

NYR5-S02

# The Ratcatchers' Guild

## A One-Round D&D LIVING GREYHAWK<sup>®</sup> Nyronde Introductory Adventure

Version 1.0

### Round 1

by **John D. Jenks, Amy Gillespie**

with special thanks to Dennis Holliday for the original idea

"Rats. I hate rats. Why did it have to be rats?" A one-round introductory scenario for somewhat greedy first-level characters.

Based on the original DUNGEONS & DRAGONS<sup>®</sup> rules created by E. Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson and the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game designed by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison.

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## Introduction

This is an RPGA® Network scenario for the Dungeons & Dragons® game. A four-hour time block has been allocated for each round of this scenario, but the actual playing time will be closer to three and a half hours. The rest of the time is spent in preparation before game play, and scoring after the game. The following guidelines are here to help you with both the preparation and voting segment of the game. Read this page carefully so that you know and can communicate to your players the special aspects of playing an RPGA scenario.

### Preparation

First you should print this scenario. This scenario was created to support double-sided printing, but printing it single sided will work as well. There is enough room along the inside margin to bind the adventure, if you desire.

Read this entire adventure at least once before you run your game. Be sure to familiarize yourself with any special rules, spells, or equipment presented in the adventure. It may help to highlight particularly important passages.

When you run an RPGA D&D adventure we assume that you have access to the following books: the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*. We also assume that you have a set of dice (at least one d4, d6, d8, d10, d12, and d20), some scrap paper, a pencil, an RPGA scoring packet, and your sense of fun. It is also a good idea to have a way to track movement during combat. This can be as simple as a pad of graph paper and a pencil, as handy as a vinyl grid map and chits, or as elaborate as resin dungeon walls and miniatures.

Keep in mind that you must have at least four players (not counting the DM), for the game session to be a sanctioned RPGA event. As well, you cannot have more than six players participating in the game.

### Playing the Game

Instruct the players either to prepare their characters to participate in the adventure before the session begins, or wait until you read the introduction, depending on the requirements of the scenario as described in the introduction.

Once you are ready to play, it is handy to instruct each player to place a name tag in front of him or her. The tag should have the player's name at the bottom, and the character's name, race, and

gender at the top. This makes it easier for the players (and the DM) to keep track of who is playing which character.

The players are free to use the game rules to learn about equipment and weapons their characters are carrying. That said, you as the DM can bar the use of even core rulebooks during certain times of play. For example, the players are not free to consult the *Dungeon Master's Guide* when confronted with a trap or hazard, or the *Monster Manual* when confronted with a monster.

Some of the text in this scenario is written so that you may present it as written to the players, while other text is for your eyes only. Text for the players will be in gray boxes. It's strongly recommended that you paraphrase the player text instead of reading it aloud. Some of this text is general and must be adapted to the specific situation or to actions of the player characters.

### Tracking

After the players have completed the scenario or the time allotted to run the scenario has run out, the players and DM fill out the RPGA Tracking Sheet. The DM should complete the top of the form and list his name and RPGA number. The players should each list their name and RPGA number. After the form is filled out it should be given to the Event Coordinator.

### Living Greyhawk

This is a LIVING GREYHAWK Adventure. As a LIVING adventure it is expected that players bring their own characters with them. If players do not have a LIVING GREYHAWK character generated, get a copy of the current LIVING GREYHAWK character generation guidelines, and a character sheet from your convention coordinator or the RPGA Web site, and then have any players without a character create one. Once all players have a LIVING GREYHAWK character, play can begin.

Along with the other materials discussed in the Preparation section above that you are assumed to have in order to run a D&D game, it is also recommended that you have a copy of the LIVING GREYHAWK Gazetteer.

### Living Greyhawk Levels of Play

Because players bring their own characters to LIVING GREYHAWK games, this adventure's challenges are proportioned to the average character level of the PCs participating in the

adventure. To determine the Average Party Level (APL):

1. Determine the character level for each of the PCs participating in the adventure.
2. If PCs bring animals that have been trained for combat (most likely being war horses, dogs trained for war), other than those brought by virtue of a class ability (i.e. animal companions, familiars paladin's mounts, etc.) use the sidebar chart to determine the number of levels you add to the sum above. Add each character's animals separately. A single PC may only bring four or fewer animals of this type, and animals with different CRs are added separately. Nevertheless, if a character has the Mounted Combat feat, he may bring a single warhorse, light or heavy, with him in the adventure and it will not count toward the APL calculation.

Mundane Animals Effect on APL		# of Animals			
		1	2	3	4
CR of Animal	1/4 & 1/6	0	0	0	1
	1/3 & 1/2	0	0	1	1
	1	1	1	2	3
	2	2	3	4	5
	3	3	4	5	6
	4	4	6	7	8
	5	5	7	8	9
	6	6	8	9	10
7	7	9	10	11	

3. Sum the results of 1 and 2, and divide by the number of characters playing in the adventure. Round to the nearest whole number.
4. If you are running a table of six PCs, add one to that average.

By following these four steps, you will have determined the APL. Throughout this adventure, APLs categorize the level of challenge the PCs will face. APLs are given in even-numbered increments. If the APL of your group falls on an odd number, ask them before the adventure begins whether they would like to play a harder or easier adventure. Based on their choice, use either the higher or the lower adjacent APL.

APL also affects the amount of experience and gold a PC may gain at the end of the

adventure. If a player character is three character levels or more either higher or lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that character will receive only one-half of the experience points for the adventure. Further, if the PC is three character levels or more lower than the APL at which this adventure is being played, that PC will receive one-half gold for the adventure as well. This simulates the fact that either the PC was not challenged as much as normal or relied on help by higher-level characters to reach the objectives.

Further, a PC who is four or more levels higher than the highest APL supported by the adventure may not play the scenario unless the highest APL supported by the adventure is APL 12.

Note: LIVING GREYHAWK adventures are designed for APL 2 and higher. Four or five 1<sup>st</sup>-level characters may find difficulty with the challenges in a LIVING GREYHAWK adventure. If a group is APL 1 there are three things that the group can do to help even the score.

5. Attempt to create a table of six 1<sup>st</sup>-level characters, or try to enlist higher-level characters to play at that table.
6. Advise characters to buy riding dogs to help protect them, and fight for them. All riding dogs are considered trained to attack. PCs who want their dogs to attack must succeed at a Handle Animal or Charisma check (DC 10). Failure indicates that the animal will not attack that round. This is a free action (spoken command) that may be attempted each round. If an animal loses half or more hp in a single round it flees, unless another check is successful.

### Time Units and Upkeep

This is a standard one-round regional adventure, set in the Kingdom of Nyrond. Characters native to the Kingdom of Nyrond pay one Time Unit per round, all others pay two Time Units per round. Adventurer's Standard Upkeep costs 12gp per Time Unit. Rich Upkeep costs 50gp per Time Unit. Luxury Upkeep costs 100gp per Time Unit.

## Adventure Background

With the fall of Rel Mord to the forces of the Black Prince Sewarndt, a great many things have been left unattended. Gardens grow un-weeded, city streets are left in need of repair, and vandalism is left unaddressed. Garbage that would otherwise

have been cleaned up long ago has been simply shoved into an unused corner to rot.

With all this unattended filth has come something rarely seen in the streets of Rel Mord.

Rats.

The rats are so prevalent, that it is not unusual to see one or two even in such pristine areas as the Via Regus – Rel Mord’s version of the town commons and outdoor historical monument. The people of Rel Mord have started carrying sticks to drive off the rats.

Enter the Rat catcher’s Guild. Once a rather modest and unassuming group of exterminators, The Rat catcher’s Guild is perhaps the only group in Rel Mord not directly serving Prince Sewarndt that has prospered. Not just prospered, but thrived. They have so much business, that they have started hiring anyone they can get their hands on.

In fact, things are so busy, that The Rat catcher’s Guild has just received a request for their biggest job ever. Cleaning out the Royal Palace itself!

Having dispatched their best team, the guild is dreaming of the riches they will earn when one of the team members stumbles back to the guild house shouting about creatures. The PCs just happen to be walking by, overhear the commotion, and may be hired to do the little extermination themselves.

## Adventure Summary

- **Opening Scene: Red** – The PCs all happen to be passing by The Ratcatcher’s Guild when they hear shouts of “Blood, blood everywhere!”
- **Scene Two: Green** – The PCs are hired on the spot to serve as temporary exterminators. They are offered an amazing sum, but just to kill off a few rats.
- **Scene Three: Black** – The PCs must talk their way inside the palace. They have credentials, but can they convince the new guard?
- **Scene Four: Blue** – Working their way down into the lower reaches of the palace, the PCs learn something of the inner workings, see some neat rooms, and overhear something.

- **Scene Five: Brown** – Creeping along the drains from the middens, the PCs run into a group of rats. Scared rats. Scared rats running for their lives.
- **Scene Six: Yellow** – The PCs are fledgling heroes, who can’t pass up a chance to prove it. So they do the obvious.
- **Scene Seven: White** – So now the PCs learn what has scared the rats, but can they untangle themselves?
- **Scene Eight: Gray** – The problem was bigger than anyone thought, they should charge more for this job.
- **Closing Scene: Gold** – The PCs return to the guild house and collect their pay. They even manage to pass along some interesting information.

## Preparation for Play

This scenario is pretty straightforward, although the background may be a bit of a surprise to players of Nyronid PCs that have not played NYR4-07 – All the King’s Men. For those players, as well as anyone unfamiliar with the current state of the kingdom, a player handout is provided.

This handout may need to be modified slightly by the addition of some further information depending on when this scenario is being played. Refer to the Nyronid regional website at:

<http://www.nyronid.org/>

For additional information, as well as up to date information as to the state of the kingdom. It is recommended that all judges review this website just prior to running this event, as some facts may have changed.

It is assumed that this scenario is being run early in the year, and Prince Sewarndt has not yet declared himself king. If these facts have changed (see above) then be sure to incorporate these changes into the various sections of boxed text included throughout this scenario.

The trap in Scene Six is a bit odd and should be read a couple of times to familiarize yourself with how it works. Also, make certain to read over the Monster Manual entry on Monstrous Spiders. Remember, tactics make combat enjoyable for everyone!

Judges may find it useful to review the Monster Manual entries for rats, monstrous spiders, and aranea.

If any of the PCs are already familiar with one another they may start out the scenario traveling together. Otherwise, the PCs meet in the Opening Scene.

## Opening Scene: Red

***Rel Mord is a different place than the talk you heard of it when you were a child. Then it was one of the great cities of the Flanaess. Now it seems, somehow, less. With the fall of Rel Mord to the invading army of the Black Prince Sewarndt, the formal government of Nyronnd is divided. The once efficient public work crews are long vanished, and the city is slowly losing its battle against decay.***

***As dusk falls you find yourself walking along one of Rel Mord's lesser-used streets, hoping to avoid the new draconian guards and perhaps find a quiet tavern to contemplate the day. It grows harder to sidestep and dodge the piles of trash; but at least their faintly glowing eyes make it easy to avoid the numerous rats and mice that have come out to feed on the filth.***

***A glow of light just ahead shows that at least one other business is still open. The light illuminates the sign above the door – “The Ratcatcher's Guild.”***

The PCs are all assumed to be on the same street, although they may not be traveling together. The PCs are free to take whatever actions they would like, although it is assumed that most will gravitate towards the guild house, given the title of this scenario.

Once the PCs have stated their actions, have the PCs roll a listen check. While they will definitely hear the shouting, the listen check is to hear the other person speaking in somewhat hushed tones.

The DC for this listen check is 10, although one line in particular has a DC15 listen check. Only check once for each character present. In the following text, the bold portions are the shouted (and easily heard) sections. Regular text has the DC10 listen check, and the single line that has been underlined has the DC15 check.

***“Blood! There was blood everywhere! Everything red, all red. I couldn't get away, but then it grabbed Moeh and I just ran. Red, red blood.”***

“Pull yourself together Larr. You're one of my best catchers.”

***“But the blood! All that blood. Everything red.”***

“Calm down, Larr. What happened to Moeh and Curlae?”

***“It got them! It got them both. I had to leave them, I had to! Or else it would have gotten me too.”***

“Larr! This contract is too important. I don't care what happened to you in there. If we don't clean the palace out, they'll ruin us.”

***“I can't go back in there! Not ever! Don't make me go back. Hire some street people to go die, I can't go back!”***

At this point the PCs should be very interested in what has happened to Larr. Luckily they won't have long to wait.

Larr's employer is the head of the Ratcatcher's Guild, a man by the name of Shahemp. He has been known to hire anyone he can get his hands on in recent weeks. The rat problem is so bad of late, that he's no longer concerned about problems like minor theft and vandalism – so long as the rats are dealt with and he can get paid.

With all his other more or less professional teams out working other jobs, Shahemp is really in a bind. His latest contract is with the royal palace. He knows that he needs to get the job done or be put out business, but anything bad enough to scare Larr is probably beyond him as well. He needs some saps – preferably ones that will either get the job done without trouble, or that will bring this “thing” to the surface for the palace guards to deal with.

While the PCs head towards the guild house, Shahemp will shove Larr into a chair and then rush to the door. There he will spot the PCs and try and hire them on the spot.

***As you look towards the source of the noise, a largish man with a clubfoot appears in the light spilling from the open door. Quickly looking around he casts his gaze towards each of you and he seems to make a snap decision.***

***“You lot! Yes, all (insert # of PCs here) of you! How’d you like to make some good money for an easy job? You all look like you can handle yourselves.”***

Proceed directly to Scene Two.

## Scene Two: Green

Assuming they mutter agreement, or at least head in his direction, Shahemp will invite the PCs in and offer them the job. He’s willing to pay quite well, since he knows that failure will be worse than not paying the PCs. He’s savvy enough to know that the PCs are probably adventurers, and therefore a better choice than he could have hoped for.

He’d like to avoid talking about the death of his other two employees, and will try to keep Larr out of the PC’s interest – but he is resigned to deal with it if he can’t avoid it. Completing the contract is everything, and therefore money (up to a point) isn’t the deciding matter.

He won’t let the PCs ruin him either. But throwing them 75 gold nobles (gp) apiece should keep them interested.

***Having invited you all in, and pouring each of you a cup of strong green tea, the clubfooted man takes a seat and outlines his troubles.***

***“Okay here is the situation. I’m desperate. As you probably saw on your way in, I’m the head of the Ratcatcher’s Guild – local #3. I’ve got a contract that I need to complete by tomorrow evening, but all of my teams are busy with other projects and can’t really be pulled out in the middle.***

***“What I need are a few stout souls to go in and kill off a bunch of rats. I’ve got some poison that will finish off the nests, but those rats defend them pretty hard – so you’ll want to take clubs and bash them a bunch so you can get close.***

***“Anyhow, it’s like this. I give you lot a small pile of gold nobles – say 75 apiece – and you folks go take care of this contract for me. Sounds good, no?”***

Most groups will have questions at this point. Some may even have several questions. Below are some example questions and Shahemp’s ideal answers. If a question comes up that is not on this list, just wing it.

- ***Why aren’t you completing the contract yourself?***

“Well, I’ve got this clubfoot and all... Makes it difficult to climb stairs or crawl around in tunnels.”

- ***What about Larr’s report? There is something dangerous in there.***

“Maybe so. That’s why I am paying you 75 gold – each no less – to take care of whatever is down there. At least a few of you have the look of adventurers. Maybe the Black Prince doesn’t like the type, but I’ve been around a long time, and you guys get things done.”

- ***You just lost two people and you only want to pay us 75 gold apiece? We need more than that.***

“Fine. I’ll go up to 100 gold each, but no more. I need to complete a contract to stay in business. Any more than 100 gold each and I may as well pack up now.”

- ***Where is this contract taking place?***

“Well that would be the reason it is so important to get it done by tomorrow night. The contract’s with the royal palace itself.”

- ***The Palace! You expect a group of adventurers to just waltz right up to the palace and just ask to be let inside without being killed on the spot?***

“Of course not. I’ve got papers that’ll get you all inside. I’ve even got a weapons permit for my operatives. That way you can carry all your swords and stuff without being detained. But you’ll still need to be polite and not do something stupid like pick a fight with the guards. Just be nice and deferential and you should all be fine.

- ***Just rats? Sounded like Larr saw something else down there.***

I’m not sure what the problem is or was. Larr’s not really my best employee, but he’s family so I let him stay on. Look, I’d rather not talk about Larr or whatever he saw down there. I’m trying to hire you all to take care of it so I don’t need to talk about it.

Eventually we hope the PCs will accept the job. If they don’t, the scenario ends here; otherwise you can continue.

Assuming they agree, Shahemp will hand each of them a club and the bag of poison.

***“Alright! That’s the spirit.” He rises from his chair and limps over to a nearby chest.***

**Unlocking it and reaching inside he pulls out a number of bundles and sticks.**

**“Okay, these here are ‘Ratbashers.’ Nothing more than a simple club, but I make a good little profit on them all the same.” And he hands each of you a polished wooden club.**

**“This next one is a bit more dangerous. Rat poison. Don’t drink the stuff, and don’t give it out to babies. It’s not terribly fatal to humans and the like, but rats surely dislike it. I don’t know what the stuff is, nor do I want to. The quad-A makes it up for me. I’ve got a permit for it, and that applies to my teams as well. And don’t think of trying to keep some of it for some nefarious use. You get caught using it without a license, and you get prison time at the least. There is some that’ve been hanged for using less.” And he carefully hands each of you a small waterskin-like bag that has been dyed a bright green color.**

The PCs do not get access to the poison, as they should only be using it through the extent of this scenario, and only for killing rat nests. Any other use will most definitely be punished under the law.

Shahemp will also give out temporary copies of the poison permit, and a copy of the contract giving authorization to enter the palace and conduct an extermination. Both documents are dated only through tomorrow, and cannot be easily forged (assume it is beyond the abilities of any 1st level character).

The PCs may have other questions. Answer these using the guidelines above. Once the PCs begin their trek to the palace, proceed to Scene Three.

## **Scene Three: Black**

The PCs are on their way. This next section is entirely role-playing, and is designed to introduce the PCs to the way of life in the Kingdom of Nyronnd – at least in its current incarnation with Emperor Sewardnt in control of Rel Mord.

**Remnants of summers past hang as brown husks of what once used to be a thriving city-wide garden overhanging the walls of the promenade. Green does manage to sprout up, but in wild tangled messes. The weeds have overcome the once proud tradition of the Hanging Gardens of Rel Mord.**

**It seems that everything has either turned to disrepair or despair in this once great city. As you approach the great fortress of the Castle of Rel Mord, dark banners in red, purple and black, showing the Emperor’s heraldry, hang from the fortress walls. Men in red and black uniforms stand guard at the castle gates watching even the most harmless of peasants with a dangerous eye as they scurry to their homes before curfew comes crashing down upon them with the night.**

**As you approach, two men at the gates straighten up, one of the guards, with halberd in hand, nudges his compatriot with an elbow. The younger man snorts and looks around, offering a wide grin like some sweaty-toothed madman from your nightmares. With an uneducated accent the man steps forward and calls out:**

**“Wha’s ‘dis den? Wha’s you ratty bunch doin’ comin’ ta da castle, wot? State yeer bus’ness so we’s can sen’ ya’ on yeers way, natch?”**

Players need to get past the guards, there is no other viable way to enter into the palace without passing these men. The guards are not against letting the group in, they just want to be troublesome.

This needs to be done with Diplomacy, in order to convince the guards to let the group in without too much hassle. One PC in the group needs to roll a Diplomacy check, while all others in the party MAY assist. To start the DC of this roll is an 18.

Modifiers to this roll come in several different means. A PC thinking to show the paperwork that Shahemp gave them upon accepting the job for the Rat Catcher’s guild adds +5 to the PC’s Diplomacy roll. As well this bonus to the roll, players may attempt a bribe. For every 10gp spent, to a maximum of 50gp, another +1 can be added to the roll.

If, even after all this, the PC fails their Diplomacy roll, the guards will send the group on a wild-goose chase to various city offices which are very much closed. When PC’s return the guards will hassle them in the vein of ‘Just this one time’ or ‘Because I’m a nice fella’ for a bit, before allowing them entrance.

## Scene Four: Blue

Upon entering the Palace, the group of Deputy Rat catchers is pawned off onto a young scullery maid just ending her afternoon duties. The young woman of mixed decent is a naive lass just old enough to no longer be considered a child. She is quiet and shy as she leads the group along before she decides to attach herself to one of the members of the party.

Jenniv, Level 2 Commoner, shows the promise of beauty when she matures. Her hair is still a golden brown, while her complexion is pale. She is in desperate need of an authority figure in her life. If there is a female PC among the party, Jenniv will, on her part, be fast friends with the most 'sisterly' of the group. If there is no female PC, Jenniv will develop a girlish crush on the male PC with the highest Charisma modifier. Should more than one PC qualify for either case, GM discretion is demanded!

Once this friendship or crush has been determined, Jenniv suddenly grows more talkative; speaking mostly to the PC she has bonded with. Jenniv will then take the PC's on a roundabout route through the Palace to the kitchens where the largest grating into the drains below the palace can be found.

Jenniv will be a fine tour-guide, showing little rooms and prominent architectural and historical pieces as well as the pretty mens and womens on the wall.

**Judge's Note:** Think Cogsworth from Disney's "Beauty and the Beast" mixed with naivety and country bumpkin raising, such as:

- ***"And here is a really old vase from long long ago!"***
- ***"There is pretty gold up there on the ceiling. Someone once said it was broke. Guess they still don't want to fix it."***
- ***"This is a picture of some mens and womens. Momma told me they was swimmin', that's why they's only wearing sheets."***
- ***"This here is a room that's said to be haunted. The Emperor don't want us cleanin' it none."***
- ***"Behind this tapestry of some dead guy on a horse, is a passage that we servants use***

***to hurry around the palace without bein' seen. Oh, the horse is dead, too."***

Anything else that would seem appropriate as Jenniv takes the PC's around the palace is fine. These are only guidelines and general ideas. Have fun hamming it up and drawing in the PC's will palace gossip such as: And here is where George and Germina were caught by Mistress Nellar bein' in-tay-mate, is fine. Most of all, **have fun.**

The reason for this, Jenniv's time as a tour-guide is about to end. Having been informed of the Ratcatchers' new group sent to delve into the drains of the Palace to take care of the rat problem, the Palace Châtelaine, Mistress Nellar has been waiting for the PC's to arrive in the kitchens.

Instead, Jenniv has given the group her whirlwind tour of the palace.

***Through the halls of the palace you are taken, given a quick, but grand tour thanks to kindly Jenniv. She acts as a most hospitable tour guide as she takes you the long way to the palace kitchens.***

***A common theme can be deduced from this wing of the Palace: Blue. A dining room, quaint and said to be for small parties of twenty or less, is painted with an azure sky along the walls and ceiling. Nearby, a small study is shown, it's navy hued walls making it seem smaller than it really is.***

***Along the way a tapestry of a warrior clad in blue riding a mounted horse in victory is seen and seems to sway with a slight breeze. Across from it stands a blue door, which appears to remain closed at all times, given the hints of dust on it's raised panel facade.***

Impatient, Mistress Nellar has gone in search of the PC's. Mistress Nellar, Commoner 2./Expert (Profession: Nanny) 3 is an entirely unpleasant woman. Aged beyond description this woman is a hag on her best days. She dresses in overly modest attire, with the fabric of her dress starting just below her chin, all the way down past her wrists and dragging along the floor. And always is it dark in color.

A woman reported to have 'The Evil Eye', Mistress Nellar carries around a black riding crop, which has seen formidable use in all her ancient days. She uses the riding crop liberally to keep the servants in line under her heavy hand. Many a servant ducks and winces when Mistress Nellar nears them or even passes the doorway.



Having found the PC's far from the kitchens, by Jenniv's hand, Mistress Nellar is NOT in a good mood.

***Loud, echoing footfalls sound their way down the corridors of the Palace. Even the few servants out in the open seem to pale and scurry away in fear. Unable to leave her charges, Jenniv instead trembles and appears ready to faint dead away.***

***Finally, from around a corner, a tall, ancient woman comes into view. Despite the many wrinkles on the woman's face, making her look more like a shriveled, old prune, she stands straight and firm in her conviction with an air of utter authority. One would think even the Emperor might cower under the cold glare of those black eyes.***

***"Jenniv," says the woman slowly, her voice reminiscent of nails sliding down a slate board, "You have been wandering again. Do I need to remind you what happens to little girls who wander the halls and do not do their work?"***

***Shaking violently now, Jenniv swings her head back and forth, "N... n... no, Mistress Nellar. I... I... I'll go finish m... my duties now!" And with that, Jenniv turns around, gives you an apologetic smile, and runs down the hall.***

***Mistress Nellar stays, however. Her dark eyes look appraisingly upon each member of the group before her ancient face turns even more deeply into a frown. "You'll have to do," she says with great disdain. "Come along, the middens are this way. I want no more rats come dawn."***

## **Scene Five: Brown**

Mistress Nellar coldly leads the group through the kitchens to a rank room nearby. Here water runs along a trough from the kitchens, ever flowing, washing away scraps of discarded meat, old and withered fruit and vegetables, along with moldy bread made mush by the water.

A large grate is on the floor in the middle of this room, the trough flowing into the grating and down. This is the middens, where all manner of refuse is dumped down into the drains beneath the palace.

PC's will need to remove the grate, difficult, as it's heavy iron, but not impossible or needing a roll. There is a series of metal rungs leading down the

ten foot drop into a small circular room. From there, is only one way, a tunnel 2 ½ feet square. Yes, the PC's will need to squeeze. Play up the unpleasantness of it all. But first:

PC's will need to make a Reflex check, DC 12, as Mistress Nellar oh so kindly empties the contents of a bucket of rotten kitchen refuse upon their heads.

***There is only one place to go from this room, other than the way you entered. A large grate of rusting iron sits in the middle of the slightly sloped room. A long trough of ever flowing water leading from the kitchens slides along the floor and down into the grate. Bits of food and filth are carried with the water into the drains beneath the castle, thus is becomes obvious this is the middens. Mistress Nellar wastes no time, or words and motions to the grate.***

***Removing the heavy iron piece you find metal rungs that lead down into a darkened room. The only light that leaks down into the space comes from the grate and this opening.***

Once all PC's have made their way down into the chamber below, read the following text:

***It takes a moment to adjust to the smell of the room below the grating -- a smell so pungent it stings the eyes. Light trickles down from up above, where Mistress Nellar glares down at the supposed heroes in disdain. With a dismissive sniff, the old woman moves away, and you find yourselves letting out a sigh of relief. There is only a passing shadow which blocks the light for a split second as warning, before Mistress Nellar is upending a bucket of rotten kitchen scraps into the room beneath her.***

PC's will need to make a Reflex check, DC 12, as Mistress Nellar oh so kindly empties the contents of a bucket of rotten kitchen refuse upon their heads.

***There is only one way to head deeper into the drains of the palace at this point – to crawl. Getting down on hands and knees you are forced to slosh over the dirty water from the middens mixed with only Boccob knows what other filth through the narrow passage. It's not a glorious job to say the least, and now it might just not seem worth what little possible reward may be coming.***

***Closer to the foul brown water the stench is even greater, and as you progress, the more the water seems to be turning to sludge and slime seems to be coating the walls, the floor, you. Even crawling movement becomes more difficult as hands and knees slip on slick patches that are the same color as everything else in this forsaken place.***

***At long last, there is light at the end of the tunnel. The passage intersects a larger junction, which will allow you to stand up and stretch your back! A quick glance as you exit the tunnel notes another similarly small passage to the right, while the larger, more inviting tunnel heads to the left. And by the wafting smell from the passage on the right along with the thick dark sludge that comes down it, it seems the best way to go is down the larger tunnel.***

At the point where the tunnels merge, attempting to stand upright will require that the PC make a Balance check at DC 10 to keep from slipping. Characters that fail will end up falling prone and becoming further soiled in the tunnel slime. This is meant to be humorous, so do not use this on PCs without a sense of humor.

Should the PC's wish to crawl through the small passage on the right (much like the one they just crawled out of), it will lead in a roughly straight shot for nearly 100 feet before it opens up into a domed room that is roughly a 5'x5' circle. Coming out of the walls are a myriad of pipes with foul smelling brown sludge and acrid water spilling forth. This area serves as the junction for a series of privies.

As the PCs continue to crawl through the passages, additional small tunnels merge with the one the PCs are using. Any PCs attempting to stand normally at any of these intersections will need to make the same Balance (DC 10) check to keep from slipping. Try not to overuse this joke, but instead treat it from here on out as a method of keeping the party together.

Eventually, the tunnel opens up into a five-foot high passage. As soon as all the PCs have entered this passage, they encounter the Rat Swarm. As a Wild Empathy (DC 12) check will reveal, the rats are terrified of something further down the passage, and will furiously attack the party in their terror and need for escape. If the PCs are having a rough time dealing with the swarm, you can use this terror as a convenient excuse for the swarm to flee the combat.

**Rat Swarm:** HP 13; see Appendix A and the Monster Manual entry, page 239.

## Scene Six: Yellow

The PC's have just destroyed a somewhat scary swarm of rats. If they remember their instructions, the rats' nest needs to be found. More observant or curious PCs will also wish to determine what was causing their terror in the first place.

A bit further down the passage, around a small bend, is a spot where the wall of the drains has broken away. Inside is the rats' nest.

***Stumbling down the drain tunnel, you notice debris ahead, as well as a high-pitched noise. Walking forward a side-tunnel is discovered. There is debris strewn about the floor of the tunnel as it winds its way with uncharacteristic turns towards an unknown destination. With each step, the high-pitched whine grows louder and louder.***

***Finally, rounding a sharp turn, the source of the noise is discovered: a mass of sickly yellow moving bodies can be seen. The tiny little bodies appear to be immature rats. They do not move away from their nest, but the bodies are certainly writhing in place.***

***Cobwebs, and sticky strings of yellowish webbing hang about the rough-hewn tunnel, in front of, around and behind the mass of rats. And just beyond the mass? There appears to be a door, covered with cobwebs that shift with an undetectable breeze. The symbol, if any, upon the door is obscured by the dusty mass. It seems you'll have to move through the rats to find out what is on the other side.***

The mass of immature rats is a trap. Well, what counts as a trap, that is. A swarm of immature rats has been caught in the flat webbing of a monstrous spider (to be seen in Scene Seven: White). So, for this purpose, the Rat Swarm is mixed with the mechanics for the web entanglement rules.

PC's need to make a Spot DC 10 to notice that, while there are writhing bodies of rats in the mass, not all of them wiggle and none of them are moving very well. The rats' nest has been entangled in a web left behind by the spiders found in scene Seven.

PC's walking into the area without taking precautions will also become snared. They must make an Escape Artist check, DC 12 or Strength

DC 16 to break free. Alternatively, attacking the webbing directly can also destroy the snare. The web has DR 5/- and 6 hit points.

The truly damaging nature of this trap, however, is the fact that there are still living rats inside. Treat this similar to a rat swarm, except the swarm cannot move. A PC will still take damage, but does not get distracted as the rats cannot crawl all over them. Filth Fever checks apply normally however.

**Rat Swarm:** HP 13; see Monster Manual entry page 239.

This immature swarm is entangled in the webs and cannot break free; therefore its AC is lowered to 12. The only way to 'disable' this snare is to kill the swarm from a distance and then remove the webbing. Should the PC's kill the swarm without noticing the webbing, they can still become entangled, but the situation is not nearly so dire.

***Pulling away what must have once been sticky tendrils of webbing, a stone door is revealed. In contrast to the rough tunnel, the door is exquisitely carved. Years of dust and debris had hidden the symbol and writing on it's stone face.***

***But now that it has been cleared, before you is the bold visage of a grinning skull ringed with flame.***

This is a sealed entrance to the Necropolis. In fact, it is an entrance that has long been forgotten by any residents of Rel Mord other than the Necropolis guardians on the other side.

PC's will need to make an EASY Knowledge: Religion check (DC 5) to recognize the Holy Symbol of Wee Jas, Sueloise Goddess of Death and Magic. She is known as the Stern Lady for good reason and this should be emphasized to the PC's.

A PC knowing Ancient Sueloise, or a PC managing to make a Decipher Script DC 20 will understand the warning given:

***Beware any who enter here. The Ruby Sorceress, Stern Lady, Goddess of Death and Magic, watches over the dead in her care and permits no trespass.***

The door itself will prove impossible, at this time, to open. It is several feet thick, thus any attempts to sunder it are useless. The PC's are NOT supposed to go through this door. Instead, the

knowledge that the entrance exists may be of use to more experienced adventurers at a later point in time.

However, lying concealed by the thick webs at the base of the door is a long decayed and rat-consumed corpse. This long-dead thief's equipment has long corroded or rotted away, but a careful Search (DC 20, although taking 20 is allowed) will yield several small yellow gems (topaz), which the thief had hidden on his person. These gems are included in the final treasure total – so if only one PC recovers these gems (such as a rogue successfully hiding what he has found), they alone receive the full treasure amount.

## Scene Seven: White

Now the PC's know they're not dealing with just rats. It's fairly easy to trace the path of the terrified creatures.

Following the trail will lead the PCs to the spiders' lair. Here they will face 3 web-spinning monstrous spiders of medium size. The spiders have a tactical advantage as they've covered the entrance to their lair with one of their trapping webs. They have also long ago sensed the approach of the PC's due to their tremor sense.

The spiders will use everything to their advantage, two dropping from the domed roof, and another one hides in the little 'alcove' provided by another grate entrance. The spiders prefer to drop down on their prey as they are ensnared in the trap at the entrance to their little home. However, these web spinners are more than willing to throw some net-like webs at their prey.

**Monstrous Spiders (3):** HP 11; see Appendix A, and the Monster Manual page 288.

Spiders, such as these, go for what moves first and foremost, then deciding between whatever is closest. There is no need for all the spiders to gang up on a single PC – especially if they are caught in one of the webs.

With bad rolling on the part of the PC's, this could be a potentially dangerous encounter. Don't attempt to outright kill the PCs if possible. Scaring them is fine, killing is not the intention, if it's just the roll of the dice that is against them. A PC being dumb and putting himself in the middle of all three spiders without any armor or a dagger in hand has unfortunately brought that upon them.

Just try to keep the PC's on edge, hurt them, scare them, but keep it fun.

***Up ahead, the passage seems to open. A space, other than the slick walls of the corridor can be seen. Wispy white tendrils of 'fluff' sticking to the walls and the curve of the domed ceiling sway in a soft breeze; giving a haunting impression as the room is approached.***

***An odd jumble of rotten food, sewage, paper, cloth and other broken trinkets is amassed at the entrance, rising slightly above floor of the corridor. It appears there is a blockage that is only growing larger with time.***

This room is a circular room of 20 feet in diameter. The domed ceiling is 15 feet in height at the apex, with a small 2 ½ foot tunnel rising 5' further up leading to another drain such as the PC's entered in the middens. Though, where that drain leads, is unknown, and not detailed in this scenario.

**Tactics:** There are two monstrous spiders of medium size hiding in this room, with a third just beyond. The first is on the near side of the false ceiling, waiting to drop onto those who get caught in the web, while the second hides beneath the pile of rubbish. The third spider waits (thus blocking the light) in the tunnel just beyond the false ceiling.

The spiders have advanced warning; thanks in good part to their tremor sense and the fact they weren't making any noise to be heard. Their tactics are fairly simple. Each of the spiders simply waits (those on the side with the PCs taking 10 on their Hide checks – yielding a total Hide result of 22, including a +5 circumstantial bonus for the webbing and other debris in the passage). Once the PCs approach close enough to the false ceiling, spider #1 will drop onto the party, bringing the false ceiling down with him. This will trap any PCs in the last 10' of the passage (perhaps 2 PCs in total) on the far side of the false ceiling with spider #3, who will attack them immediately. Spiders #1 and #2 will attack the PCs remaining on their side.

As with the previous scene, a Spot check will alert the PC's to presence of the false webbing ceiling – although the check DC will be 20, as the spiders have taken more time on this snare.

The spiders are not afraid to use their net-like webbing to try and entangle more PC's rather than biting for damage. After all, once a PC is stuck, the spiders can come back later for a midnight stuck. (Unless the PC is freed by some means.)

## Scene Eight: Gray

Once the fight is over, the PCs can clear the false ceiling and regroup their split party. They will also gain some time to look around. The spiders' lair is a circular chamber with a total of four exit passages. The PC's entered the chamber through the eastern passage. Thick webs that seem to have been there for some time block two others, those to the north and south. There is only one way remaining for the PCs to continue (while the webs can eventually be cleared from the northern and southern passages, they lead to two additional entrapped rat nests that can be easily cleaned out – see the Closing Scene).

This passage makes several sharp turns along the way, with other side passages that lead to small passages two and a half feet square, which end up narrowing or otherwise becoming impassible.

Should any inquire, a Spot check (DC 18) will let them notice that not even the occasional rat is to be seen in this area. After a final set of turns, a large square chamber revealed.

***A large chamber, square, seems to be the final nexus of drainage tunnels before a metal grate with a large heavy lock is seen on the opposite side of the passage.***

***Various trinkets and discarded objects clutter the space, while a small pool of foul smelling and dirty water resides in the middle of the room before draining out past the grate.***

***Settled in by some well-repaired bookshelves in a far corner, is an elven man with book in hand. Upon your entrance, the man looks up and his lips pull back in a smile.***

***"Ah, visitors. It's been quite some time. Have you come for dinner?"***

The elf is actually an Aranea in disguise, in his hybrid form as a matter of fact. These intelligent creatures are spider-like shape shifters with sorcerous powers. He will attempt to talk for a few moments, putting the PC's at ease. However, a PC that makes a Spot Check, DC 18, will notice that his eyes are completely black (there are no whites and no pupil) and he has exceedingly long fangs. The DM should roll this check before hand privately, and mention it in passing to the PCs when the time seems appropriate.

The Aranea, if his efforts at calming the PC's seem futile, will then attempt to surprise the PC's by shooting a web at the strongest appearing PC. From there, the Aranea will attack the most

dangerous-appearing person in the party until it is subdued or all PC's are unconscious.

**Aranea:** hp 22, see Appendix A and the Monster Manual entry, page 15

## Closing Scene: Gold

The PC's should be reminded to make certain that all Rat Nests have been poisoned and taken care off. If the PC's remove the webbing of the Monstrous Spiders in Scene Seven, they will find a rat nest in each of the tunnels that are far less dangerous than the trap in Scene Six.

The PC's will likely make their way back to the middens and find Mistress Nellar waiting for them on the other side of the kitchens. She promptly kicks them out of the Palace, using the servants' entrance and making much ado about their appearance and smell. However, she does give the PC's an official note saying the job is done.

From here, the PC's should eventually make their way back to the Ratcatcher's Local – #3 guild house. Shahemp is eagerly awaiting the PC's to hear how they did. He will be greatly relieved, and be quite surprised to see they have a note from Mistress Nellar herself!

This bodes well for the Ratcatcher's guild, and the PC's have done Shahemp a great service. The man will lavish praises onto the party until they decide it is time to leave. If the PC's do not finish before dawn, they do not receive the note from Mistress Nellar. Returning from the palace to the guildhall, the PC's find that Shahemp has fled and taken their gold with him – the PC's are simply out of luck and receive only their 'Ratbasher' clubs as a memento of their adventure. The judge should skip the final section of boxed text:

***The rosy fingers of dawn brighten up the eastern sky, the last shadows of night being chased away by Pelor's bright light. From atop the hill leading up to the Palace, the Via Regus leads down towards the distant glow. It's been a hard night's work, but even in this time of uncertainty for the Empire of Nyrond, one can't help but feel they've accomplished something good.***

**The End**

## Experience Point Summary

To award experience for this adventure, add up the values for the objectives accomplished. Then assign the experience award. Award the total value (objectives plus role-playing) to each character.

### Scene Five: Brown

Rat Swarm, EL 2

60 xp

### Scene Six: Yellow

Rat Swarm Trap, EL 2

60 xp

### Scene Seven: White

(2) Monstrous Spider + tactical advantage, EL 4

120 xp

### Scene Eight: Gray

Aranea, EL 4

120 xp

### Story Award

Poison Each Rat Nest (2) [Not Trap]

10 xp (each)

### Discretionary role-playing award

Used appropriate skills, feats, racial abilities, and class abilities in solving the problems in the scenario in an efficient and/or creative manner.

20 xp

### Total possible experience:

400 xp

## Treasure Summary

During an adventure, characters encounter treasure, usually finding it in the possession of their foes. Every encounter that features treasure has a "treasure" section within the encounter description, giving information about the loot, coins, and magic items that make up the encounters treasure.

The loot total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if the foes are plundered of all their earthly possessions. Looting the bodies takes at least 10 minutes per every 5 enemies, and if the characters cannot take the time to loot the bodies, they do not gain this gold. If you feel it is reasonable that characters can go back to loot the

bodies, and those bodies are there (i.e., not carted off by dungeon scavengers, removed from the scene by the local watch, and so on), characters may return to retrieve loot. If the characters do not loot the body, the gold piece value for the loot is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

The coin total is the number of gold pieces each character gains if they take the coin available. A normal adventuring party can usually gather this wealth in a round or so. If for some reason, they pass up this treasure, the coin total is subtracted from the encounter totals given below.

Next, the magic items are listed. Magic item treasure is the hardest to adjudicate, because they are varied and because characters may want to use them during the adventure. Many times characters must cast *identify*, *analyze dweomer* or similar spell to determine what the item does and how to activate it. Other times they may attempt to use the item blindly. If the magic item is consumable (a potion, scroll, magic bolts, etc.) and the item is used before the end of the adventure, its total is subtracted from the adventure totals below.

Once you have subtracted the value for unclaimed treasure from each encounter add it up and that is the number of gold pieces a characters total and coin value increase at the end of the adventure. Write the total in the GP Gained field of the adventure certificate. Because this is a Regional scenario, characters may spend additional Time Units to practice professions or create items immediately after the adventure so this total may be modified by other circumstances.

L = Looted gear from enemy; C = Coin, Gems, Jewelry, and other valuables; M = Magic Items.

### **Scene Two: Green**

L: 0 gp; C: 100 gp; M: 0

### **Scene Six: Yellow**

L: 0 gp; C: 100 gp; M: 0

### **Scene Eight: Gray**

L: 250 gp; C: 0 gp; M: 0 gp

### **Total Possible Treasure**

L: 250 gp; C: 200 gp; M: 0 gp - Total: 450 gp

## **Items for the Adventure Record**

### **Fondness of Jenniv**

You have made a fast friend with Jenniv, one of the scullery maids within the Palace of Rel Mord. She is an energetic young woman, and is more than delighted to see you again. This favor may be used or become important later.

### **Favor of Shahemp, Ratcatcher's #3**

Because you came through in a pinch, Shahemp is extremely grateful for your help. You saved the reputation of the Ratcatcher's Local #3, and that's no small deed. This favor counts as an Influence Point with the Ratcatcher's Guild and can come into play at later date.

### **Item Access**

As an introductory scenario, this adventure does not give the PCs any new item access, other than those items that are now generally available to characters in the Living Greyhawk campaign.

## Appendix A – Combat Encounters

### Scene Five: Brown (EL 2)

**Rat Swarm:** CR 2; Tiny Animal (Swarm); HD 4d8; hp 15; Init +2; Spd 15ft, climb 15ft; AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 11; Base Atk/Grapple +3/1; Attack: Swarm (1d6 plus disease); AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2

Skills and Feats: Balance +10, Climb +10, Hide +16, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Spot +7, Swim +10, Alertness, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse

SA: Disease, distraction; SQ: half damage from slashing and piercing, low-light vision, scent, swarm traits

### Scene Six: Yellow (EL2)

**Entrapped Rat Swarm:** CR 2; Tiny Animal (Swarm)/Trap; HD 4d8; HP 13; Init +2; Spd -; AC (entangled) 12, touch 12, flat-footed 9; Attack: Swarm 1d6 (plus disease); AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2;

Skills and Feats: Balance +10, Climb +10 (entangled, cannot move), Hide +16, Listen +6, Move Silently +4 (entangled, cannot move), Spot +7, Swim +10, Alertness, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse

SA: Disease, distraction; SQ: half damage from slashing and piercing, low-light vision, scent, swarm traits (no distraction effect, as the rats are entangled and cannot move).

### Scene Seven: White (EL4)

**(3) Monstrous Medium Spiders;** CR 1 each, CR 3 total; Medium Vermin; HD 2d8+2; HP 11; Init +3; Spd 30ft, climb 20ft; AC 14 (13 touch, 11 flat footed); Base Atk/Grapple +1/+1; Melee +4 bite (1d6 plus poison) or web +4 ranged; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 0, Wis 10, Cha 2

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Hide +7, Jump +0, Spot +4, Weapon Finesse

SA: Poison, web; SQ: Darkvision 60ft, tremorsense 60ft, vermin traits

Tactics: Advantage

### Scene Eight: Gray (EL4)

**Aranea:** CR 4; Medium Magical Beast (Shapechanger); HD 3d10+6; HP 22; Init +6; Spd 50 ft, climb 25ft; AC 13 (12 touch, 11 flat-footed); Base Atk/Grapple +3/+3; Bite +5 melee (1d6 plus poison) or web +5 ranged; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 14

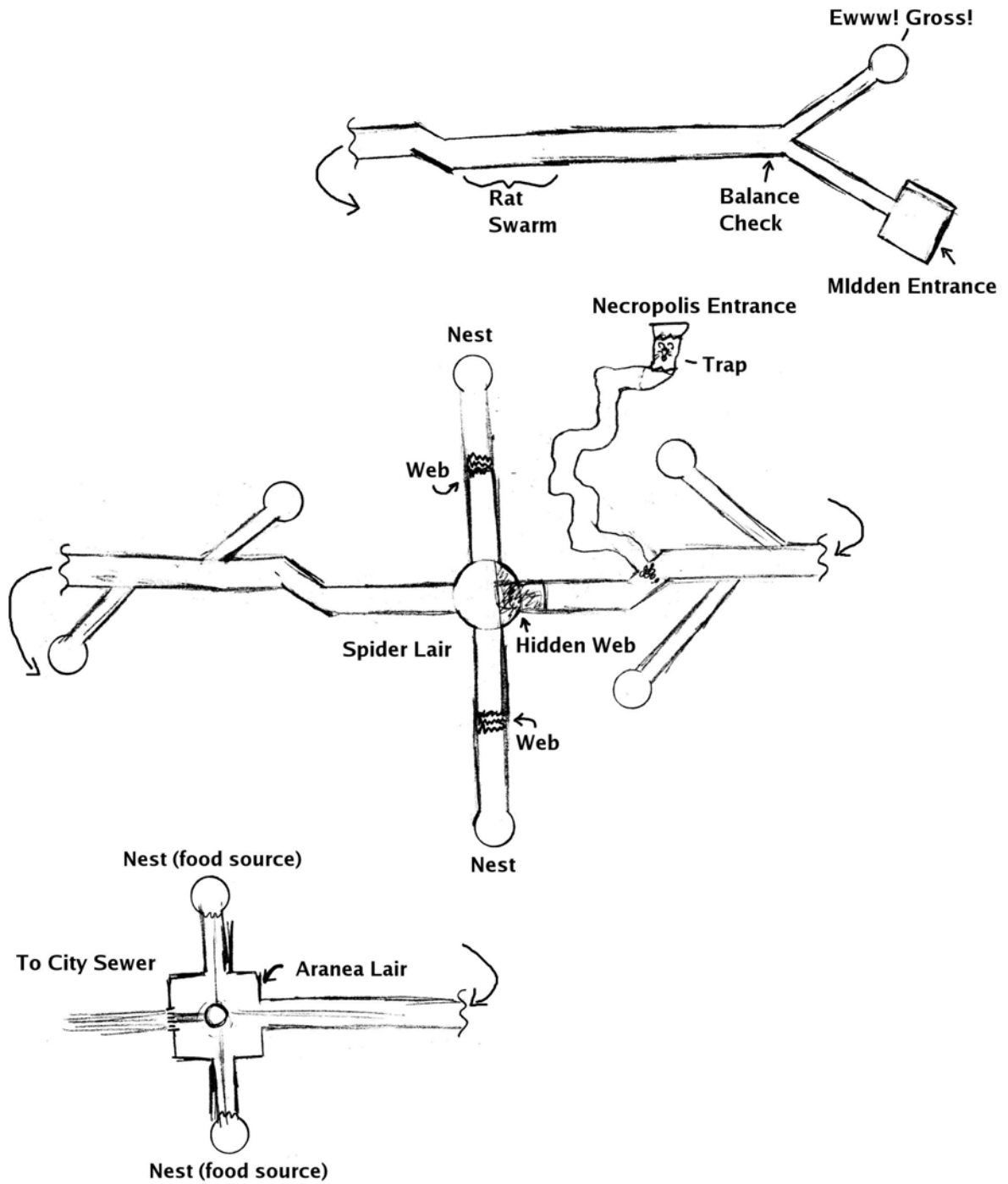
Skills and Feats: Climb +14, Concentration +8, Escape Artist +5, Jump +13, Listen +6, Spot +6, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Weapon Finesse

SA: Poison, Spells, web; SQ: Change shape, darkvision 60ft, low-light vision

Spells: Caster Level 3 (6/6; save DC 12 + spell level): *0-daze, detect magic, ghost sound, light resistance, 1- mage armor, silent image, sleep*

Possessions: spell component pouch (x2), jeweled dagger (50 gp), fine clothing, various books (novels), fine pipe (35 gp)

# Judge's Map – The Tunnels Beneath the Palace





# Player Handout #1 – Current State of the Kingdom of Nyron

On the very last day of Common Year 594, Prince Sewardt launched a surprise attack on the Kingdom by refocusing the dimensional gate located in the depths of Onyxgate. The attack landed in Rel Mord, capital city of the Kingdom. Under assault by a combination of demonic and regular forces, backed up by the foul magic of the Witches of the Bright and the insidious prayers of those devoted to Hextor, Rel Mord fell in a matter of hours. That which had never been conquered, fell easily to the combined might of Sewardt's forces.

King Lynwerd, Queen Xenia, the Gray Seer, and a number of close aides and advisers were rumored to have escaped the fall of the capital – indeed, Sewardt has never displayed Lynwerd's head upon the gates of Rel Mord, something the Black Prince has been known to desire. This leads most to suspect that the King is merely in hiding, waiting a time to strike back at his traitorous brother. However, Sewardt is in firm control of the capital, and his troops are also said to hold several other important cities throughout the kingdom.

Currently, Rel Mord is a city struggling. Sewardt has kept the city open for trade, although there are many who have fled the troubles. Prices have soared, and shortages of even basic commodities are quite common. Most of the established temples are down to just a few acolytes, and the temple of Heironeous is barren, while priests of Hextor roam freely through the city streets.

The citizens of Rel Mord, at least those few that show their faces, are allowed to conduct business during the day, although martial law keeps everyone confined indoors at night. Black-cloaked Constables, forces of Sewardt, keep order in the streets; they seem to have the powers of judge, jury and executioner all at the same time. No persons are allowed to bear weapons with but two exceptions: the Constables are, of course, heavily armed; and the common people are allowed to carry short clubs – to be used only against the rats of the city; with penalty of death if used for any other purpose.

The rats are common; even a plague. Debris, trash, and worse lie unattended in the streets, serving to attract all sorts of vermin – although the rats are the worst of a nasty lot. All public services have been turned off, from the common baths and the beautiful fountains, to such basic services as mail delivery and trash removal.

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