
Speed: 5
Duration: 5 (10 seconds)
Cast Time: 3 (4 seconds)
Modifiers:
 Components: Drop of water
 Gestures: Flicking.

This spell lets the caster introduce a “dream message” of up to four words into the mind of a sleeping subject. The subject immediately wakes, “hearing” the message ringing in his mind. The caster flicks a drop of water in the direction of the subject (it doesn’t have to reach him, however). (Like the more common spell *awaken*, the effect value of the spell is used as a *first aid* total but, since the duration is so short, only Ks, Os, shock damage, and bleeders are affected.)

SLEEPING CLAIRVOYANCE (O/OB-O)

Skill: *Divination: somniomancy*
Most Applicable Arcane Knowledge: *Dreams*
Difficulty Number: 15
Feedback: 14
Effect Value: 14
Range: 18 (4 kilometers)
Speed: 5
Duration: 14 (10 minutes)
Cast Time: 14 (10 minutes)
Modifiers:
 Apportation: Basic movement
 Components: Beeswax candle, dreamstone with no fractures.
 Gestures: Peer at candle’s flame while moving the dreamstone in a small circle.

Incantation: “While my body sleeps, my mind is free to roam.”

To use this spell, the caster must make all appropriate mental preparations — this is represented by the casting time — then must light the candle. While moving the dreamstone in a small circle between the caster’s eye and the flame of the candle, the incantation must be spoken. Once that has been done, the caster must fall asleep (by whatever means come to mind). While he’s asleep, the caster’s “mind’s eye” travels to the desired location, and can look around. The effect value of the spell is used as the character’s *perception* total during the spell’s duration. When the duration is up, the character immediately wakes.

Physical barriers *can* block the spell’s effect. The spell basically moves the character’s “mind’s eye” to a certain location. What he can see from that location is what he’d be able to see if he were standing there “in the flesh.” While the spell lasts, the caster can apport his “mind’s eye” around.

SLEEP BALM (O/OB-O)

Skill: *Alteration: somniomancy*
Most Applicable Arcane Knowledge: *Dreams*
Difficulty Number: 7
Feedback: 3
Effect Value: 20
Range: 0 (self)
Speed: 0
Duration: 38 (one year; permanent)
Cast Time: 21 (6 hours)
Modifiers:
 Components: Cloth-of-gold sheets (destroyed), wine (destroyed), ivory wand, dreamstone
 Concentration: 21 (6 hours)

This spell uses the power of the caster’s dreams over his own body to heal wounds he’s suffered. The caster wraps himself in cloth-of-gold sheets, drinks a goblet of wine, then lays a small ivory wand across his eyes and holds the dreamstone in his hand as he settles back and falls into a sleep that lasts six hours. If he’s woken in the interim (reflected by the concentration modifier), the spell fails. If the spell succeeds, the effect value is used as a *first aid* total applied to the caster. (Note that, unlike the standard *first aid* spell, the duration is



permanent.) A time-consuming and “fiddly” spell ... but a potential life-saver!

NIGHTMARE (C/OB-C)

Skill: *Alteration: somniomancy*
Most Applicable Arcane Knowledge:
Dreams

Difficulty Number: 17

Feedback: 11

Effect Value: 18

Range: 15 (1 kilometer)

Speed: 15

Duration: 25 (1 day)

Cast Time: 18 (1 hour)

Modifiers:

Components: Dreamstone (destroyed),
 beeswax candle (destroyed), glass bell
 (destroyed)

Concentration: 18 (1 hour)

Conditional Modifiers: Subject must
 be asleep; caster must be inside

Incantation: Litany (DN12) — the
 litany can be a prepared reading of
 what the caster wishes the night-
 mare to be about.

A nasty little spell, this is used to fill a sleeping target's mind with terrifying nightmares. The phantasms are so disturbing that the sleeper will immediately awake ... and the memory of them will undermine his confidence for an entire day afterward. The caster must maintain his concentration for the entire casting time: one full hour.

(Compare the spell's effect value to the target's Confidence on the “Push” column of the Success Chart. Subtract the push value from the target's Confidence for the duration of the spell.)

DREAMTRAP (O/OB-O)

Skill: *Alteration: somniomancy*

Most Applicable Arcane Knowledge:
Dreams

Difficulty Number: 11

Feedback: 12

Effect Value: 20

Range: 0

Speed: 0

Duration: 21 (4 hours)

Cast Time: 18 (1 hour)

Modifiers:

Charges: 5

Components: Dreamstone

Conditional Modifiers: Subject must
 be asleep

Gestures: Move dreamstone in a large
 circle

Incantation: “Dreams are but doors to
 the mind.”

This spell traps dreams that a slumberer has during a four hour span of time. The spell is completed when the caster waves the dreamstone in a circle over the dreamer. This spell can be used to store five dreams per dreamstone. Because of the special nature of the dreamstone, the dream can be stored for as long as the dreamstone has its potency. To release the dream (and thus the charge), speak the incantation while holding the dreamstone and then go to sleep.

The effect value of the spell should be compared to the original dreamer's Confidence. Read the result points on the “General Success” column on the Success Chart. A Minimal, Solid, or Good success allows the dream to be trapped. Anything better than a Good success means that the dream that is trapped is an extraordinarily vivid dream.



CHAPTER SEVEN

NEIGHBORHOODS

A STROLL THROUGH PADARR (PART 1)

I remember how glad I was to see the gates of Padarr the first time. (Just goes to show that anything's better than the freakin' Wilderness ...) High walls, shapes moving along the battlements. Glints of sun on glass as the guards checked me out with spyglasses (or maybe they were rifle-scopes, I don't know). Gates were open, and — for a wonder — the sun was out. Through those gates I saw the sun shining on the buildings of Padarr. Pretty sight. Whitewashed walls of stone and stucco. Sloping roofs made out of that yellow-brown tile they make here. Lots of people in the streets — drab clothes, at least in contrast to their buildings, but I didn't really notice that at the time.

First impression once I was through the gates? It was *clean* — none of the crap on the streets that I'd gotten used to in Guildsport. Maybe it was the heavy rain washing the streets, I didn't know. (Now I know it was just the proximity to Snob Hill.)

Second impression: *big!* Much bigger than Guildsport. A huge, sprawling city. Couldn't believe there could be anything bigger. (That was before I visited Galitia, of course.) Buildings everywhere. *People* everywhere. When I had time to think about it, I guess I was surprised that the buildings weren't taller — two or three stories, most of them, with only a few higher than five. Just about what I was used to in Guildsport ... and I guess that surprised me a little. You'd think a "big city" would have big buildings — real skyscrapers, eight or nine floors to them.

Wider streets than I was used to, too — the main ones, at least. Sure, lots of the sidestreets and the alleys were just as claustrophobic, but the main ones were wide enough for cars to pass each other without scraping fenders or creasing pedestrians.



Caught my first glimpse of Jon Jevik five minutes after I'd come through the gate. Damn near ran me down in that big black car of his. I jumped out of the way, and came face to ... well, suffice it to say I found myself staring at the south end of a northbound horse.

I should have realized that was an omen ...

THE DOCKS

The dock area of Padarr is divided into two main areas: the fishing docks, and the so-called "trade" docks. All are under the strict control of the Harbormaster and under the jurisdiction of the Harbor Police.

Most of the streets in this area are narrow and winding, and pitch-black at night. A few major thoroughfares are wide enough for truck traffic, however, and are lit by glowstones mounted on the buildings.

FISHING DOCKS

Bustling, chaotic and reeking of fish, these areas are busy around the clock. Small rickety docks jut out every which way, providing berths for the city's fishing fleet. Fishing boats range in size from little dories powered by single-lunged gasoline engines, right the way up to ocean-going trawlers — painted in the blue-and-white livery of Daile Fisheries — with crews numbering in the dozens.

Most of the fleet — the Daile Fisheries vessels are among the few exceptions — are only good for day trips. They set sail before the dawn, returning to the docks at sunset. The catch is unloaded overnight, and a free-for-all fish market starts up three hours before sun-up with dealers loudly hawking their wares. During the day, boats that aren't out on the fishing grounds are repaired and maintained. Around the clock, year-round, old fishermen sit on the docks repairing nets and floats with their gnarled hands.

Only fishing boats recognized as part of the fleet by the Harbormaster can moor here. Any other boat that approaches the fishing docks will attract the immediate attention of a contingent of Harbor Police. The Harbor Police patrol the fishing docks when they can be bothered, looking for contraband. (It's pretty easy, after all, for a fisherman to make some extra cash by off-loading contraband from a

smuggler's ship moored further out in the Bight — out of sight behind the Sentry, for example.) The Harbor Police use these patrols as an opportunity to shake the fishermen down for squeeze, to get their mitts on cheap fish to feed themselves and their families, and to roust the Unnaturals who work the docks.

"TRADE DOCKS"

The trade area is better organized than the fishing docks, but only marginally. The docks themselves are larger and stronger, capable of

A STROLL THROUGH PADARR (PART 2)

One of the first things I needed when I hit town was a hot meal ... preferably a *cheap* hot meal. I asked some guy I but-tonholed on the street, and he suggested I try a place called Blood Alley. Gave me directions and everything. Guess he either had a stake in the place, or a real twisted sense of humor.

Never been to Blood Alley? Take my advice, and keep it that way. It's right down by the docks, a small place with its windows blacked out. (Or maybe that's just gunk on the glass that's built up over the years, I don't know.) It's one of those places that spreads sawdust on the floor to absorb ... well, let's just say *fluids* that happen to get spilled. From what I saw, those fluids don't include drinks. Your typical patron of Blood Alley would rather gut his neighbor than waste alcohol. I think you get the drift.

Smelled of fish, and blood, and urine, and barf ... and bad attitude, and repressed violence. Before I'd even found myself a place to sit down, two slob had tried to pick fights with me. Neighborly place, if that's your taste. Thank Ison I found myself a seat with my back against a wall.

The food? Okay, I've got to admit it, the slob on the street steered me right on that. The food *was* good — assuming you like fish and nothing but — and the price was right.

handling bigger vessels. Cranes — powered by internal combustion engines or (rarely, and only on the private docks run by companies owned by the Big Rich) elemental engines — loom against the sky.

Ships are mooring or warping away from the docks around the clock; there's always a buzz of activity. Stevedores and longshoremen — Humans and Unnaturals — are kept busy handling cargo, under the eyes of the Harbor Police. (When the stevedores aren't busy, they're often getting into comradely fist-fights in the many scuzzy taverns that line the Widow's Walk.)

By night, the active docks are lit by high-intensity glowstones mounted on the overhead cranes, or by portable units set up on the wharves. While these give the stevedores enough light to work by, they do cast very deep shadows elsewhere along the docks ... perfect places for various kinds of predators to await the unwary. The docks are *not* a safe place to frequent after dark. Even the Harbor Police recognize this fact; when they patrol by night, they do so in groups of five or more.

“EXTRATERRITORIAL AREA”

The warehouse area within about 50 yards of the waterfront is classed as “extraterritorial.” In other words, many of Padarr's laws don't apply in this area. Specifically, Unnaturals are free to work unhindered — although not undisturbed — in this region, while cargoes illegal in the city proper can be stored in warehouses without undesirable legal entanglements. This area is under the jurisdiction of the Harbor Police. Strictly speaking, the proctors have no authority in the region (although a few interesting “seams” in the laws make this a debatable issue; see the chapter on “Cops and Crooks”).

Many import/export companies — those owned by various Big Rich and others — have their warehouses, and even office complexes, down in this area to avoid legal complexities. Most of these will be *very* well guarded, particularly at night. It's not at all uncommon to see “hard-men” patrolling around warehouses, cradling submachine guns in their hands. (Obviously, their employers have paid the appropriate *squeeze* to put the normal weapons laws in abeyance.)

The extraterritorial area is also home to a

wide variety of taverns, watering-holes, gambling houses — legal and illegal — brothels, and rooming houses catering to those too stupid to live or too tough to die.

The way the warehouses and other buildings are arranged, only a couple of streets run from the extraterritorial area into the rest of the city. Both the Harbor Police and the proctors keep a close watch on those streets. (Of course, there are always ways of avoiding this attention: crossing over rooftops, or navigating through the sewer and storm-drain network beneath the streets.)

POINTS OF INTEREST

HARBORMASTER'S BUILDING

Right on “Widow's Walk,” the main thoroughfare lining the docks, this is a heavily-built stone tower that wouldn't look out of place as the keep of a Wilderness fortress. Atop the tower is an observation deck, with various telescopes and signaling devices — a heliograph and a couple of different kinds of semaphores — mounted on a central steeple. (Even though most communication between the Harbormaster's Building and ships in the harbor is handled through crystal sets, these older systems are kept in working order. This reflects both tradition, and the fact that sometimes crystal sets aren't as reliable as older methods.)

The building houses the personal quarters and office of the Harbormaster himself — currently Bryce Hurne — and the offices and barracks of the Harbor Police. The harbor pilots operate out of this building too, but typically live elsewhere. There's also a small lock-up in the basement of the building; although the Harbor Police should turn over all criminals to the Proctors, sometimes they're a little lax in doing so. Many smugglers have spent some unpleasant hours in the claustrophobic lock-up. (It's amazing how clumsy some of those smugglers seem to be ... judging by the frequency with which they “walk into doors” or “fall downstairs,” at least.)

BLOOD ALLEY

That's the name of one of the more famous harborside watering-holes along the trade dock area. It's small and dark — even at high noon



— with low ceilings, and its air usually thick with smoke from various ... *interesting* ... herbs. It used to be honky-tonk, but five years ago some disgruntled patron shotgunned the piano (the pianist somehow managed to do the quick fade before things went down). The management apparently thinks the ruined hulk adds to the bar's ambiance, because it's still there, gathering dust in a corner.

Food at the Alley is typically bad enough to choke a Taxim ... except for the Catch of the Day, which is usually excellent. The "house special" brew, whipped up on the premises by one of the co-owners, packs a wallop, and is best consumed in *very* limited quantities.

Blood Alley's regulars are a hard-bitten lot, the victors of a kind of low-level "survival of the fittest." (People not tough enough to hang out with the Alley's regular patrons either don't come back a second time — if they have any brains — or get their heads beaten in.)

The Alley is owned and run by a couple of identical-twin Hugors, Mike and Spike. (Con-

sidering how upset the brothers get at anyone who calls them by the wrong name, the similarity in names is fortunate. You can usually get away with mumbling "-ike"... and keep your teeth.)

GOLDY'S

Goldy's caters to the biological needs of sailors, broken-down fishermen, and the occasional uptown failure. One of the few actual "houses" in the dockside area, Goldy's pays lavishly to keep the Harbor Police from darkening the brothel's door (at least by cops who are on duty at the time). The brothel is home and workplace to three dozen workers — mostly girls, and mostly Humans. (The few exceptions turn a good trade from those patrons interested in a little novelty.) The parlor downstairs is a good place to go blind drinking bad gin, get ripped off in a card game ... and, incidentally, look over the "talent."

Despite the connotations of the name,

A STROLL THROUGH PADARR (PART 3)

Anyway, Blood Alley is one of those places where you eat and *get*, if you take my meaning. So I ate and got ... and took the wrong turning. (Oh yeah, a friendly warning: unless you've got the constitution of a Hugor, do *not* drink more than two pints of the "special brew" at Blood Alley. I've got a nasty feeling their brewmaster's name is Mickey Finn ...) So I'm strolling along the docks — the wrong way — and there's nothing ahead of me but darkness. Behind me I can hear some longshoremen yucking it up with the Harbormaster's goons as they're offloading a freighter. That's when I know I'm lost ... but I don't turn and retrace my steps, because I *know* that's just a pure invitation for any hard-knuckled alley-basher waiting in the shadows to make his move. I've got one hand on the butt of my .38-caliber security blanket, and I'm trying to grow an extra set of eyes.

Which is why I see the ship, quiet as a ghost, edging up to one of the wharves ahead of me. Ship's gig, it looks like — couple of Hugors on the oars, trying real

hard to be quiet. So I just fade into the shadows and I watch while a couple more Hugors just kind of materialize out of the darkness and unload some cargo. (Don't know what it was, don't *want* to know.) Takes them maybe ten minutes, and I don't think I even breathed for the whole time. Finally the Hugors onshore head off, and the boat fades away into the darkness. I take my first breath ...

And almost swallow my teeth when another figure appears out of the shadows maybe an arm's length away from me. Harbor Police, I can tell by his uniform, and he's been watching the whole thing. I look into his eyes, and then down at the gun on his belt, and I figure that's it for me unless I want to become a cop-killer my first night in a new burg. The harbor cop gives me the evil eye for a moment ... then he writes me up a citation for vagrancy. I slip him a 100 osee note, and everyone's happy.

That was my first lesson in getting by in Padarr.

"Goldy" is a Human male big enough to give a militant Hugor second thoughts about causing trouble. He has little patience and less sense of humor.

"RAT'S NEST"

Uphill from the docks, right up against the eastern wall of the city, is the region called the "Rat's Nest." It's a dirty, claustrophobic maze of narrow, winding streets, few of them wide enough for vehicular traffic. At one point, the city paid to install glowstones along the major roads ("major" being a relative term, of course), but they didn't last long. The residents of Rat's Nest thoughtfully shot them out, magically discharged them, or simply pried them out of their mountings for personal use.

Various construction codes are on the books to guarantee that buildings are at least marginally safe throughout Padarr. Apparently, the inspectors were on vacation when most of the buildings in the Nest were built (or a large amount of squeeze changed hands). The predominantly single-story buildings are ramshackle fire-traps, most of them, ready to collapse if someone looks at them wrong ... and those are the newly-constructed buildings! The older ones are even worse. Many have already collapsed or been burned out, leaving vacant lots that gape like missing teeth. Squatters of various stripes have built shanty-towns or tent-cities on many of these lots. At night, cookfires burn in makeshift braziers, with huddled shapes silhouetted against the dancing light.

The Rat's Nest does have a storm-drain and sewer system — something the City Fathers are particularly proud about, apparently — but it's a mixed blessing. There's no waste treatment plant in this part of the city; raw sewage is dumped into the sewers — as well as into the streets — and allowed to flow roughly downhill into the harbor. Unfortunately, the city engineers who installed them didn't take into account "spring tides" — when the tidal rise is higher than normal — and the effects of abnormally heavy rains. During spring tides, and after particularly heavy downpours, the sewers in the Nest have an unpleasant tendency to back up into the streets ...

Proctors do patrol the Rat's Nest — usually in pairs or groups — but typically they are

nowhere near as rigorous in enforcing the law as in richer areas. (For example, on Snob Hill people might get a ticket for jaywalking or even littering. In the Rat's Nest, you'd almost have roll an old lady right in front of the proctors — or chuck a rock at their car — to get yourself arrested.) That's the standard situation, but it doesn't pay to depend on it too much. From time to time — for various political and other reasons — the proctors do step up their enforcement from "virtually nonexistent" right the way up to "stringent as all hell."

There aren't many obvious Unnaturals in the Nest, but there are some. Generally, they keep to themselves and hang out with their own kind, keeping a low profile. (Of course, it's tough to know when a Relkazar or a 'Shifter has moved into your building ...)

There are almost as many taverns per capita in the Rat's Nest as there are around the docks, and considerably more illicit gaming houses. (Most of these are run by Nico Flynn, but Jonas Reetch has started opening up competing operations.) A recent addition to the entertainment options of the area is pit-fighting. In the basements of abandoned buildings, you can watch a couple of fighters — professionals mainly, although a few amateurs appear in the pits (voluntarily or otherwise) — beat the stuffing out of each other with fists or various implements of destruction. Pit-fighting is illegal, and betting on it is even more illegal. It doesn't seem likely that the "game" will be closed down anytime soon, however ... particularly since Delwin Harn, the Big Rich, has discovered a taste for the sport. (Predictably, he doesn't show up at pit-fighting "establishments" wearing his own face ...) Most professional pit-fighters — those who make a name for themselves on the "circuit", at least — are Hugors. A couple of establishments stage Humans-only events from time to time, however.

There's also an entire sprawling block — Fleshmarket, it's called — dedicated almost entirely to brothels. Prostitutes display their wares on the streets under the eyes of their Gris pimps, and various predators lurk in the alleys to prey on sated (and hence less than vigilant) "clients." Fleshmarket is probably the best place to find information in Padarr. Need to learn where to buy a gun, where to hire a necromancer, or where to lose a few ooses



betting on a pit-fight? Talk to the girls of Fleshmarket.

Many of the city's fences work out of the Nest. It's been said, only partially in jest, that if you've had something of sentimental value stolen, you can often buy it back on the streets of the Rat's Nest.

POINTS OF INTEREST

"HUGGY'S HOME"

This is the closest thing to a "one-stop shop" for vice and illegal dealings in Padarr — a fact that *must* be known to the proctors, implying that Huggy himself probably has a powerful patron. Huggy's Home is one of the few two-story buildings in the Nest, a tumble-down firetrap that once was a rooming house ... for the two weeks before its owner/operator was mugged twice and declared bankruptcy. Upstairs, prostitutes ply their trade. In the smoky, low-ceilinged barroom, various reprobates cut secret deals. Illegal card and dice games take place in the back room, while downstairs is one of the region's most popular pit-fighting concessions. Huggy himself dabbles in selling

unregistered guns.

Be warned: Huggy's is the Nest's answer to a "private club." If you're not recognized as a regular — and if you're not *very* quick with your tongue, your fists, a gun or a spell — you're likely to end up as rat-bait in the back alley.

MONTKEITH'S

Montkeith (Monty to his friends) used to be a hot up-and-coming mage, a shoe-in for associate membership in the Arcanum if he ever got around to applying. Everybody knew he was the toughest spell-slinger to ever rise up from the streets of the Nest.

Unfortunately, Monty came to believe his own PR a little too much, and bit off a couple of conjurations that chewed *him* rather than vice versa. Even though he's only 35 or so, he looks more than twice that. Still, he's a friendly sort with a kind word for anyone who comes to visit him — whether they exist outside his addled brain or not. His many friends in the Nest put up with his tendency to carry on arguments with people long dead or never born, and know to either run for cover or punch him senseless whenever he starts casting a spell.



Marshall Andrews III

Monty still hires out his services as a spell-slinger. He's undismayed by the fact that his only clients are out-of-towners who don't know any better. (Sending a chuckle-headed would-be client to see Monty is one of the most entertaining diversions the Nest has to offer.) He runs a little store from which he sells "artifacts of great antiquity and greater power" — often resembling, to the "uninitiated and benighted," a dead rat or the rusted hubcap from a Grady Vesper. Once in awhile, he *does* acquire something that's actually useful or even powerful. He also does a small trade in alchemical ingredients — enough to keep him fed, at least.

STAMP'S LANDING

Despite the name, this isn't a dockside tavern. It's nestled right in the heart of the Rat's Nest, a long and narrow drinking establishment with one of the best selections of beer on tap in the entire city. Fine though the beer selection is, it's the clientele that attracts the most attention. For some reason, Stamp's has become the watering-hole of choice for magicians from all strata of Padarren society. Backstreet technomancers rub shoulders with uptown elementalists, and on occasion a red-cloaked associate member of the Arcanum shows up for a pint and an hour of discussion. "Mundanes" are welcome at Stamp's, as long as they don't mind the risk of being caught in the feedback of a drunk mage trying to impress his buddies with his new spell. A tightly-knit group, the clientele has a penchant for practical jokes against newcomers. (Considering the amount of magical talent that can be found in Stamp's of an evening, the scale and complexity of these practical jokes can be staggering.)

Incidentally, nobody seems to know the origin of the tavern's name. It's nowhere near a landing, and not even the long-time regulars can recall anyone called "Stamp."

"KARKAS ROW"/GRISTOWN

At the northernmost end of town, Karkas Row — otherwise known as Gristown — is sandwiched between the stormy Marthak Bight and a particularly malodorous area of the Coldmere Marsh. The wall that lines the

eastern side of the region doesn't do much to protect it from the bitter and acrid winter winds blowing down from the foothills. Its western side is bounded by the shore of the Marthak Bight itself, a region of shallow waters and soup-like mud, impassable to even the smallest skiff. Because of the reek emanating from the WithCo Tannery on the southern margin of Karkas Row, only people with absolutely no alternative would ever consider living here. In Padarr, that generally means Unnaturals.

If most of the buildings in the Rat's Nest look as though they should be condemned any day, those in Gristown look as though they *have* been condemned and the demolition already started. Fire-gutted buildings, vacant lots and "tent cities" are more common in Karkas Row than in the Nest ... and that's saying something.

Karkas Row isn't served by the same infrastructure as the rest of the city. Proctors visit the area only to cause trouble; any fireimages coming to put out a fire have obviously gotten lost. There's no garbage pick-up, and the sewer systems long ago clogged up and ceased to work. In some ways, however, this is a blessing. In some parts of the Rat's Nest, people actually wait for the city to handle the build-up of garbage in the streets. (The city *will* do it — eventually — but the residents may have to live with the reek for weeks.) In Karkas Row, however, that kind of self-delusion — "The city will take care of things" — isn't possible. Everyone knows the city *won't* take care of it ... of *anything*. If the residents of Gristown don't handle it, it won't get handled at all. This understanding breeds a rugged self-sufficiency.

Different blocks within Gristown have established their own volunteer fire departments. Even races that don't normally get along have seen fit to work alongside each other to fight fires and other crises. (Racial intolerance generally takes a back seat to survival ...) Similarly, residents will arrange to take care of their own garbage. ("Take care of" usually means "feed it to a Gris" ... although sometimes it translates as "pack it up late one night, and dump it somewhere embarrassing on Snob Hill.") As to the sewers, a system that doesn't work at all is arguably better than one that backs up when it rains heavily.



Gristown is a dangerous place to find yourself at night, whether you're Human or Unnatural, and it's not much better by day. There are some exceptions, of course, but the predators prowling the streets generally don't pick their victims based on race, but on the yield they expect to realize and the risks involved. While you're not necessarily likely to get mugged just because you're Human, you *are* going to feel kind of unwelcome ... much the way an Unnatural would feel anywhere else in the city. Walking down the street, you're going to get the evil eye from most of the Unnaturals you pass; in the small, rundown stores that do business in Gristown, the only service you're likely to get as a Human is lip service.

A couple of the streets in Gristown are wide enough for cars or trucks ... but smart drivers never test it out. Residents of Karkas Row can't afford cars and wouldn't buy them if they could. To the Gristowners, "car," "Big Rich" and "bullet-bait" are synonymous. If you try to drive into Gristown, the best you can expect is to have rocks, mud and various biological products hurled at your car. (The *worst* you can expect is to have the residents roll your car over, pile flammables around it, and light it up ... with you still inside.)

POINTS OF INTEREST

WITHCO TANNERY

Run by Elaine Withers' corporate "combine," the WithCo Tannery is the biggest "fleshmill" in Padarr. Its official charter claims it will only work on "non-sentient, non-protected species." Nasty backstreet rumors, however, claim that anyone or anything foolish enough to not watch its back around the WithCo Tannery is running a real risk of ending up as a handbag or leather coat. (A couple of Central News Agency "stringers" claim to have *seen* 'Shifter, Hugor and even Human bodies being dragged into the gaping main doors of the WithCo Tannery ... but CNA's editors have always claimed the evidence is much too slim to warrant running the story.) Other rumors claim that the WithCo establishment sometimes takes "special orders." Someone with really jaded tastes who just won't feel complete without a *qim*-leather coat can talk privately with tannery management. A few days

later, the *qim* population of Gristown drops by one (you know those Unnaturals; always dropping out of sight for their own dubious reasons). A few days after that, the guy who placed the order is trying on a new coat ...

In other cities, a fleshmill like WithCo would be staffed almost entirely with Taxim. Not in Padarr — not *officially*, at least. WithCo toes the party line and doesn't officially employ anyone but Padarren citizens (in other words, only Humans). Official employees work a single (albeit backbreaking) shift a day, typically 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. According to the official employment rolls, nobody but management should be in the plant at night. How come, then, that locals say the fleshmill is working at full speed around the clock ...?

Withers knows that the tannery could easily become a focus for the hatred of the Unnaturals. To protect a profitable business, she keeps SMG-armed guards patrolling the place around the clock.

THE RAFFLES

The closest thing Gristown has to a "high-tone establishment," the Raffles is a watering hole, pure and simple. The management doesn't hire prostitutes (although sex workers are certainly free to "work the crowd" if they so wish); it doesn't run illicit gambling (although patrons are welcome to fire up a craps game if that's their taste); it doesn't officially countenance the fencing of stolen goods or the peddling of weapons (although the customers are all considered responsible adults, and how they want to spend their spare time is their own concern). Unlike many places in Gristown, it's not certain death for a Human to wander into the Raffles. A Human patron will definitely feel unwelcome, and will have to wait an inordinate length of time for his first beer, but the Raffles' management enforces the rule "Never Kill Another Customer ... On The Premises."

Human patrons who put up with the stink-eye and the execrable service, and are still polite and companionable with their Unnatural drinking companions, might actually be able to make valuable contacts here.

"THE MEAT MARKET"

Among "proper" Padarens, it's *déclassé*, and downright illegal, to hire Unnaturals —

particularly Undead. Among “proper” Padarrrens, however, it’s also important to shave a few ooses here and there. Socially unacceptable though they may be, Zuvembie and their ilk certainly work cheap, and as long as you’re not looking for anything in the way of initiative they can be effective workers. Many “proper” Padarrrens know of a place called “the Meat Market” but wouldn’t admit as much to their friends (even if they suspect those friends are also clients of the Market).

The Meat Market is a kind of hiring hall for undead of various kinds: Ghouls, Orris, Zuvembie, and other less familiar types. Sentient Undead cut their own deals with prospective employers — or, more likely, their representatives — and slip a cut to the managers of the Market. Zuvembie are generally rounded up like cattle and shipped off to whoever wants to pay for them; all their “salaries” are kept by the Market’s managers.

Of late, the Meat Market’s been falling on harder times. It seems that a couple of regular employers have been killed — and perhaps eaten — by their “short-term employees.” The Market’s management won’t talk about it at all, but there are rumors that the only “workers” the victims hired were Zuvembie ... or what they *thought* were Zuvembie. The “conventional wisdom” holds that there’s some sentient Undead with an ax to grind against Padarr’s Humans, pretending to be a Zuvembie and using the Market as his way of getting past the defenses of his chosen victim.

Because generally “like trusts like,” the managers of the Meat Market are also Undead: a Vampire, and two Orris.

“THE CIRCLE”

Roughly in the center of town, this is the “government district,” the home of the bureaucracy and its associated functions. It’s a neighborhood of expensive, elaborate — many would say “ostentatious” and “overdone” — buildings: mainly buildings that house the functions of government, rather than people as such.

It’s often said, only partially in jest, that while Padarr has enough civil servants for a city twice its size, it has enough public buildings for *two* cities twice its size. (Actually, “public” refers to the source of funding for the

buildings, not their openness to the rank-and-file citizenry. It’s almost easier to arrange a personal invitation into a Big Rich magnate’s mansion than it is to get into some government buildings ...)

Streets in the Circle are wide, scrupulously clean, and well-lit at night. The tallest buildings in Padarr can be found here: whitewashed stone edifices five or six stories high. It always seems that there’s a new “public building” under construction. Architectural styles follow changing trends, which guarantees there’ll never be any sense of uniformity or “harmony” among buildings built at different times.

Proctor presence is very high in the Circle around the clock. Anyone on the street who doesn’t look as though he belongs — an Unnatural, for example, or a Human wearing anything but the “standard-issue” dark suit of the bureaucracy — is sure to attract official attention. Most of the pedestrians around here are bureaucracy “drones,” and they definitely look the part.

In addition to public buildings, there are a few residences specifically for low- to middle-ranking bureaucrats: soulless-looking apartment hotels. A couple of higher-ranking managers have large houses within the Circle, but members of the Management Committee live on Snob Hill. Countless restaurants, clubs and stores cater to the needs of the bureaucrats. There’s as much of a social hierarchy among these services as there is within the bureaucracy itself; for example, a senior manager wouldn’t be caught dead in a restaurant that caters to his subordinates, and a junior functionary wouldn’t have the gall to “overreach herself” by shopping at a store for high-rankers.

POINTS OF INTEREST

COUNCIL HALL

This grotesquely ostentatious building contains the domed hall where the City Fathers hold their regular meetings. Although most of these meetings are *in camera*, the hall does have a “spectators gallery” for those few times when the citizenry can watch the governance of their city. Other rooms in the building are set aside for official receptions — when diplomats from other cities come to pay their re-



spects to the City Fathers — and other such events. There's a large underground parking facility dedicated entirely to the councilmembers' limousines.

Security around the Council Hall is competent, but not extreme. Proctors patrol the outside and watch key hallways within. Since a recent "bomb scare" directed against the entire council, members of the Special Squad watch the entrance to the underground parking garage. (It would be too easy to roll a truck filled with explosives down the ramp into the underground, and blow the entire building to fragments.)

CITY HALL

Less ostentatious than the Council Hall, this building is still obviously the more important structure of the two — judging by proctor security surrounding it, and by the round-the-clock sense of hustle and bustle. This large structure houses the "brains" of the bureaucracy — the Management Committee. The hall where the Committee meets is even larger and more sumptuous than that where the City Fathers gather. (Of course, nobody outside the bureaucracy would know that, since Management Committee meetings are *never* open to the public.) In addition to the meeting hall, each member of the Committee has his or her own office, with associated offices for personal staffers.

The rest of the building is filled with a warren of smaller offices. (In general, you can estimate an individual's rank by the size of his office. Other perks of high rank are windows and private bathrooms.) Some but not all major divisions of the bureaucracy have their head offices within City Hall: most notably, Personnel and the Civic Planning Office. Generally, having offices within City Hall — rather than in one of the outlying "subsidiary" government buildings — is a sign of rank and favor. Thus, departments and divisions often get into "turf wars," scrapping it out with each other for the honor of being relocated within the City Hall building ... with one notable exception.

INLAND REVENUE OFFICE CENTER

That exception is the dreaded IRO. Under the management of Laiza Smed, the IRO has

seriously bucked tradition by moving its offices *out* of City Hall, taking over one of the smaller subsidiary government buildings. (Smed's bureaucratic rivals don't know quite how to take this. No matter how much they try to convince themselves — and each other — that Smed's department is now "out of the loop," away from the center of power, and hence somehow marginalized ... they can't shake the feeling that she's managed to stage a *major* coup.)

IRO Center is one of the smaller subsidiary government buildings, but what it lacks in size it more than makes up for in atmosphere. Padarrens aren't quite sure how much of that atmosphere is actually due to the knowledge that this is the IRO's headquarters, however. Would the building look quite so dark and menacing if it were home to, say, the Civic Beautification Department ...?

THE AEDIFICIUM

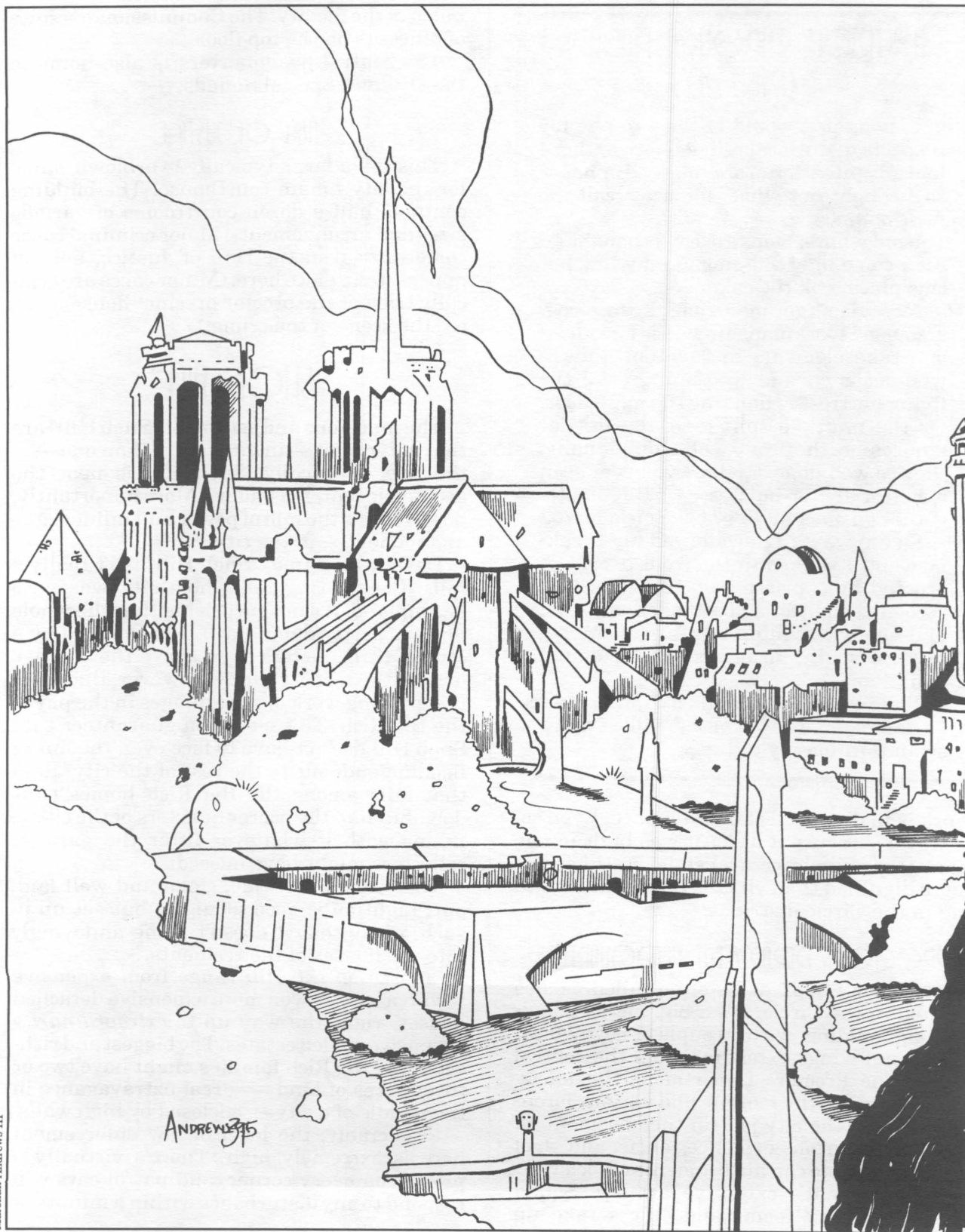
The center of the Ajaran faith in Padarr, the *Aedificium* combines the functions of church, monastery and religious library. It's a large, sprawling — and quite schizoid-looking — building right in the heart of the Circle. Its central structure is the cathedral, a fusion of half a dozen (largely incompatible) styles of architecture. The low, largely-windowless east wing houses one of the largest religious libraries on Marl (devoted entirely to the words of Ajara and the (seemingly endless) analyses and interpretations of those few scraps of dogma, of course). The west wing — built in yet another incompatible style — is the home of the Praetors and the members of the College of Elders. (This wing's bleak exterior is a decided contrast to its luxurious interior.)

THE ARCANUM

If the *Aedificium* is the center of spiritual life in Padarr (as the Praetors love to claim), then the Arcanum is undeniably its magical heart. This magical "college" is located less than half a mile from the *Aedificium*; while certain Praetors may be uncomfortable about this proximity, they know better than to raise a stink about it.

The Arcanum is a large, sprawling facility, apparently much too big for its seven Collegians and 35 "associate members." The stone-





Marshall Andrews III

A STROLL THROUGH PADARR (PART 4)

I thought it would be wise to pay my respects to the local religion — whether I had any intention of abiding by it or not — so I sought out what the locals call the *Aedificium*.

Ison, what a monstrosity! I thought I'd seen some ugly buildings in my life, but this place took the cake.

Now, don't get me wrong. I can recognize good workmanship when I see it. If you take elements in isolation, they're well-designed and well-built. Take the flying buttresses flanking the main door. Or the multiple spires. Or the brazier sconces on the front wall. Individually, they're well done. (Hells, I've never seen a better flying buttress ...) But all together on one building? Give me a break.

So anyway, I re-swallowed my breakfast and I walked in the front door. Got greeted by a priest immediately. She'd recognized me for an outlander, she said, and she was willing to pray for my benighted soul ... in return for a nominal donation.

"Paying respects to the local religion," he damned. I was out of there like I had a swamp-rat on my tail.

work is in dire need of maintenance. Even so, however, because it at least was built in one harmonized architectural style, it still seems more dignified than virtually any other building in the Circle district.

PROCTORS DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS

The "Cop Shop," as its often called, is also located in the Circle. It's a big, institutional-looking building, with a couple of newly-built additional wings extending from the central block. The Proctors Department Headquarters is home to the morgue and various forensics labs, to the city jail (in the basement, of course), to various evidence rooms, and — of great interest to certain segments of society — the department's extensive armory! Squad rooms, meeting rooms and offices take up

much of the facility. The Commissioner's suite of offices is on the top floor.

The central headquarters is also home to the OPI and Special Squads.

HALL OF JUSTICE

This is Padarr's typically-overblown name for the city's main courthouse. The building contains half a dozen courtrooms of various sizes and arrangements. Major criminal cases come to trial in the Hall of Justice, and all appeals take place here. (Minor cases are typically tried at the proctor precinct house nearest the scene of the crime.)

"SNOB HILL"

The mansions and estates of "Snob Hill" are the centerpoint — in more ways than one — of the city. Physically, Snob Hill is near the geometric center of Padarr. More importantly, however, it's the hub of power and influence — and money! — in the city.

Despite its name, "Snob Hill" isn't really a hill. (Considering the whole city was once swampland, it's not surprising that the whole place is pretty damn flat.) It is elevated by a crucial three meters or so above the average level of the rest of the city, however, thanks to the untiring work of watermages in the pay of the Big Rich. This elevation guarantees that Snob Hill doesn't have to face even the minor flooding endemic to the rest of the city. Rain that falls among the Big Rich homes runs downhill into the poorer quarters of the city ... taking with it whatever litter the garbage collectors might have missed.

The streets are wide, clean and well laid-out. Lighting is good at night, but set up in such a way that it doesn't shine annoyingly into the houses of the residents.

Houses on the Hill range from expensive townhouses, to even more expensive detached houses, right the way up to *extraordinarily* expensive walled estates. The biggest and richest of the Big Rich families might have two or three acres of land — a real extravagance in the middle of a city — enclosed by high walls.

Predictably, the level of law enforcement here is extremely high. There's virtually a proctor on every corner, and patrol cars will respond to any disturbance within a minute or



two. The proctors patrolling the Hill are surprisingly polite, even to people they're pulling over for some infraction. (After all, you never know whether the shabbily-dressed guy who's speeding down the boulevard in that Vesper is a car thief or Jon Jevik's cousin ... and it doesn't pay to defecate on your own career by guessing wrong.)

THE CATACOMBS

Old-time crooks and modern ones have one thing in common — none of them get anywhere taking things for granted. Sure, Padarr had enough natural defenses to hold off even a determined navy, but there was always the chance some little sloop would slip through. It wouldn't do to have your gold pinched while you were manning the walls, laughing at the frigates stuck in the mire.

So with the help of a few well-placed tunneling spells, the locals started digging out a network of passages under the city to stow their stash. This was back before the first Godwar, of course, and the job was an open secret around the burg. There were rumors,

naturally, that all sorts of things had been encountered by the earthmage crews doing the work, but no unions existed in those days, so no complaints are on record. But as the digging progressed, more and more armed guards were put on the payroll, and that has to mean something.

How many pirates actually made use of the tunnels is unknown. Probably a good number, each one commissioning a "wing" of their own, and that's how the Catacombs came to spread until they were larger than the city itself. The idea that there might be tunnels leading out to the Wilderness isn't something you talk about in polite company — but look at some of the things that have popped up unexpectedly in the middle of Karkas Row and you can guess the answer.

Usually, these stories end with, "One day, piracy collapsed, the tunnels were forgotten, and everyone walked around like saps with a treasure under their heels." But that's not how it happened. Sure, the pirates went the way of the Gazeran Empire (and in half the time), but the locals took this as a sign that it was open season on the treasure down below. Walk into any inn in

A STROLL THROUGH PADARR (PART 5)

There's nothing physical, nothing visible, to separate Snob Hill from the rest of the city. No wall, no gates. But there might as well be. The moment you step over that invisible border, you can *feel* it — in the air you're breathing, through the soles of your boots. You're not in the world you know any more. Different rules apply.

Who do you know who can afford a freakin' orchard in the middle of a city? No one I know, let me tell you that. But in the first three blocks I walked on the Hill, I saw two of them — corpses of fruit trees showing their upper branches over stone walls.

Nice wide sidewalks line nice wide streets ... but those sidewalks aren't used that much. Nobody seems to walk in Snob Hill — other than the proctors, that is. I guess all the high muckamucks who live there are *much* too important to scuff shoe-leather. Why walk when you can ride ...?

Somebody told me about the aristocrats and the Big Rich — how the old families

were falling on bad times, and the Big Rich were buying them out. Well, you can *see* it on the Hill. You can see where the old families are still clinging by their fingernails. Look around you — you'll see them. Big houses — beautiful old things — that look like they're ready to come down any second. Moss all over the whitewashed walls, ivy ripping up the roof tiles ... Sure as all the hells, that's an aristo's house.

Oh yeah, and there were proctors everywhere. Everywhere you look, there's a proctor in his leathers. Not giving you the evil eye, like they do elsewhere. Looking at you, sure ... but *smiling*. And tipping his cap to you, even. Real civilized and polite. Surprised me so much I made a big mistake.

I asked one for directions.

That stopped him being polite in a big hurry. If you ask for directions, you don't live on the Hill. And if you don't live there, you don't *belong* there. Took me two hours to talk my way out of the precinct house.



Padarr and half the people had picks and shovels — the rest had the dough on hand to rent an earthmage. Everyone, but everyone, was tearing up the pavement looking for a way into the tunnels and the gold, jewels, and Ajara knew what else that was down there.

What did they find? A few baubles; a gold coin or two; and some big nasties who were thrilled to see they wouldn't have to go looking for lunch — the Catacombs had room service. After a while, even Humans can take a hint. One too many expeditions went down and didn't come back up, and suddenly the story was that there'd never been any treasure to begin with — the tunnels were one big trap, that was all.

That, you shouldn't need to be told, was a crock. The treasure was there first, the Wilderness creatures came second. And before you get any funny ideas, no, they aren't guarding hoards. What does a two ton flatworm need with a diamond bracelet? How many invites out on the town do you think it's going to get? Once they found out none of it was edible, the creatures below lost any interest in all the shiny stuff. (Hell, if they had known it was responsible for bringing them all those meals, they would have posted signs saying, "This way to jackpot.")

Years went by — they have a way of doing that. Now and then, some cash-crazy idiot would stumble on a paved-over entrance and make a big show of going in for the gold. The city finally put a stop to that by refusing to pay benefits to the widows when the fortune-hunters didn't come back. A dame looking at an old age on the street or in a flesh mill can be damn persuasive when she says, "You're not going."

Today, the Catacombs have the status of local legend. Most of the entrances are under pavement, though every now and then somebody digging out a basement finds more than he bargained for. If he's smart, he tells the city and they seal it up right quick — if he's dumb, he keeps his mouth shut and one night something comes out and shuts it for good.

Still, the lure is there. Those pirates probably stored a lot more than money down there — the ships they sacked carried grimoires, spell components, alchemical potions, and all sorts of other things. What couldn't be drunk or fenced had to be stored someplace, right?

The map on page 105 shows a small portion

of the Catacombs, located beneath Karkas Row. This is the only known map of any of the tunnels left over from the old days. Even if you didn't find any treasure below, sketching an accurate map of the place would be worth plenty of dough to other fortune-hunters.

Here are some of the features of the map:

1. Entrance: Back when this map was drawn, the entrance was concealed by a slab of rock. Nowadays, it's buried under a pile of rubble at a construction site. That means a lot of digging, preferably at night, or a good *earthheater* spell. It wouldn't hurt to be able to conjure an illusion of rubble, either, so passers-by don't notice it was moved.

2. Weak Tunnel: The tunnel's weak in this spot. Might have been bad bracing, but more likely it was a cheap spell. And if the spell wasn't working right back then, what do you think it's like now? A shot, a scream, a sneeze will bring the whole thing down on top of your head.

3. Unknown symbol: Nobody's ever been able to figure out just what this symbol means. It might mean there's a gold hoard here; it might mean there's a Wilderness creature, or was nine centuries ago; it might mean the guy who drew the map was a sloppy eater.

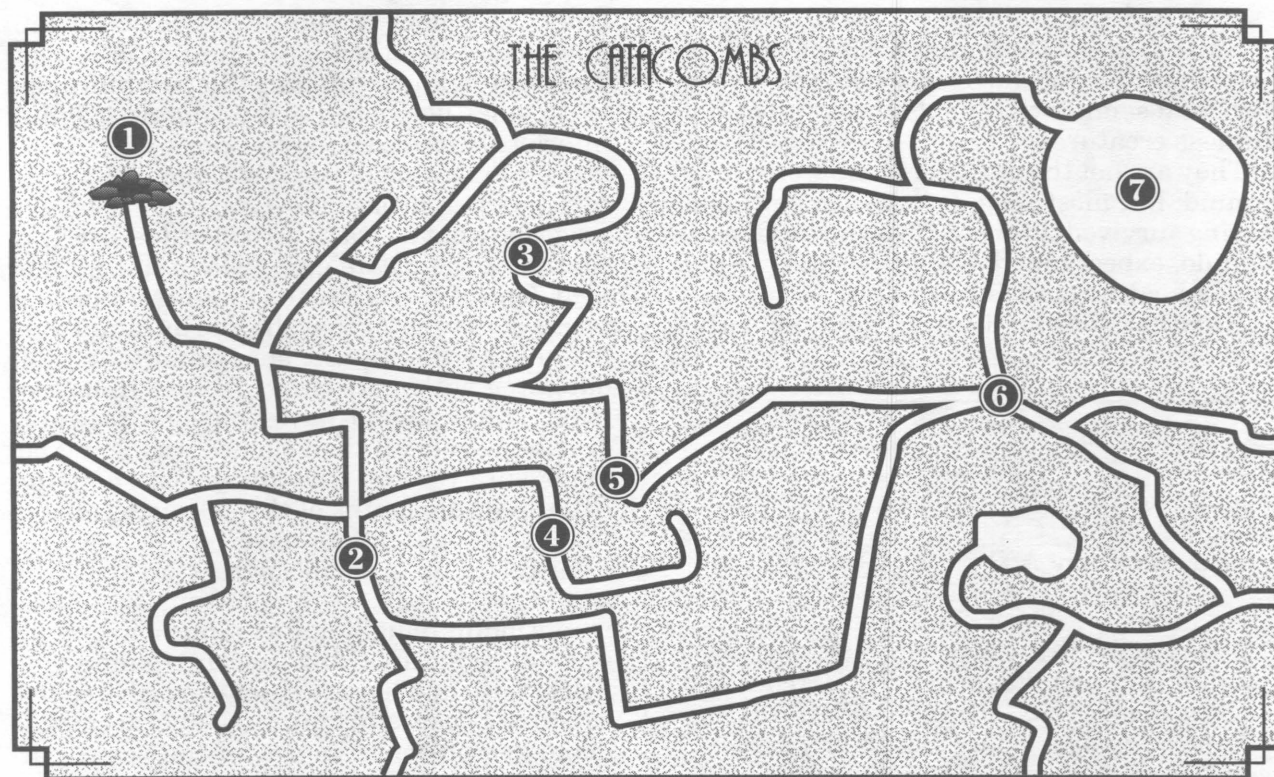
4. Trap: Could be a deadfall, but not likely — the pirates weren't interested in blocking their access to the goods. More than likely, it's a pit of some sort, maybe even a ward. And before you say, "Ha! No ward's still going to be active after all this time," they made spells pretty good in those days. Not like the cheap junk they peddle today.

5. Critters: Now this is definitely a danger sign. My guess is something — maybe a lot of somethings — found their way in around here. Unless you've mastered invisibility and have no scent to speak of, go around.

6. Treasure: This close to the entrance, it's probably not jewels, but maybe guns, potions, and other gear you can sell up above.

7. Flophouse: This is a new addition to the map. It's a Gark flophouse, and what you make of that is up to you. Promise them a cut of whatever you get out of the Catacombs and maybe they'll guide you around. But stiff 'em and they get cranky. A cranky Gark is about the last thing you want to see — and more than likely the last thing you ever will see, if you catch the drift.





GARK

"What do you think, we like living in stone tunnels under the streets? But you know what it's like up above — Padarr's not known for its love of Unnaturals. After a few generations of getting shot at, burned out and chased by 'Shifter wardens, we decided the hell with 'em — we've got everything we need right down here.

"Well, maybe not everything. But with the stuff we're always stumbling across down here, we can buy whatever we need. The merchants up top may not like our looks, but our gold's as good as they next guy's, pal.

"Come down and visit, if you have a mind to. We don't bite ... much. Don't mess with us and we won't mess with you — unless you're asking for it. And we'll do you right as guides, though even we don't know more than maybe a quarter of the tunnels. It's too easy to get lost down here if you don't know where you're going, so we don't wander ... unless the pay is right."

Gark are the only species of Unnatural known for a fact to be living in the Catacombs. It's possible that there are other types down

there, but they're using it more as a temporary refuge. Gark consider the tunnels home and they've adapted to it over the years.

For one thing, they have great night vision. For another, their metabolism is such that they don't need a lot of food, a handy trait to have in a place where most of the other living things are out to eat you.

Gark average about a meter and a half in height, with pale, smooth skin and slightly oversized eyes. Their teeth don't amount to much, but they have nice-sized claws to dig insects and such out of rock crevices. Contrary to popular belief, they don't love the Catacombs so much that they never want to leave — but they'll want to make sure they're heading for something better before they do.

STANDARD GARK

AGILITY 10
DEXTERITY 9
ENDURANCE 8
STRENGTH 8
TOUGHNESS 9
INTELLECT 9
MIND 8
CONFIDENCE 10



CHARISMA 6

Skill Notes: Gark put a lot of stock in perception — you have to when you live in dark and semi-dark tunnels chock full of Wilderness creatures.

They are not the most personable creatures around, but most seem to take some pride in having survived this long. If you hire a Gark as a guide, expect him to want to be boss — and take a healthy cut of any profits.

Natural Tools: Claws, damage value STR+4/12.

BACKGROUND NOTES: GARK

Advantages/Compensations

1CI, 2CIII, 1CIV

Mandatory A/C

Advantages: Special Abilities (CIII): Enhanced Senses, Omnivorousness, Infravision/Ultravision; Special Abilities (CIV): Natural Weaponry (HTH), claws.

Compensations: Advantage Flaw (CIII): Minor Stigma, refuses to take any action on behalf of a non-Gark unless paid — in advance; Reduced Attribute I, Gark may never increase their Charisma above 6, due to the fact that a winning personality has never been one of their priorities.

Recommended A/C

Advantages: Any

Compensations: Any

Restricted A/C

Advantages that provide bonuses to Charisma or Charisma-based skills.

THE SENTRY

Many people (and Unnaturals) speculate about the Sentry, but nobody ever goes there to find out if their theory is true. In the far past, it is known that some Padarrens periodically went over to see what they could see, but since none of them ever came back, trips out to the Sentry dropped off drastically. Ever since then, the Sentry is largely ignored or feared, or both.

THE SENTRY'S PAST

When the pirates first picked out the Coldmere Swamps as their center of operations, a traveller who went by the name of

Gray came along to join them. He was a subdued, close-mouthed individual with a past. The pirates, understanding this, left him alone to do what he wished — as long as it didn't interfere with their operations. This didn't last for long. One of Gayle's scheming daughters put her hooks into Gray and used the mage for what he was worth in order to stay in control of the pirate group when her mother died. One of Nayla's plans to control him was to use the daughter that she had by him. To get his help on the waters, she would take their daughter with her. Gray, feeling that poor little Trista should have someone to watch over her while all the violence was going on, made sure that he was always on the trips. After several months of this, Gray decided to take his daughter and leave.

Gray set up a small fortress on the little island in the bay. He created many amusements for his daughter, including a maze with unusual creatures and colorful plants and flowers. He and his daughter were able to live a relatively peaceful life until Nayla decided to make her presence known in the worst possible way.

Nayla was angry at losing her hold over

WHAT'S ON THE SENTRY?

Nobody in Padarr knows what is on this island — if anything. Most don't let themselves think about it. The Sentry doesn't intrude into their daily lives, so why worry about it? Others tell tales about evil sorcerers or nasty creatures, but these tales seem rather silly, frankly. If there really is an evil sorcerer or nasty creature on that island, then why hasn't it come to bother Padarr? Then there are the tales about some mourning old man who values his privacy above all else. Well, unless it's some dame that the man is mooning over, I don't see the point. Even dames don't deserve *this much* attention. After all, the guy's been on that island for a long time from the tales that I hear. I mean, I can understand a couple months, maybe a year — I've been there myself — but centuries? Whoo! Must've been some dame!

Gray. She was so angry that her scheming, grasping mind wasn't able to override the fateful actions that she took one day after several weeks of railing at the men and women around her. Early one morning, after a night of drunken rage, Nayla took a boat through the morning mists and docked on the island. She snuck through the front gate and started working her way through the maze. She had almost reached the building when she came upon her daughter playing with some of the stranger creatures of the maze. When the large beaked and winged thing saw her, it raised its voice in the loudest screech that Nayla had ever heard and grabbed for Trista in an effort to protect her. Nayla, who was still feeling the effects of large amounts of liquor running through her system, mistook the creature's actions as being harmful to her daughter. She grabbed her knife and made to slash at the thing. Tragically, her aim was off — she accidentally struck her daughter with a killing blow.

Gray showed up too late. A terrible scene met his eyes when he came to investigate his servant's alarm. His servant was pecking at Nayla's dying body as she cradled her dead daughter Trista. The whole thing must have

ADVENTURE HOOK

If the gamemaster wishes, this island can be used as an adventure. Gray the sorcerer has in his possession a Shaping Crystal that allows the user to assign a Special Ability to someone or something living. It will only use those Special Abilities that will make the creature change in form somehow. For example, Natural Armor can transform a creature's or person's skin into something like fur, toughened hide, whatever seems appropriate. Flight would cause wings to grow from the subject. Because this crystal is such a powerful item, it would be wise to either limit the charges that it has or to limit the access that the characters have to it.

unhinged him because that's when he called up the mists that currently surround the island. Now, he has no contact with the outside world. Anybody who tries to penetrate the mists is met with death.



Marshall Andrews III

POINTS OF INTEREST

THIRD PRECINCT HOUSE

This is definitely the best-funded and best-maintained — though not the largest — precinct house in the city. Unlike most other precinct houses, the building is actually *clean*, the whitewash hosed down every now and again. It has an underground parking garage — so the precinct's neighbors don't have to look at "untidy" patrol cars parked by the curb — and it even has small flower-gardens flanking the broad steps that lead up to the front doors.

Inside, the Third looks like any other precinct house: claustrophobic, generally dirty ... and filled with proctors. The Third is also home to the Internal Affairs Division. The IAD's offices are on the top floor of the building ... and considered "no-man's land" by the officers who work below.

GENERAL POINTS OF INTEREST

BRIDGES

Jokers have often commented that Padarr's major cash crop seems to be bridges. Indeed, there are quite a few of them, ranging from the major — the stone-and-gilt-paint Goldspan — to the minor — the Beggar's Bridge — to the

ephemeral — the makeshift and dangerous "Rat Run." There are six permanent bridges crossing the Coldmere, and — depending on the day — roughly as many temporary makeshift crossings. In most cases, the proctors will cut down makeshift bridges ... when they get around to it.

The Goldspan, the broadest bridge across the Coldmere, is a toll bridge ... and so not as widely used as it would otherwise be. Toll is "ten pennies per leg or wheel" — thus 20 pennies for a pedestrian, or 100 pennies (1 osee, 36 pennies) for a heavy truck with driver and passenger.

STRIP-MINES

Several mining conglomerates have established strip-mines on the headlands of the Marthak Bight. Ore, dreamstone, building stone, and anything else that might be considered of value, is ripped out of the ground and shipped in flat-bottomed barges across the Bight to the Padarren docks. The mining conglomerates have been very careful to make sure the mines aren't considered part of the city itself ... and so under the jurisdiction of neither the proctors or the Harbor Police. "Polite society" in Padarr doesn't like to talk, or even think, about who (or *what*) is doing the work at the mines. (Almost certainly, Unnaturals do most of the backbreaking labor, although Human slaves are probably involved as well.)

CHAPTER EIGHT

INSIDE DIRT

KEY CITY OFFICIALS

GALEN MEWS

The Commissioner of Proctors, Galen Mews has a reputation as a hard-assed old bastard ... and it's well-deserved. He's held the position for ten years, and private estimates within the department figure he'll hold it for at least another ten.

He's not from Padarr, and he was never a proctor — two strikes against him, as far as many of the “career cops” were concerned when he became Commissioner. How could someone without experience on the city streets do the job? That's what Proctors wondered. They quickly learned that, though he might be new to the specific streets of Padarr, Galen Mews definitely knew the moves and the way things worked. He took over management of the Proctors Department as if he'd been born to it, and quickly improved the entire agency's efficiency — efficiency in terms that mean something to beat cops: arrests, and convictions, not the kind of thing that excites time-and-motion-analyst bean-counters. He won the hearts of his cops when he spoke out publicly *against* the IAD, calling them a bunch of vultures who should be forced to get themselves an honest job. He got himself a dressing-down for that from the City Fathers ... but it was worth it for the loyalty he earned. (Some cynics wonder if that hadn't been his intention all along ...)

Mews is a sharp-eyed, hawk-nosed man in his mid-50s. He's square-jawed, with short-cropped white hair.

GALEN MEWS

AGILITY 9

Dodge 11, melee combat 13, unarmed combat 11



DEXTERITY 8

Fire combat 15

ENDURANCE 9

Resist shock 12

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 10

INTELLECT 11

Deduction 14, forgery 14, perception 16, smuggling 13, trick 12

MIND 10

Business 14

CONFIDENCE 10

Alteration: vitomancy 13, con 11, interrogation 14, intimidation 13, streetwise 16

CHARISMA 9

Charm 13, persuasion 11, taunt 10

Life Points: 8

Alignment: Order 4

Arcane Knowledges: Folk 3, Living Forces

3

Spells: *Bullet, slow, speed, strengthen*

Equipment: .44 revolver, damage value 21, ammo 6; *chain reaction*, damage value STR+4/19; handheld crystal set

Background Notes: Although he doesn't talk about it, Galen Mews knows a *lot* about how organized crime works ... because that was his last career before taking over the Proctors Department. He was chief lieutenant of a major crime boss in Selastos ... until he made a foolish mistake involving his boss' favorite girl, a bottle of wine, and a parked car. Mews left the crime boss's employ one step ahead of various payback artists and headed for the hills. Nobody knows how he met Jon Jevik, but it was that well-known Big Rich who decided Mews would be perfect for the position of Commissioner.

Roleplaying Notes: Mews is a straight-talker; he's never seen the need to pull his punches, and he's not about to start now. About the only topics he'll ever evade or finesse his way around are his background, and the fact that he owes a Big One to Jon Jevik.

BRYCE HURNE

Pushing 60, Bryce Hurne has held the position of Harbormaster for roughly twenty years. He's a favorite of the bureaucracy's Management Committee and seems to enjoy the innate skill of always knowing which boots to lick in any given situation.

Hurne is a charming individual, when he wants to be. When he bothers, he can convince just about anybody that they're his closest friend — and vice versa. When he *doesn't* bother, he's cold, emotionless and outright ruthless. He has one loyalty in this world, and that's to Bryce Hurne himself.

Unlike Galen Mews, Hurne is a Padarren, born and bred. His mother was a harbor pilot, and his father was ... well, he doesn't really know *who* his father was and could hardly care less. He runs his bailiwick with an iron hand.

Bluff and hearty, Hurne is a tall man, moderately overweight, with eyes that look weak and rheumy. He always wears clothes that vaguely resemble a military uniform (although he has no military background or experience).

BRYCE HURNE

AGILITY 8

Dodge 10, melee combat 10, swimming 13, unarmed combat 10

DEXTERITY 7

Fire combat 9, vehicle piloting: boats 13

ENDURANCE 9

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 10

INTELLECT 9

Perception 10, smuggling 14, trick 10

MIND 9

Business 12

CONFIDENCE 11

Alteration: vitomancy 14, bribery 15, con 14, streetwise 12

CHARISMA 12

Charm 15, persuasion 13

Life Points: 4

Alignment: Order 1

Arcane Knowledges: Folk 6

Spells: *Charm, personality*

Equipment: Sawed-off shotgun (under desk), damage value 21, ammo 2; brass knuckles, damage value STR+4/19; smoke rings (x2); leather jacket, armor value TOU+2/17.

Background Notes: Before being named to the position of Harbormaster, Hurne was a member of the Harbor Police. Most of his colleagues recall him as gregarious, a fun boon companion. Certainly, once in a while he'd get a little carried away interrogating a suspected smuggler ... but *any* man can have a temper, can't he? Only a few of his colleagues saw the ruthlessness behind his charming mask, or

realized Hurne was perhaps the most corrupt of a corrupt bunch. A little corruption didn't seem to bother the bureaucracy's Management Committee when they needed a new Harbormaster, however. They figured that Hurne's understanding of the smugglers' community — much of that understanding coming from the fact that he spent much of his career in their collective pockets — would stand the city in good stead.

Roleplaying Notes: Hurne is charming, an entertaining conversationalist ... but only when it benefits him to be so. When he's behind closed doors with people who know him, he's a ruthless, foul-mouthed son-of-a-bitch. He's as corrupt now as he ever was ... but he recognizes he has to be a little more discreet about it. (He's got so much more to lose now.)

ARISTOCRATS

SUTCLIFFE VECUREN

Sutcliffe is the patriarch of the greatest of Padarr's Great Families, and hence worthy of respect and attention — that's how he views it,

at least. Many common Padarrens share this view. The Big Rich, and others who really understand how things work in the city, consider him and his fellow aristocrats to be marginalized fossils, clinging to delusions of importance.

Sutcliffe Vecuren is in his late forties. He's short and small-boned, with pale, wispy blond hair. He's inordinately proud of his mustache ... despite the fact that, in certain lighting conditions, it virtually disappears. In personality, he's an aristocrat to his core. It doesn't matter to him *what* other people think of him; all that matters is the "truth" of his nobility and prestige. He dispenses patronage to other aristocrats and to artists and the like who attract his attention. (Unfortunately for the starving artists in Padarr, Vecuren's patronage is purely on the level of "moral support" ...) He "holds court" regularly, and the other marginalized aristocrats visit him to bask in his reflected "glory."

SUTCLIFFE VECUREN

AGILITY 7

Dodge 9, melee combat 9 (rapier 11), melee parry 9 (rapier 11)

DEXTERITY 8



Ron Kulp

ENDURANCE 9
STRENGTH 8
TOUGHNESS 10
INTELLECT 8
MIND 8

Artist: dance 11

CONFIDENCE 11

Faith: Ajara 12

CHARISMA 9

Charm 13, persuasion 11, taunt 10

Life Points: 2

Alignment: Order 2

Equipment: Rapier, damage value STR+6/21.

Background Notes: For someone who's lived so long in the city of Padarr, Vecuren seems surprisingly lacking in survival skills. That's because he's never had to deal with the "real world" outside the little fantasy he and his family have created. His one useful skill — melee combat — he learned through fencing. He always carries a rapier with him — it's part of his "costume" — but he's never had to use it in anger.

Roleplaying Notes: Vecuren knows he's better than everyone else, and doesn't have any problem explaining that to people. He's particularly bigoted toward "tradesmen," poor people, and — of course — Unnaturals.

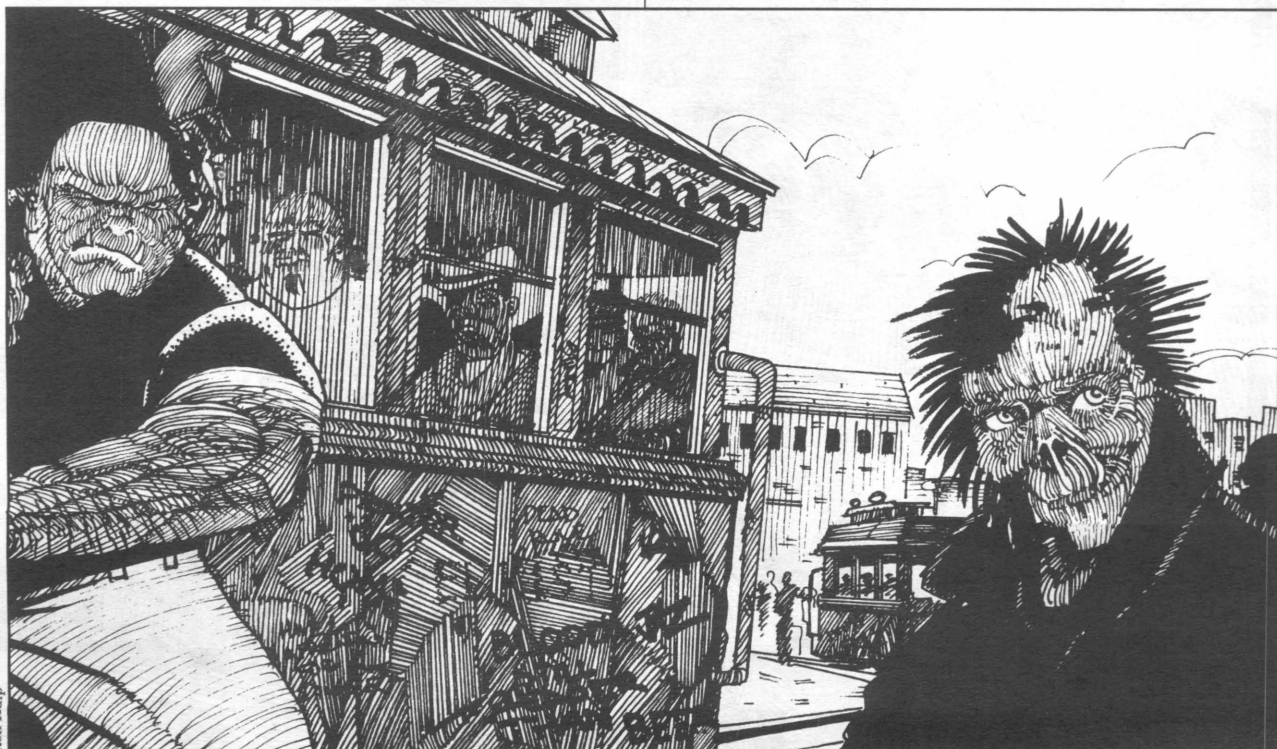
THE BIG RICH

JON JEVIK

Jon Jevik is, easily, the most important person in Padarr — the richest and the most influential. Directly or indirectly, he controls perhaps one-quarter of the entire city's economy. Many figures at various levels of government owe him favors or are totally in his voluminous pockets. (It's been said that Jon Jevik disburses more money per month in squeeze than most people see in an entire lifetime.)

Jevik is urbane and sophisticated, generally very polite and soft-spoken. (After all, when you've got as much real power as Jevik, you don't have to raise your voice.) He recognizes that he doesn't always have all the answers, and so he encourages his underlings to forward suggestions for how things could be handled better in his various business concerns.

Unlike many of his fellow Big Rich, Jevik isn't particularly vain. He does like the finer things in life, but he doesn't bother with self-aggrandizement to the degree of many of his fellows. The one thing he *is* sensitive about is



Ron Kulp

the fact that he has a glass eye (his left). Making some kind of joke about this — or even seeming to stare too long at his face — is an excellent way of getting on Jevik's bad side.

JON JEVIK

AGILITY 9

Dodge 10

DEXTERITY 9

ENDURANCE 10

STRENGTH 9

TOUGHNESS 10

INTELLECT 11

Deduction 13, smuggling 13, trick 15

MIND 10

Business 18, research 14

CONFIDENCE 11

Alteration: elemental 13, bribery 15, con 14, gambling 14, intimidation 13, streetwise 13, willpower 15

CHARISMA 11

Charm 15, persuasion 14

Life Points: 6

Alignment: Order 1

Arcane Knowledges: Air 3, Water 3, Earth 3

Spells: *Freeze, ice dagger, quicksand, wall of air*

Background Notes: Although he won't admit it publicly, Jevik doesn't consider *any* of his fellow Big Rich as anywhere near his league. Certainly, once in a while they might come up with an innovative idea ... in which case Jevik will "borrow" it and apply it to his own operations. Still, they *are* the closest thing he has to peers within Padarr.

Roleplaying Notes: Calm, quiet, gracious, elegant ... and totally ruthless when it becomes necessary: that's Jon Jevik. Very few people outside the Big Rich get the chance to learn this, however, since they never meet the man. As Padarr's richest Big Rich, he's always surrounded by minions, "executive assistants," bodyguards, and various sycophants.

CRIME FIGURES

PACO FRANCISCUS

Head of the oldest and largest bodylegging ring in Padarr, Franciscus has significant influence among the city's "necromantic underground." Even though his mysterious competi-

tor Darknight is starting to cut into his business, Franciscus is still the source of choice for many powerful necromancers needing a little "something extra" for a project on which they're working.

He lives comfortably, if modestly, somewhere near the Snob Hill region (few people know exactly where). In his early fifties, he's small of frame and dark in coloration — eyes, hair and skin tone — with a smooth, mellifluous voice. He's unfailingly polite and never raises his voice or shows any outward sign of anger. Franciscus never threatens violence; threats are a waste of breath. If he's got it in for you, the first you'll learn of it is when the first bullet enters your skull.

PACO FRANCISCUS

AGILITY 9

Dodge 11, maneuver 10, stealth 11, melee combat 10 (knife 11)

DEXTERITY 9

Fire combat 10

ENDURANCE 10

Resist shock 12

STRENGTH 7

TOUGHNESS 10

INTELLECT 11

Divination: vitomancy 17, deduction 13, perception 12, trick 13

MIND 11

Business 14 (criminal 16)

CONFIDENCE 8

Streetwise 10

CHARISMA 8

Alteration: vitomancy 19, charm 12, persuasion 11

Life Points: 8

Alignment: Chaos 2

Arcane Knowledges: Folk 6, Living Forces 6

Spells: *Charm, facade, pain*

Equipment: Dagger, damage value STR+4/19; lightning cane, damage value STR+4/19, *lightning bolt* spell; .22 revolver, damage value 15, ammo 6.

Background Notes: Franciscus has some kind of "leverage" on one or more of the city's Big Rich — almost certainly Nico Flynn and perhaps Lara Finnelle as well. He never flaunts this leverage, however, preferring to keep a nice low profile. Beyond his role as head of Padarr's major bodylegging ring, Franciscus



is also an incredible source for information about the underworld.

Roleplaying Notes: Quiet and charming in a kind of “old world” way, Franciscus is very pleasant company. Even though he trades in dead bodies and other unpleasant substances, he’s not “spooky” in the least. People who’ve met him say he could just as well be a dealer in antique books, or something similarly cultured. When necessary, however, he’s as ruthless as they come.

“DARKNIGHT”

Paco Franciscus’ new competitor in the bodylegging trade, the individual known only as “Darknight” is actually a Relkazar. (That’s why different people describe Darknight differently: they’ve seen the demon possessing different bodies.) Nobody knows Darknight’s motives for sure, but it’s a fair guess that his main interest isn’t so much in tying up Padarr’s bodylegging trade as it is to break Franciscus’ hold over that same market.

Darknight’s true nature explains some of the puzzling things about his operations. He doesn’t have “moles” within the proctors and Paco’s operations, simply because he doesn’t need them. Whenever he needs information about his opponents’ actions, he just possesses someone involved in the planning process, seeing those plans through the eyes of his “puppet.”

If Darknight has any weakness at all, it’s his voracious appetite for vicarious experience. He lives for the “rush” of using the bodies he possesses to experience new adventures and sensations — fine food, sexual excess, danger, even pain — filtered through Human senses. The Relkazar is addicted to this “rush,” and his need for new, ever more intense sensation, occasionally distracts him from his central goal.

DARKNIGHT

AGILITY 10

Dodge 14, maneuver 12, melee combat 16, unarmed combat 16

DEXTERITY 7

ENDURANCE 10

STRENGTH 13 (15)

TOUGHNESS 13 (19)

INTELLECT 8

Perception 13, tracking 10

MIND 7

Business 9 (bodylegging 11)

CONFIDENCE 9

Intimidation 15, streetwise 12

CHARISMA 8

Persuasion 10

Life Points: 12

Alignment: Oathbreaker 10

Equipment: Varies depending on the body he’s possessing. Typically .22 revolver, damage value 15, ammo 6; runelugs, various.

Background Notes: Nobody knows where Darknight came from, how he came to throw in his lot with the Oathbreakers (in contrast to most of his kind), and why he’s so interested in “taking down” Franciscus. He’s obviously thought through his campaign, since he’s doing everything right.

Roleplaying Notes: Darknight seems to relish his shadowy reputation, and the fact that nobody knows who (or what) he is. He’s a lot less brutal and direct than most Relkazar, and much better at concealing his impatience and anger when things don’t turn out his way. If somebody gets in his way or causes him trouble, he’ll seek revenge ... but that revenge will generally be more subtle — and hence more satisfying in the long run — than tearing the victim limb from limb.

JONAS REETCH

Little is known about the Vampire Jonas Reetch outside his small but growing gambling empire ... and those *inside* aren’t talking. Reetch’s employees seem abnormally loyal to their boss. While they claim this is just because he treats them well and has a clear vision of how he sees the organization growing, many people suspect that the Vampire is using some magical ability or other to gain and maintain their loyalty.

Whatever his background, Reetch is a savvy businessman, a good manager of people ... and a ruthless infighter in the vicious games of the underworld. Unlike some other crime bosses, Reetch doesn’t mind getting his hands dirty. Rather than sending Hugor leg-breakers to take care of rivals, snitches or other “liabilities,” Reetch seems to enjoy doing the dirty jobs himself. His nature gives him some very real advantages in penetrating Human secu-

urity ... as a couple of Nico Flynn's gambling-business lieutenants found out to their terminal detriment.

Unlike many Padarrens, Reetch seems to prefer technology over magic as a solution to problems. This isn't an aesthetic decision (as it is for many others); it's merely due to the fact that technology is easier to understand and repair and often more reliable. (Demons are much less interested in hiding inside electric lightbulbs than they are in glowstones, Reetch believes.) He doesn't discount magic or the sacred, however; in fact, he's a fervent believer in Ghazereth and is a member of the local cult.

JONAS REETCH

AGILITY 11

Dodge 16, melee combat 13, stealth 16, unarmed combat 13

DEXTERITY 8

Fire combat 14 (pistol 16), lock picking 10

ENDURANCE 10

STRENGTH 10

TOUGHNESS 11

INTELLECT 9

Apportation: technomancy 14, camouflage 11, deduction 11, perception 13, trick 13

MIND 9

Business 15 (underworld 18)

CONFIDENCE 11

Bribery 12, con 13, faith: Ghazareth 12, gambling 19, intimidation 15, streetwise 15

CHARISMA 11

Disguise 12, persuasion 13

Life Points: 6

Alignment: Oathbreaker 7

Arcane Knowledges: Death 2, metal 5

Spells: *Rain of razors*

Equipment: .45 automatic, damage value 20, ammo 9; knife, damage value STR+4/19; leather jacket, armor value TOU+2/17.

Background Notes: Reetch is one of the oldest Undead in Padarr. He's been a Vampire for more than 50 years, and has learned well the hard lessons of (un)life. Like all of his kind, he feeds on blood ... but unlike most Vampires, he's made an interesting arrangement to get his dietary needs filled. In many of his gambling houses, there's a unique "cover charge" for people who want to play in the higher-stakes games: a pint of blood, drawn with carefully-sterilized needles, and then stored in chillboxes for Reetch's future use.

Roleplaying Notes: Reetch seems erudite, polite, very open and friendly, even to would-be rivals. He knows that many people fear him just because of his nature, and he goes out of his way to set their fears at rest. Long ago, Reetch learned that a soft word often gets you more than a knife in the back, and so prefers to solve problems through dialogue and accommodation. He doesn't have any aversion to violence *per se*; he just knows it's a tool to be used carefully and appropriately.

VINCENT CONSIDINE

Considine is still a friend and confidant of Nico Flynn, even though the two parted ways professionally some years ago. As a lieutenant in Flynn's gambling concern, Considine learned the ins and outs of business in the underworld. He runs his current operation as if it were a legitimate business, with all the internal checks and balances and organized structures so often lacking in crime empires.

Personally, Considine doesn't like violence. It's bad for business, he believes, and usually causes more problems than it solves. When there are no viable options, however, he reluctantly sends out "goon squads" to take care of matters. (When they return, he never wants to hear details; all he wants to know is that the job was completed according to plan.)

VINCENT CONSIDINE

AGILITY 8

Dodge 9, melee combat 9 (knife 10)

DEXTERITY 9

Fire combat 10

ENDURANCE 8

STRENGTH 7

TOUGHNESS 9

INTELLECT 10

Divination: elemental 13, deduction 14, perception 14, trick 12

MIND 11

Business 16 (criminal 19), conjuration: elemental 14

CONFIDENCE 9

Streetwise 11

CHARISMA 8

Alteration: elemental 12, charm 13, persuasion 13

Life Points: 5

Alignment: Neutral





Marshall Andrews III

Arcane Knowledges: Elemental 6

Spells: *Fireball, freeze, wall of air*

Equipment: Knife, damage value STR+4/19.

Background Notes: Considine learned from one of the best, and prides himself on his knowledge of business. He also prides himself on the fact that he was born into a poor family and “made his own way in the world” without any help from “old money.” (To tell the truth, privately he considers himself superior to his mentor, Flynn, because of this point.)

Roleplaying Notes: Considine likes the good life — the finest food, liqueurs and women. He considers himself to be very cultured and is something of a snob when it comes to wine and music. (Actually, his knowledge about the arts and such is quite superficial. Of course, *telling* him that is a very good way of getting on his bad side in a hurry ...)

GWINNISHOLM

Gwinnisholm is a Hellghest. Like some of her kind, she can change from her natural form — a humanoid mass of soft, gray tissue — into a large, cat-like beast and into a creditable imitation of a Human woman. In Human form,

she appears young and lithe, tall and slender with short-cropped black hair and sharp black eyes. Her fingernails are abnormally long and curved, and her eye teeth are long and sharp like fangs. Nobody — not even her closest confidants — knows exactly where she lives, although it’s almost certain she makes her home somewhere in Karkas Row.

GWINNISHOLM

AGILITY 8/11*

Climbing 10/13, dodge 10/13, melee combat 9/- (knife 10/-), unarmed combat 13/16

DEXTERITY 7/7

Fire combat 10/-

ENDURANCE 8/10

STRENGTH 8/11

TOUGHNESS 9/11

INTELLECT 9/7

Divination: photomancy 12/10, deduction 11/9, perception 14/12, *safecracking* 14/12, trick 10/8

MIND 10/6

Business 16/12 (criminal 18/14), conjuration: photomancy 14/10

CONFIDENCE 10/7

Bribery 15/12, streetwise 16/13

CHARISMA 9/9

Alteration: photomancy 12/12, persuasion 13/13, summoning: photomancy 12/12, taunt 10/10

* Numbers before the slash refer to Gwinnisholm's natural and Human forms; numbers after the slash refer to her cat-like form.

Life Points: 6

Alignment: Oathbreaker/Order 7

Arcane Knowledges: Photomancy 5

Spells: *Light, sun-burn*

Equipment: Knife, damage value STR+4/19; .38 revolver, damage value 17, ammo 6.

Background Notes: Gwinnisholm started her career as a freelance box artist. She made quite a name for herself in the underworld — so much so that Considine even tried to hire her early in his own career. Gwinnisholm hates Humans with a passion, however — not an uncommon attitude among Padarr's 'Shifters — and turned him down flat. (She had the smarts not to tell him precisely what he could do with his offer, much as she wanted to.) Considine's offer made her rethink her own career path, however. She realized that the best way of making the fortune she wanted was to “leverage” her work, by managing other thieves and cracksmen.

Roleplaying Notes: She hates Humans, and considers 'Shifters like herself to be infinitely superior to “mundanes.” However, she recognizes the necessity of working with them from time to time, and she manages to suppress her distaste. Gwinnisholm enjoys the aura of the “mystery woman” that she's built up, and goes out of her way to keep people guessing about her base of operations, and her future plans (which include squeezing Considine out, when and if her own operation gets big enough.)

OTHER INDIVIDUALS

MIN RAELE

The current Master of the Arcanum, Raele is the most knowledgeable magician in the city

of Padarr. Perhaps unfortunately, just about any street-corner spell-slinger could take her off in an arcane duel; she might know a lot, but she's too impractical to be able to *use* that knowledge in any useful way. Raele has spent most of her long life squirreled away in various arcane libraries or fiddling about in her lab.

Raele is 75, although she looks even older. Her gray hair is long and ratty (she simply doesn't think about taking care of it; she has more important things on her mind), and her personal hygiene is sadly lacking.

MIN RAELE

AGILITY 6

DEXTERITY 7

ENDURANCE 6

STRENGTH 6

TOUGHNESS 7

INTELLECT 10

Apportation: alchemy 19, apportation: wizardry 19, apportation: sorcery 14, divination: wizardry 18, divination: sorcery 17, divination: somniomancy 16

MIND 10

Conjuration: wizardry 18, conjuration: somniomancy 15

CONFIDENCE 10

Alteration: alchemy 17, alteration: wizardry 17, alteration: sorcery 17, alteration: somniomancy 17

CHARISMA 7

Life Points: 3

Alignment: Neutral

Arcane Knowledges: Life 6, Living Forces 5, Folk 8, Magic 10, Inanimate Forces 9, Enchanted 10, Dimension 9, Dreams 11

Background Notes: Raele knows no spells — *none*. This is because she considers the creation of spell formulae to be a “cheapening” of the purity of magic. She doesn't forbid the other collegians or the associate members from learning spells ... but she does consider them to be “debasing” themselves by doing so.

Roleplaying Notes: Raele views everything through her own strange mental “filter.” Anything that doesn't relate *directly* to her academic study of magic is totally irrelevant.



CHAPTER
NINE

NEW UNNATURALS

TANTRA

"Is it just me, or is there a lot of whining goin' on these days? All the Unnaturals, playing the 'poor me' game like it's goin' out of style? 'Oh, if only I was Human ...' Cut me some slack.

"I ain't Human, and that's just the way I like it, by the nonexistent gods. Ever see a Human move this fast? (Over here, slick, that's right. See me now?) Or hang from a ceiling like this? Course you ain't. You and me ever have a difference of opinion, I'll have a shank in your kidneys before you even know I'm comin' for ya.

"Course, if I have my way, you ain't even gonna know I'm around, so there ain't gonna be no difference of opinion in the first place. Look at me, for Ajara's sake. What am I gonna do? Come to you lookin' for a job? Ask for your daughter's hand in marriage? Yeah right.

"Ya see, Slick, Tantras like me, we don't make a living. We take yours. And there ain't much you can do to stop us.

"Next time you're lying in bed with the missus and you hear a breath of wind outside the window ... hey, maybe it's me coming to pay you a visit. Get the picture?"

Tantras are rare in Padarr ... fortunately, otherwise the incidence of burglary and "second-story jobs" would be much higher. Nobody really knows how Tantras arose. Competing schools of thought argue that a) they're the result of some strange biomagical experiment; and, b) they're the natural result of crossbreeding between a type of Demon and an as-yet-unknown form of Shapeshifter. If the Tantras themselves know, they're not telling.

Tantras are roughly humanoid in form, slightly shorter and thinner than the Human average. Their hair is coarse and tightly-curled, usually black or

dark brown. Their skin is mottled gray and rough, almost gritty, to the touch. Their fingers and toes — twelve of each — are abnormally long, and double-jointed. They can pass as Human, but with some difficulty. (Makeup, concealing hats and gloves go a long way ... but often not far enough.) They're pure omnivores like Humans. Anything a Human can eat, a Tantra can eat. (Tantras don't see the attraction in half-burning meat before they eat it, however ...) Average life-span for a Tantra is close to 45 years.

Tantras are blindingly fast — not quite as fast as Sketh, but close. (They don't have the Sketh's *blur* or *confusion* powers, however.) More importantly, at will they can secrete a kind of "topical adhesive" from the pads of their fingers and toes. This adhesive allows them to climb vertical surfaces, and even hang from ceilings, without any difficulty.

By secreting a special solvent — also at will — they can remove all traces of this

adhesive ... if they want to bother. Without the solvent, the adhesive will dry to a hard, brittle consistency over a period of two hours. While it's still tacky, it will bond with Human skin on touch.

STANDARD TANTRA

AGILITY 12

DEXTERITY 10

ENDURANCE 9

STRENGTH 8

TOUGHNESS 10

INTELLECT 8

MIND 8

CONFIDENCE 10

CHARISMA 6

Life Points: 3-5

Skill notes: Tantras can learn any skills, but typically concentrate in criminally useful areas like lock picking, safe cracking, etc.

Alignment:

Tantras are traditionally neutral (the Godwar is more of an irritation — an interruption of "business as usual" — than anything else.

LARBO

"You. Yes, you. Get your sorry ass over here, and look snappy about it, bub.

"I hear you been asking a lot of questions down here on the streets. What you looking for, anyway? If it's trouble, you've found it. And if it's muscle — smart muscle, someone with a little more subtlety than a knuckle-headed Hugor — you've found that, too.

"Never seen nothing like me before, have you? Well, you don't come from around here, that's obvious. You don't see my kind down in the cities of the south. But that's going to change, you can take my word on it. You'll be hearing more of us ... and seeing more of us, too."



BACKGROUND NOTES: TANTRA

Advantages/Compensations

2C1, 1CIII, 1CIV

Mandatory A/C

Advantages: Special Abilities (CIII): Enhanced Senses (vision); Speed, Special Abilities (CIV): Adhesive (+5 to all climbing rolls).

Compensations: Achilles' Heel (CIII): entity spells against them add +3 to their effect values.

Recommended A/C

Advantages: Any

Compensations: Quirk (CIII) (arrogant in the extreme).

BACKGROUND NOTES: LARBO

Advantages/Compensations

1CI, 1CII, 2CIII, 2CIV

Mandatory A/C

Advantages: Special Abilities (CIII): Environmental Tolerance (cold), Omnivorousness; Special Abilities (CIV): Accelerated Healing, Attack Form Resistance (intimidation).

Compensations: Bigotry (CII): against Hugors.

Recommended A/C

Advantages: Additional Attribute Point (CIII): applied to Strength or Endurance; Special Abilities (CIV): Attribute Increase II (applied to Strength or Endurance), Hardiness II.

Compensations: Any.

Larbo (the word is the same, singular and plural) seem to be a kind of “second-order” Breed — a cross between a Hugor and ... something else, though nobody’s quite sure what. They look pretty much like Hugors, but more so: slightly taller, significantly broader, generally uglier, with bigger muscles and worse breath. They don’t share the Hugor’s yellowish skin, however; Larbo are similar in complexion to Humans. Interestingly, female Larbo are generally stronger — although not necessarily bulkier — than males.

Larbo don’t have the same symbiotic relationships as Hugors. They definitely prefer the company of their own kind, but suffer no physical consequences from isolation. Larbo society is polyandrous — in other words, an adult female will have a “stable” of up to eight husbands. (Female Larbo have a ferocious sexual appetite. Even a single unmarried Larbo female can keep an entire cohort of Incubi busy ...) The society is also matriarchal,

with females making all major decisions.

Generally speaking, Larbo are less mindlessly violent than Hugors, and more ambitious.

STANDARD LARBO

AGILITY 9

DEXTERITY 7

ENDURANCE 12

STRENGTH 13

TOUGHNESS 12

INTELLECT 9

MIND 8

CONFIDENCE 8

CHARISMA 7

Life Points: 3–5

Skill notes: Larbo can learn any skills, but typically avoid those that depend on their limited Dexterity attribute.

Alignment: Larbo typically favor Order.



Marshall Andrews III

NEW WILDERNESS CREATURES

MARTHON

Marthons — also known as “swimming mouths” — can be found in the shallow coastal oceans along the northwest coast of Marl. Although they’re rare in the waters off Guildsport, small “schools” of the creatures have been sighted. Marthons are large, muscular fish — generally around eight meters in length, although larger specimens have been reported — with broad, powerful tails, and massive jaws. They have no dorsal fins, so even though they like to swim close to the surface, they show little sign of their passage. They are social creatures, congregating in “schools” of up to twelve individuals.

They hunt other fish and water-dwelling animals of up to human size and sometimes larger. Although not strictly “intelligent” by standard measures, marthons are cunning hunters and work together cooperatively. They use their *intimidation* specialization to strike terror into the hearts of their prey, sometimes

causing their victims to die outright from fear (very convenient when it works ...).

Marthons will attack anything roughly human-sized, particularly if it’s splashing around on the surface (like a sailor who’s fallen overboard). They will rarely attack small boats, instead they try to capsize them and get to the succulent morsels inside. Only rarely will they come near larger vessels, and then that’s usually to steal hooked fish from the lines or nets of fishing vessels. (It doesn’t happen often, but marthons have occasionally lunged from the water to pluck a net-man from the decks of a larger boat ...)

STANDARD MARTHON

AGILITY 9

Maneuver 15, swimming 20, unarmed combat 17

DEXTERITY 5

ENDURANCE 18

STRENGTH 18

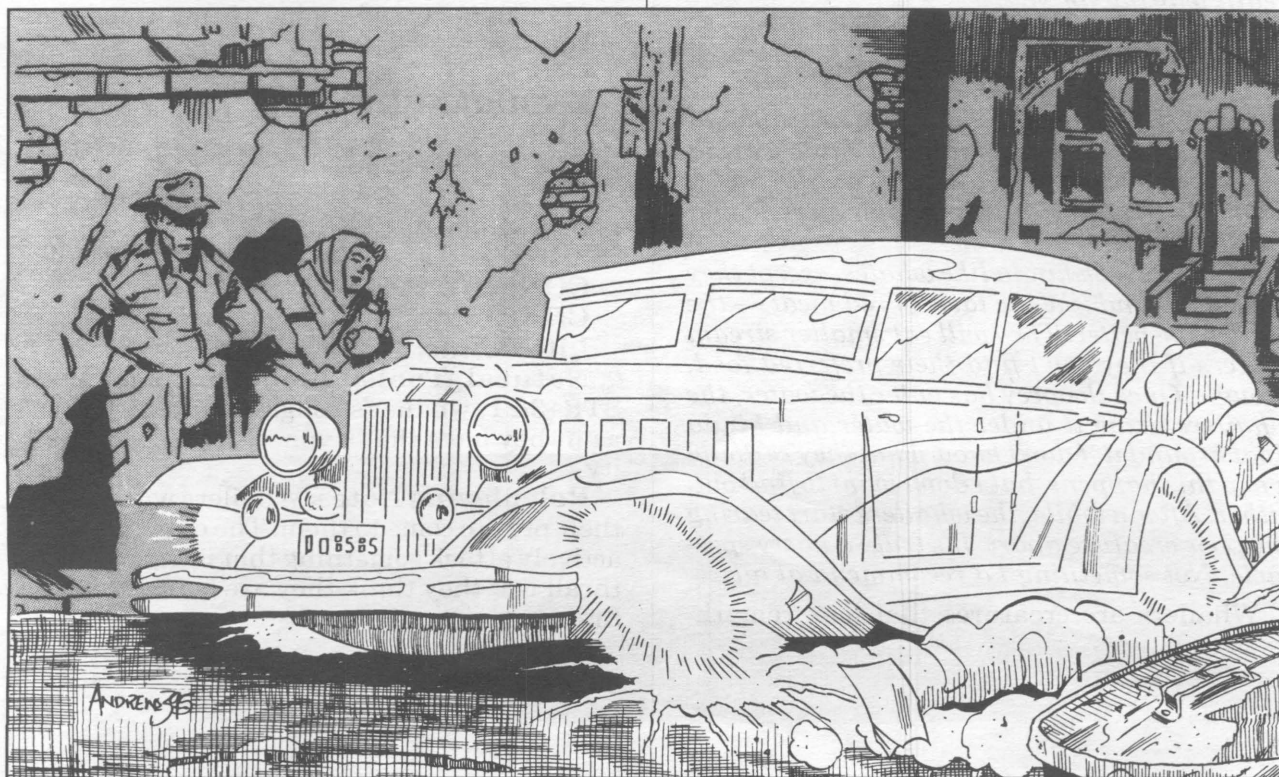
TOUGHNESS 21 (26 with armor)

INTELLECT 4

Perception 15, tracking 9, trick 10

MIND 4

CONFIDENCE 7



Intimidation 16

CHARISMA 6

Life Points: 4–8

Natural Tools: Teeth, damage value STR+3/21

Roleplaying Notes: Marthons are cooperative eating machines, pure and simple. They do little other than eat, breed, and eat some more. A school will attack anything up to twice their size ... but they'll withdraw if it seems they're getting the raw end of the battle. (This doesn't mean they won't try again later, using different tactics, of course ...)

Marthons sometimes go into a "feeding frenzy" when their prey's blood is in the water ... but they never attack each other in this condition. (They're smarter than that.)

WHAILERS

If you ever find yourself trekking the Jalan Mountains, keep an ear out for these creatures. Whailers would be harmless if it wasn't for that wailing of theirs. Yep, I call it wailing, but you might call it the most beautiful thing you've ever heard in your life. Take my word for it, if you listen to these things, you'll find your own death waiting for you.

These critters live in deep pools along the Coldmere and other freshwater streams that wander through the mountains. When they're hungry, they wail. Most of the time, this will bring them some mountain critter stupid enough to fall for the wailing. If they're lucky, a whailer could even trap a Human traveller for their feast.

Whailers look kinda like whales, except they have teeth and like the taste of red meat — the redder the better. They will eat smaller stream critters if they can't find their preferred food, though. Once the prey has entered the water, the whailers draw it under the water and kinda float around it. I don't know what they're doing when this happens, but I don't want to find out, either. After a while, the whailers start tearing the poor creature apart. It's truly a nasty spectacle. Not something I'd recommend at all.

Whailers are creatures that look remark-

ably like whales, except that their size range is considerably smaller than the northern whales. This places a whailer's size at anywhere from two meters to four meters long. These creatures can commonly be found in the Jalan Mountains in some of the freshwater streams that run throughout this range.

Whailers are best known for their "song" or "wail." To the casual ear, the sounds that emanate from these creatures seem to promise many things to the listener. In fact, the song has the power to enthrall the listener so much that she will believe that she must go to the source of the song. Once the listener is in the water, the whailers will gather around and keep her under the water. Then they start drawing the listener's thoughts, memories, and dreams to themselves. Once the listener's mind has been fully absorbed by the surrounding whailers, they start to tear the flesh off the listener. To a more enlightened listener, the wail of this creature will cause a ringing in the ears. Prolonged exposure will very likely produce a headache that will refuse to go away for several hours.

WHAILER

AGILITY 9

Maneuver 10, swimming 15, unarmed combat 10

DEXTERITY 8

ENDURANCE 13

STRENGTH 15

TOUGHNESS 14

INTELLECT 6

Perception 10

MIND 8

CONFIDENCE 5

CHARISMA 7

Life Points: 4–8

Natural Tools: Teeth, damage value STR+3/21; whailer's songs should be treated as if they have the "Hypnotism" Special Ability

Roleplaying Notes: Whailers will wait for their prey to come to them. The only time they actively attack something that is not under its thrall is if they think they are being attacked first.

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