

The Rat Princess



a scenario by Troels Ken Pedersen for Viking-Con 37, 2018

Dear Dungeon Master!

Thanks for running the scenario. In practical terms, the following sections explain how the elements of the game work and what the point is, *Introduction* and *About the Player Characters*. You should read and grok these sections in preparation, but you shouldn't need to refer to them while running the game. The next section is *Runthrough*, and you'll need this while starting up the game, until the players actually begin to crawl in the dungeon. Then follows a description of areas and rooms in the dungeon – you should have read through this beforehand, and you will play off of these pages. Likewise, you should have read the section *Endgame*, and you will play off of the page. Here, it is particularly important that you are aware of the things that set off the endgame. A number of handouts and aid sheets follow, and finally there's a *DM overview* with bullet point guidance for you to lean on along the way.

Print the scenario single sided, in greyscale – in pure black and white, the menu won't look good. You'll need such dice as are used for D&D. Consider bringing extra in case some players have none. You'll need about 20 tokens, coins or the like, for rat tokens. And maybe scissors to cut out the relationships. Figures and battlemaps are not necessary, and using them will take time that the scenario doesn't really allow for.

Credits: Oliver Nøglebæk for illustrations, Forfatterkollektivet Arbejdstitel for sparring, Anne Vinkel Hansen, Christoffer Hoeck, Elias Helfer, Liselle Angelique Krog Awwal og Michael Lentz for playtesting. And my apologies to the rats – I use them as metaphor for a lot of nasty things, and I know they aren't really that bad.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Setting	2
Mechanics.....	3
Dungeon Crawling How-To.....	3
About the Player Characters.....	5
Runthrough.....	6
Dungeon.....	7
Starting Area.....	7
The Rat Horde.....	11
The Smuggler Cult.....	15
The Temple of the Moon.....	19
Endgame.....	22
Handouts & Aid Sheets:	
Opponents.....	23
Player Characters.....	25
Relationships.....	31
Rat Tokens.....	32
You are the Rat Princess!.....	33
DM Overview.....	34
Menu of Player Characters.....	35
Player Map.....	36
DM Map.....	37

Introduction

Rat-catchers hunt down a were-rat in the sewers of the City to avert a disaster. Oracle Grandmother has said that tonight, the Rat Princess will drive rats in their tens of thousands to spill the blood of the innocent. Only the rat-catchers, despised outcasts of the City, can stop the catastrophe – if they can make it in time, and if they can stick together in spite of old grudges.

Tags: Dungeon thriller, filthy fantasy, D&D 5th, dice

Number of players: 3-5 players plus 1 DM

Duration: 4 hours

The Rat Princess is a dungeon thriller set in a somewhat vaguely described large, dirty, corrupt fantasy city called the City. The players play a handful of female rat-catchers trying to find and stop a were-rat called "the Rat Princess". They've been sent to an old, secret, underground temple to an almost forgotten moon goddess, where they will run into both hordes of rats and a shabby smuggler cult worshipping the goddess and building terrifying traps. With a special rule, they can get strong bonuses by picking up "rat tokens" and telling brief flashbacks in which they either rat out their friends to some authority or gang up with one friend against another. The twist of the game is that one of the player characters IS the Rat Princess, and Grandmother has sent them to the temple as a sacred trial to "awaken" the Rat Princess. The rest will then have to either submit or try to stop the princess. How many rat tokens you've picked up has a lot of influence on who turns out to be the chosen one – but it's difficult to make it through alive without taking any.

The game is a *dungeon crawl* in the sense that the players explore a dangerous subterranean place, and use D&D 5th edition rules for the purpose (at low levels, as here, they are refreshingly simple). The game is a *thriller* in the sense that there is a plot and time pressure, there are meaningful and ambiguous relationships between the player characters, and there's a sneaky

intrigue (which however doesn't require the players to conspire against each other). The mood is rough and gritty, and betrayals and selfishness are emphasized. At the same time, the real core of the game is the community and solidarity of the player characters as outsiders, and the question is, can the rest stick together when one of them turns out to fail them badly?

There are more potential player characters (6) than players (3-5). Each player character consists of a core of personality and mechanics – and the two are connected. The player characters are completed by the players choosing and elaborating relationships with two other player characters, so that they form a "circle" of relationships, so to speak. The relationships are chosen from a list of six possible ones, where at most five can be in play. The relationships from the list contain questions which the two players answer together – and the DM helps with the whole process. The relationships have no mechanical weight BUT later on when the players pick up rat tokens, the relationships will see a lot of play. All the player characters are women – that only women can be rat-catchers is one of the many strange rules of the City. Other than looking cool in my head, there's a bunch of stereotypes about women that work together with the relationships and the rat token rules to evoke the sort of conflicts between the players which are interesting wrt. the theme of the game. Don't worry about it.

Setting

The Rat Princess is set in the City. The City is a dirty, corrupt, low fantasy city. Low fantasy means that magic is rare, and as often trickery as the real deal. The game has a genuine magical element in the form of a transformation into a were-rat, and also swarms of rats acting unnaturally, but otherwise it's all spooky mood, mechanical devices and optical illusions – or at least ambiguous. If you're thinking something along the lines of Lankhmar from Fritz Leiber's Fafhrd & the Gray Mouser stories, you're in the right neighbourhood. The precise details in all this aren't terribly important – feel free to make stuff up, but not so much that it distracts the players.

Once upon a couple of centuries ago, kings ruled the City, but they were overthrown, and now the City is ruled by a collection of guilds, all busy scheming against each other and operating by a mess of strange rules. For the most part rich merchants hold the real power, and they rule through courts and the guards, fire watch and other militias. There are temples and priests (and maybe gods), but they primarily serve the rich. Not all guilds are powerful and wealthy – there are poor, ragged guilds, such as that of the rat-catchers, to which the player characters belong. Many professions are regulated by guilds, but there's still a bit of wiggle room in the grey areas in between them.

The scenario takes place in an old, secret underground temple to the Moon Goddess hidden in the sewers of the City. It used to belong to a murderous cult involved with the last, scandalous generation of royals before the merchants seized power. In most of the intervening years the temple has been deserted, populated only by sewer rats, but some time ago it was taken over by a cult led by Jasca, who is of old, royal blood. She has joined forces with the smuggler Karl, and now they're running a smuggler cult. Traps are sacred to the cult, both building and avoiding them (or falling into them). Also, silver is a sacred metal to the Moon cult.

Mechanics

By and large, The Rat Princess runs on Dungeons & Dragons 5th edition, a reasonably simple system, especially when the player characters are level 2 and there are no spellcasters. D&D is used in it's simple form, with no tracking of detailed combat positioning. Besides D&D for general handling of fictitious reality, there's also a storygame mechanic with which the players use flashbacks to draw resources into the now of the game.

A player feeling the pressure can take a ***rat token***. When they do, they must briefly narrate a flashback. If they want to ***reroll a d20 roll with advantage***, they must narrate how they ***ratted out*** another member of the group to some sort of authority in the family, the rat-catchers' guild or the City. When they've done so, they get the effect back in the present, as they found the

determination to turn failure into (hopefully) success. If they need ***healing***, they must recruit another member of the group (who also takes a rat token) to co-narrate a brief flashback about how they ***ganged up*** on a third member by teasing them, excluding them, denying them food or the like. Back in the present, the two gangers-up heal 2d8 for rogues, 2d10 for fighters – wounds turn out to not be so bad, and they find the strength to go on.

In both cases, speed is of the essence. Scenes are not to be played out with dialogue, they are to be narrated with just enough detail that we have an idea what happened, and how the victim felt about it. Also, players must keep their rat tokens in front of them. You can hint that they will have consequences later on, but don't reveal the details. Note that one player having four rat tokens is one of the conditions that set off the end game. Players can use the aid sheet on page 32 for support when they want to take tokens.

Dungeon Crawling How-To

In practice there are many, quite different ways to run a dungeon crawl. Here is exactly how to run *this one*. It's important that the dungeon feels to the players like a piece of (fictitious) dangerous reality that they are exploring through their characters, NOT as an excuse to have a series of encounters/combat. The basic method is that you say what they see (and hear, and smell), then they say what they do, and based on that, you say what happens and what more they see. If it's doubtful if they could perceive or do a particular thing, you can ask for an ability roll from them. You are not supposed to describe every stone in detail. That would be boring and take far too long, and as this is a *dungeon thriller*, they should feel time pressure rather than lassitude.

In this scenario the players have a map (page 36), so it should be simple enough for them to follow, and they don't need to bother with mapping. The players' map is obsolete, though – you have an up-to-date DM's map (page 37). It is just like the players', but with corrections and additional information in gray, and numbers that refer to the room descriptions.

Here is the key to the scenario's style of play: ***be generous with information*** and always foreshadow dangers. The players should have a clear understanding that you have an obligation to direct their attention to potential dangers. If you have stated that there is a door, it is fair game that they fall into a trap if they open it without investigating it for traps, but trap doors don't just open under them if you haven't hinted at something potentially interesting/dangerous in the area, like if they're just walking down a corridor. They only need to worry about interacting with the things that you say, not the things that you DON'T say – this is not ***Tomb of Horrors!***

There will be a couple of ***combats***. Strive to get combat over with as fast as at all possible, and do not get into more tactical detail than you can handle by pointing at the the players' map with the tip of a pen. Squares and figures take much more time than you should spend on combat. Also, combat is not encounters to be overcome, it might be as good or better to avoid combat, and not all combats are designed for the players to be able to overcome them. So, they are a part of the reality that the players must handle.

A few words on specific skills: *Perception* covers general alertness and sharpness of senses, while *Investigate* covers examining a particular thing or place and figuring out how it works. With regard to traps (that matter quite a bit in the scenario), the way it works is you find them/figure them out with *Investigate* and disarm/open them with *Locks & Traps* (which is to say Thieves' Tools proficiency, here linked to Intelligence for the sake of simplicity). However, sometimes it's obvious how things works and there's no need to roll *Investigate*, while at other times you can avoid traps without rolling with *Locks & Traps* once you've figured them out.

The players can always say that they're looking/listening/sniffing carefully, and if they then roll well with *Perception*, you can elaborate a bit about their surroundings and possibly drop a small hint, but you should ask them to get on with their lives if they get it into their heads that everyone should be rolling *Perception* all the time. If the players want to roll *Investigate* for every 5 foot stretch of wall, feel free to point out that there really isn't time to be that thorough (because a proper examining takes a minute or so), and

there's nothing there if you haven't said SOMETHING. The main rule is that the necessary information comes out of conversation between you, not from a thousand dice rolls.

A number of skills have obvious uses pointed out in the descriptions of the various room, but there are also skills that might turn out useful if the players get creative. Bea's flute-playing, Dina's sleight of hand. If the players come up with something cool to do with them, feel free to run with it, though these things shouldn't totally circumvent the challenges of a room. But if Dina can convince a cultist that she's a sorceress by pulling coins out of their ears, great. A couple of player characters have some knowledge of history, and if they ask and roll above room temperature, do tell them something interesting and maybe even helpful – but it's not a thing that they should be spamming.

The description of the dungeon is thirteen rooms divided into four areas. There's an introduction for each area that describes it's appearance and inhabitants, as well as something that you as GM should say to prod the players with the urgency of their mission. Then follows descriptions of each room, one page for each, and here you find information on traps and opponents as well as relevant skills and difficulties. Stats for opponents are collected in their own section on pages 23-24. The first room is used for mechanics demonstration. Besides looking for the Rat Princess, the players have the secondary goal of looking for more silver weapons to improve their odds against the Rat Princess.

The endgame, in which the Rat Princess is revealed, is triggered in three ways. It can happen if the players make it to ***room 13***, if one player takes their ***fourth rat token*** or if they're running out of ***time*** and there's only ***45 minutes*** left of the time slot. If triggered by tokens or time, the endgame takes place in the next place that they enter. If you're not good at keeping track of time, consider setting an alarm to remind you. See the details on page 22.

After the endgame, you can round off with very brief epilogue narration.

About the Player Characters

– from halfway there to all done

They are all young rat-catchers in the City This means that they are all women. They are poor, and though they have a place of sorts in society, it is a despised place on the edges. This, they deal with in very different ways!

The players choose character cores, which they then complete by building relations with each other. Give them the menu sheet on page 35 from which to choose character cores. Make sure it's not a matter of speed and steely eyes that determine the distribution – together, they should arrive at a distribution that everyone is happy with. There are more characters than you can choose, and no one is indispensable.

When everyone has read their characters (people with no D&D knowledge should focus on getting a general impression without getting too much into the details yet), they must work together to choose relationships. Every player character must have a relationship with two others, so that they form a "ring". The relationships to pick are on the menu on page 31, and when they have worked out the "ring", it would be wise to change seats so they actually sit next to their two relations. Then, based on the questions on the relationships, they put a little meat on the bones, and though it shouldn't get long winded, it is OK to spend some time making it good.

All player characters are between 17 and 22 years old. There are two sibling relationships, and it's important that they're aware that you can be sisters even if you don't look much alike on the pictures. You can be half sisters, or one can be adopted – they're still family. Also note that one player can only have one sibling relationship. A good place to start when establishing details is with the sibling pair big/little sister, by establishing their ages and then expanding from there. Bemærk også at én spilperson kun kan have én søskende-relation. Feel free to help the players answer the questions. All questions in one relationship need not be answered at once, skipping around a bit is fine.



Runthrough

Welcome and managing expectations: This is a dungeon thriller with elements of narration play. Relationships between the characters are critically important – and so are the details of the dungeon.

Intro to setting: Gritty, urban, medieval-ish fantasy. The City is just called the City. It is dominated by guilds running on a combination of dirty, corrupt politics and odd traditions and taboos. Once there were kings, but they were overthrown by the guilds centuries ago.

Choosing character cores: With the help of the menu (see aid sheet with nifty illustrations on page 35). There are six, all players pick one. Ask the players to read their characters. If they know D&D they can read it all, otherwise they should focus on the descriptive text and general idea. On stats: humans have stats from 4 to 20, where 10-11 is average – just so you have an idea.

Choosing relationships: Each player character must have a specific relationship with two other player characters. They are chosen collaboratively from a menu of six possible relationships (see the aid sheet on page 32). It's a rule that a player character can have only one sister relationship (of which there are two). Talk it out, quickly form a ring pattern of player characters. Sit to fit.

Elaborating relationships: Together, answer the questions. Ages are in the span 17-22. Think of it as storytelling play – you are already telling, and playing...

Intro to D&D 5th mechanics: d20 + bonus vs difficulty. Room one in the dungeon will also be mechanics intro, where saving throws, skill checks and combat are introduced.

Intro to the storygame mechanic: Ratting out your friends for rerolls with advantage, or ganging up on your friends for healing. We take it in play. Underline that this is a game about the tension between solidarity and hard feelings, not a bullying game.

Style of play and traps: The art of exploring a trap-filled dungeon – it requires you to explore your surroundings. Traps don't come out of the blue, but when the GM has foreshadowed that something is dangerous, it's good to stay sharp. Perception and Investigate rolls can sometimes yield extra information, sometimes it's all handed to you if you just look. There are some puzzles, but you can throw dice rolls (and rat tokens) at most of them so you won't get stuck. Not all combats are best handled by fighting! Remember that you are under time pressure, keep up the pace.

Dungeon! The big, meaty part of the scenario. You start out wading out of the nasty water and into the first room, which is also both mechanics intro and mission briefing. Then, straight on to proper dungeoneering.

Endgame: When it is set off Both drama and mechanics! The criteria are on the GM's overview sheet.

Epilogue: Briefly narrated if needed.



Dungeon

Ostensibly, Our Heroes are in the sewers to find the Rat Princess. However, the players aren't necessarily supposed to fully explore everything, or even for that matter reach the sanctum (though it is fine and fitting if they do). The players explore, are challenged, spend resources and are pushed/lured to use flashbacks to get resources. Real success for the players consists of finding daggers and crossbow bolts of silver that they can use in the final confrontation. The final confrontation comes when the players reach the sanctum, when the players have used a certain amount of rat tokens, or when the time is running out.

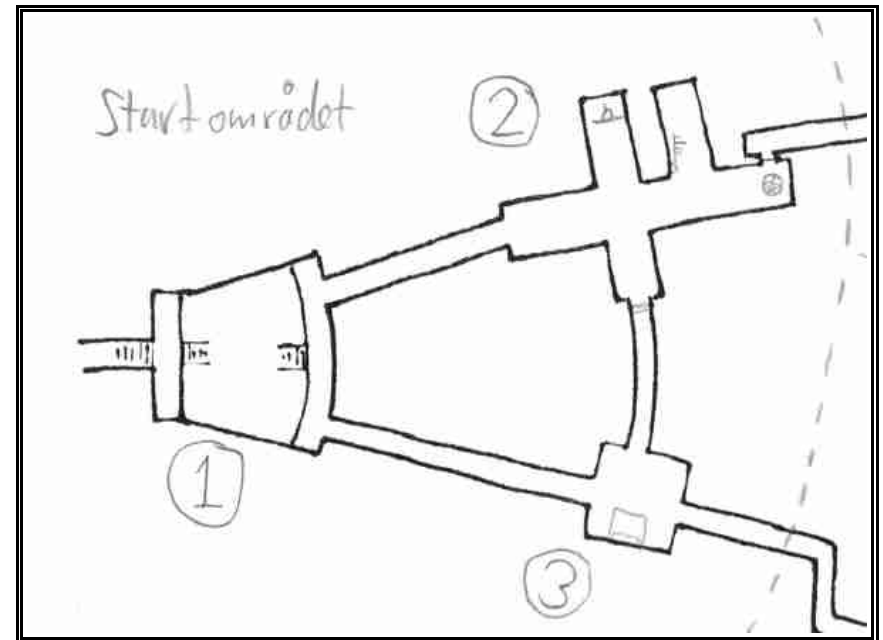
There are four zones: The starting area, the smuggler cult, the rat horde and the moon temple. The players can choose if they want to go through the smuggler cult or the rat horde (though they don't know the contents of the two areas!) From the start, the players are equipped with a (slightly outdated) map of the place.

In each area, **threats** are emphasized in bold, while *skills* and *difficulties* are emphasized in cursive.

The starting area

Here is old masonry with peeling plaster and heavy, vaulted ceilings. The area is dirty and dusty, and bears the traces of both rats and smuggler cultists. Footprints, a bit of trash ...and traps.

Note that room (1) in the starting area contains both system intro for D&D 5th edition and plot infodump. You can introduce rat tokens when they begin to be more seriously challenged in the areas (2) or (3), where you might do well to call attention to the possibilities of rat tokens.



(1) Water reservoir

The water is shallow but treacherous, and giant rats are lurking. Here, we learn much about the game.

Start with Our Heroes struggling their way through a nearly flooded corridor with unmentionable things in the water. **First system demo:** Everyone must roll a difficulty 8 constitution saving throw to avoid taking 1d4 damage.

After a long, exhausting trip, with the most important gear held over their heads, they enter the room. Now they're standing on a platform in front of an old, subterranean reservoir, which is full of perhaps 8 inches of dark, not so nice water. They can barely make out the platform on the other side, maybe 40 feet away. Stairs lead from the platform the six feet down to the surface of the water, and according to the map, stairs go up on the other side too. Remember light! Who holds torches? On the platform there are slimy footprints from both human shoes and small and large rats.

Plot intro: Run tightly, not giving time for reactions and dialogue.

Flashback to earlier that night, in the humble guild house of the rat-catchers, by the great board with rat tails to keep track of catches. Great-grandmother, the psychic elder of the guild, tells the assembled rat-catchers that tonight, the wererat known as the Rat Princess will come to the ancient, underground temple of the Moon Goddess, and there she will summon a horde of all the rats of the City, and send them into the night to drink blood and spread the plague. Only the rat-catchers can stop this – Our Heroes have been chosen for the mission. Great-grandmother gives them a silver dagger and an old map (put the player map on the table). Who has the silver dagger?

Someone's mother says that maybe they can find more silver items down there, as that stuff is sacred to the Moon Goddess, and says very urgently that they must hurry, or they risk not being able to stop the Rat Princess. And then...

Back in the sewers! There's splashing in the dark on the other side of the room, and sharp eyes can see the torchlight reflected in eyes. **Second system demo:** Ask everyone for a *difficulty 15 perception check*, those that

succeed can see the location of a handful of giant rats on the other side. It is however so dark over there that shots will have disadvantage, which is to say that you roll 2d20 and pick the worst roll.

As mentioned, stairs lead from the platform down to the water in the reservoir. The bottom, about 8 inches under the water's surface, is slippery and there are large holes that are impossible to see. If people move slowly and carefully it's safe, but if people hurry at all (up to half speed, as it's difficult terrain), it requires a *difficulty 10 dexterity saving throw* to avoid falling after a couple of steps and losing the rest of their movement (which is to say that you end up prone).

There are twice as many **giant rats** as player characters on the other side of the reservoir. When Our Heroes are about halfway (who is in front?), half the rats attack, which is the occasion for the **third system demo**, combat. Describe how they are charged by rats the size of dogs, rushing through the water, and roll initiative so Our Heroes have a chance to shoot them before they engage. To begin with, they attack the people in front. If the first wave of rats are wiped out in the first round, the rest flee into holes under the water. If any of the first wave are left, the rest attack in the second round, favouring opponents who are down. Take special care to make sure that people understand what actions they can take in a round, and that the order is free.

On the other side there are two openings into hallways to the east, with crumbling plaster over bricks. There are no noises, and tracks of rats and humans in both corridors, but more people to the left (towards 2), and more rats to the right (towards 3).

(2) Traps that mean business!

These are the outer defenses of the smuggler cultists, traps and a robed statue to divert attention.

Graffiti is scratched on the walls of this irregular room, both cock-and-tits and moons in various phases, with rough facial features. On the floor along one wall there are glass shards, and split and broken boards here and there. If people sniff the shards and succeed at a **difficulty 13 perception** check, they can smell old brandy. There are side rooms, one to the south and two to the north. As they reach them, in the side room to the right they can see a wooden door, and in the side room to the left they can make out a dark, rectangular shape, perhaps of wood, seven feet wide and four feet tall. Just then they see a dark figure in the far end of the room, visible by the pale face and hands peeking out of a dark robe (it's a marble statue of a woman dressed in a dark robe of real fabric, but until you get close, in the dim light it looks like a person standing still).

Behind the wooden screen in the first side room to the left, there's a **small catapult** loaded with a ball of clay and wooden spikes. It is set off by a stumbling thread in front of the box, and if there are 4 or 5 players, also if the swinging boom trap is set off. The stumbling thread can be spotted with *difficulty 10 investigate* if anyone is being careful, and is easily avoided. If the catapult is set off, someone in front of the screen (and not pressed against a wall) is attacked, otherwise someone in the middle of the room, must make a *difficulty 16 dexterity saving throw* or take 2d10 damage.

Behind the corner of the second side room to the left, a **curved, spiked swinging boom** is attached to a vertical post with a "spring" of rope wound many times around the post. It is released by a painted wooden plate just before the corner, just where people are probably distracted by the statue (unless they're specifically paranoid). Proper paranoia can spot the trap with *difficulty 12 investigate*, you can jump over the plate with *difficulty 8 athletics* and disarm the trap harmlessly with *difficulty 12 locks & traps*. If the trap is released, the first person in harm's way must make a *difficulty 18 dexterity saving throw* to duck and avoid 3d6 damage – if someone is just

behind them, they too must roll if the first one avoids the trap. If there are 4 or 5 players, this also sets off the **catapult**.

At the end of the room, there's a wooden door to the left of the statue. It's not locked, and when they open it they can hear bickering voices and see firelight in the distance, to the east.

Remember that when the player characters take a beating from the traps here, it is an occasion to introduce them to rat tokens – but of course they must themselves choose to use the tokens!



(3) The Moon Face

A holy trap that hides a little treasure in the mouth of the smiling face of the Moon.

The floor is reasonably tidy in this room which is dominated by a great full moon face on the south wall, five feet in diameter, with dark (glass) eyes that glitter in the firelight and a wide, smiling, slightly open mouth like a deep gash in the wall. There are corridors to the north, the east and the west. As Our Heroes approach, a couple of (small) rats scamper off along the corridor to the east. There are two tile pipes in the south wall, east of the face, just above floor height, like foot-wide tubes into the wall.

Investigate difficulty 13 can reveal that 6½ by 6½ feet of floor in front of the face is a **trap door**. *Difficulty 10 perception* can, if people listen at the pipes, reveal rustling in the dark and the smell of rats.

Inspection reveals without rolling that the mouth of the moon face is deep, and on the tongue, just over three feet in, is a knife with a dark blade and some four inches of key sticking out of the hilt. If you investigate closely (that is, press your face to the mouth or touch the knife), you will find that the knife is held by a metal band over the hilt, but can probably be jiggled or wrenched free. If you try this without succeeding at a *difficulty 15 locks & traps check*, the trap door opens. Trying to pry out the glass eyes also release the trap door.

If the trap door opens, whoever had their arm inside the mouth or was doing violence to the eyes automatically falls in, while people right next to them can avoid the trap with a *difficulty 12 dexterity* saving throw. People who were very involved in the discussion were clearly adjacent unless they had stated in advance that they were not. However, if you set off the trap by taking the knife, you do get the knife. Under the trap door is a twelve foot pit with stone rubble and filth at the bottom – you take 1d6 damage from the fall. Worse, the pit is home to two **poisonous snakes** that the cultists sometimes feed with rats. If you keep your cool and succeed at a *difficulty 13 animal handling check*, the snakes do not attack. If you're not cool, the

snakes attack. They have advantage on their attacks if you're lying down (ie. lost the initiative) or if you're trying to climb up. The snakes are difficult to hit from above if someone is in the pit, and attacks are at disadvantage. Climbing up requires a *difficulty 18 athletics check*, but others can help, giving advantage.

In case of tumult, that is if the trap is set off, **giant rats** come out of the holes, two fewer than the number of players. Ada can well have set up a trap, if she's in the party.

If something goes wrong here, you can use it as an occasion to introduce the players to rat tokens – but of course, they must choose to use them!

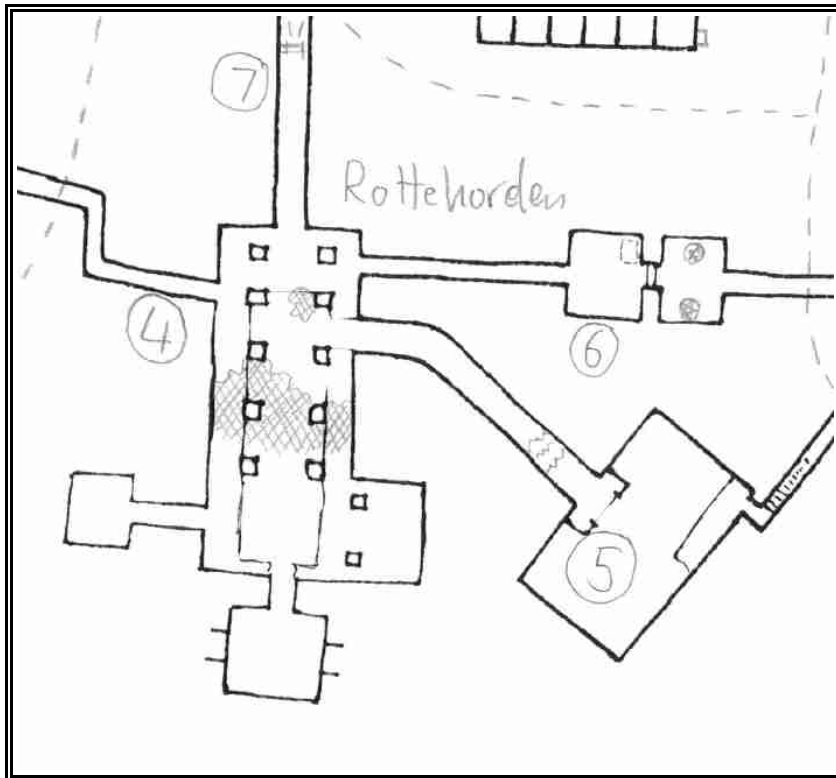


The Rat Horde

The whole area is more damp, muddy and moldy than merely dusty and dirty, like the starting area. The torches sputter and the darkness seems heavier. Here are tracks of rats small and large in the muck, but few of people. An intense animal smell hangs heavy in the air.

Our Heroes run right into the horde, and their further travels should be in fear, under pressure and the threat of rats coming after them.

Reminder of time pressure: A scratching of paws is heard, but it's hard to tell where from. Perhaps inside the walls? And in some inexplicable way there's something expectant about the sound, as if the rats are impatiently waiting for something. Or someone.



(4) The Horde

Under the piles, in the holes, in the shadows, a mass of fur and hate is lurking.

This place should be really creepy! And the fight should press them to the point where they surely use their rat token abilities. This is a great hall, forty feet wide and of unknown depth, with broad pillars, but parts of the hall have collapsed, and parts don't seem quite safe. Aside from piles of piles of broken masonry there's also some old, ruined machinery of dark, moldy timber. There are many shadows, holes, nooks and crannies, and in them the eyes disappear when you look closely. The smell in the hall is intensely animal. There is a doorway in the west wall (through which they are likely to enter at first), a doorway in the north wall and one in the east wall. Also, to the right of the doorway in the east wall, there is a wide tunnel. From it emerges, in the breadth of the tunnel, a 15 inches deep canal, dry but for a bit of mucky mud and a narrow stream in the middle. The south end of the hall has collapsed.

Our Heroes have time to enter the hall, orient themselves and discuss what to do before the rats emerge from holes and piles and attack. At first, they are attacked by the following:

3 players: One **swarm of rats** and four **giant rats**.

4 players: One **swarm of rats** and six **giant rats**.

5 players: Two **swarms of rats** and four **giant rats**.

Especially swarms should be scary! Emphasize that rats don't normally behave like this, thus hinting that a dark force is at work. When they've fought off the first wave of attackers, you should hint with threatening sounds and eyes in the shadows that there are many more rats where the first ones came from, to make the players hurry on. If they don't catch the hint, hit them with another hard fight. If they return here later, pound them. Think of the horde as an endless supply of furious rats.

(5) The Dam

Behind the barrier, snakes and murky waters await.

Here I assume that they're coming from the west. See below about coming from the east. Originally, the room held a collecting reservoir with a sluice gate to the canal to the west. On the eastern side there's a ledge above the planned water level, and from it stairs go down to the corridor heading northeast. The sluice gate is broken, but instead the canal to the west has been blocked by a collection of trash that has built up into a dam. The dam is inhabited by a small colony of **poisonous snakes**. At the bottom of the reservoir there's a stone chest with three silver crossbow bolts. The water is cool but not dangerously cold, and about 6½ feet deep.

They come up the (almost) dry canal, with a furious horde some way behind them. Instead of the expected room, they arrive at a sloping **barrier** of trash blocking the corridor. Branches, boards, bricks, bones and dark, damp things that you might not want to ponder too deeply. Water seeps out of the barrier, and this is the source of the bit of current in the canal. Out of the barrier, at chest height, there is about 3½ feet of smooth wooden haft sticking out at an odd angle. If someone grabs the shaft it's well stuck but not immovable. *Investigate difficulty 15* reveals that the whole barrier seems pretty water saturated and unstable, but with caution it might be possible to pull out a few things from the top and worm past it. (They can also try this without the hint, of that's what they say that they do.)

If someone gives the shaft a good tug, the old rake comes loose with a wet sound. Then the whole dam quivers for a moment and collapses. Everyone must make a *strength saving throw vs difficulty 15* to stay upright in the flood of water and garbage. Those who succeed take 1d4 damage and stay up, those who fail take 2d4 damage and are knocked prone, and torches that they're holding are extinguished. It's not just water, there are also surprised **poisonous snakes** in the wave (of snakes who are angry and attack there is one, or two if there are four or five players). The snakes get a free attack in the first round, going for people who are down (they have advantage against them).

Crawling and digging your way over the heap requires a *stealth difficulty 15* roll to do it so lightly and delicately that the whole thing doesn't collapse. When the first person has crossed, it takes stealth difficulty 8 for the ones who follow. If anyone fails, the barrier breaks down (and it might be worth reminding them of the ratting-out rule that gives a reroll with advantage) – those who have yet to cross roll as described above, while those who have crossed roll a difficulty 15 dexterity saving throw to determine if they take 1d4 or 2d4 damage, and they end up prone in any case. If they get across the barrier they can swim through the room to the ledge on the other side. Remember light, though! as the room is pitch black in and of itself. If the basin is drained, they can climb the steps to the ledge and the visible (if there's light) opening in the wall leading to a stairway down and to the northeast.

At the bottom of the basin there's a stone chest, about three feet long and just short of two feet wide and deep, carved with patterns of human body parts and rats. The lid is sealed with cement, but can be pried open with a bit of force – it's much too heavy to bring along. *Investigate difficulty 12* reveals that there are no obvious traps, but it is impossible to tell what nastiness might be inside – however it has obviously been sealed for so long that living creatures, most spring mechanisms and many poisons are unlikely to be a problem. Inside the chest are three silver-headed crossbow bolts wrapped in old, fragile silk. The bolts seem usable.

If Our Heroes come from the east: They come up a narrow stairway to a low-ceilinged room where they stand on a ledge a bit more than two feet wide and twelve feet long. Stone steps like a ladder cut into the wall lead down into the water. On the other side of the room they can see a wide corridor with about a foot of space between the water and the ceiling.

(6) The Riddle Gate

Which takes time. Plus foul corpses and hungry, frustrated rats.

This assumes that Our Heroes come from the west, from the horde, as it is really hard to come from the other side first. In this lofty chamber, twenty by twenty feet, the smuggler cult have hoisted up a couple of suspected traitors in chains under the ceiling to the rats can't get at them, and they are now dead and **stink terribly**. A handful of (ordinary) rats on the floor look longingly up at the corpses but must make do with whatever drips down. And now the rats scatter, but Our Heroes are pursued by **rats from the horde**. From the time of the old cult there is a gate that you open by solving a puzzle. The same puzzle releases a **falling block of stone** if you get it wrong. And as if the pressure from the rats is not enough, they must roll a *difficulty 11 constitution saving throw* to avoid nausea from the stench, and disadvantage on all d20 rolls until they get away from it.

The gate is of massive stone and looks like it must rise to open. On it's center is carved a new moon with a happy face looking right (that is, waning). On the wall to the left of the gate is a panel of dark, dull metal (tarnished silver) with five cylinders next to each other (like in a slot machine). On each cylinder there are five pictures of the moon in different phases, with different expressions. The cylinders have a bit of resistance, and you can hear quiet clicking from the interior of the mechanism. A roll against *investigate difficulty 10* will show that a big block of stone above the mechanism, 3½ by 7 feet, has a clear crack around it and might fall. And the mechanism probably controls both the gate and the block.

When they have had time to look around and see what's there, the first rats arrive (and be clear that more are coming). In the first round, (no. of players minus two) **giant rats** attack. In the next round, (no. of players minus one) arrive, and in the third round (no. of players minus two) **AND a swarm of rats**. After that, (no. of players minus one) giant rats per round. This should suggest to the players that they ought to get the gate open in a hurry, spending rat tokens if they must.

Remember light! You need *locks & traps* or *perception* (by listening for clicks) *difficulty 15* to operate the mechanism – remember disadvantage from the stench if anyone is nauseous. Folk who aren't nauseous can help, but it requires a full round at the mechanism. With a resounding click, the first success loosens the hidden counterweight that can lift the gate – and it also loosens the stone block, which is now primed to fall! The second success makes the gate rise, slowly and with a scraping sound – whereas failure after the first success makes the stone block fall. Whoever operated the mechanism (or helped and didn't join the fight) must make a *difficulty 15 dexterity saving throw* or take 3d10 damage from **the falling block** and be pushed aside. A small silver lining: the crash makes the rats flee. It takes an hour or so before the counterweight is ready again, so the gate is closed if they fail. After having been open for a minute or so the gate descends again, and it's heavy enough that objects set to block it are crushed unless they are REALLY tough.

Behind the gate is another chamber of the same size, dry and a bit dusty. Left and right, there are yellow sandstone statues of women in voluminous robes. The one on the left display in her hands three crossbow bolts with heads of dark, dull metal (a bit dry but usable, obviously silver), while the one on the right have her hands raised in benediction. A narrow corridor leads to the east. It ends in a stone door that can be pushed open with some difficulty – if allowed to slide shut unblocked, it is impossible to open from the east.

If your players *really* feel more like solving puzzles than rolling dice, it works like this: To **prime** the mechanism they must first arrange the cylinders by moon phase, with waxing new moon (points pointing right) first, full moon in the middle and waning full moon at the end. It is impossible to make the moods of the faces fit a neat pattern at the same time. To open the gate they must then arrange the cylinder by mood, from furious to happy. It is impossible to make the moon phases fit neatly at the same time. Success opens the gate, failure (ie a pattern, but not the right one) sets off the trap.

(7) The gate between the cult and the horde

A mysterious and obviously threatening wooden gate – especially with a horde on your heels!

This assumes that Our Heroes come from the horde side, from the south. If they come from the north, see below. The gate is a relatively new construction erected by the smuggler cult as defense against both rats and other intruders. As we have seen elsewhere, the cult is fond of traps. Here is a **spear trap** that thrusts four spears through holes in the gate, hordewards, if the wrong rope is pulled. They are probably under time pressure because the rat horde behind them is mustering for a new assault.

A wall and gate in solid wood is built across the ten feet wide corridor. It doesn't appear to be more than a few years old. The gate is a single door that opens out. From above the gate, three ropes hang down to a height of five feet, a black one to the left, a white one in the middle and a red one on the right. On the wooden wall to the left of the gate, at a height of seven feet, a new moon is painted, to the right a full moon, both in yellow paint and with faces. In a height of one, three and four feet, there are rows of red fields across all the width of the gate and wall, about a foot apart. They are an inch and a half tall and 3/4 of an inch wide.

A quick *investigate difficulty 10* says that the red fields are painted plaster and the ropes resist tentative tugs, indicating that they are probably tied to some mechanism that might well open the gate ...or make nastiness come out of the plaster-covered holes. The floor, ceiling and walls of stone seem solid and secure. This is as much information as they can gather without having to fight rats – they must act. The mechanism cannot be disabled from this side of the wall.

A pull on the black rope opens the lock of the gate with a clack of wood on wood and makes the gate crack open. A pull on the white or red ropes make four spears shoot out of some of the holes with great force and loud clonks, going about five feet before they stop. Anyone standing near the gate (that is everyone who hasn't said that they don't!) must make a *difficulty 15*

dexterity saving throw to avoid being struck by a spear for 2d10 damage. Once the trap has been released once, there are no more spears, and pulling the red or white ropes has no effect.

Behind the gate is a lot of wooden machinery: scaffolds for four spears pointing at holes which on this side are covered with linen patches, in various heights and angles. There are also four little catapult-like mallets set to hit the butts of the spears to launch them (or have done it, if the trap has been set off). It is possible to open the gate, and if it is closed, the lock mechanism will fall into place. You have to be a bit careful to get past the machinery. Away to the north, they can hear voices bickering and see torchlight.

If they come from the north, it's not a problem to get past and out. Unless you have furious cultists on your heels, in which case you must hurry, and whoever opens the gate must make a *difficulty 8 dexterity saving throw* to avoid setting off the closest mallet-catapult for 2d4 damage.



The Smuggler Cult

Around here it is only a little damp, and the smells of unwashed people and oil cooked food hang in the air. It is a little messy, and generally the cultists are a bit ragged and not too well fed. The area is dimly lit by little oil lamps and smoky torches, but it is a fest of light and colour compared to the other areas.

Unlike with the rats, you should keep track of the total number of cultists, since they behave dynamically, and adapt the areas to their behaviour. Generally they will be a little confused at first but inclined to fight the intruders unless those are VERY well spoken. If they find out that they are under attack, they will try to lure the intruders to the fire trap in the refectory, and then attack with most (though not quite all) of their strength. If defeated, the survivors will try to barricade themselves in. Individuals might panic and flee, and they might make tactical retreats to places where that they can barricade, but they will not surrender (being cultists). If Our Heroes hit them fast and moderately hard and fight their way through to the Moon Temple, the cultists will pursue them to area 11, and attack those who hesitate because of the masks, but no further.

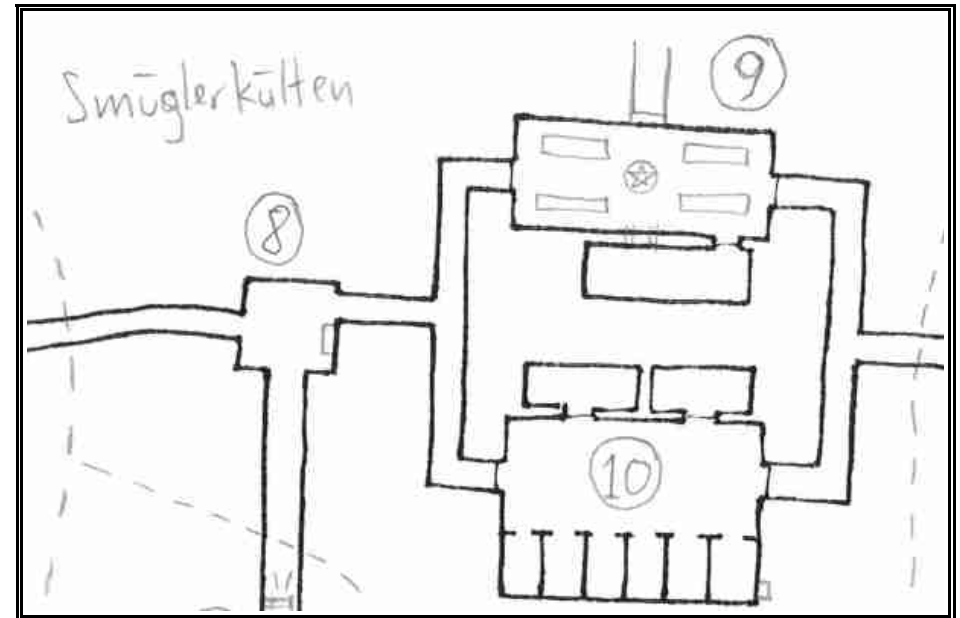
The leaders of the smuggler cultists are **Jasca**, who is primarily a religious visionary, and **Karl**, who is primarily a smuggler. They are lovers, and their stats are to be found with the rest of the opponents. The number of other cultists is determined by the number of players, and they have standard stats (again, see opponents). Jasca is in area 12 and not in touch with the rest of the cult, while Karl is in area 10 and leads the cult.

3 players: 15 cultists

4 players: 20 cultists

5 players: 25 cultists

Reminder of time pressure: A sudden draft makes the torches flicker, and for a moment the flames are not orange but silvery like the moon. A sigh passes through the hallway, of expectation of the coming of the Rat Princess...



(8) The Guards

Bored guards sitting, talking about things that might interest Our Heroes.

The strategically most important thing here is whether the guards manage to raise the alarm. Also, this is the point in the game where cunning players can make the most of social skills. The **cultists** Gerson and Hanna are sitting on a bench of wooden boxes, talking (and if there are five players, a third, nameless cultist is there too). The room is low ceilinged, some seventeen by seventeen feet and lit by two torches. There is graffiti scratched into the plaster on the walls. Sneaking near enough to overhear their conversation and have a clear shot is not hard – *stealth difficulty 8*, so only Frida will have a problem. Getting into melee without the guards discovering the intruders is harder, *stealth difficulty 14*.

The two cultists are a skinny young man (Gerson) with a thin, ragged beard and a dark-haired woman (Hanna) who probably looks older than she is. Both are clad in leather tunics and boots, and have two hand axes and a dagger. They have clearly had a fight, and have just calmed down. If Our Heroes attack directly, they will of course overhear not further conversation. If they play it a bit more cool, you can summarize a bit of conversation. Now, hearing the DM talk to themselves is boring, so give quick recaps. Give the players a pause in which to react between subjects.

* The man asks her if she really believes what Jasca says about the chosen of the Moon Goddess coming to purify the City with blood? The woman answers that she hopes it is true, and that all the rich pigs who have no respect will learn the hard way.

* The woman asks the man if he thinks the Goddess will accept Karl and all that practical stuff with smuggling brandy that he's got the cult into? The man says that if Jasca is OK with it, he supposes he is too. And the new oil cooking vat is not half bad – both rats and turnips taste a lot better with oil cooking.

* The woman says that Karl is probably all right. When his man Ian stole from the sacrificial offerings, Karl didn't pout about Ian being strung up down at the riddle gate, where that idiot who failed to pay his booze debts was strung up earlier. Does the man think Ian is dead now? The man is sure that he is, in that awful place he must have been dead for days (he shudders).

If the players have yet to make a move, the woman says: "Gerson, we are alive. I'll go get us some food. The Moon Goddess be praised!" He answers: "Go in Her holy glow, Hanna." Because when they have names they seem human, though the conversation might have revealed that they aren't stellar specimens. She (and the possible third) leave by the corridor to the east, so only Gerson remains. That tells the players that they have a bit of time, but not endless amounts, so presumably they will do something.

They have a pretty good chance of taking him down if they attack. If he somehow gets his turn, he will of course holler ALARM!!! and fight back, but that is unlikely. If someone wants to use deception, that is clearly an option. They can't just roll, they must have some idea what their story is. The *difficulty is 20* if it is far out, a bad lie ("We are peddlers who just happened to come this way"). The *difficulty is 15* if it is kind of far fetched but not completely ridiculous ("We heard that you sell brandy here...") and the *difficulty is 10* if it is plausible, speaks to wishful thinking or is otherwise a good idea ("We are from the Moon Cult on the Islands, salutations"/"I am the chosen of the Moon Goddess, bow down before me!"). He will then tell them things that he knows and that make sense in light of their story, but he will not directly betray his cult.

He is not endlessly brave, and you can bully him some with *intimidate difficulty 15*, but he will only be temporarily pliant. If the angle makes sense, Persuade can be used to convince him that he feels less like dying now than living, if a knife is to his throat, but he will rather die than see himself as a traitor. *Persuade difficulty is about 15*, modified for how good the angle is.

(9) The Refectory of the Smuggler Cult

Here, the smell of deep frying is the strongest, and behind it lurks a deadly fire trap.

The hall runs east-west, and there are wooden doors at the east and west ends – Our Heroes probably come from the west. In the middle of the north wall there is a solid wooden gate surrounded by new, rough masonry – this is not on Our Heroes' map, and it is the new main entrance of the smugglers. The bar of the gate is on this side. At the east end of the south wall there is a door (that leads to the kitchen). In the middle of the south wall there are three horizontal slits in the wall about two feet up, with three feet between them (*perception difficulty 15* to notice them from the end doors, *difficulty 10* from the middle of the room). Both the ceiling and the walls are very clean in the middle of the hall. In the north and south of the hall there are long tables with benches, with room for maybe forty people, and in the middle of the hall is a statue of a woman, facing the gate and wearing a black cloak. In her raised hand she holds a brightly shining knife (which is indeed a silver dagger).

In front of the statue, (no. of players) **smuggler-cultists** are gathered, most of them very focused on something on the floor. They are holding cockroach races and betting coppers on it. If Hanna from area 8 went for food, she is one of them. One of the cultists is not completely absorbed, so sneaking close to them requires *stealth difficulty 12*. They are not impossible to fool if someone has a good angle, but it requires *deception difficulty 15*. Let Hanna speak if it comes to a conversation.

If a fight breaks out, at least one will immediately flee to warn Karl and the main force in area 10. In round two, surviving cultists will move a bit east, and the cook in the kitchen will pull the lever that tips the great oil cooking vat so that the oil runs out of the three slits (hitting a candle flame along the way that sets the oil alight). This turns the entire middle of the hall around the statue to a sea of flames. Anyone there must make a *difficulty 13 dexterity saving throw* or be set on fire. Those who succeed leap out of the area and only take 1d4 damage, while those who miss take 2d4 damage for

two rounds – in round two, they can avoid the damage by leaving the area and using their action to roll on the floor. Moving in the sea of fire is difficult because the oil is slippery, and requires a *difficulty 10 dexterity saving throw* to avoid slipping and falling (and burning). Likewise in round two, the cook's assistant bars the door to the kitchen. The smoke makes for disadvantage on ranged attacks.

In the kitchen there are store of turnips and skinned rats, there are barrels of oil and stacks of firewood, and a primitive, leaky faucet that draws clean water from a higher level, and a hole for garbage leading to a lower level. However, Our Heroes are unlikely to see the kitchen. If they plan to break open the door, remind them that it takes time.

If the cultists are on full alert, adapt as needed.



(10) The Quarters of the Smuggler Cult

Here, a large group of cultists are preparing for great changes.

The hall is quite large, with a number of doors and curtains leading to side rooms. The walls are decorated with somewhat clumsy murals where the moon plays an important role, with humans, snakes and disquieting, furry creatures. There are wooden doors in both east and west.

Of the **cultists**, (no. of players x2, +1) are immediately visible. They stand in a circle in silent concentration. About every thirty seconds, one of them gently pings a little metal triangle. They don't look around, but the room is very quiet, so it is hard to sneak past – *stealth difficulty 18*. If a fight breaks out, more cultists emerge from the side rooms, (no. of players -1) and the smuggler leader **Karl**. This is enough that it should be a quite hard fight for Our Heroes, and they will probably run. If they try to talk their way out, they will have to deal with Karl, and he is not easily fooled.

Again, adjust the situation if the cultists are on full alert.

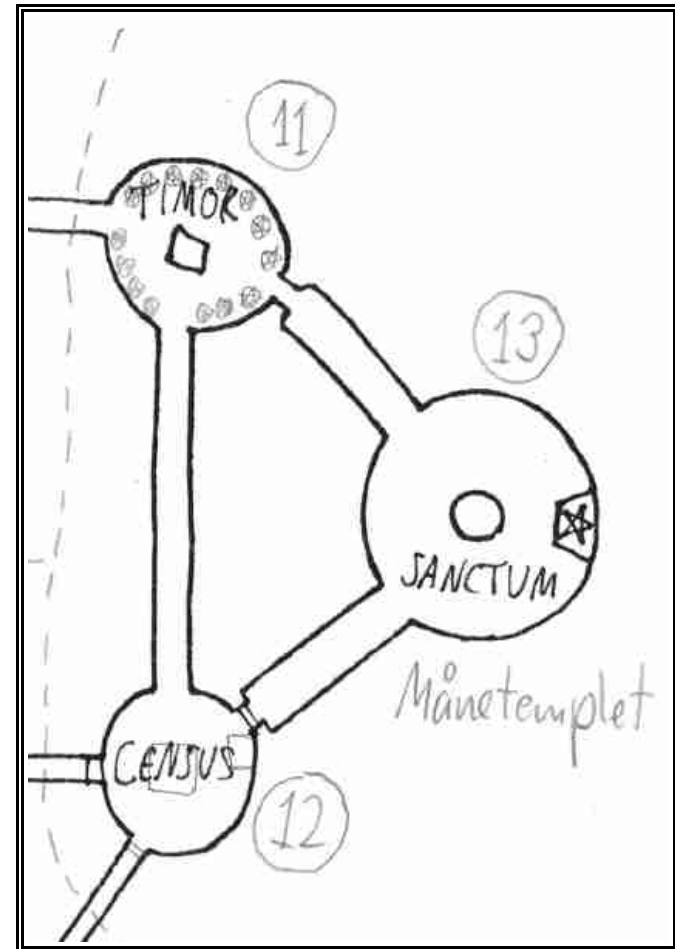
The side rooms include: latrine, storeroom (brandy, boards, rope and assorted bric-a-brac) and sleeping rooms. One of these is Karl and Jasca's chamber. The cultists' treasure of 200 gold pieces and 800 silver in leather bags is hidden in a secret compartment in the wall, which can be found with *investigate difficulty 20*.



The Moon Temple

The air here is relatively fresh. Corridors and halls are of fairly fine masonry, and richly if disturbingly decorated with swirling patterns. There are some traps here, but few opponents – just Jasca the cult leader, and then the Rat Princess herself...

Reminder of time pressure: Several rats scamper around the feet of Our Heroes, and a whisper sounds that is like an expectant sigh of "soon..."



(11) The Many Masks of Terror

Horrible carvings, echoes, luminescent fungus and an air canal that turns even the least wind into a lament.

In itself, it requires some self-mastery to step into the room, and it can be quite a problem with furious cultists hot on your heels (if that's an issue, you know it as the DM). Oh, and there's a LITTLE trap by the exit towards the inner sanctum (13). The room is approximately round, and thirty feet in diameter.

As you approach, you can make out a sound (of artfully enhanced echo) and a distant howling, and by the entrance, you come face to face with a **terrifying sight**: In the middle is a cluster of enormous, horrible faces of animals, humans and intermediate forms, with glittering eyes, and teeth and tongues in distended mouths. Along the walls, equally terrible figures stand still, some with weapons in their hands. Even worse: in the dark, there's a hint of a pallid glow (from fungus that grows on shelves on the walls, and hangs in garlands behind the giant masks around the central pillar). The effect, all in all, is hard to bear, and it takes a *wisdom saving throw difficulty 10* to master your fear enough to enter the room. If there are pursuers, they arrive in time to attack those who missed their saving throws... You can make another saving throw at the start of each turn, and once you've made a successful saving throw, you are as freaked out as you feel like being, but you can move freely. If it comes to a very loud battle here, Jasca will hear it in the Chamber of Trials (12) and be warned.

It is not easy to see the exits, but Our Heroes should know from the map that they are there, and can see them if they look in the right places. To the left of the exit to the southeast, there is a grotesque rat-person brandishing a large scimitar, and to the right, there is a grinning wolf standing on it's hind legs holding a meat skewer in a hand that ought to have been a paw. If there are three or four players, **the rat thing is a trap**, and if there are five players, **the wolf with the skewer is a trap as well**. If the players are alert and state that they look out for traps when you talk about the statues, they can find out with *investigate difficulty 13* that the statues have jointed shoulders and

feet, and that there are stepping plates in front of them – they are easily avoided when you know. If you pass by them unawares, you set off the trap and the whole statue tilts forward with a small crash, and the arm swings the weapon. They must make a *difficulty 14 dexterity save* to avoid the swing. The scimitar does 2d6 damage, the skewer 2d4. They will target different players. Afterwards the statues will slowly, with a series of creaking clicks, pull back into place, driven by hidden machinery.

The statues by the corridor to the south (towards the Chamber of Trials) are naked people, a man to the left and a woman to the right, their faces distorted with fear, and their bodies sporting slightly glowing body hair of mold. The statues towards the west (towards the cult) are a dog with two heads and a human-sized rat on it's hind legs.



(12) The Chamber of Trials

Here, in front of the stone gate in the grand Chamber of Trials, we find the moon priestess Jasca – it should make for an interesting conversation...

The chamber is round and some 27 feet in diameter, with the ceiling ten feet up. The exit to the north is a wide corridor. The door to the southwest is a wooden door with some cracks in (through which people coming from area 5 will be able to make out some firelight, and which creaks too much to open silently). The door to the west is hidden behind a carved stone panel, and slides shut if not blocked – and it can't be opened from this side. The door to the northeast is clearly the focus of the room, a massive stone gate that must rise to open, decorated with a mighty moon face, and on the wall to the right of it is a keyhole rimmed with carved stone flowers. In front of the gate, **Jasca** the cult leader is kneeling, waiting tonight for the prophesized coming of the Rat Princess. There is a **trap door** in front of the keyhole, some 6½ by 6½ feet, and a **trap door** 8 by 8 feet in the center of the room. The trap in the middle opens if you step on it, the one in front of the keyhole if you try to pick it and fail. The room is lit by two torches set in holders by the exit to the north.

The gate is opened with the key dagger from 3, and if you want to pick it, it requires *locks & traps difficulty 20*. *Investigate difficulty 10* will reveal the locations of the trap doors, *15* that one is probably set off by tampering with the gate – but they might be busy with Jasca to begin with. If the trap door in front of the keyhole opens, the person picking the lock falls in automatically, while people standing next to her can avoid it with a *difficulty 15 dexterity saving throw*. If you step on the trap door in the middle unawares, it requires a *difficulty 15 dexterity saving throw* to avoid falling in. Both pits are twelve feet deep, and you take 1d6 damage from falling in. In the pit in the middle there is a skeleton of an enormous snake, ten feet long at least, in the hole by hole by the northeast gate there are skeletons of two "little" snakes five feet long.

Jasca the cult leader is clearly the main trial that the room offers. She is a tall woman with an aristocratic, somewhat worn face. She is clad in a chainmail shirt and a dark cloak, and on her belt is a longsword and a (silver) dagger with a beautifully decorated silver hilt. She smells of cooking oil. On the floor beside her is a bottom-up wicker basket. Unless they have been extraordinarily sneaky, Jasca rises when they enter and moves to the opposite side of the room from them (to keep the trap door between them), and bids them to come no closer, and to say who they are. She is cautious and aware that she is outnumbered. First and foremost, she is curious about what these strangers are doing here, and if they have anything to do with the Rat Princess. It should quickly be clear that Jasca does not identify as the Rat Princess, as Jasca is waiting for the foretold coming of the Rat Princess who will cleanse the City with blood.

Then she will try to get away towards 11, back to her cult – she will much rather flee than fight to the death. Trying to fool her requires *deception difficulty 15* – persuade won't amount to much, and *intimidate difficulty 15* makes her flee without a fight, but not surrender. If there are 4 or 5 players, there are 1 or 2 **poisonous snakes** under the basket, which she will kick (and leap away from), if a fight breaks out. She will then tactically cover her front with the pit trap and one flank with the snakes. You can get the snakes to not attack with *animal handling difficulty 18* if it's in the middle of a fight, or *difficulty 13* if Jasca is dead or fled.

(13) The Inner Sanctum

In this beautiful and holy but frightening place, the story comes to a close, if it hasn't yet.

The air is fresh and smells of rain in the vast room. The hall is round, fifty feet in diameter, with a domed roof rising to a shaft six feet wide, forty feet above the floor. Pale, white, indirect moonlight shines down from the shaft, which continues with white marble walls to a spot of night sky far above. There are some withered leaves on the floor. In the middle of the room, right under the shaft, is a stone font with water in it.

In the east end of the hall, on a low stone dais, is a ten feet tall, dark, green-tinged bronze statue of a majestic woman with her arms extended to the sides, palms up. She is clad in garments of holed, fragile, gray fabric and her eyes are glittering opals – the Goddess is a somber and heartbreakingly beautiful sight. In one hand is a dagger (sized for normal humans), in the other is two little arrows (both are tarnished silver). It looks like you can take the dagger or the bolts (and you can). Reaching them, however, requires a full round and a *difficulty 14 athletics* check to climb up and take one of them – with advantage if you get a boost (help), or you already climbed the statue and took the contents of the other hand. The statue is solidly anchored.

There are no other threats in the room but the Rat Princess and such rats as she might call to herself.

Endgame

Outlining again: the endgame comes when a) Our Heroes reach the Inner Sanctum (13), b) a player gets 4 rat tokens or c) there are 45 minutes or less left in which to play. If b) or c) the endgame is in the next area that they enter, instead of what there would normally be of opponents. If a), it is of course right away.

What happens: from an appropriate entrance, an ancient woman in white enters, a lantern shining with rainbow radiance in her hand. It is Great-Grandmother, the Eldest of the rat-catchers guild. She says with a smile: "Salutations, Rat Princess!" A shiver runs down everyone's backs, and all players with rat tokens must roll 1d6 and add the number of their rat tokens. The highest result which is 4 or more is the Rat Princess! In case of a tie, they feel something like wet fur rising in their throats, and must roll until there is a highest. Give them the sheet **You are the Rat Princess!**, which describes their new abilities (bite attack, immunity to non-silver attacks, using tokens to heal harm or reroll). Confiscate the Princess' own tokens which disappear, gather tokens from everyone else and give them to the Rat Princess.

Then Great-Grandmother says: ***"Rat Princess, ruler of the night, it is time that you call upon your people and cleanse the City with blood."*** Then ask the players what they say and do (and note that the scenario does not require combat). It is likely that the rest gang up on the Princess – and then they have a chance – but who knows? Play it as a dramatic scene and make a fight of it if someone attacks. When the scene ends (with the victory of one side, or in some other way), move to the **epilogue**. Great-Grandmother only fends off attacks, withdraws from the fight and disappears.

Backup rats: If there are four players, one giant rat comes out of the shadows to back up the Rat Princess. If there are five players, two rats come.

Epilogue

Round off with storytelling play. If the rest submit to the Princess, ask them to describe a bit about rat attacks and plague outbreaks, and the awful cult terrorizing the City. If they defeat the Princess, ask them to briefly describe how they get out (or not), but say that they must themselves dream of further adventures in the City which has no idea what it has been delivered from, and which still despises the filthy rat-catchers...

Opponents

Suggested house rule: Opponents always have an initiative value of 10+dex bonus. Otherwise, just +dex as usual.

Giant Rats:

Str 7 (-2) Dex 15 (+2) Con 11 (+0) Int 2 (-4) Wis 10 (+0) Cha 4 (-3)

Speed: 30' Initiative: 12 AC: 12 HP: 7

Attack: Bite +4, damage 1d4+2 (Pack Tactics: Rats have Advantage on melee attacks if there's at least one ally within five feet of their target).

Swarm of Rats:

Note that this is a variant. Individual stats are not terribly interesting.

Speed: 20', Initiative: 12, AC: 12, HP: 24

The swarm fills up 5 x 5 feet. When it moves into an opponent's space (no OA), the opponent must make a *difficulty 14 dexterity save* to avoid being swarmed by furious rats. If you succeed, you only take 1d6 damage and can leave the space without the rats following. If you fail, you take 2d6 damage and the rats stick. Every turn, the rats do 2d6 damage. You can use an action to try to roll/brush them off, successfully on a *difficulty 14 dexterity save*.

When the rats are *not* all over a person, they may be attacked normally. If they're on a person, an attack on the rats does an equal amount of damage to the rats' victim, unless you use a light weapon in melee and take disadvantage on your attack – in which case only the rats take damage.

24 points of damage doesn't kill all the rats, but it breaks up the swarm. If it runs into Ada's trap, it takes damage automatically but isn't stuck.

Poisonous Snake:

Str 2 (-4) Dex 16 (+3) Con 11 (+0) Int 1 (-5) Wis 10 (+0) Cha 4 (-3)

Speed: 30', Initiative: 13, AC: 13, HP: 2

Attack: Bite+5, damage 1+poison (2d4 damage from the poison, *difficulty 10 constitution save* halves, rounded down).

Smuggler Cultist:

Stats 11 (+0)

Speed: 30', Initiative: 10, AC: 11, HP: 9

Attacks: 2 x hand axe +2, damage 1t6

Armed with two hand axes (and a dagger), and wearing a leather jerkin.

The smuggler cultists are somewhat shabby to look at (and don't smell great either).



Karl:

Str 10 (+2) Dex 15 (+2) Con 12 (+1) Int 14 (+2) Wis 11 (+0) Cha 14 (+2)

Speed: 30', Initiative: 12, AC: 14, HP: 22

Stealth +4, Perception +2 (+ whatever)

Attacks: 2 x dagger +4, damage 1d4+2 (+ sneak attack 2d6, max 1/turn, samme rules as for player rogues)

Light crossbow: 1 x +4, damage 1d8+2 (and sneak attack 2d6 if he shoots sneakily and with advantage)

Karl has a leather armour with cool studs, a light crossbow and two daggers – one with a shiny silver blade, that you can direct the players' attention to.

He is a skinny but charming middle-aged man, and leader of the smuggler wing of the smuggler cultists. Jasca has taken him as her lover, and he has increased the numbers and standard of living of the cultists quite considerably. He is brave (because ambitious, and somewhat personally devoted to Jasca) but pragmatic.



Jasca:

Str 14 (+2) Dex 15 (+2) Con 13 (+1) Int 13 (+1) Wis 12 (+1) Cha 16 (+3)

Speed: 30', Initiative: 12, AC: 15, HP: 22

Perception: +3 (+ whatever)

Attacks: 2 x longsword +4, damage 1d10+2

Jasca has a chain shirt, a longsword that she wields with both hands (in Frida's hand it would have the same stats as her morning star), and she carries a silver dagger.

She is a tall woman with an aristocratic and slightly worn face, descendant from the old, fallen royal family of the City, and a priestess of the Moon Goddess. She is visionary and inspiring, almost as visionary as Great-Grandmother, and her vision involves cleansing the City with blood. Jasca is however pragmatic enough to value her own life.

Great-Grandmother:

Stats are not terribly relevant.

Speed: 20', Initiative 10, AC: 10 (but see below), HP: 20

Defense: Great-Grandmother only dodges. Thus, attacks against her have disadvantage. In combat, she will withdraw and disappear.

Great-Grandmother gave Our Heroes their mission, and now she is here to pay her respects to the Rat Princess, who is chosen through sacred trials to punish the City that has humiliated the rat-catchers.

Ada, clever, frustrated trap-master, level 2 rogue

Strength	11	+0
Dexterity	16	+3 (+5 save)
Constitution	15	+2
Intelligence	15	+2 (+4 save)
Wisdom	12	+1
Charisma	8	-1

Hit points: 17

Current:

Armor class: 14

Initiative: +3

Skills:

Locks & traps +6

Stealth +5

Investigate +6

Perception +3

Athletics +2

History (the past of the City) +4

Medicine +3

Equipment:

Four daggers, leather armour, trap (steel jaws) with chain and peg, pouch w. 15 silver pieces, backpack, pouch of rat treats, set of lock-picks, crowbar, two torches (heads wrapped against damp), tinderbox, wrapped meal, waterskin, five iron spikes, wooden mallet, roll of string, 50' rope, two hooks.

Ada is great at catching rats. Mostly with traps: small and large steel jaws, snares, rat poison, all sorts of stuff. No rat-catcher in the guild catches more rats than Ada. And yet she does not feel that she quite gets the respect that she deserves as the cleverest and most skilled rat-catcher. It cannot possibly have anything to do with her being grumpy, cynical, frustrated and all out of patience with frivolity and carelessness. Besides rat-catching, Ada has also picked up a smattering of lore on medicine and on the past of the City, but who ever wants to hear what a rat-catcher knows? Sometimes, other rat-catchers, but noone else.

In one round: Action, movement, bonus action (& maybe reaction).

Action: Attack, set trap, help, dodge, (dash, disengage, hide).

Movement: Up to 30 feet if unhindered.

Bonus Action: Off-hand attack (if "attack" w. action), dash, disengage, hide.

Reaction: Attack if an opponent flees without "disengage".

Attack: Dagger +5, 1d4+3 damage (+1d6 if Sneak Attack), thrown 20/60

Off-hand attack: Dagger +5, 1d4 damage (+1d6 if Sneak Attack)

Sneak attack: Once per turn, +1d6 damage on attack w. advantage OR if an ally of yours is in melee with the same opponent.

Fælde: Steel jaws. Dex save DC15, 1d4+2 damage, Strength DC 15 check AND 1 more damage to try to break free. (Less good if others set it.)

Bea, quiet, empathetic rat-hunter, level 2 rogue

Strength	9	−1
Dexterity	16	+3 (+5 save)
Constitution	15	+2
Intelligence	11	+0 (+2 save)
Wisdom	14	+2
Charisma	13	+1

Hit points: 17

Current:

Armor class: 14

Initiative: +3

Skills:

Locks & traps +2

Stealth +5

Investigate +4

Perception +4

Athletics +1

Persuade +3

Animal handling +6

Flute-playing +3

Equipment:

Light crossbow, quiver w. 10 bolts, two daggers, leather armour, pouch w. 7 silver pieces, wooden flute, backpack, pouch of rat treats, set of lock-picks, two torches (heads wrapped against damp), tinderbox, wrapped meal, waterskin, five iron spikes, wooden mallet, roll of string, 50' rope, two hooks.

Bea understands rats, for better and for worse. In many ways, they're admirable animals. This doesn't make Bea show mercy, because killing rats is who she is. With knife, crossbow and patience. Most others are in a great hurry to get their rats ...and yet they catch fewer than Bea. Bea's quiet demeanor often works well with people, too. Not so much to trick people with a quick lie as to make them calm down if they're angry or upset, and to remind people what is actually important to them. Her calm can be infectious. Bea has a quiet pride in her craft and in her people, the rat-catchers.

In one round: Action, movement, bonus action (& maybe reaction).

Action: Attack, help, dodge, (dash, disengage, hide).

Movement: Up to 30 feet if unhindered..

Bonus Action: Off-hand attack (if "attack" w. action), dash, disengage, hide.

Reaction: Attack if an opponent flees without "disengage".

Attack: Light crossbow +5, 1d8+3 damage (+1d6 if sneak attack, two handed)

Dagger +5, 1d4+3 damage (+1d6 if Sneak Attack), thrown 20/60

Off-hand angreb: Dagger +5, 1d4 skade (+1d6 hvis Sneak Attack)

Sneak attack: Once per turn, +1d6 damage on attack w. advantage OR if an ally of yours is in melee with the same opponent.

Carita, exciting, charming fuck-up, level 2 rogue

Strength	12	+1
Dexterity	17	+3 (+5 save)
Constitution	14	+2
Intelligence	11	+0 (+2 save)
Wisdom	8	-1
Charisma	15	+2

Hit points: 17

Current:

Armor class: 14

Initiative: +3

Skills:

Locks & traps +2

Stealth +5

Investigate +4

Perception -1

Athletics +5

Acrobatics (balance, stunts) +5

Perform (dancing etc.) +4

Deception +4

Intimidate +4

Equipment:

Rapier, dagger, leather armour, pouch w. 3 silver pieces, shoulder bag, set of lock-picks, crowbar, torch (head wrapped against damp), tinderbox, pot of cheap brandy, four dice + dice cup, fur-trimmed manacles (the lock is broken).

Carita is a charming acquaintance, full of fun and great stories! And she looks great too! You wouldn't think her profession is something as sad as rat-catcher. With her confident smile and her rapier at her side, she clearly looks like an adventurer, maybe even a hero! Unfortunately, Carita has a lot of trouble controlling her sudden impulses – sometimes they're good ideas, but often, they're pretty bad. Also, she is inclined to tell lies and embellish things in ways which may make her life easier right now, but which bring trouble when people compare notes later on. Carita has had several other jobs and has tried her hand at this and that, but sooner or later things go wrong, and then she ends up back with the only people who will put up with her, the rat-catchers. Which Carita truly appreciates! She's good enough at handling traps that she's not completely useless as rat-catcher, but she is too easily distracted – anything else is more exciting than catching rats.

In one round: Action, movement, bonus action (& maybe reaction).

Action: Attack, help, dodge, (dash, disengage, hide).

Movement: Up to 30 feet if unhindered.

Bonus Action: Dash, disengage, hide.

Reaction: Attack if an opponent flees without "disengage".

Attack: Rapier +5, 1d8+3 skade (+1d6 hvis sneak attack)

Dagger +5, 1d4+3 skade (+1d6 if Sneak Attack), thrown 20/60

Sneak attack: Once per turn, +1d6 damage on attack w. advantage OR if an ally of yours is in melee with the same opponent.

Dina, small-time crook, more elegant than effective, level 2 fighter

Strength	10	0 (+2 save)
Dexterity	17	+3
Constitution	15	+2 (+4 save)
Intelligence	12	+1
Wisdom	9	-1
Charisma	14	+2

Hit points: 20

Current:

Armor class: 14

Initiative: +3

Skills:

Locks & traps +3

Stealth +5

Investigate +1

Perception -1

Athletics +2

Sleight of hand (tricks) +5

Deception +4

Equipment:

Two shortswords, two daggers, leather armour, pouch w. 12 silver pieces, shoulder bag, set of lock-picks, crowbar, tinderbox, pot of cheap red wine, jar of honey bonbons, box of makeup.

Dina is totally cool with her two shortswords! No other rat-catcher is as dangerous in a tight spot as Dina, and as impressive too. Generally, Dina is a bit better at impressing than at actually getting things done. She catches rats as best she can and takes what praise she can get, deserved or not. She makes a bit of silver on the side by petty theft and cheating at gambling. Dina dreams of better things than rat-catching, but she's also aware that she may not really have it in her. And in that case, it's better to be a slightly too cool rat-catcher together with her friends than it is to fail as a con artist, thief or murderer.

In one round: Action, movement, bonus action (& maybe reaction).

Action: Attack, help, dodge, dash, disengage, hide.

Movement: Up to 30 feet if unhindered.

Bonus Action: Off-hand attack (if "attack" w. action), second wind

Reaction: Attack if an opponent flees without "disengage".

Attack: Shortsword +5, 1d6+3 damage

Dagger +5, 1d4+3, thrown 20/60

Off-hand angreb: Shortsword +5, 1d6+3 damage (or dagger, as above)

Second wind: (bonus action, once in the game) heal 1d10+2 hit points

Action Surge: Once in the game, take an extra action

Elja, odd, shy sniper, level 2 fighter

Strength	13	+1 (+3 save)
Dexterity	16	+3
Constitution	15	+2 (+4 save)
Intelligence	10	+0
Wisdom	14	+2
Charisma	9	-1

Hit points: 20

Current:

Armor class: 14

Initiative: +3

Skills:

Locks & traps +0

Stealth +5

Investigate +0

Perception +4

Athletics +3

Animal handling +4

Equipment:

Rogar (heavy crossbow), quiver w. 10 bolts, two daggers, leather armour, pouch w. 20 silver pieces, backpack, pouch of rat treats, two torches (heads wrapped against damp), tinderbox, wrapped meal, waterskin, five iron spikes, wooden mallet, roll of string, 50' rope, two hooks. A much-worn silk shawl wrapped around her hair.

Elja is a bit of a weirdo. Perhaps she should be shooting something more impressive than rats with the enormous crossbow that is the apple of her eye. That she talks to. That understands her. That she calls "Rogar". The other rat-catchers may not quite get Elja, but they don't bother her much, and that is precious to Elja. Other people ask strange questions and seem incapable of shutting up about all the things they don't understand. Elja is patient. With Rogar in her hands she is calm, methodical and deadly. Surely to rats, and perhaps also to other problems.

Elja is proud of her hair, which is long and strong, and which she keeps covered with a shawl that was once very fine. Rogar's bowstring is made from Elja's hair.

In one round: Action, movement, bonus action (& maybe reaction).

Action: Attack, help, dodge, dash, disengage, hide.

Movement: Up to 30 feet if unhindered.

Bonus Action: Off-hand attack (if "attack" w. action), second wind

Reaction: Attack if an opponent flees without "disengage".

Attack: Rogar (heavy crossbow) +7, 1d10+3 damage (two-handed weapon)

Dagger +5, 1d4+3 damage, thrown 20/60

Off-hand angreb: Dagger +5, 1t4 skade

Second wind: (bonus action, once in the game) heal 1d10+2 hit points

Action Surge: Once in the game, take an extra action

Frida, hot-headed, loyal and useless rat-catcher, level 2 fighter

Strength	16	+3 (+5 save)
Dexterity	13	+1
Constitution	15	+2 (+4 save)
Intelligence	8	-1
Wisdom	10	+0
Charisma	14	+2

Hit points: 20

Current:

Armor class: 15

Initiative: +1

Skills:

Locks & traps -1

Stealth +1 (disadvantage b/c armor)

Investigate -1

Perception +2

Athletics +5

History (the past of the City) +1

Intimidate +4

Equipment:

Big, nasty morning star, dagger, scale mail, pouch w. 2 silver pieces, backpack, three torches (heads wrapped against damp), tinderbox, wrapped meal, pot of ale, crowbar.

Frida is really no good at catching rats. Neither with traps, knives, arrows, cunning or really in any way. But Frida comes from a family of rat-catchers, and when she tries her hand at a job as something other than rat-catcher, it doesn't take long before somebody says something nasty about rat-catchers – that they're stupid, dirty, thieving beggars who eat garbage. When you say that kind of thing to Frida, she gets angry and beats people up. Now that, Frida is good at! But still, it makes trouble, and then Frida ends up back with the rat-catchers. Again. There, she carries heavy stuff and snarls at people who come and give the rat-catchers lip.

In one round: Action, movement, bonus action (& maybe reaction).

Action: Attack, help, dodge, dash, disengage, hide.

Movement: Up to 30 feet if unhindered.

Bonus Action: Second wind

Reaction: Attack if an opponent flees without "disengage".

Attack: Big, nasty morning star +5, 1d8+5 damage (one hand)

Dagger +5, 1d4+5, thrown 20/60 (and 1d4+3 damage)

Second wind: (bonus action, once in the game) heal 1d10+2 hit points

Action Surge: Once in the game, take an extra action

Relationships (possibly cut out)

Older sister/younger sister

How old are each of you two sisters?

Over what is the older sister secretly envious of the younger?

Sisters, same age

Twins, or one is adopted? (Who?).

How old are you?

Who does mother love the most, and why?

How do you two sisters stick together?

Lovers

How old are you?

How long have you been together?

Who made a move on whom?

And who is a little jealous?

Competitors

How old are you?

Who of you is the best rat-catcher right now?

Who is it that each of you wants to impress?

What do you admire about each other?

Friends

How old are you?

Who of you was the most popular among the girls in the street when you were 14 years old?

Why is this no longer the case?

What do you do together?

Former friends

You fell out about a year ago. How old are you?

What did you fall out over?

Why do you each wish you were friends again?
(Obviously you are too proud to say so.)

Rat Tokens

In play, as a player you can take rat tokens. Then you tell a brief flashback, and get a bonus when you return to the sewers. The bonus depends on which of the two kinds of flashback you have told. You can tell **RAT OUT** which is individual, or **GANG UP** which requires two players (so you have to invite co-players to join you). **RAT OUT** gives you a reroll on a d20, with advantage, so instead of your failed roll, you roll 2d20 and pick the best. **GANG UP** allows both participants to roll two dice (2d8 for rogues, 2d10 for fighters) and get back that many lost hit points. Neither is obviously magic, but work by you finding hidden reserves of determination.

Telling a flashback means that you establish what happened, who was involved and who was the worse for it. At the end, the target tells about the consequences, emotional and social. The flashback must be quite brief, not told in colorful detail or played out with dialogue!

Each player keeps their rat tokens in view in front of them. At some point they will mean something maybe not so nice, but it is seriously OK to take them if you need them.



RAT OUT:

Tell a flashback in which you rat out one of the other player characters to an authority figure by telling on them about something they did that doesn't please the authority figure. Then, the one ratted out tells about the trouble that got them in (though they didn't necessarily find out who ratted them out).

Take reroll on a roll with a d20. You have advantage on the reroll.

Suggested authority figures:

MOTHER (literal parent)

GREAT-GRANDMOTHER (the oracle and elder of the rat-catchers guild)

MERCHANT LARCHDALE (rich, miserly and a busybody)

CAPTAIN BRAZENHILL (of the guard)

GANG UP:

Tell a flashback in which two of the player characters gang up on a third in a small, mean way – gossip about their secrets, refuse to share a treat, humiliate them or the like. Not gross violence. Then the one that they ganged up on tells how they felt about it.

Then both the gangers-up heal – a rogue gets back 2d8 hit points, a fighter gets 2d10, up to their maximum.

You are the Rat Princess!

Heir to the fury of the Moon, appointed by destiny to cleanse the City with the blood of the clean and the rich. The furry horde of the night is yours, ready to stream forth at your command ...if noone stops you. Calling down the fury of the Moon and the rat horde tonight is not something you have a choice about, but you might be able to work the details a little. How things turn out for your fellow rat-catchers will be determined now!

You have fur and a giant rat head, but you can still think and talk. ***Weapons that aren't silver won't harm you***, you are simply immune.

Rat Tokens: Your own tokens disappear, but you get everyone else's rat tokens. These you can use for two purposes, and you can use them freely as long as you have stores.

Healing: For ONE rat token you can heal yourself of 1d6 hit points of harm – if you are hurt, it's a good idea to do this right away. ***Describe how your wounds close.***

Reroll: For TWO rat tokens, you can reroll a failed d20 roll. ***Describe your furious strength.***

Rat Bite:

When you use your action to attack, ***in addition to what you usually do*** you can bite an opponent in melee with your big, sharp rat teeth:

Extra attack +5, damage 1d4+3



DM's overview

Style of play

Be generous with information, let it flow freely in conversation – skills can give extra advantages or little tidbits.

Foreshadow dangers – the players should never be hit with a trap or an opponent without you hinting that something was dangerous.

Keep the pace high – drive the game and the players forward, remind them of the time pressure often.

Rat tokens

You take a rat token, and a brief, narrated flashback gives a bonus. Aid sheet for the players on page 32.

Gang up for healing, 2d8 or 2d10 – two players on a third, both take a token and healing.

Rat out for reroll with advantage – betray another player character to an authority figure for another chance, with advantage.

MOM (literal parent)

GREAT-GRANDMOTHER (elder and oracle of the rat-catcher's guild)

MERCHANT LARCHDALE (rich, miserly and a busybody)

CAPTAIN BRAZENHILL (of the watch)

Actions in combat

In one round, in any order, Reaction out of turn.

One **Action**

One **Movement**

One **Bonus Action** in any order.

(One **Reaction** – when there's something to react to)

Endgame

(a) When Our Heroes reach the Inner Sanctum (13).

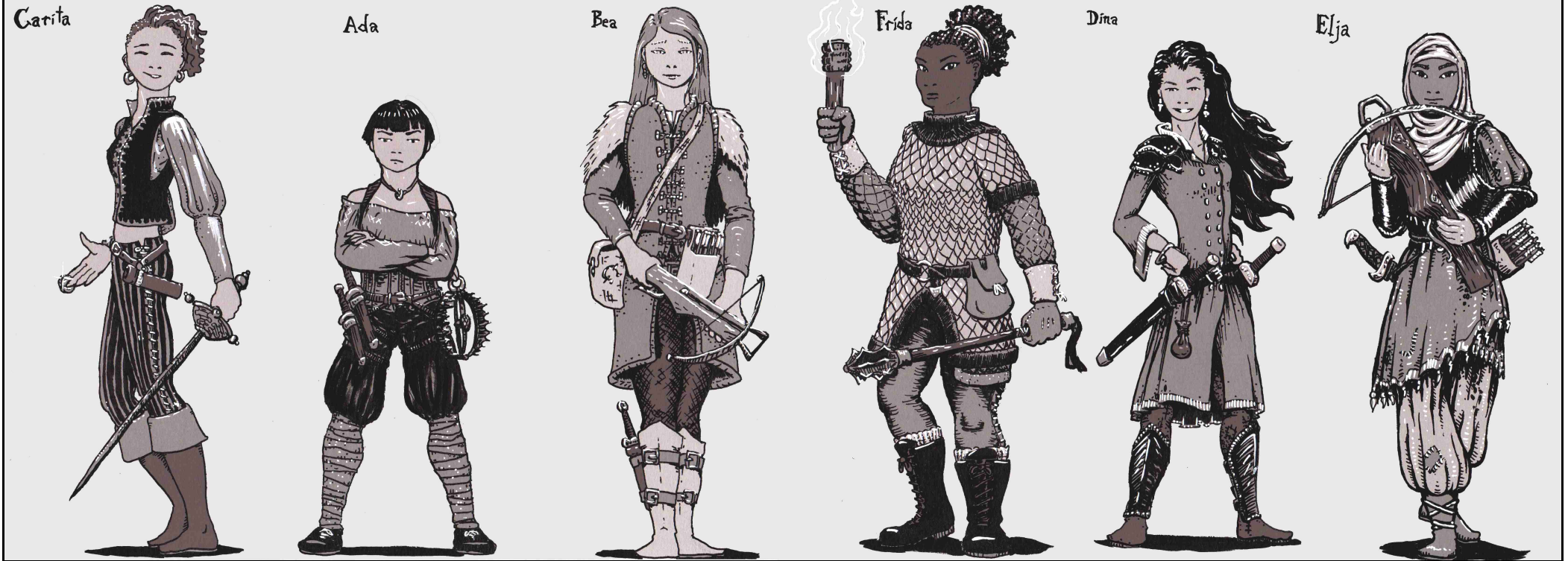
(b) A player reaches 4 rat tokens.

(c) There's 45 minutes or less in which to play.

If (b) or (c), the endgame is in the next area that they enter, instead of what opponents would normally be there. If (a), it is of course right away. See *Endgame* page 22 and *You are the Rat Princess!*, page 33.



Rat-Catchers Menu



**Exciting,
charming
fuck-up**

**Clever,
frustrated trap-
master**

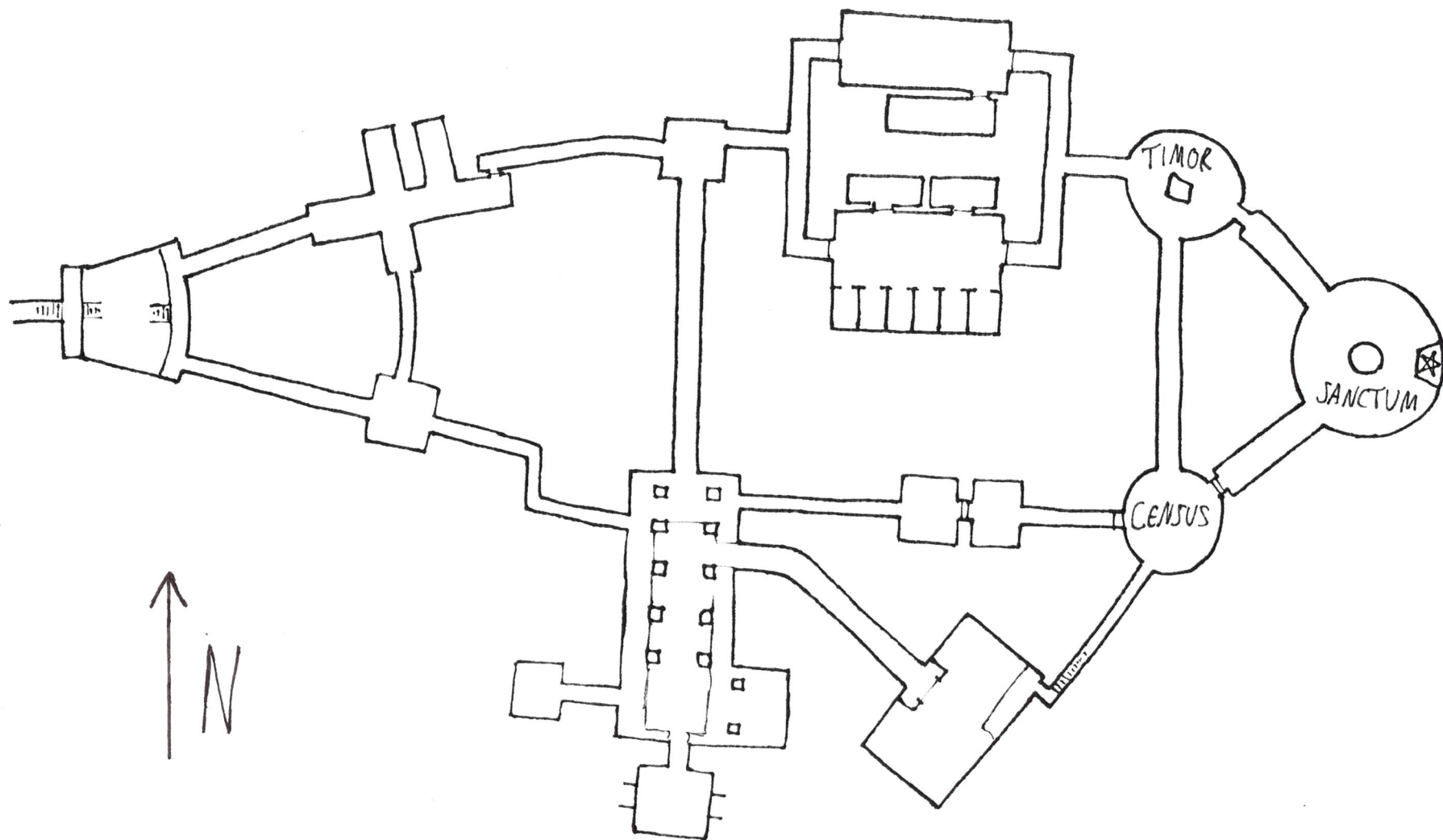
**Quiet,
empathetic rat-
hunter**

**Hot-headed, loyal
and useless rat-
catcher**

**Small-time crook,
more elegant
than effective**

**Odd, shy
sniper**

MÄNENS UNDERJORDISKE TEMPEL



MÅNENS UNDERJORDISKE TEMPEL

