



Board Enterprises proudly presents
Build Your Fantasy World in
Small Bites

THE KILLER CRIME FAMILIES OF GARNOCK

aka All About Organized Crime in Fantasy



INTRODUCTION

First off - We're glad you're here! At Board Enterprises we feel that we're a little on the fringe right now and charting a course in a direction we've never attempted before, so we're glad you're reading this and participating! Remember that word "participating". We really want to hear from you folks and understand what you want and how you want it delivered. Without that feedback, this turns into a self-serving experiment, and that is not our goal!

So this month's theme is Organized Crime in fantasy worlds. It's a theme pretty near and dear to our hearts, because most of the folks at BE grew up in neighborhoods that were under the control of organized crime, and we're here to tell you that not every part of that was bad. So we're going to try and give players and game masters alike some sense of what it can be like without glamorizing it and without turning it into a caricature.

But there is another piece of this that makes this topic difficult. Garnock is a military power house in Fletnern, and most of its history is based in the military actions. We have to drift into the military in order to make some of the criminal elements make sense. At the same time, it is also famed for having the best gladiatorial events in the world, again, indirectly tied to the crime families. So keeping this theme focused on the organized crime aspect means we're ignoring some of the main features of this same city-state.

So when you catch a scent of the military muscle in town, please understand that despite seemingly no connection to the criminals, there still is one. Everything is interconnected, especially in a political town like Garnock!

This may be our first "product" edition (aka not free), but we are assuming that you've gotten a feel for how these work. For that reason, we stopped putting all the article descriptions in. If you are uncertain as to what's going on and feel we've jumped into the content a bit too quickly, check out the Article Summary at this link. That should help shape your expectations of what's to come!



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FLETNERN WIKI

All of the posts in this edition are already out on the wiki as this is published, and you can refer to them. We have gathered them here, because we think they are valuable in a group, and they all pertain to our theme for the month. All of them are also tagged as being in the categories of “Garnock” and “Preadomus” in case you are more comfortable using the wiki instead of this edition.

Building the wiki is one of the major goals of this entire project. If there is something that you think we have not yet covered in enough depth, you owe it to yourself to tell us about it. Really! We want to share this world with you and give you what you find most interesting! You will be pleasantly shocked at how responsive we are!

Bronze (badge)

Artifact

A “bronze” is a small, 3” square badge issued by the government of Garnock. It entitles the holder to carry steel weapons. Without such a badge, anyone (not obviously a member of one of the Garnock troops) carrying iron or steel items can have that metal confiscated for the good of the city.

After the unexpected retreat of the Garnock / Wembic army from Rhum during the Conquering War, the Lats of Garnock needed to replace a large amount of lost equipment, mainly armor and weapons. With their limited iron ore, the city-state was in desperate need.

In 628P, the Generals’ Conclave passed a controversial law allowing soldiers of the Garnock military to confiscate, forcibly if necessary, any iron or steel items they “discovered”. Discovered came to mean came across after forcing their way into the homes of those who could not defend themselves. Known as the Ferrous Metals Act, it is part of the reason that Steel Plume and the Villenettis were able to swing the support of the people behind their assumption of power. While Steel Plume and its allies never repealed the law, they stopped the raids that were going on where military companies would descend on small farming towns and carry off nearly everything ferrous they could find.

The bronzes are cast by government contractors and are difficult to forge. The raised edges and intricate seal of Garnock (on the “tails” side) are more than a non-professional engraver could handle. The front of the badge simply reads “Authorized” with the alchemical symbol for iron. Few people carry them in plain sight, and they are most commonly held inside a coin purse of some kind (most commonly worn by a chain around the neck and under the armor or clothing). Each badge

weighs about 13oz., so they are not considered convenient to carry.

Cassodovu Family

Group

The Cassodovu Family is a well-known and respected merchant family based in Garnock. They have large vineyards northeast of the city and participate in a shared troop, providing a general to the Conclave. While wine is their primary business, they also deal in some related industries, such as wood and barrels and in the various glass and crystal trades. They are also rumored to be a powerful banking house, though if this is true, these transactions are far less public.

Garnock

City

The city of Garnock is located at the boundary between several different regions. To the east and north are the lush plains similar to those near Scaret. Immediately to the southwest of the city is a major swamp, but beyond the swamp and dominating the western regions of the city’s influence is a steppe broken by large badlands. The summers are warm, though winter does still come to the region (similar to Missouri). The people are most closely represented by the Italians, physically and especially in their cuisine. Garnock is a military dominated society. Being the aggressors in several historic wars, they are seen as “evil” by many of those who they once had conquered.

Gumbaiyo Barkala

Group

The Preadomus Families are organized under the Gumbaiyo Barkala, which translates as “administration rulers”. The Gumbaiyo Barkala is organized in a generally feudal manner, and so too are the crime families. The Barkala sits at the top with the hope that it makes the feudal structure seem more democratic or at least less autocratic. But make no mistake; over-bosses control under-bosses, and under-bosses control neighborhoods. As long as the “taxes” are being passed upwards correctly, everything runs smoothly. Don’t tithe in the correct fashion, and you are likely to be killed.

The Barkala currently contains seven members representing the different industries that the ruling Villenetti family handles. Each of the Barkala is paid the same amount of “stipend”. In this way they are all considered equal and share equally in each other’s successes and failures. The previous ruling criminal family in Garnock (the Manszi Family) was organized by neighborhoods, with the bosses in charge of the wealthier neighborhoods getting far wealthier than those in charge of the slums. This caused anger, resentment, and eventually assassinations.

Far from being socialistic, the members of the Barkala give each other gifts to thank them for their contributions

to the communal funds. Should one of the Barkala gather a new highly profitable business, he should expect expensive gifts from his peers to compensate him for success. When one of the Barkala is ready to try and unseat another, he will typically begin to give inexpensive gifts, which are insulting. In this way, he is challenging the other to a show down. These showdowns can be handled without violence. Perhaps as many as one in four of these show downs results in one of the Barkala retiring and moving away from the city. The other 75% result in assassination or war.

Of the seven seats on the Barkala, two are expected to be held by non-Villenettis. In their rise to power, the Villenetti Family asked two families to join them as allies. The Nargooso Family and the Tellurrillo Family agreed to form an alliance with the Villenettis if they had some say in the policy making. Permanently placing a Nargooso and a Tellurrillo on the Barkala served to solidify the alliance.

Currently, the Barkala “positions” are: **Military Liaison** (a political position that works with Steel Plume, but also controls a large number of the enforcers), **Populous Chairman** (the person who handles the entertainment of the people of Garnock through gambling, prostitution and other means), **Integrity Chairman** (the person who handles the judges; Steel Plume controls the prisons and various other military forces inside the city), **Mystic Scholar** (the person who monitors all magical services in the city including the various enchantment factories), **Treasurer** (the person responsible for monitoring currency exchanges and the High Order of Telepathy), **Nargooso Delegate** (the representative from the Nargooso Family currently handling many of the manufacturing businesses, including breweries and distilleries), and the **Tellurrillo Delegate** (the representative from the Tellurrillo Family currently handling most of the housing issues in the city including hotels).

The Gumbaiyo Barkala along with their Steel Plume allies control the economy of Garnock. Through the use of various licenses and taxes, they are able to allow or quash businesses and trade itself. This is their true power - economics. While they certainly have troops in the form of policing units, it is their control of the money and the businesses in the city that grant them their true power.

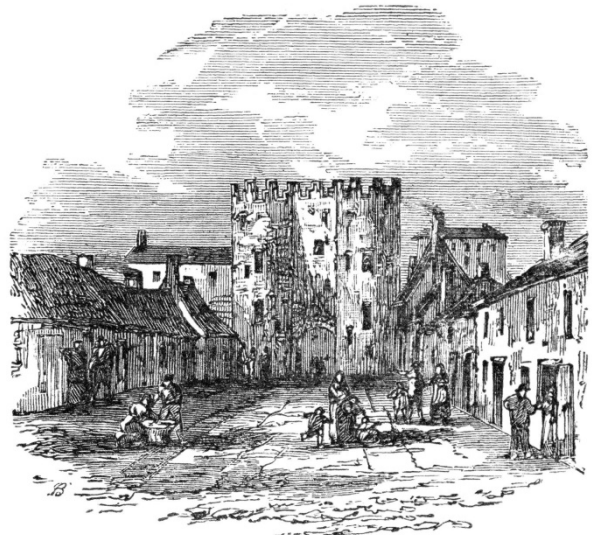
Locking the Gates

Military Action

While the military of Garnock has always held great political power, it was the bureaucrats, merchants and slave traders who truly controlled the city. These people controlled the city’s economy, and more importantly, its foreign trade. As the defeated army returned home from the failed Conquering War, the military leaders immediately fell under rigorous blame and accusations.

Seeking allies anywhere they could, the various factions continued to bicker over who should be blamed for the failed campaign. As Steel Plume rose to power, it did so with the help of a private and powerful ally, the Villenetti crime family.

With military conservatives and a powerful hand in the city’s growing black market, this alliance used scare tactics to control political powers and the general populace. They already had the loyalty of many of the soldiers in the barracks as they offered the return of their pride. Their legitimate power grew almost as fast as their control of the criminal elements of the city. When they closed the gates to the city, they did so with a grim purpose: to kill their rivals without allowing foreigners to interfere.



It is commonly believed among non-Latvich peasants and rural farmers that Garnock closed its gates out of fear. Many more worldly people believe that the closing of the gates was simply a foolish power-play by one or more factions who have since faded into obscurity. Those in the know understand what the Villenettis were working to accomplish.

With the gates closed, Steel Plume controlled all foreign trade. No longer could the merchants and slave traders rely on their contacts for money and help. In addition, the military factions who were lining their pockets with the loot from Parnania were cut off from their source. While Steel Plume worked to control the common people and the soldiers, the Villenetti family massacred merchants and slave traders who had worked against them in the past. While vindictive and vengeful, this purge did serve to eliminate many of the worst war profiteers.

Oddly enough for their methods, the Steel Plume/Villenetti alliance did many good things for the city. They worked to provide bread for everyone. They lowered the price of admission to the gladiatorial events

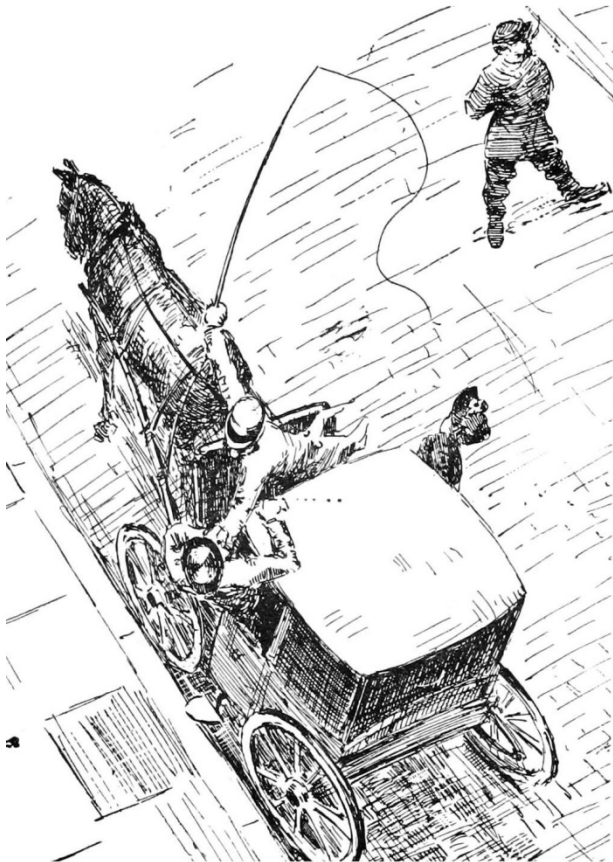
so that the people might be constantly entertained. They lessened the number of bureaucrats and bribe takers within the government. While they were certainly not moral nor ethical, they were the least evil the city had seen in a long time.

(In 655P) The gates of Garnock remain locked, but some of the regulations are loosening. It is becoming easier to obtain a pass to travel into or out of the west gate. Fewer bands of soldiers roam the city or the countryside searching for ferrous metals to confiscate. More trade goods from the outside are being brought in, and some are being released from the warehouses where they were stored after being confiscated. After the hardship of the self-imposed siege, these benefits are regarded by the people as wondrous.

The city was never truly secure. Even at the height of the patrols, magic and stealth could get people into or out of the city. The price for such passage was high, both for the service and for the bribes to cover it. Smugglers were active despite the number that were caught and hung. More always arose to take their place. Yet, the measures worked. Garnock is once again gaining strength, though it may be another generation before it is ready to field an invasion force.

Manszi Family

Group



The Manszi (man ZEE) Family was the power in Garnock before the Villenettis. Corsi Manszi was the top boss. The Manszis profited enormously from the sack of Villai and from the war slave trade in general. They were able to blackmail many Generals and built enormous wealth through trade and extortion. But the Manszis lost control. Their wealth separated them from both the citizens and from their peers. Their greed overcame them, and they stopped sharing their gains with other families. They utilized several “pet” troops to destroy enemies within the city-state, upsetting everyone at this breach of cultural morals.

The closing of the gates of Garnock were mainly to allow Steel Plume and the Villenettis to destroy the Manszi hold on the criminal families and the neighborhoods. Dethroning this powerful family took years and cost many lives on both sides. Many would describe this time as a time of anarchy in the streets, but this was not the first time gangs and rioters held most of the power in the city of Garnock.

The Manszi Family is mostly broken and disbursed. Some managed to fall back on their mother’s maiden name or in other ways hide and continue to work in the city, while some of the wealthier Manszis who survived moved to plantations and other retreats outside the city walls. There is no known stronghold of the Manszis still left, though isolated pockets of the family continue to survive with some wealth and huge grudges against the Villenettis.

When the Manszis were in power (and most commonly in the past) the Gumbaiyo Barkala was organized with seven different families as the members. But towards the end, this became the Manszis, three allies (including the Tellurillos), and three puppets. Maintaining these puppets in order to exert complete control was perhaps the first step of their downfall. Many suspect that if they had removed the puppets and replaced them with the Villenettis and Nargoosos they may have stayed in power. In other words, had they shared the power, they likely could have retained it.

Nargooso Family

Group

The Nargooso Family has become one of the most influential Preadomus Families in Garnock. A short time ago, they were a mid-tier family controlling a neighborhood, but doomed to stay out of the “big leagues”. As the Villenettis began to rise in power, Guliermo Nargooso correctly predicted the future and allied his family with theirs. Immediately upon agreeing to back the Villenettis, the Nargooso’s area of control doubled. When they began to help the Villenettis in the street wars that were raging, they were granted exclusive rights to merchant for most of the breweries in the city. Many saw this as the Nargoosos becoming the Villenettis' pets.

This misconception that the Nargoosos were nothing more than a retainer bribed by the Villenettis was the reason that Guliermo stepped down. Had he continued as the family's Don, there would have been conflict within the family and disrespect outside of it. Having Agostino as the Don has allowed the family to retain its fearsome reputation and its independence.

The Nargoosos control most of the trade in the breweries and distilleries within the city. As such, every family must deal with them in order to stock their bars and night clubs, giving the Nargoosos strong revenues as well as power. Knowing how good the families (including themselves) have always been at smuggling, the Nargoosos do not abuse this power, but play reasonably fair with most of the families, at least those who continue to be loyal to the Barkala.

Pantobo Watchers

Military Unit

The Pantobo Watchers are a troop sponsored by a group of organizations. Chief among the group are the Pantoboccilious Family, a noble family controlling lands north east of the city of Garnock. At one time, the unit was all theirs, but difficult times have caused them to sell off lands and not be able to field 1,000 soldiers at any given time. So they worked with their wealthiest neighbors and together they all support the troop.

The Watchers are a bit different than some other units with multiple sponsors. Rather than truly being a troop of 1,000 soldiers, they are a compilation of four units: one of 400 soldiers and three of 200 soldiers each. The Pantoboccilious Family sponsors 400, while each of the other three participants field 200 apiece.

In addition to the noble family, the Watchers are supported by the Capprelli Family who own a large leather working operation, the Cassodovu Family who are vintners and wine merchants, and the Castamugnunio Family who are millers and pasta makers. The four family groups get along surprisingly well, and they have not yet had a serious disagreement as to how their representatives should vote in the Conclave.

The original Pantobo emblem was the family's crest showing three silver circles arranged in a pyramid on a blue field. This was intended to represent the Watchers' shields and show how the Watchers were always intended as a defensive unit. With the joining of the other three families, three "C"s were added across the bottom of the field to show the inclusion of the others.

Portage License

Artifact

A portage license is a small wood plaque issued by the city-state of Garnock. While the government is officially issuing the licenses, it is the Villenetti Family that has the practical control over who is allowed a license and who is not.

A portage license allows someone to move trade goods throughout the city-state, but in order to be "legal" both the driver and the vehicle need a license. Any vehicle used would need a license, including wheelbarrows and hand carts. A porter would only need a single license.

The licenses are intended to be required only for trade goods (anything to be sold). If a shopper needed a wheelbarrow to get his or her potatoes home from the market, technically they would not need a license. Licenses are typically only checked at check points, such as bridges, gates, or tolls. They can be required anywhere by a soldier, but few soldiers are looking to harass farmers and peddlers.

Each license is about 3" square with a small crown branded into it. Beneath the crown is a number and beneath that, the date the license was created, both burned into the wood. There is an extensive list of the people who officially received the license, and licenses are not for resale.

Legitimate traders and merchants can receive a license from the Villenettis for a 12sc registration fee after a wait of about two to three weeks. To receive one more quickly costs more. This is unquestionably a bribe, but it is how business is done in Garnock and no one would question the ethics or legality of such a bribe. Next day service costs about 50sc, with that price dropping over the course of time. A one-week wait is typically around 25sc.

While these can be forged, it is typically not worth the time or effort to get a skilled forger to mimic the crown brand. Plus, the licenses can be checked against the book to confirm if they are legitimate. Most people will carry the license in their pocket or coin purse, but most vehicles have the license nailed to them. The license is not considered a "square" but a diamond, with the crown corner facing upwards.

Preadomus Families

Group

In old Latvich, Preadomus is a word rooted in the term "home guard". This has always been seen as the troops left to defend the home city while the others were off to war.

This is how the current Preadomus Families see themselves. It is their responsibility to protect their homes and neighborhoods. In this feudal style, there is a hierarchy, with the lesser families watching the neighborhoods and more powerful families leading those and so on up the chain. At the top is the Gumbaiyo Barkala - the administration rulers.

While outsiders see the Preadomus Families as extortionists and thugs, they see themselves on an equal level as any noble sheriff. They keep the peace. They collect taxes. They look out for their neighbors. But unlike so many "lawful" lords and knights, if they fail in

their duties, there is always someone lurking close by who will usurp their authority and take over. This is seen as good for the people.

Whether they are for the benefit or detriment of their various neighborhoods, it would be foolish to underestimate the various families. Certainly there are some who are weak or sadistic in their power, but they all hold power. Not only do they control the economy and police in their neighborhoods, but they are feared. Fearful people tend not to rebel, even when led by the charismatic.



Tellurrillo Family

Group

The Tellurrillo Family would in many ways be considered the second most powerful Preadomus Family in Garnock. They had been allies of the Manszi Family and had had a seat on the Gumbaiyo Barkala then as well. But as the Villenettis began to rise in power, the Manszis not only worked against them, but brought violence to the streets. The Tellurrillo Family is against violence in the streets - it's bad for business.

At no point, should they be considered pacifists, but they understand that having their soldiers and enforcers keep the peace and collecting taxes is vastly better than having those same folks guarding intersections and at risk for being jumped in the alleys. Controlling the hotels, they took the biggest hit of all the families when the gates were locked, and many assumed this would turn them against the Villenettis, but it did not. The Villenettis and Nargoosos treated the Tellurrillos with respect and they worked together to get through the issues their city and the various families were in.

There are some within the Tellurrillo Family who hear stories of the old days and want to return to those. It would be safe to say that more than half of the family is content with the status quo and will work diligently to maintain it. Less than a quarter would consider themselves to still be somewhat loyal to the Manszi Family and might take actions to support them should they start to rise again. The remainder would like to see the Villenettis fall and the Tellurrillos rise to the top spot. These are the youngest "bucks" and know no different. Given the chance, they would run the Barkala exactly as it is today, with multiple seats for the Tellurrillos and a small number of seats for some allied families.

THE SOUNDING BOARD

Organized Crime

I have a problem in my fantasy world. Nothing is illegal. OK - that's an exaggeration, but certainly not a lot of things. Sure, murder and theft are illegal. But drugs are legal. In some cities, you need to have a pharmacist's license from the druggists' guild, but other than that, anything goes. Prostitution is legal in most cities. Gambling - legal. Drinking age - Can you hold the stein? See, nothing's illegal.

Why is this a problem? Well, because I want organized criminals. I grew up in a Sicilian neighborhood in Chicago - Yeah, that one! We had organized crime. They were great! They kept the gangs out. Now they're all politicians. Guess what - That really makes sense!

So what do I do in my fantasy world? Well, I start with smuggling. Since there really are no goods that aren't allowed, then smuggling is just about getting past the customs officials without paying the tariffs. Since tariffs can be as high as 20%, this can still be a good business. What else? Well, the prostitutes still typically have pimps. Without them the girls are too much at risk, so networks of pimps make sense. So far this is pretty small potatoes.

The big money is in the protection rackets. Here's the business model: Guy walks into your store and says, "You have a lot of nice things here. It would be a shame if anything were to happen to them." Then the store owner hands over a percentage of his perceived sales and the hood goes down the street to collect at the next place. But here's the thing - In Fletnern, the organized criminals actually protect your place. This is their neighborhood. Nobody steals stuff from you in their neighborhood. Even the pickpockets better know to stay out of their neighborhood or they may be sleeping with the fishes. You see my organized criminals - they're family men. They want their kids to live in safe neighborhoods - neighborhoods made safe by the local boss.

In one city, this goes so far that there are no police. The city guard has been completely replaced by the crime families. There's a lot of back story to how this came to be - a big war, lots of soldiers needed, deals made, etc. So let's rethink the protection money: insurance and taxes. We may pay insurance and taxes in the modern age, but in these fantasy settings, the same things are being provided by the crime families. If someone steals from you, you tell the local boss who hunts the guy down and roughs him up. Next thing you know, someone returns your stolen goods. It's better than insurance, because the local boss is nowhere near as evil as a modern insurance company. You pay taxes to make sure the police patrol your streets.

They pay the mob boss to make sure his thugs patrol their streets. What if the local well goes bad? Tell the mob boss, he'll take care of it. The really nice thing about this is that you don't have to worry about some written laws. Say your 19yo daughter decides to run off with some loser. The police won't help you, but the mob boss will. These guys actually believe in customer service. OK, so the thug collecting is probably about as likable as an IRS agent, but still, you're even up there.

Look, my world has cities with city guards. In one city, the guards are controlled by the local noble families who once owned the lands that have become the neighborhoods. Those guards brawl with each other more than the crime families do. In some cities, the guards are even good at their jobs, but they are constrained by the laws, and they still cost you in taxes. You see, here's where I tie organized crime to politicians. Both get paid the same way - by taking money out of the pockets of the producers. Now what they do needs to get done, otherwise there would be chaos and anarchy. But who do you trust? The local mob boss who's kids are playing in the street with yours, or the politician who's never worked a day in his life. I've lived under both, and I can tell you, I don't trust politicians.

Street Kids (in fantasy)

I grew up in an age where kids would just "go outside to play". We didn't make play dates. We never really knew where we were going; we were just going "out". Drove my dad crazy to not know where we were. Now that I'm the Dad, it drives me crazy too.

But in a day and age where kids' time is so structured, it is tough to remember those more innocent days when people weren't worried about drive by shootings and other random violence. So what do fantasy era kids do?

I think it's important to call out some differences. I know exactly what kids on the farms do: they help their parents and do chores. Not that they don't get to play as well, but when there is work to do, they are working. No child labor laws here! I recall a story (no promise that it's true) that Abraham Lincoln's father rented him out to the neighbors, and Abe would chop wood and do other chores for money that he then gave to his father. Try that today!

Before moving on - let's finish the rural kids: Mostly, they are doing chores: weeding the crops, foraging for berries or mushrooms, feeding the livestock, helping in the kitchen, chopping wood or gathering kindling, all sorts of stuff. What do they do for fun? Well, their friends are a fairly long distance away (because they are on the next farm over). This makes playing with friends a little tougher, but if time permits, they will try. More likely, they will amuse themselves on their parents' farm. Some of their play time will likely be productive; things like fishing, grooming the horse(s), maybe a little

hunting, even if it is only for crayfish or frogs. But they will have toys too. Little wooden figures they can set up as knights, corn husk dolls, fireplace soot tic-tac-toe, these kids have enormous back yards and imaginations to fill them, just not as many people as the city kids have.

So what happens in the cities? The kids leave the home and play in the streets all day until they get home just before their dads so it looks like they've been around the house all day. My city homes typically do not have back yards, or have very small backyards, because real estate inside a city wall is expensive! So where do these kids go?

Most kids will try to get away from the house so they are out from under mom's watchful eye, but they don't want to go too far or they lose all the benefits of home (free food, clean toilet, bandages when necessary). If there is a park close by, they will likely go there. It will be a gathering place for all the neighborhood kids. If there isn't, then they are far more likely to get into trouble. Come on, you know it's true. Where would they go? an abandoned house, or the street corner, or a grocery store. Even if their intentions are good, playing and hanging out in these places is likely to cause trouble for someone, and the accidents have far more consequences than they would at a park. But what are they doing? Typically just hanging out.

Is that all? Of course not! There will be some kids who are helping their parents at work, whether that be sweeping up the shop, helping mom when she is cleaning the fancy houses, or legitimately learning a trade as an apprentice. Some of the kids will be enrolled in schools, but with the cost of these schools, it is unlikely that the kids will be there all day, probably only half days. Some of the churches may try to run youth programs, but these are pretty few and far between. While the kids may be playing sports, what sports are common in your cities?

Kids like sports, so let's think that one through just a bit more. In Forsbury, the main sport is horse racing, but very few kids can afford a horse. So they would gather at the horse ranches, sitting along the fences watching the horses train. They would constantly be discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the various horses (sometimes correctly, but more often not) and dreaming of their lives as jockeys. In Brinston, the various policing units all have competitive track and field teams. Here most of the kids would either watch the athletes train or compete in their own races and mini-competitions. No, it's not organized, but since when did a group of kids need adults to organize a game for them. Oh, that's right, it started in the 90s. Taking a similar but darker perspective, in Garnock they all watch gladiatorial events. Here the kids would be watching the gladiators train or actually going to the arenas and watching the matches. Watching grown men kill each other for sport has to have an impact on a kid.

Does any of this matter? Yes! Why? Because knowing what the kids do during the day will tell you where they are, and at times, it is important to know where the kids are. Want to steal a race horse, expect that there are some kids at the fence watching you (during daylight hours). Did your pocket get picked? The kids on the corner probably either did it or know who did, but questioning a kid can attract all the wrong kinds of attention. Plan to meet a contact at a public park? You may not be able to communicate from all the noise the kids are making.

Ignoring these types of things makes your world feel dull and flat. You need to describe your world as a bustling, rambunctious place. Make the players feel as if there is life in the city, rather than just describing the signs above the doors of the businesses. Let them know there are kids playing tag in the streets and mothers yelling at their kids for not being careful enough or to come home for lunch. This is the illusion that you need to create.

Want to take it further? One of my best players was the “kid whisperer”. Immediately after getting any mission, she would question the local kids. Why? Well, the kids typically aren’t busy and will stop to talk. Kids can be bribed for a whole lot less than an adult. And kids seldom have agendas that would cause them to lie. Granted, the character needed a lot of acting skill, because she was a cold-blooded killer, and those types of folks tend to scare small children and their pets, but she had the social skills to pull it off. You might want to think about some of this the next time you find yourself in a big city and have no idea how to start the mission - whether you’re a GM or a player.

Post Script: Having trouble with a character history? Well, if you know about Brinston and that’s where the character spent his childhood, it would be common for the character to have Running or Jumping skill levels because of what they did as kids. Do other kids have wrestling skills from the way they spent their youth?

Thugs and Two-Bit Gangsters (FRPG)

After covering Death Cults, it seemed appropriate to cover street thugs. Why, because they too are really the bully losers of life. Please understand - There are bullies that make great lives for themselves. Many CEOs are bullies, as are a huge number of people who have upper management positions in bureaucracies. Think those IRS folks who have spent the last few years lying to Congress and the people of the USA are mice? No way - bullies who found their niche. But the street thugs are the bullies who didn’t find a good spot. Oh, they think they have a good spot. Their bosses allow them to bully people and feel powerful, but they are pawns.

Modern street thugs are mostly stereo-typically gang members. OK - let’s admit my bias. I grew up in a neighborhood where the mob was still in control. No

random crime happened in my neighborhood, because the street thugs were terrified that the little old lady who’s purse he was stealing would turn out to be some major gangster’s mother. Only the mobsters got killed in my neighborhood (by other mobsters). Well that whole town has been in the news for years now because of the gang violence in the streets. Is it the fault of the IRS putting away all the major mob bosses? Well, partially. But let’s focus on the street thugs. They drive down the street and shoot as many bullets as they possible can without ever learning to shoot straight. In truth, I think they do it while terrified that someone is going to get a shot off back at them, and this ruins their already crap aim even more. How do we put these guys in fantasy terms?

I don’t think you can. Not directly. Without guns, the thugs need to be completely different “archetypes”, but we can still carry forward some ideas. First, I think a fantasy era gang leader would be looking for guys who are huge - not bright, huge. So whatever your game does to give the advantage to guys with near max Strength and Endurance, yeah, these would be those guys. But whatever your game does to grant benefits due to skill, these guys won’t have. I’m not suggesting these guys don’t know the sharp end of a sword, but I would think they should be near the minimum when it comes to training. The main reason for this is that these guys really are more for show than for go. You send a weaselly collector out with two huge goons, and the shop keepers will quake in fear. You put the thugs up against a trained soldier, and they’ll fall like wheat. But, if they score a hit on that soldier, expect damage modifiers.



My main reasoning for this is that these thugs are a dime a dozen. Any plow boy with a huge frame and broad shoulders can be made to look like a dangerous thug, but training takes money and time. To a gang leader, these guys aren't worth that. Should a few of them get killed, he will find some trained killers to avenge them and protect his reputation, but those trained killers are likely to be a lot more "normal looking" than the brute squad. Want to jazz them up a little more? Give them some manner of flashy weapon. Remember, the idea is more in the intimidation factor than in the usefulness. If they have a sword that's too big to use or a billy club with the end dipped in copper or silver, these will make an impression. If they have to use them, people might start figuring out how useless they are.

So what happens when your adventurers fight them? Well, the oversized Strength and Endurance stats should make them far more dangerous opponents than if they were more normally attributed, but the skills and skill levels still need to be low. In many games, high attributes are worth quite a bit more than "mid-level" skills, so it should work out. (You know your game better than I do and can adjust in the best ways!) Now once the good guys (players) start fighting the bad guys (thugs), soon enough the far more challenging guys will start to make an appearance, at least they will if there is any organization to the criminals. Organized criminals are dangerous! Street thugs are not! Need more convincing? Think of who their normal prey is. If they prey on shop keepers and farmers in the market, they are probably the dregs I've described here. If they are extorting huge sums from bankers and politicians, well then they aren't.

Fantasy Thieving Specialists

Think about your thieves. There are all manner of specialists: pick pockets, second story men, jewel thieves. They know their stuff. Jewel thieves need to know how to appraise gems and jewelry so they will choose the best stuff, and not get fooled by forgeries and paste. But how far does it go?

Are there fantasy era specialists? There should be. In the same vein that a jewel thief must know the good stuff from the fakes, a magic thief will need to be able to understand the real magic from the stage theatrics. But is specializing in magic enough? Wouldn't there need to be different styles of specialist for stealing alchemicals? A separate specialist for acquiring components and other materials? What about someone who goes after the enchantments themselves? Even the necromancers would need someone who knew how to get the right things for them. After all, it would be incredibly embarrassing to send a thief after an important skull, only to have him steal the wrong one. ("Abby someone.") In a similar fashion a mentalist in need of the proper psychometric items would

need someone who understood which items held the proper mental vestiges.

These thieving specialists need to understand their targets, which means they probably need to have some skill in them. That means they might know a bit of alchemy in order to understand both the alchemical products and equipment. Or they may need training in magic in order to read spell books and mystic scrolls, in order to know what they are stealing. At the same time, sorcerers would use different styles of traps and tricks than enchanters or alchemists would, so once again, understanding your target(s) will benefit you, and knowing how to handle those types of items and magic would give you a significant advantage. The same should be said for their tools of the trade. Knowing how to beat a sorcerer's traps does not necessarily position you to get past a necromancer's.

Honestly, this subject is too huge to do justice in a blog post, but I hope I set your mind spinning. Need some ideas on what a magic thief would be stealing? Check out Alchemist's Lab for all sorts of fun products and equipment!

A Note on Culture

You are in a theater in Myork watching an Anglic play. The sheriff walks into a public house (bar) and orders a beer from the bartender. The bartender says, "How's the war effort going?" The sheriff grumbles back, "None of your damn business!" Who's the bad guy? Well, it's obvious: the sheriff is drinking in a bar when he should be off fighting a war, leading his patrol. Plus he swore. He's evil to the core - in Myork.

You're in a different theater, this time in Garnock watching a Latvich play. The extortionist walks into a bustling bar and demands money from the bartender/owner. The owner says, "I don't have the money to pay you." Who's the bad guy? Again, it's obvious: the bar owner. I just said the bar was bustling. He doesn't have enough money to pay the extortionist off? That's a lie! And after all the extortionist is doing for the community. No, really! In Garnock, the organized crime families do extort money from the shop keepers, but they also run the community watch program (no one else better rob a store in their territory!), the fire brigade, and handle most of the civic programs. They also pass money upwards to the bigger crime families who pass it on to the government, so they are the tax collectors.

Confused? I hope not. In one city the sheriff is considered derelict, while in the other the extortionist is Robin Hood. It all depends on the culture. Why write this blog entry? Because if your world has only one culture, you need to do some rewriting!

The Thrill of the Heist

Ever watch a heist movie? *Ocean's Eleven*, *The Italian Job*, *Kelly's Heroes* (my favorite movie of all time). You know what I'm talking about. A bunch of guys get together, and they are going to steal something. Quite often they try to give the thieves some manner of reason to make it seem like they are Robin Hoods and not actually thieves, but well, they're criminals. Did it stop you from rooting for them? Yeah, me neither.

There is something about stealing things that is thrilling. Something in the breaking of the law, something in the danger, something in the "beating" whoever is there to stop you from doing it. There is something there that gives you an adrenaline rush. In rare occasions, I have been able to insert that feeling into games. I want to do it more!

The vast majority of FRPG quests could have this feeling melded into them. Sometimes the party is recovering a lost artifact ala *Indiana Jones*. It can have that same "heist" feel to it. Think about *Indy* and the golden skull. Remember his assistant mirroring his moves at the dais? It's like that. We need to get the players to be doing that; feeling the tension as their characters weigh the bag of sand.

So how do you do it? I think one of the best ways is through melodrama. It's sappy and a bit silly (especially for guys trying to be cool), but to bring some of that style of tension into the game, you have to schmaltz it up as a GM. What I mean is this: OK, I'm going to roll this die. If I roll a 12 or over, your character is going to succeed in sliding down the hall on your stomach without the guard noticing you, but if the number is lower, then the guard hears or sees you and will instantly raise the alarm. Your whole plan hinges on this one die roll. Either way, this is it; it all comes down to this. Are you ready? I mean are you really ready?

I admitted it was silly, right? It is, but just as it is silly for famous actors to take a pie in the face for a movie, sometimes, you have to evoke your inner ringmaster.

These GMing tactics can be used in nearly any situation, but don't go overboard. Yes, you can do the same with a swing of the sword. Yes, you can do the same with the casting of a spell. But it is typically in the thieving rolls where one roll decides the fate, as opposed to a sword/spell needing to roll damage, and even then it is rarely final, but just the start of an long combat.

This is one of the reasons (I think) people like to play thieves. Picking a pocket? It's a yes or no - one die roll, big gamble. Yes - get money. No - start the chase music boys.

It does not have to just be about these types of rolls. The other way to get it is what I think of as the "gold effect". In the movie *Kelly's Heroes*, every time someone saw the gold bar for the first time, there was this glittering music, and they were stunned in awe of the beauty of the

gold. This is what I'm going for when I reveal a treasure horde to the party. The most anti-climactic thing you can ever do when introducing a dragon sitting atop a mound of gold is to start talking about numbers.

Look, in truth, the reason I've never written a novel is because I cannot write dialog and I find writing most descriptive narratives to be way too much hard work. But if you have any spark of story teller in you, you should be able to weave a tale like this: You know you've reached the final chamber of this cave system because the dragon is there. In the blink of an eye, it all comes to you. The mighty dragon is coiled upon heaps of gold. The light of your torches gleams of multi-colored surfaces in the pile that must be gems, while the helms and armor of ancient warriors are mixed into the piles. OK, I said I don't do that well - often I can do it verbally better than I can write it because I can see what is or isn't working for my "audience".

It works for a single target too: This must be the gem you're after. It sits on a pedestal with two hanging lamps providing the light to emphasize its many facets. The gem is huge, bigger than you have ever seen before and of such a striking, true-blue color that the angels themselves must have crafted it.

Want to get back into the more roguish style? Try this one: Your target sits there in the restaurant, piggish and obese. Shoveling food into his oafish mouth, you can see his stubby little teeth as he chews like a cow with cud. This is the demon of a man that your client needs dead, and he is right in your sights. He may be surrounded by witnesses for now, but you're going to get him, as soon as he (falls into the trap the character has laid out).

The moral of this story is that especially when it comes to the single action, suspenseful things that rogues do, a little drama or melodrama can go a long way. It is storytelling. It is acting. You don't need to be James Earl Jones with a booming voice to play up the tension and anxiety. Be yourself, but be a little bit bigger version of yourself, and bring those players into exactly how important this one moment in their characters' lives really is!

Information Gathering

When an adventuring party goes out to a dungeon, they may learn who built the dungeon and what they are after, but they rarely plan for it. They don't try to get the right tools, other than possibly getting extra rope if they know they need to repel to get into the dungeon.

But in an urban adventure, you not only have the time to plan, but you should be forced to do it. You also have the ability to choose when to attack. Not putting in this extra effort is foolish. It will likely involve people in the mission (battle) that you don't want there. Like who? Well, innocents, the police, or battle ready neighbors who

may think you are after them as well. So how do you choose your battles? Through information gathering.

Let me draw a contrast between how information gathering is done in Garnock and Forsbury to show how this can work. In Garnock, they are watching their own people, while in Forsbury they tend to watch the travelers who come into town. Because of this, in Garnock they rely on street informants like street vendors, street sweepers, and even street walkers. Meanwhile in Forsbury, they rely on the cab drivers, bartenders and most of all, the bellboys in the hotels.

But how does a party get this information? There are really only two ways. The first is the best way - by having the PCs already have established contacts in town - people who know them well enough to trust them and share gossip and other information. The other is through bribery, most commonly through bribing an information broker. Information brokers are the people who make their living by having already gathered all the information that people are probably looking for, or they know who to go to. But it is important to remember, that very few information brokers are freelancers. They work for someone. So whatever the party is trying to figure out will be reported upwards.

Honestly - I suck at bribes! In real life, I never know how much to tip a maître d' for a good table, or any of that stuff. I'm probably too much of a rules follower. But in game, GMs need to understand how much of a bribe is required. Here's the only way I can figure out how to do it: an information broker. How many customers does he get in a day? He probably averages one per day, so he's learning everything he can just to inform one person. This guy wants a full day's wages to share his information; otherwise, he's going to go broke. So for relatively public knowledge (info that could be public for anyone who had the time to do the recon), he wants 12sc. A bartender on the other hand who has a job and gets info requests three times a day (on average), he's maybe looking for 3sc (x3 customers equals a full day's wage for him).

But what if it is not public? Well anything that could get the broker or his informants in trouble is worth a lot more - probably five times as much. This includes things like who did the merchant leave the sleazy hotel with - gossip stuff that isn't public and probably shouldn't be. For something that could be dangerous, as in tell me the right time to assassinate the target, something that could get the informant involved in a murder, now we're talking about two weeks' pay or say 250sc. Why? Because first of all, the informant is going to lay low for a couple of days in hopes that nothing blows back on him, plus if he is in danger, he deserves a lot more. How much do you have to bribe him to keep his mouth shut while the enemy is getting ready to torture him? Yeah, that number doesn't exist. These guys are not the ones you rely on with secrets!

LIFESTYLES OF THE MAGICAL AND MUNDANE

So how does it really work, this having "criminals" for police? Well, better than you'd think, at least for Garnock. In hopes of better explaining the culture, we're going to tell you about a day in the life of Matteo Morchia, an up and coming enforcer likely to be promoted to capo several years from now, despite his lack of the best family connections.

Matteo doesn't need to start his day too early. Mid-morning he rolls out of bed and stumbles to the kitchen. Being more of a self-made man, he doesn't have his mother living with him, just his wife and kids, but the wife is smart enough to have gotten the kids out of the house before he awoke. A breakfast of fried bread (yesterday's bread dipped in egg, fried with some cheese on top) probably with some peppers and sausage on the side, because he's got the money for it, is waiting for him. Alongside is a hot mug of orzo - think of it as barley coffee - hot and filling, but without the caffeine kick.

The wife handles the kids and the home; Matteo doesn't need to worry about anything there. And he doesn't. He gives himself time to eat, wake up, and he's out the door.

Matteo is a sharp dresser - it helps him stand out from the other enforcers and soldiers. Like most Latvich business men, he's wearing leather pants and a linen shirt. Unlike the business men, Matteo's shirt isn't a version of off-white, but instead brightly dyed. Today he's going with carmine - a fairly common red dye in Garnock. Shiny black leather belt and shoes finish his outfit. The leather workers in Garnock are some of the best, and Matteo is certainly taking advantage of them.

A quick divergence here - the linen shirt is along the lines of a modern button down dress shirt. The look is similar, but buttons are neither easy nor fashionable. The men of Garnock (and most of the other cities) are using shirt studs and cuff links. Typical studs are silver, but Mateo thinks silver clashes with carmine, so he uses gold plated studs. When he becomes a true capo, he'll probably rise to using solid gold studs and links. Poor folks wear pull over shirts, but the wealthy (and those hoping to appear wealthy) are wearing shirts that require studs.

So our sharp dressed man heads out to work. His work day starts by picking up his soldiers at the boss' night club. Matteo and his three soldiers start to make their rounds. Before visiting anyone who owes the boss money, Matteo heads over to talk to his various informants. These informants take many forms, including some of the hookers who work for the family,

beggars on the streets, and even the other merchants and store owners. Those who are paying their protection money to the family will want to insure that their competitors are paying too, as well as staying in the good graces of the family. In this way, Matteo knows before he arrives at his collection points whether the store keepers have been doing well or doing poorly.

Upon knowing who's been doing well, Matteo and his guys head out to the various shops. Collections is the most common "work" for a crew chief like Matteo. It is a rare day that he even needs to threaten these folks. He doesn't even count the money they give him - that's for bookkeepers to do. He simply puts their "donation" into one of the subdivisions within his collections box and moves on to the next place.



Matteo is one of those "more flies with honey" types who feels it is perfectly appropriate to be nice to his targets, even typically buying something from them while passing through. Others might simply take what they want, but Matteo needs to insure that no one sends bad news about him up the chain. It wouldn't do for the bosses to hear he was taking advantage.

Besides, he's still known for the time he got ambushed while out on collections. A rival collector came out from behind a pile of boxes and stabbed him in the side. Quick as lightning Matteo drew his own stiletto and stabbed the other man in the eye. The guy probably died immediately, but at that point Matteo's anger was up, and he stabbed him seven times in the throat and chest before he hit the ground. It was an impressive "battle", but it gets exaggerated even still. Being known for having quick reflexes and a savage temper have allowed him to collect without the overt threats.

Late in the afternoons, it's hot, and nobody wants to work. So Matteo has time to work on his own projects.

After all, collections rarely take a lot of time. He sends the boys off to do whatever, and he settles in for an hour or two at a friendly cafe. This isn't in his territory, but he's been flirting with the buxom waitress there, and everybody knows he's just "taking in the sites". What they don't know is that he's been casing the alchemist's shop across the street from the cafe. He's learning the patterns of when they get their shipments of supplies. The delivery of potions are too well guarded, but the supplies (not as valuable, but still valuable) are no where near as protected. Pretty soon, he'll hit the supplier of ingredients as he is getting to the alchemist, and he'll be able to keep most of the profits for himself. Even though he'll need to use his soldiers, the bosses will reward him if he can pull off a safe and profitable burglary.

Before dinner he stops in at home and checks on the wife and kids. There are nights where he takes the wife out on the town normally to dinner and an opera, but this isn't one of them. She's desperately trying to keep the kids from misbehaving in front of their quick tempered father, but like most nights, everything goes well, and there is no cause for anger. While most families would be eating dinner together about now, Matteo is off to the night club to check in with his boss and drop off the collections money.

If you asked his wife what he does, she'd tell you that he works for the boss - that he is in middle management. Violence is typically kept away from the women, and the women pretend that it doesn't exist. They aren't stupid; they're just good at acting like certain parts of their husband's professions don't exist.

In most cultures, people stop in at the local tavern to relax, but Matteo knows that this is the real work of his day. Not only is he expected to turn in the money he's collected, but also give a reasonable accounting of what's going on in his part of the neighborhood. Of course, he's not there to complain, but instead to inform the higher ups that everything is going smoothly and he has handled every little issue that came up.

This doesn't mean that everyone in the night club is privy to the business of the family. No business actually happens in the club area. There's always a back room, which anyone can locate by checking to see which doorway is guarded. If that doesn't give it away, then it might be the fact that the mid-level bosses keep going in and out through that doorway.

So, not as glamorous as it is in the movies, huh? Well, there is the night club every night, and the snappy clothes. There's the good money, but there's also the chance of getting ambushed most days. If you think the enforcer has it kind of dull, imagine how the thugs have it. They're vastly more likely to get knifed for less money. They're better at pretending they are actually important.

NEWS OF FLETNERN

The Origins of the Preadomus Families

In literal terms, "preadomus" meant "home guard". In a more practical sense, they were less the "guard" and more of a militia. Originally, this is what the term preadomus meant, and it was only later that the criminal organizations adopted the word to make their extortion rackets seem more wholesome. Before this, the term was used throughout the Latvich speaking region to represent the various militia style units.

1087HR Founding of Garnock (barony)
94D Prince Fiori Giorgginni began to build the wall around the town of Garnock.
(approximately 200 years after 1087HR)

It is important to remember that Garnock was established near Lake Whensafri when the area was considered to be too marshy to build on, and useless as a farm. The Giorgginni line had chosen the spot, not for the agriculture, but for the bog iron they were able to find within the swamp. What at first appeared to be a foolish under taking began to yield one of the few iron and steel producing settlements for hundreds of miles. In addition, they had access to river transport, at least when heading east.

So it is not surprising that two centuries later, the town of Garnock was one of the more successful in the region. With a small army of swampers collecting bog iron and a half dozen foundries in the town belching out smoke and steel, Garnock was becoming "the" spot for steel, whether in the form of weapons or tools.

Early on in the history of Garnock, their political moves caused concern amongst their rivals and peers. As the Giorgginni noble family arranged marriages and alliances, other noble families in the region began to see them as a threat. This meant that even before the wall began, the town of Garnock had one of the stronger castles in the territory, and a dungeon of political prisoners.

It is believed that the first gladiatorial fights were held in Garnock around 15D. These were considered an honorable way for soldiers to be executed, but certainly they were also seen as entertainment. Because these were an odd form of execution, betting on the fights was believed to dishonor the soldiers being executed. Of course, once something is banned, criminals arise to fill the void. The bookies who handled gambling on the gladiatorial battles of this era are considered to be the beginnings of the Preadomus Families.

Once the town became walled and later became a city, the gladiatorial fights were still a big attraction, but

betting was no longer outlawed. This put a big dent in the criminal enterprises. Since by this time, the bookies were firmly entrenched in their neighborhoods, they began to broaden their entrepreneurial spirit. Fairly quickly, they moved into extortion.

Many claim the extortion began somewhat innocently, but the actual history here is a bit vague. The militias did need to be supported and someone needed to collect that support, but it seems unlikely that the collectors began as friendly tax men. In any case, the criminals and militia leaders seem to have been the same people, and the extortion rackets were gaining strength.

At first, there were city guards who patrolled the streets, but as the various troops began to gain in strength (both military and political), they began to distrust one another. This distrust played out in troops being banned from the city limits, except for a few wall guarding units. The policing activities were quickly taken over by the Preadomus Families, and whether they were police or enforcers, the result was the same. The Families, as extortionists who actually kept the peace, began to become firmly entrenched in the Garnock culture.



Much later on when the gates of Garnock were closed, the Families saw a dramatic increase in their power base. They were now the smugglers who could provide anything the citizens wanted, no matter what the soldiers at the gates seemed to think. It is this historic basis in extortion coupled with the more recent smuggling operations that have brought the Families to where they are today and the level of power they have assumed.

(In 655) The gates of Garnock are now open, though trade is still restricted in many ways. This will likely serve to weaken the Families, but the Villenettis (the most powerful Preadomus Family) seem to have

control of trade, and they and their allies will likely continue to gain power as the smaller Families lose theirs. How this plays out over the next generation or two is anyone's guess, but it is most likely to be very exciting!

The Legend of the Villenettis

A while back there were these two punks, brothers, Tony and Tommy. Tony, Anthony, was the older one, a huge hulking guy, expected to turn gladiator, either by choice or by arrest. Tommy was the younger one and a lot smaller. He was a clever kid, fast when he needed to be, smooth when he needed to be. They use to do odd jobs, you know, a little carpentry, running errands for old ladies, maybe a little shoplifting, nothing major.

So one day, this little old lady asks Tony to go talk to the local boss. Seems he was her landlord, and he was really squeezing her for more rent. So Tony goes hat in hand and tries to be nice and respectful, asking the guy to take it easy on the old lady because she's such a nice broad and all. Of course the boss, this guy they all called Tomato Nose, thinks that Tony is meant as a threat on account of his size. So he has three of his goons rough Tony up. Tony never fought back; he just took the beating and left.

Well, when Tony gets back to Tommy, the two are both furious. They start to think about how they're going to get revenge, never really thinking through the whole idea that they are taking on the neighborhood boss. So Tommy runs around and keeps track of the three guys who beat up Tony, while Tony heals up. These guys are big men in the neighborhood. They aren't afraid of anything, and they aren't careful. So Tony and Tommy catch the first one as he walks home from his girlfriend's place, and they beat him with clubs until he's got a broken leg and a busted face. The next guy thinks he's being safe by carrying a big sword. When Tony and Tommy jump him, Tommy hangs onto the sword to keep it in the scabbard, while Tony beats the guy to death with a club. He didn't mean to kill him, but the guy was punching Tommy in the head and Tony had a bad temper.

Well, now Tomato Nose has one bodyguard and he's worried. He's expecting that another boss is trying to take his territory. He's not even looking internally. So Tommy gets the idea to bring a message to the Tomato. The message says something like, send your enforcer to Mill Street and Fungunii Street at sundown, so we can talk. Tomato sends the last goon, but the brothers don't go after him, they go after Tomato Nose. The two kick the door in and start in on him with bats. The whole time, Tony's going, "So you gonna lower the rent now?" and stuff like that. Well they beat him pretty bad, but he knows exactly who they are now.

Tony and Tommy go into another neighborhood to hide, and Tomato Nose tries to get that boss to roust the two brothers for him and bring them to him as a courtesy. Well that boss does grab the two boys, but he wants to talk to them. He's thinking that these two have nearly taken down Tomato Nose by themselves. Now Tomato Nose was no big thing, but still, two teenagers wiping out a neighborhood boss is something special. Of course, Tomato still had a bunch of other guys, but these three were supposed to be his super tough guys. Well the other boss offers to give the boys Tomato's neighborhood with him as their upper boss. Tommy is all for it, but Tony's all shy and not sure. In any case, they go to see Tomato Face escorted by their new ally like they were being surrendered, but armed with long daggers. Tomato gets all cocky and starts strutting, but then Tommy just goes wild and stabbing him all over. The upper boss has his guys hold back the last of the enforcers, while Tommy, all by himself kills Tomato Nose. Well, like it or not, they're now neighborhood bosses.

Turns out that little Tommy is a stone cold killer. He'd wait for hours and then just shoot a guy in the chest with a poisoned bolt. Tony can't do it that way. He can kill in the heat of a moment, like when his temper is flaring, but he won't do it all cold and heartless. So Tony becomes the boss, and eventually his cold blooded brilliance builds the family into being one of the major vassals around the city. By the time his enemies killed Tony, Tommy already had a squad of guys just as big and a lot more ruthless to take his place.

And that's how the Villenettis started.

The Villenettis and Steel Plume

The Villenettis and the Steel Plume troops control the city of Garnock, but previously they were seen primarily as thieves and mercenaries. They rarely get the respect they deserve for having brought peace to their homeland. Both in the city of Garnock and beyond, the Conquering War is seen as a failure, but the Villenettis and Steel Plume cannot allow that. So what to do?

- First, they needed to blame someone. For fear of upsetting the orcish Wembic Nation, they decide to primarily blame the Vile Ones tribe. This too often becomes "all orcs", but they have a plan to keep going after the Vile Ones only. (The leaders of the Vile Ones tribe were allies of Garnock during the war, but have since been dethroned by the Crooked Swords tribe.)
- It was the Vile Ones who burned Villai. The Garnock army was not making warlike gestures, just pursuing a confederation of bandits and trespassed into Villai lands. They had even sent diplomats to the leaders of Villai, but the Vile Ones sacked the city.

- All atrocities committed during the period were caused by the Vile Ones. To the point that after hearing what the Vile Ones had done during the Siege of Rhum and fearing what was going on in Parnania, the Generals' Conclave recalled the army to prevent any more problems. So the Latvich army left Rhum and returned to Parnania in order to save Parnania from the Vile Ones, as proven by the fact that once the Garnock army left Parnania, they left it in the hands of the Crooked Swords. There is just enough truth here to seem possible.
- There was a group of halflings who had formed an evil alliance with the Vile Ones. These halfling bandits (the ones they had been after originally) after being dispersed across the northern landscape by the first action, had their leaders bribe the corrupt Vile Ones. It was this cabal that began the military action that has become known as the Conquering War. There are enough Latvich enemies for Steel Plume to vilify, and they continue to accuse these factions of taking bribes from the halflings and Vile Ones.
- The Vile Ones wanted to put their enemies (amongst the orcish tribes) into the field so they would die. The Vile Ones would gain more power. Most humans are unfortunately willing to overlook this weakened the entire empire, because they believe orcs don't think that far ahead.
- The halfling bandit cabal wanted the army to cause chaos throughout the Rhoric Plains so they would have fewer militias and soldiers to worry about and could loot and plunder as they wished. This did happen (though it was typically Latvich and centaur bandits, not halflings, but we'll forget that part, they were probably in cahoots or working for the halflings directly).
- There are some stories circling that some of the Lats were actually being mind controlled by halflings. They may even be able to produce a circlet worn by some Lat Prince that had chrystalist in it. It is unfortunately now broken because it was cut from his head in battle, finally releasing him from the mind control. These stories seem far-fetched, even to those who began them, so they are rarer than most of the other stories.
- This entire propaganda campaign explains why the Lats continue to hunt the halfling bandits - They want revenge. They have the crown jewels back in Garnock, so they need another reason.
- Most of this is not easily believed by anyone who was involved, but the War has been over for two decades, and those who were involved are becoming fewer. Most of these lies have kernels of truth to them, and so are more easily believed. They are helped by the fact that few commoners can really believe that Garnock's mighty military machine was stopped by a big village like Rhum. They don't think about how the Garnock military was stretched from Nanerette to Parnania to Villai and the entire east, as well as maintaining Garnock and the full assault on Rhum. The Villenettis (along with Steel Plume) have been pushing stories like this since they first took over. There are now history books written in Marilick, Borten and Latvich stating this to be the truth and quoting dozens of now dead generals from all sides. There is art in the city of Garnock (relatively new - completed within the last five years) that depicts important pieces of this, like the return of the army to Parnania (and a battle with violet eyed orcs) and the capture of halfling bandits and the recovery of the crown jewels.
- Despite this propaganda, certain Latvich troops retain the blame for having lost the war, chief amongst them the Black Skulls. The more closely allied a troop was to the former power in Garnock, the Black Skulls troop, the more blame is heaped upon them.

Steel Plume primarily rose to power by blaming the other military troops and their Generals for having lost the war, but now that they have assumed the leadership role, they cannot allow their people to become unpatriotic. So while it is a reversal in their writing of history, they are working diligently to change the perceptions.

The Conquering War Mini-Timeline

614P	Garnock and allies sack Villai
626P	Garnock takes Parnania
626P	Garnock accepts the surrender of Nanerette
626P	Garnock fails to take Rhum
629P	Garnock abandons Nanerette
638P	Steel Plume takes control of the Generals' Conclave in a bloodless, political "battle"
640P	The gates of Garnock are closed and locked preventing any unauthorized trade
653P	Garnock's orcish allies begin to abandon Parnania and return to the Wembic Empire

THE GOOD LIFE

The city-state of Garnock is most often considered one of the two military super-powers of the world. This isn't dismissing the cities of Purity and Brinston so much as assuming that land based power comes from Myork and Garnock and sea based power from Brinston and Purity.

In Garnock, they often see themselves as the blue lions of their region. The blue lions are every bit the lions you think of, except they have no manes and are of a dark blue coloring - perfect camouflage for nocturnal attacks. They are the apex predator of their world and as such are truly kings.

But the lion is not as strong as the bear (often representing the north or Rhorics and Tanta Bosh) nor the ox (steer - representing the Velesans). In these situations, the lions use strategy and team work to defeat physically larger and more powerful creatures. Yes, might makes right, and the strong take what they need from the world in order to survive. Meanwhile the weak or stupid die to preserve the strong and smart. This attitude guides the way the Preadomus Families work as well as the military might of Garnock.

The concept of mercy is not what modern man might think. Mercy is a swift kill. See the lion? He kills by tearing out the throat, a reasonably swift kill. For prey without antlers, he can sever the spine in one bite. Thus the lion is merciful in the way that it kills. Snakes are not merciful. They strike and then the prey wanders around for a while until it finally dies of the poison, days later and in agony. This is because the snake is not a hunter. When it bites, it kills, but not in order to consume.

Obviously, not every personality within the Latvich region can be summed up in this one generality, but following this style of thinking will make understanding (and role-playing) the Lats that much easier.

Garnock is not the greatest food producer in the world. They have a swamp to their south and the badlands to the west. For this reason, they have (over centuries) continued to gather more and more land from the Bortens to the east. Even with these additions, Garnock is a food importer, but several neighboring regions are willing to trade with them in exchange for their superior steel and leather goods.

Latvich wines are warm region wines, while Brinston wines tend to be more in the cooler family. Although they both appear to be on the same latitudinal line, Garnock has much hotter weather, while Brinston

weather is cooler due to common fogs and other sea effects.

Maril/Brinston wine drinkers find Garnock wines to be too sweet and therefore not sophisticated enough. Garnock wine drinkers believe that Brinston wine drinkers are foolish little women. They like their women and their wines to be "tiny", where Lats prefer fully bodied women and wine. The same can be said for their foods.

The city-state of Garnock produces very little cheese. Most of it is brought in from the Headwater Hills to the far west, but they are crafting the cheeses that are most loved in the Latvich region. Again, where the Marils of Brinston like soft cheeses with mild but subtle tastes, the Latvich like hard cheeses with strong, robust tastes. Latvich cheeses are more often grated on top of other dishes to eaten with something quite salty to help distract from the strong tastes. The Lats also enjoy goat and even sheep based cheeses, something the Marils would turn their noses up at.

Latvich cuisine is based on spices that can be grown abundantly. Anise, oregano, onions, and garlic; these are not like mace, saffron or black pepper that do not grow well near Garnock. Even a small family farm in Garnock can produce these spices in quantities that allow them to have very flavorful foods.

The Latvich summers can be dry and hot. While this is not prime weather for any type of grain, the harder wheats tend to do the best. This is why the Latvich cuisine is filled with pastas and not breads. They do have bread as well, but this is more of a luxury good, made with wheat imported from other regions. The most common pasta dishes are various forms of spaghetti and linguini; pastas that can be rolled out and then cut to size. There are also tubular pastas, but these are more often for manicotti and other large tubes to be filled, as opposed to what we would know as macaroni. While most home makers would make fresh pasta daily, dried pasta is also the preserved food of choice for all Lats, including those on the march.

One of the most common sauces in Garnock is garum. Garum covers a broad group of fish sauces, but the most common is basically small fish, packed with salt fermented in the hot sun. The ingredients come in from Scaret, most commonly in sealed ceramic jars. Once it arrives, the Lats would combine it with some olive oil and ferment it, often adding spices for their particular recipes. The closest modern equivalent might be anchovy sauce or paste, but even that isn't exactly right. Despite what we might think of it, it is a staple of Latvich cuisine, adding a salty flavor and moisture to nearly anything.

WHAT'S MISSING

This is the “World Walker” version of this edition. Therefore it is not the complete version, but more of the slimmed down version. So the question could be - What’s missing? Here is a summary of what you’d see if you got the Game Masters’ version of the book:

How to Play a ... Criminal Enforcer

Some quick notes on how to play an enforcer, especially within a traditional FRPG adventuring party.

How to GM a ... Criminal Enforcer

More extensive notes on how to challenge enforcers, but also how to play urban campaigns and how to allow intimidation and other role-playing factors to work, because you can’t just walk around cities slaughtering people. (No really, you can’t - They frown on that stuff!)

Monsters & Other Menaces

Some descriptions of the members of the Gumbaiyo Barkala and some other folks you might not want to run into on the streets of Garnock.

The Dark Sides

Some details on the not so nice pieces left out elsewhere. Some notes on criminals and criminal activities, and how you can GM them.

Campaign Starter Kit

This CSK is about working for the Cassodovu Family (described in the wiki entries). Are they a nice group of wine merchants who hire adventurers from time to time or are there secret layers to the family and their various business dealings? And what are all the weird looking women about?

Small Towns and City Neighborhoods

Dons and capos in Garnock often own night clubs, but the night club itself isn’t just a place to meet. It is also the entryway into the estate of the “boss”, as well as the entertainment for the various enforcers.

Tavern Talk

Guiseppe Vilvaldo O’Connerghy’s (Guido) take on the bar and night club scene in Garnock. This is one subject that he knows well, I mean really well!

A Funny Thing Happened ...

Two different urban encounters to challenge parties innocently wandering around city streets.

Pull Back the Curtain

How Garnock and its wars have been retconned over the years and how these same techniques can help most GMs.

Y? Y? Y!

Why Garnock resembles Rome, and some of the important differences where it doesn’t.

IN CONCLUSION

This is our first edition to only be available to paying patrons, so we would like to thank you for being our patron! We also want to remind you that being a patron means we owe you something. We owe you what you want! You just need to let us know what that is!

We promise to make the communication as much of a two way street as we possibly can. If you reach out to us, we will get back to you! If you ask for something, we will either schedule it, move it up in the schedule(s), or let you know why we think we cannot do it right now. Hopefully it won’t be that last one.

If you have this book and are not yet a patron on Patreon, please get involved! We need your financial support, but we also need you with your ideas, priorities, feedback, and more! We are not writing these for our own usage - We really want to share! Enough begging, let’s wrap this thing up.



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