



HackMaster

**Nest of the
Rat Master**
by "Weird Dave" Olson

Tale from the Tavern: Look At All The Rats!

"Have you ever heard of anything so easy to kill as a rat?"

The roars of laughter coming from the table in the corner of the tavern set Aiden Hart's teeth on edge. They were young, mostly, a fresh set of mercenaries trying to make a name for themselves in the city. But their casual boisterousness about rats struck a nerve in the half-elf seated at the bar that was hard to hide.

Behind the bar, Oswald the proprietor looked on his friend's face and knew something was bothering him. He poured a mug of ale and set it down in front of Aiden.

"Something on your mind?" Oswald asked innocently.

Aiden took the mug and took a long gulp. Wiping the suds from his mouth, he jerked his thumb back at the corner. "Young faces. They don't know what's down there in the sewers. Everything's dangerous, including the rats." He paused. "Especially the rats."

Oswald nodded his head. "Aye, that you are correct. But let the pups have their fun. And truth be told, a little confidence can go a long way when you're down in the depths."

"Confidence is one thing," the half-elf agreed, "but arrogance is another. If you're not paying attention, if you let your guard down for even a moment, some giant rat is liable to take a chunk out of your flesh. And it's not the bite that'll kill you, it's the disease that follows."

The barkeep did not answer, though his smile was somewhat less sure than it was a moment beforehand. Aiden shook his head and scratched his ragged auburn beard.

"I needs to take a splash," one of the young hooligans announced much louder than he perhaps intended as he stood up. He gripped the edge of his chair warily as his legs refused to bear the weight of his body, but after a quick guffaw from his fellows and a few moments he smiled and strode confidently towards the door leading to the chamber pot, only stumbling two or three times.

Opening the door, the man's gave out a blood curdling shriek. Aiden was on his feet in moments, and swiftly behind him were the remaining young adventurers from the corner table.

Inside the chamber pot room was a carpet of gnawing, mangy, red-eyed, black-furred rodents, some as large as a small dog. They swarmed over each other, scurrying through a hole in the wall.

"Look at all the rats!" one of the younger fortune-hunters whispered in awe. Aiden's face was grim as he pulled out his blade in a smooth motion.

"Anything you want to share, Oswald?" the half-elf shouted as he backed into the mass, scattering furry bodies everywhere.

Oswald's Introduction

I know what you're thinking. You're thinking that rats are a problem in every city, so why should this one be any different? Well, you're right and you're wrong, friend. This city does have its fair share of normal rats, but lately something's been agitating the little creatures. And the rumors flying around the tavern say that it's not just the rats that have been acting funny – the beggars have too.

If you ask me, I think it's all connected. I don't want this getting out, but the last few months I've seen more rats than normal around the kitchen. Now, don't go thinking I don't run a clean place! I won't have that kind of slander spread about the bar. But don't you see, that's the strange thing – I keep the pests away and still I've been seeing more rats. What's a fine tavern keeper like myself to do?

City guard says that it's nothing to get worked about, but I think they're just as stumped as the rest of us. Maybe more so. Ask around and you might find someone willing to talk. Or, if you're brave, check out the sewers and sniff around for anything ... ratty, if you catch my meaning. Just make sure you've got a strong constitution. I've seen men and women go mad from the plagues in a vermin's bite.

GM Overview

"Nest of the Rat Master" is a section of city sewers occupied by a gifted but low-ranking servant of The Rotlord, his beggar-thrall devotees and several varieties of giant rats. It is optimally designed for a party of five 4th-level characters.

The scenario has purposefully been left vague with regard to its location so as to allow you to place it in any large town or city of your choice. The dungeon as presented is a self-contained warren separate from any connection to a wider subterranean network of tunnels. Neval and his followers have bricked off any outside access for reasons of privacy and security. However, should you have ambitious plans for a larger series of sewer delving scenarios, options have been noted allowing for access to a greater sewers system of your own design.

If you are in need of a city and map in which to host this scenario, you may wish to take a look at Kenzerco's *City Map Folio* available in PDF at <http://tinyurl.com/citymapfolio>

Background

Thirty years ago, a child named Neval was born into a poor family, the eighth such progeny of a seamstress and a member of the city watch. His parents, deciding that they could not afford another mouth to feed, anonymously dropped the newborn babe off at an orphanage several nights after he was born. There, under the care of the patient sisters of the Eternal Lantern, Neval grew up. If not outright happy, he was at least content with his life. He had friends, and though quiet, he was well regarded by those at the orphanage.

Shortly after his fifteenth birthday, a terrible plague swept through the slums of the city, killing many. The brothers and sisters of the Cathedral of Light did what they could to combat the plague, and through their actions many were saved. Unfortunately the orphanage was at the epicenter of the outbreak and nearly everyone died.

Neval managed to survive though he was rendered homeless as the orphanage was burned to stop the spread of the disease. Horribly scarred by the ravages of the plague, he fell into bad company and lived in the slums of the city, feeding off of handouts and stealing what he could. His time amongst the city's beggars taught him harsh lessons, and as the years past Neval became bitter and angry. This gradual transformation of his personality into some-

thing entirely malignant was no doubt facilitated by the fact that he never truly recovered from the plague. It stayed with him all those years as a chronic affliction that became increasingly debilitating both physically and mentally. Neval began to die slowly and painfully from the inside.

Already addled, he frequently took to wandering the filthy subterranean tunnels and passages beneath the city. Neval was reduced to a crawling wretch living in the city sewers, eking an existence off of the refuse of the surface world. Delirious with fever and with the shadow of death itself hovering over him, he stumbled across an abandoned altar dedicated to The Rotlord, Mangrus. In his delirium, he believed the voice of the Lord of Pestilence spoke to him through a giant rat, telling Neval that he could live and serve The Rotlord as a loyal servant if he but swore allegiance. Angry and bitter at the world, Neval readily agreed.

Whether a miracle occurred or it was just the newfound sense of purpose that re-invigorated Neval is immaterial. Either way, he began to take meaningful actions that changed his destiny. His affliction went into remission as he dutifully sought to become an acolyte of the Prince of Pestilence.

With great alacrity he achieved his goals. Ever mindful of his epiphany, he embraced the rat as his totem and sought to express his devotion to the King of Affliction through this humble creature. To this end he gained palpable mastery in training and breeding rodents.

Eventually, Neval came to see himself as a father to the rats, and began to breed new strains. Always he sought to inculcate size and ferocity, ruthlessly culling out those that did meet his specifications. He added exotic rodent species to his breeding stock in the hopes of developing a super rat that humans would fear not only for the threat of disease but also for their very real lethality as predators! To this end he has achieved some success and it has sufficiently bolstered his self-confidence that he began calling himself the Rat Master.

Now, bitter and angry at the surface world, Neval the Rat Master has also mastered the secrets of charming simple-minded beggars and

infesting them with diseases, sending them out to the city to steal and wreak havoc for his lord. From the Chapel of Rats in his own personal nest, the Rat Master cackles at the death and destruction being caused and looks forward to the day when his rats – his children – will take the city in a swarm.

Hooks and Rumors

Utilize “Oswald’s Introduction” as a way of introducing the players to the scenario. The tavern is left unnamed so that you can use one of your own choosing if you already have an urban area with which the PCs are familiar.

You may choose to stage an attack on the PCs similar to the one detailed in the “Tale from the Tavern” or another one in an alley to allow them to feel involved in the rat problem.

5 Giant Rats (60 EP): HP 8 each, Init 0, Spd 10, Rch 0', Atk +0, Dmg 1d4+1, Special Atk *any bite subjects victim to Rat Bite Fever*, Def -1, DR 1, ToP 10/ 3, Size S, Move (Jog) 5 ft./sec.

Once the characters have a personal stake in the rat problem, they will probably be motivated to take more assertive actions in gathering information. Each successful use of the Glean Information skill permits a roll on the chart below (award a +1 bonus for Average Mastery, +2 for Advanced Mastery, +3 for Experts and +4 for Masters).

City Rumors

1) There have been an awful lot of rats seen scurrying about the city in the past few months. Some poor people have been disappearing, too, though so far no one important. Disappearances like this are not uncommon in the city.

2) It seems that a portion of the local beggars' union has broken up, which means there have been less beggars than normal panhandling for coins in the city streets. Most people pay this no mind.

3) A few travelers have reported in the past weeks being attacked by manic beggars who frothed at the mouth like mad dogs. They have not been seen in any mobs greater than two or three, thankfully.

4) Strange rats with hellish red eyes and pitch-black fur have been spotted in unusual places across the city, watching travelers and merchants as they go about their days. There seems to be an unusual number of beggars in the same areas as well.

5) A mad beggar was caught by the city guard screaming about “the Rat Master” and how his “army of rats and beggars was going to wash over the city like a plague.” The speech was discounted as the rambling of a lunatic.

6) Some wealthy merchants in the city have let it be known that certain valuable objects have been stolen. They don't want to create a panic, but if someone were to return such valuables a reward would likely follow.

7) I can't believe the town council allows all those filthy beggars free lodging in the sewers. I'm going to complain to my alderman.

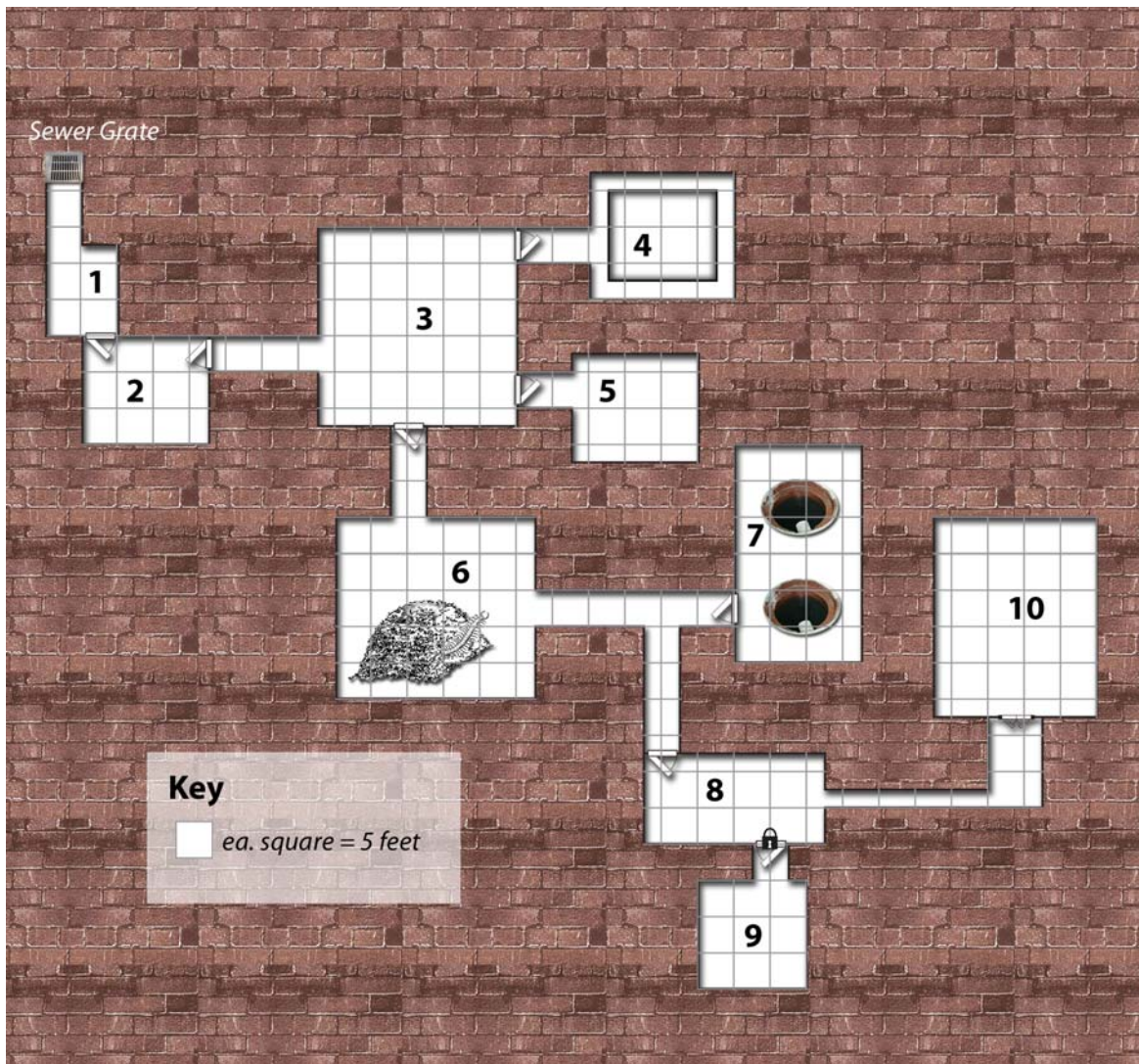
8) Our new kitchen servant, what's his name... Sammet, that's it. Well he never returned from that errand I sent him on to [general vicinity of the Rat Master's temple]. Seemed like a good kid, didn't think he'd just disappear, especially with me owing him a week's pay. Go figure. (reroll if rolled a second time)

9) “I see ‘dem filthy beggars hangin’ around [location of grate leading to the Rotlord's temple]. Ain't up to no good that's fer certain.

10+) I saw a group of four beggars lift a sewer grate in [location of Rat Master's temple] and scurry below. I thought that was odd. Kept my eye on it all night and saw it happen again. I wonder if they're living down there. Poor souls.

Map Key

The nest of the Rat Master is accessible from the city streets via a sewer grate. It is left for the GM to place this entryway in a reasonable location. The Rat Master is secretive and prefers security through obscurity. As such, he does not post exterior guards. A malingering crowd of armed beggar-thralls might draw the unwanted interest of the city watch while unnaturally sized rats would certainly do so. Despite these precautions, the comings and goings of his human



followers has been noted - though those mindful of the beggars' frequent use of this particular grate have not connected it to the wider issues plaguing the municipality. Even the cruelest amongst them merely grumble that their tax levies should be better allocated than to maintain the borough's sewers as clearly they are no more than a hostel for the indigent.

As human beggar-thralls occupy much of the subterranean area, the dungeon is lit at least partially in chambers unless otherwise stated. This illumination normally comes from burning piles of garbage serving as braziers but a few of the rooms contain actual torches.

Unless otherwise stated, beggar-thralls carry only 1d4p trade coins on them at any given time.

Endemic Disease Warning: The entire complex is permeated with noxious vapors. This miasma makes anyone breathing it in vulnerable to catching Bog Madness (see details of this disease in the appendix). A communicability check should be made for each character. Perform this check **once per foray** into the complex.

1. The Warning

Encounter: none

Potential Yield: foreknowledge that a temple dedicated to the Rotlord exists within these sewers

Have the party roll observation checks as they approach the Nest of the Rat Master. Read all, some, or none of the following depending on their rolls:

Read the following when the characters enter.

After descending the filthy shaft beneath the grate, you find yourselves in a cylindrical tunnel some five feet in width. The wall to your north has been bricked up. While gazing in the opposite direction you note that the passage shortly ends in a dank stone chamber. Puddles of murky, suspicious liquid dot the pitted floor in between the piles of rotting refuse and mold. The stink from it assails your senses and you choke back a gag as you adjust to the noxious air. Against the far wall of the room is a wooden door, closed but clearly in poor repair. Next to it lies a moldering body. Tattered rags drape the slumped figure's rotted frame. Clutched in the figure's hands is a wooden placard.

Garbage is piled in great heaps upon the floor of this room, obscuring the ground almost completely. Clearly gathered from all manner of discarded junk and refuse, the piles now serve as the feast for a number of giant rats who chew obsessively on whatever they lay their paws and teeth upon.

Anyone examining the corpse will note that most of the skin has been gnawed off judging by the teeth marks on the bone. The remains look like they might be those of a wizened human male. Upon the placard is scrawled a skull with a diagonal line intersecting the left eye socket.

There are no rats in this room, just the aforementioned creepy rotted corpse of a beggar who died many months ago. The sign was constructed as a way for the beggar-thralls to know they have reached the nest (they symbol on the placard being a crude rendition of the divine icon of the Rotlord). The corpse is a blunter message to warn rival vagrants away.

A PC with any mastery in Religion (the Rotlord) will recognize the symbol for what it is (the diagonal line is intended to be a worm exiting the skull) and the certainty that a priest of the Rotlord dwells nearby.

The door is easily opened (though you may wish to require a Feat of Strength check just for show). Anyone choosing to listen at the door beforehand should be granted an (average) Listening check. If successful, they hear the sound of rats scurrying and squeaking in the chamber beyond. Armed with this foreknowledge, PCs should be permitted a d8 initiative die for the upcoming encounter.

2. Feast of the Rats

Encounter: 10 giant rats (120 EPs)

Potential Yield: engagement ring (25 sp)

Anyone moving greater than walking speed in this room must make a Feat of Agility check (vs. 10 if jogging, 13 if sprinting, or 16 if running) each second of movement or stumble in the garbage. A failure means the character forgoes that second's movement and falls flat if they are sprinting or running. If a character falls, he drops any items he was carrying in his hands and must spend d3 seconds standing up and retrieving his items. Being small and sure-footed creatures used to this terrain, the giant rats do not suffer such penalties.

There are 10 giant rats gnawing away at refuse in this room. Here in their lair they will Aggressively Attack (see Special Combat Moves in *HackMaster Basic Plus* or the *Player's Handbook*). Despite this bravado, they are still cowardly creatures, so be mindful of their morale.

Once the rats are killed or dispersed, characters may search through the garbage. The first PC to succeed at an (average) Scrutiny skill check will spot a shiny glint of metal. Digging further uncovers a silver engagement ring set with a small stone worth 25 sp. (The owner of this ring threw it away during a heated argument with her fiancé over questions of fidelity.)

10 Giant Rats (120 EP): HP 8 each, Init 0, Spd 10, Rch 0', Atk +0, Dmg 1d4+1, Special Atk *any bite subjects victim to Rat Bite Fever*, Def -1, DR 1, ToP 10/ 3, Size S, Move (Jog) 5 ft./sec.

3. Thrall Hall

Encounter: 14 giant rats (120 EPs)

Potential Yield: d4p trade coins per bum

Potential Story Award: 200 EP for resisting scurrilous goading and obtaining useful information

No check is necessary to detect the sounds of snoring and general commotion coming from this



chamber. The beggar-thralls inside suffer a +20% penalty to their Observation checks to detect sneaking characters due to their general lethargic attitude.

Read the following when the characters enter.

This vaulted chamber is over twenty-five feet wide, with piles of burning garbage scattered haphazardly about.

The light from the fires illuminates a large number of beggars dressed in tattered rags, their dirty disheveled faces partially obscured beneath heavy hoods. Their hands are bound in bandages, most of which cover up oozing sores of unknown nature. These beggars gather around the fires, chatting quietly amongst themselves, while an equal number sleep in piles of filthy rags.

This is a gathering place for the beggar-thralls of the Rat Master, a spot where they can sleep, sip muskatel and await further orders. The beggars are uniformly lazy, lethargic and possibly intoxicated. Unless the characters start a fight or act suspiciously (GM's call), the occupants of this room simply keep to themselves. There are 14 beggar-thralls in here, and half of them are sleeping.

Character may wish to interrogate some of the vagrants in order to learn more about the complex or they may simply be kind-hearted softies that want to help the downtrodden. They may be in for a literal rude surprise as all of these bums are afflicted with Bog Madness. Each and every one is a cantankerous old bastard and exceedingly unpleasant. As GM, do your best to be as utterly churlish and insolent as possible when roleplaying the part of the beggar-thralls. They have no fear of being confrontational even if threatened with bodily harm – possibly expectorating upon the person making such a threat.

Discourteousness notwithstanding, some PCs may possess the self control not to be baited into a fight and might actually succeed at a social skill check such as Glean Information (albeit with an additional -15% applied to the roll due

to the vagrant's orneriness).

A successful check will yield some basic information regarding the Rat Master ("he provides for us, yes he does!"), while a particularly good roll (≥ 25 over minimum necessary for success) can get a basic description of the dungeon ("he's down the hall in the chapel").

Successfully interacting with and learning information from the beggar-thralls is worth a Story Award of 200 EP.

If provoked (i.e. a character succumbs to the rude handling by the bums and lashes out), the beggar-thralls unite to fight the characters, though any sleeping ones must be awakened (taking 20 seconds to be roused). All have makeshift clubs at the ready.

14 Beggar-Thralls (140 EP): HP 18 each, Init +5, Spd 10, Rch 2½', Atk -2, Dmg d6p+d4p-2, Special Atk *HackFrenzy*, Def -2, DR 0, ToP 6/3, Size M, Move (Jog) 10 ft./sec.

4. Fight Club

Encounter: 2 oliphant rats (190 EPs), 6 beggar-thralls (60 EPs)

Potential Yield: d4p trade coins per bum

Potential Story Award: 100 EP for rescuing Sammet Hrogan

Neval has a contingent of indigent human worshippers drawn to him by their destitution and the fleeting hope of a remedy for their ailments. Most are content to perform menial chores and acknowledge the supremacy of the Rotlord in exchange for a roof over their heads and the meager rations that Neval dispenses.

These vagrant men are uniformly gaunt, dirty and look years older than their true age. Each is also suffering from the major effect of *Bog Madness* (q.v.) acquired by living in the miasmatic sewers. As such, they are all cantankerous (see Ornery quirk) and will lapse into *HackFrenzy* upon receiving a wound $\geq \frac{1}{4}$ of their current hit points (unless they save by rolling ≤ 3 on a d20).

* *Though not brave men, the beggar-thralls effectively have Steady morale if drawn into a fight owing to their sheer cantankerousness.*

Beggar-Thrall

HIT POINTS: 16+d4	
SIZE/WEIGHT: M/ ~130 lbs	
TENACITY: Steady*	
INTELLIGENCE: Slow	
FATIGUE FACTOR: 3	
MOVEMENT	
CRAWL: 2½	ATTACK: The beggar-thralls are armed with clubs. # APPEARING: 1-20 % IN LAIR: 60% FREQUENCY: Common ALIGNMENT: Chaotic Neutral HABITAT: Urban EXPERIENCE POINT VALUE: 10
WALK: 5	
JOG: 10	
RUN: n/a	
SPRINT: n/a	
SAVES	
PHYSICAL: -2	
MENTAL: -1	
DODGE: -1	

At nearly any hour of the night a commotion can be heard from this room in the previous chamber. The sound consists of the yells and cheers of a group of beggar-thralls. Read the following as the characters approach.

The hollering grows louder as you move along the hallway, which empties into a square stone chamber. A five-foot walkway along the walls outlines a large earthen pit, roughly ten feet deep. The soil at the bottom of the pit is littered with bones and carcasses of humanoids and large mammals.

A small group of beggars yell and cheer along the walkway as a skinny lad, no more than twenty years old, faces off against two frickin' enormous rodents. The rats are as big as the lad with razor sharp incisors and an evil glint in their rodent red eyes. Armed with only a sharpened stick, things do not look to be going well for the would-be gladiator in the pit.

If one was feeling sorry for the plight of the beggar-thralls, this barbaric cruelty should open their eyes to the inherent depravity of these men. Even beggar-thralls need entertainment now and then, and their favorite past time is capturing an unsuspecting citizen from the city streets and reveling in watching him be torn apart by the savage rats. There are 6 beggar-thralls watching the fight, totally engrossed in the carnage. Unless the characters intervene, the man (Sammet Hrogan, a kitchen servant) will swiftly be killed.

If the characters leap into the pit, Sammet cowers behind them and is completely worthless in a fight (he uses the Full Parry Special Combat Move if engaged). Knowingly leaping into the 10' pit is considered an expected fall and a dirt landing thus no damage will be sustained.

2 Oliphant Rats (190 EP): HP 36, Init +2, Spd 10, Rch 1', Atk +4, Dmg 3d4p+3, Special Atk *any bite subjects victim to Black Rash disease*, Def +1, DR 3, ToP 15/ 9, Size M, Move (Jog) 10 ft./sec.

6 Beggar-Thralls (60 EP): HP 20 each, Init +5, Spd 10, Rch 2½', Atk -2, Dmg d6p+d4p-2, Special Atk *HackFrenzy*, Def -2, DR 0, ToP 6/ 3, Size M, Move (Jog) 10 ft./sec.

Sammet Hrogan (0 EP): HP 23, Init +2, Spd -, Rch -, Atk -, Dmg -, Def +6, DR 0, ToP 7/ 5, Size M, Move (Jog) 10 ft./sec.

Rescuing Sammet from the clutches of the beggar-thralls nets the characters 100 EP for doing the heroic thing. (This bonus is only applicable if the PCs return Sammet safely to the surface. Merely setting him on his merry way garners no award.) Any intervention in the pit fight will enrage the beggar-thralls and compel them to attack.

5. Hungry, Hungry Rats

Encounter: 7 giant rats, 3 massive rats, 1 oliphant rat (278 EPs)

Potential Yield: none

Read the following once the characters open the door from the Thrall Hall:

The smell emanating from this corridor reminds you of a charnel house – death and decay hangs heavy in the air.

If they proceed, read:

Entering the chamber you spot the source of the horrific stench. Dozens of corpses in various states of ghastly decomposition litter the ground. Most of the bodies have clearly been partially eaten as large chunks of meaty legs and buttocks are absent showing only bones where flesh should be. A few dozen or so rats are nibbling on choice remnants. Most of these rodents are ordinary sewer rats that, though despicable, are nothing out of the ordinary to most urban residents. However, several abnormally sized rodents bolster their numbers. These giant rats, as well as even larger species – some as large as a pet dog and a pair approaching the size of wolves – glare menacingly at your intrusion and move to attack!

This room serves as a charnel house for the Rotlord cult. Unwanted bodies that might bring

suspicion if arbitrarily dumped are placed here to be eaten by the rats the Lord of the Putrid has deemed fit to accompany his cult. These corpses include ordinary citizens abducted by cult members (some captured for nothing more than sport) as well as beggar-thralls that have succumbed to their inevitable fate.

Security reasons notwithstanding, this chamber also serves as a common feeding room for the cult's rats and, as such, a favored area for them to congregate. There are 36 ordinary (non-combatant) rats, 7 giant rats, 3 massive rats, and 2 oliphant rats in here when the PCs initially enter. The larger and more aggressive rodents (i.e. all but the common rats which immediately flee) will attack any unknown intruders.

Once the creatures have been dealt with, particularly greedy PCs may wish to examine the corpses for treasure. If they proceed in this endeavor, each such PC exposing himself by handling a decaying corpse should make a communicability check for Flesh Rot (communicability=10). The rotting corpses have no items of worth.

7 Giant Rats (84 EP): HP 8 each, Init 0, Spd 10, Rch 0', Atk +0, Dmg 1d4+1, Special Atk *any bite subjects victim to Rat Bite Fever*, Def -1, DR 1, ToP 10/ 3, Size S, Move (Jog) 5 ft./sec.

3 Massive Rats (99 EP): HP 18, Init -1, Spd 8, Rch 0', Atk +2, Dmg 2d4p+1, Special Atk *any bite subjects victim to Devil Sweats disease*, Def +3, DR 2, ToP 8/ 8, Size S, Move (Jog) 5 ft./sec.

Oliphant Rat (95 EP): HP 33, Init +2, Spd 10, Rch 1', Atk +4, Dmg 3d4p+3, Special Atk *any bite subjects victim to Black Rash disease*, Def +1, DR 3, ToP 14/ 9, Size M, Move (Jog) 10 ft./sec.

GM note: Should you desire to add this feature, a rat tunnel accessible by size S PCs exists in the west wall of the chamber. The tunnel leads to area 7.

6. Nest of Crawlies

Encounter: 7 giant centipedes, 1 massive centipede (298 EPs)

Potential Yield: none

Potential Story Award: 150 EPs for using the safe route through the room

The Rat Master attracts all manner of vermin to himself, not just the creatures of his name-sake. Within this warm and humid chamber is a massive pile of rotting vegetation that is home to a number of giant centipedes as well as a massive individual.

The composting pile is festering and disgorging a vile odor of rot along with sufficient heat to make this chamber noticeably warmer.

You feel your stomach lurch as you approach this room. In the room's far corner is a humongous pile of composting vegetation whose warm fermented odor fills the area. The pile is alive with movement as a half score of giant centipedes wriggle through the mass. Suddenly a far larger centipede burrows out through the top of the pile and seemingly turns its attention towards you.

These centipedes serve as guardians preventing unfettered access to the private area of the Rotlord's temple. (Areas 1-5 are considered common unsanctified areas and no effort is made to prevent non-faithful indigents from seeking shelter in the Thrall Hall.)

The principal threat the centipedes offer is fear. Their mere presence is sufficient to deter unsupervised visitors from straying beyond the Thrall Hall. Those with a reason to enter the functional area of the temple know that the centipedes will not attack anyone that slowly walks along the northeast walls to cross the chamber. The centipedes are not gifted with any heightened ability to discriminate between authorized and unauthorized personnel. Thus PCs that follow this same path at walking speed or less may pass through this room unmolested.

Characters that succeed at an (average difficulty) Tracking check will note that several individuals have passed through this chamber walking directly alongside the northeast walls. No other tracks exist.

Award a 150 EP story award if the PCs deduce the existence of a safe passageway or are simply fortuitously stumble upon it.

7 Giant Centipedes (98 EP): HP 3 ea, Init -1, Spd 5, Rch 0', Atk +0, Dmg 0, Special Atk *VF 5 poison - suffer d6p at a rate of 1 hp/10s (save for 1/2)*, Def +1, DR 0, ToP na, Size T, Move (Jog) 5 ft./sec.

Massive Centipede (200 EP): HP 28, Init -2, Spd 8, Rch 0', Atk +4, Dmg 1d6p, Special Atk *VF 8 poison - suffer 2d8p at a rate of 1 hp/10s (save for 1/2)*, Def +1, DR 3, ToP na, Size S, Move (Jog) 10 ft./sec.

7. Incubation Pits

Encounter: 5 massive rats, 1 oliphant rat, 4 very sick beggar-thralls (278 EPs)

Potential Story Award: 500 EPs for sterilizing the incubation pits

A noxious odor fills this room rising from two circular pits on the floor. Each pit is about ten feet in diameter with diaphanous vapors emanating from their depths. Cloth sacks are stacked about the corners, and as you watch large green bubbles drift lazily up from the pit accompanied by the sound of something sloshing around in liquid. Stirring the liquid in the pits with long poles are a handful of beggars.

The two pits are incubation chambers for Black Rash and Devil Sweats diseases respectively. The beggar-thralls are charged with maintaining these festering pits at peak virulence by adding nutrients and gently agitating the mixtures. The cloth sacks in the room contain sugar beet derived sweeteners that the workers will periodically add to the pits.

Not all of the rats that the cult captures and domesticates are carriers of these diseases. In order to ensure that fresh rats are thoroughly exposed and become carriers and that the other rats' strong constitutions do not overcome their infestations, they are dunked in these spawning pits (the liquid is sufficiently sweet such that the rats are not overly reticent to swim in them). Currently 5 massive rats and 2 oliphant rats are being re-exposed.

If the beggar-thrall workers are given the opportunity, they poke at the rats to goad them into leaving the pits and attacking intruders. Should they be incapacitated before they can

react, 20 seconds will elapse before the rats emerge to investigate the commotion.

The rats are dripping wet with disease culture so anyone touching them must check for communicability in addition to checking upon a successful bite.

The beggar-thralls join in to (ineffectively) defend their master's totem animals.

5 Massive Rats (165 EP): HP 18, Init -1, Spd 8, Rch 0', Atk +2, Dmg 2d4p+1, Special Atk *any touch or bite subjects victim to Devil Sweats disease*, Def +3, DR 2, ToP 8/ 8, Size S, Move (Jog) 5 ft./sec.

Oliphant Rat (95 EP): HP 34, Init +2, Spd 10, Rch 1', Atk +4, Dmg 3d4p+3, Special Atk *any touch or bite subjects victim to Black Rash disease*, Def +1, DR 3, ToP 14/ 9, Size M, Move (Jog) 10 ft./sec.

Anyone coming into contact with the fluid in either pit must also make a communicability check. The worker thralls are all suffering from severe cases of Black Rash, Bog Madness and Devil Sweats. Anyone coming into close proximity with them (searching for treasure, tending to wounds or other similar actions) triggers communicability checks.

4 very sick Beggar-Thralls (4 EP): HP 18 each, Init +5, Spd 10, Rch 2 1/2', Atk -8, Dmg d6p+d4p-8, Special Atk *HackFrenzy*, Def -8, DR 0, ToP 6/ 3, Size M, Move (Jog) 10 ft./sec.

Sterilizing the incubation pits is no mundane tasks and cannot be accomplished with materials found in this temple. However, doing so is a worthwhile endeavor even for evil PCs and merits a 500 EP reward. A cask of strong alcohol or several buckets of salt will suffice to kill off these organisms as will casting the clerical spell *Sterilize* once per pit.

8. Guardians of The Rotlord

Encounter: 5 massive rats, 1 oliphant rat (260 EPs)

Potential Yield: key to Area 9

The denizens of this chamber are very aggressive and trained as sentry animals. Because of said training, they have effective olfactory Observation skills of 60% that permit them to roll a d4 for initiative if successful. An opposed

check should be made against the first individual that enters the room.

They *Aggressively Attack* (see Special Combat Moves in the *Player's Handbook*) any creatures unless they smell the presence of the Rat Master. These sentinals fight until killed.

A key is affixed to a spiked collar around the Oliphant rat's neck. The key opens the lock in the door leading to Area 9.

5 Massive Rats (165 EP): HP 18, Init -1, Spd 8, Rch 0', Atk +2, Dmg 2d4p+1, Special Atk *any bite subjects victim to Devil Sweats disease*, Def +3, DR 2, ToP 8/ 8, Size S, Move (Jog) 5 ft./sec.

Oliphant Rat (95 EP): HP 36, Init +2, Spd 10, Rch 1', Atk +4, Dmg 3d4p+3, Special Atk *any bite subjects victim to Black Rash disease*, Def +1, DR 3, ToP 15/ 9, Size M, Move (Jog) 10 ft./sec.

9. Treasury of Shiny Things

Encounter: 3 skeletons (260 EPs)

Potential Yield: 4 objets d'art, 2898 tc, 510 cp, 141 sp

Potential Story Award: up to 115 EPs for returning stolen treasures to their owners

The door to this room is locked with a Good quality lock (the key to which can be found around the neck of the oliphant rat in Area 8). Read the following once the characters get inside.

This chamber, perhaps the size of a Lady's walk-in closet, is remarkable for the fact that the walls do not ooze with slime and the floor is clean fitted stone.

Scattered around are piles of coins interspersed with shiny decorative baubles seemingly thrown about as if someone just dumped out a treasure sack. As your mouth salivates at the thought of taking all of this unguarded treasure, movement catches your eye from the back of the room as a group of cloaked figures slink forward. One of them catches the light and you realize that these foes have no skin at all – they are animated skeletons!

The skeletons are gifts from the Rot Lord to protect the treasury of the Rat Master. They fight until destroyed, attacking with their scimitars.

If defeated, the characters can search the room. They will find four unique items clearly marked with emblems of important families within the city (a character can recognize these with a successful Current Affairs (Easy) check).

Crystal Decanter (30 sp)

Gold Signet Ring (45 sp)

Silver Chalice (25 sp)

Silver Locket (15 sp)

Returning these baubles to their rightful owners nets the character a story award with EPs equivalent to the item's value as well as a 10% finder's fee paid in coinage. An intangible side benefit is an affluent contact well disposed to the PC. Selling these items locally runs a grave risk of being implicated as a thief. Specific details are left to the GM.

In addition to these pieces, there is a stoppered clay jar containing a **Potion of Treat Disease** (*effects as cleric spell*) and thousands of loose coins numbering 2898 trade coins, 510 copper pieces and 141 silver pieces. The bulk of the trade coins and much of the copper represent years of effort on the part of the beggar-thralls.

3 Skeletons (67 EP ea): HP 30 each, Init 0, Spd 9, Rch 3', Atk +1, Dmg 2d8p-1 (scimitar), Def +1, DR 3 vs. *crushing*, 9 vs. *hacking* & 13 vs. *piercing*, WF 1 (#1 has WF 6 due to *Unholy Resolve - Unum*), ToP n/a, Size M, Move (Jog) 10 ft/sec

10. Chapel of Rats

Encounter: 5 massive rats (165 EPs), Neval the Rat Master (167 EP)

Potential Yield: Scimitar +1, small shield +1, Wrap of Protection (42 hp), 3 gp, gold medallion (49 sp)

Potential Story Award: 1000 for slaying the Ratmaster and ending the scourge on the city

The sickly sweet smell of vermin mixed with vomit and disease emanates from this chamber. Decorating the stone walls are images of a giant rat face painted in what appears to be blood, smeared by hand in basic murals. The murals depict the giant rat face devouring stick figures, or spewing noxious vapors over a crude drawing of a city skyline. At the far end of the chamber squats the stone statue of a pony-sized rat, upon which sits a hunched figure. Dressed in unusual rags, the man rubs his hands together in anticipation as he leans forward. The light dancing along torch sconces reveals a manic, very rat-like face with pocks and boils cover his skin. He grins wickedly and motions for you to come forward.

Neval the Rat Master is completely insane, and speaks in alternating hushed whispers and loud shouts. He is angry at the characters for killing his “children” and promises that they will pay for what they have done, but not before he blesses them with the touch of the Rot Lord. From behind the statue 5 massive rats run to *Aggressively Attack* the characters and screen anyone from immediately engaging Neval in melee.

Given time, Neval will attempt to cast the following spells: *Hex: Immunosuppressant* (4s) on a rival cleric, *Alter Emotion: Frighten* (3s) on a formidable-looking combatant, *Cursing* (2s) on the three closest opponents. He holds back *Aggravate Pain* for a good opportunity. If out of spells, he joins in combat shrieking angrily but wielding his blade with cruel efficiency, hoping to plunge it into the guts of a character.

5 Massive Rats (165 EP): HP 20, Init -1, Spd 8, Rch 0', Atk +7, Dmg 2d4p+1, Special Atk *any bite subjects victim to Devil Sweats disease*, Def +1, DR 2, ToP 8/ 8, Size S, Move (Jog) 5 ft./sec.

Neval the Ratmaster (167 EP ea): CE human cleric 3, HP 29, Init +1, Spd 8, Rch 3', Atk +3, Dmg 2d8p+2 (scimitar +1), Def +7, DR 2+d4p, ToP 10/ 5, Size M, Move (Jog) 10 ft/sec

Quirk: Delusional

Spells: 1: Hex: Immunosuppressant 2: Alter Emotion (Frighten), Aggravate Pain 3: Cursing, Unholy Resolve (Unum) *already cast*

Special Ability: Touch Opponent for 3 hp damage 1/day (DR ineffective vs. this effect)

Notable Skills: Animal Training (rodents) 58, Disguise 31, Listening 15

Possessions: Scimitar +1, small shield +1, leather armor, Wrap of Protection (42 hp), 3 gp, gold medallion bearing a rat's head (49 sp value)

Aftermath

Defeating the Rat Master and his small army of beggar-thralls and vermin eliminates this chronic danger to the city and is worth a story award of 1000 EP. If the Rat Master escapes, he plots personal revenge against the characters while seeking to establish another dungeon complex, certainly recruiting more verminous minions to his unhealthy cause.

Appendix: New Diseases

Black Rash, Bog Madness and Devil Sweats are newly discovered diseases manifesting themselves in this adventure. Rules for adjudicating diseases in HackMaster can be found in the Appendix.

Black Rash & Devil Sweats are detailed under the rustlers.

Bog Madness

Communicability: 7

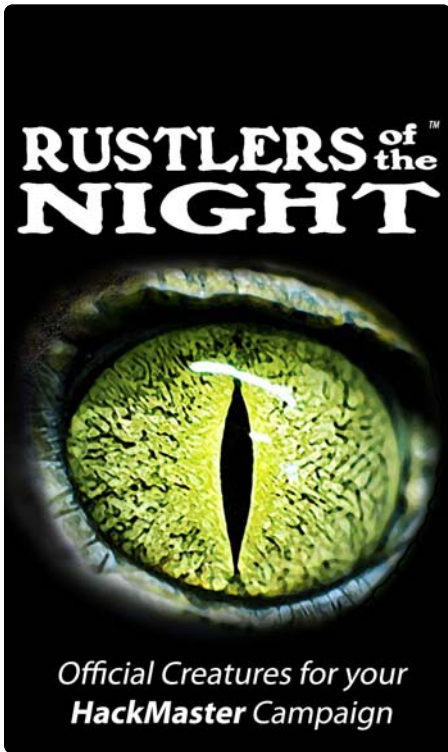
Severity: 7

Where is the disease found? Bog Madness is endemic to northern wetlands such as marshes, moors and fens. The disease has also been transplanted by human carriers and can also be found in the stagnant sewer systems of many cities. It is a miasma disease contracted by breathing in the foul air emanating from areas contaminated with this pestilence but additionally may be contracted from individuals suffering from its effects.

Minor Effect: Beginning a day after contracting the disease, the victim begins to feel lightheaded and manifests difficulty concentrating (assess a -1 penalty to Intelligence and -2 to Wisdom). d3p days later, he will start becoming irritable and surly (effectively gaining the Ornerly quirk).

Bog Madness will persist as long as the victim continues to periodically breath in the noxious vapors that afflicted him. Spending d4p+1 weeks completely removed from the source of Bog Madness will allow the symptoms to recede.

Major Effect: As above, however the victim also develops HackFrenzy (see flaw) d4p days after his quarrelsome personality manifests. Recuperating for d4p+1 weeks in a desert climate is the only known cure for severe bog madness.



MASSIVE RAT OLIPHANT RAT



Giant rats are a pestilence but no more. A forcefully presented torch is usually sufficient to keep them at bay. Unfortunately in my travels I have come to learn that even larger and more aggressive species of rodents exist. This knowledge is most unwelcome...

The massive, or devil, rat is a particular menace. Highly intelligent, they are a true bane wherever they are found in large quantities, as their sheer size and viciousness is a deterrent to many predators that might ordinarily keep their numbers in check. In poor lightning, be sure to look for their tell-tale red eyes as it may be difficult to distinguish between the cowardly giant rat and this far deadlier foe.

The fearsome Oliphant rat is truly a terror to behold. A large as an adult wolf, this aggressive predator bears enormous fangs that can chew through plate armor. While docked in Ashoshani, I witnessed a score of these beasts gnaw their way through the hull of a merchant cog loaded with Kalamaran grain, sinking the vessel in the process.

Signs/Tracks

Range on Tellene

Size Comparison



Massive rats are noticeably larger than normal giant rats and they have an unnaturally slick black fur coat and hellish red eyes that gleam like rubies in the shadows. They are ferocious by nature, attacking without mercy, and frequently carry a debilitating disease that can be difficult to cure if not treated properly. Though disparaged as devil-spawn, these creatures are not actually devils. Their name comes from their general tenacity in combat and unnatural red eyes. They are a significantly more aggressive than their small size would lead one to expect. In general, these rats are only found in particularly loathesome environs: those lacking good ventilation, full of stagnant water and rotting debris, and with a good source of putrifying foodstuffs.

Devil-spawn rats may be carriers of a disease called devil sweats. If so, communicability must be checked upon each bite.

Devil Sweats

Communicability: 2

Severity: 5

Where is the disease found? Meat-eating mammals may carry this disease though they are not vulnerable to the pathogen. Humans, demi-humans and humanoids may contract the disease if bitten by a diseased animal or by consuming its undercooked flesh.

Minor effect: The victim begins to sweat profusely (penalizing his fatigue factor by 4) and develops blurry vision (suffering a -2 penalty to melee attack and -4 to ranged attacks) 1d4p hours after infection. This disability persists for 3d10p hours whereupon the fever breaks and all penalties are removed.

Major effect: Initial reactions as above. However, the fever does not break for d6p days. Each full day the devil sweats persist, the victim temporarily loses 1 point of Strength and Constitution. Should either of these scores fall below 0/01, the victim dies. Complete bed rest and adequate hydration restores STR & CON at a rate of 0/50 points per day after the fever breaks.

Rat, Massive

HIT POINTS:	13+d8
SIZE/WEIGHT:	S/ ~45 lbs
TENACITY:	Brave
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal, High
FATIGUE FACTOR:	-3

MOVEMENT

CRAWL:	1¼
WALK:	2½
JOG:	5
RUN:	10
SWIM:	10

SAVES

PHYSICAL:	+3
MENTAL:	+2
DODGE:	+3

SPEED 8	ATTACK +2	INIT -1
DEFENSE +3	2d4p+1	DMG REDUCTION 2
REACH 0'		DAMAGE 8
		TOP SAVE

ATTACK: Massive rats are aggressive hunters that do not fear fire. They can be dangerous opponents as they inflict a severe bite and tenaciously attack weaker foes. Many individuals are disease carriers.

GENERAL INFO

ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Nocturnal
NO. APPEARING:	2-20
% CHANCE IN LAIR:	15%
FREQUENCY:	Frequent
ALIGNMENT:	non
VISION TYPE:	Normal
AWARENESS/SENSES:	superior olfactory sense
HABITAT:	Cities, Wetlands, Subterranean
DIET:	Omnivore
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any Save Subarctic or colder

YIELD

MEDICINAL:	none
SPELL COMPONENTS:	none
HIDE/TROPHY:	no
TREASURE:	none
EDIBLE:	generally cautioned not to eat
OTHER:	nil
EXPERIENCE POINT VALUE:	33

Oliphant rats are huge abominations thought to be related to the capybara. Their heavy, barrel-shaped bodies are covered in coarse brown fur and they move with an ungainly waddle, baring their incisors and hissing constantly.

Oliphant rats are naturally at home in the water being excellent swimmers. They may remain submerged for as long as five minutes.

Oliphant rats are only very infrequently encountered pristine natural environments. Unlike their capybara relatives, Oliphant rats are heartier and better adapted to the conditions of endemic disease so often found coexisting with communal human habitation. Their natural aggressiveness and temerity toward humankind allows them to exist as parasites of civilization. In general, they can readily obtain sustenance from what their host communities discard. If not, they will become a dangerous menace.

These creatures almost always nest in the putrid, filth filled sewers of major cities – occasionally making a home near the harbor where they can pilfer from vessels docked in port.

These rats are the size of wolves and quite frightening to behold. If engaged in melee, they attack with brute force and little finesse.

Oliphant rats are noted disease carriers like their lesser siblings. Their bites frequently transmit a stronger variant of the giant rat disease called Black Rash.

Black Rash

Communicability: 4

Severity: 8

Where is the disease found? Giant rodents are known carriers of this disease. Communicability should be checked on each and every bite. Rumors persist that other creatures may also be carriers of the black rash.

Minor effect: After contracting the disease, a dark grey rash becomes visible at the injury site within d3p hours, and an hour later it spreads over the entire body, appearing as a dirty bruise. The rash lasts 16+3d12p hours, during which time the victim suffers -2 to Attack, Defense, and damage rolls due to soreness and discomfort.

Oliphant Rat

HIT POINTS:	25+2d8
SIZE/WEIGHT:	M/ ~95 lbs
TENACITY:	Brave
INTELLIGENCE:	Animal, Low
FATIGUE FACTOR:	-3

MOVEMENT

CRAWL:	5
WALK:	10
JOG:	15
RUN:	20
SWIM:	10

SAVES

PHYSICAL:	+6
MENTAL:	+2
DODGE:	+2

SPEED	10	INIT	2
ATTACK	+4	DMG REDUCTION	3
DEFENSE	+1	REACH	1'
DAMAGE	3d4p+3	TOP SAVE	9

ATTACK: Though not as intelligent as massive rats, their sheer size and toughness makes oliphant rats formidable opponents. Their bites can easily prove lethal.

GENERAL INFO

ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Nocturnal
NO. APPEARING:	1-10
% CHANCE IN LAIR:	15%
FREQUENCY:	Infrequent
ALIGNMENT:	non
VISION TYPE:	Normal
AWARENESS/SENSES:	superior olfactory sense
HABITAT:	Cities, Wetlands, Subterranean
DIET:	Omnivore
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Temperate or warmer

YIELD

MEDICINAL:	none
SPELL COMPONENTS:	none
HIDE/TROPHY:	no
TREASURE:	none
EDIBLE:	eating poses health hazard
OTHER:	nil
EXPERIENCE POINT VALUE:	95

Major effect: As above, but after 3d12p hours the rash blackens around the mouth and joints. The victim suffers sharp pains, stiffness and inflexibility in his joints in addition to systemic discomfort

resulting in penalties of -4 to Attack, Defense, and damage rolls. The rash dissipates after 2d4p days abrogating all penalties.

Disease Rules

Diseases and plagues are common in medieval realms such as the Kingdoms of Kalamar. Poor sanitation, lack of knowledge of the methods of disease transmission and simple ignorance all add up to very deadly factors.

Fortunately, the worst diseases tend to be rare, as they kill off the entire afflicted population and then die off when they have nowhere else to go. However, some of the most advanced diseases can lie dormant for decades (or even centuries) while waiting for a living victim. Thus, disease can strike anywhere at any time on Tellene.

Use of Diseases in Play

Perhaps because disease is something everyone can relate to (certainly more so than sorcery or dragons), there has always been a trend to mimic real-world pathology when incorporating contagions into a RPG. The results have usually been unworkably complex with the net result being underutilization except in the case of those specific to a monster.

While such efforts have been admirable, they fall prey to a couple of key conceptual flaws. First is the fact that any RPG is by its very nature an abstraction. Player characters are never so detailed as would be required to perform a proper immunological study. The simple Constitution score does not reflect all the nuances (endocrinology, genetic susceptibility or resistance, etc) required to 'realistically' determine the progression of a disease. Attempting to do is comparable to precisely cutting a beam to a sixteenth of an inch tolerance with a woodsman's axe. The tools available don't support the job.

The second flaw is that the very concept of pathology is an anachronism. Disease agents, vectors of transmission and inoculations are completely unknown concepts. Cities did not have proper sanitation methods and even the use of soap for personal hygiene is centuries off. Much as with guns, the building blocks to implement these modern concepts are present but neither the knowledge nor the methodology (i.e., Francis

Bacon's concept of scientific inquiry that today we take for granted) is present.

Disease should therefore take on more folksy nomenclature ('the shakes' versus 'acute nervous system disorder'). Their method of transmission cannot be systematically determined (and is undoubtedly wrongly ascribed by the afflicted population).

Infection: Catching Diseases

As a GameMaster, you should view disease as another tool in your kit with which to challenge your players. As such, it should be knowingly placed into a scenario with the same care you would position a monster or a poison needle trap. For example, a village the players may travel to could be noted as having the plague. If they enter the village they are exposed. It simply isn't necessary to denote that the plague is transmitted by fleabites, contaminated drinking water or an airborne retrovirus (although if your players push for an explanation, it is fine to have a suitable one). It's an area effect and if they enter the area – they're affected.

Similarly, a specific well, offal pit or even an entire monster lair can be listed as containing disease X. The presence of the disease becomes another challenge.

Disease Stats and Resistance Checks

Diseases have 2 baseline characteristics: communicability and severity.

Communicability represents the ease with which a person exposed to the disease may become infected. *Severity* is a measure of how difficult it is for the victim to withstand the disease.

When exposed to the disease, a character must make a communicability check against the disease. The PC (or the GM secretly on his behalf) rolls d20p and adds his Constitution score while the GM rolls a competing d20p adding the disease's communicability rating. If the GM's roll exceeds the player's, the PC has contracted the disease.

If a disease is contracted, the PC must make a

severity check in the same fashion, with the GM rolling d20p + the disease's severity score. If the GM exceeds the PC's roll, that character suffers the full effect of the disease [denoted as Major Effect in the disease listing]. If the PC matches or exceeds the GM's roll, he still contracts the illness but only suffers the Minor Effect of the disease. These effects are listed under the specific disease listings.

Note that while some diseases mention stages in their effect, this is for illustrative purposes only.

Baseline Chance of Exposure to Disease

Disease should, in general, be thoughtfully placed in your campaign. However, you may wish to use the following table while your party travels about Tellene. Note that should your roll indicate the presence of a disease, you should choose one that makes sense for the area, climate and season, based on the descriptions given beneath each disease.

Death from Disease

While some diseases are explicitly terminal, others may prove fatal to the weak and elderly. If a disease causes a penalty to an ability score that lowers said score to zero, the victim dies from the illness.

Treating Disease

After a character has become sick with a disease, there are few treatment options available. Anyone with Advanced mastery in First Aid can attend to a sick victim and permit him a second roll against the severity of a disease. This roll grants the victim a +1 bonus to his d20p roll versus severity. A master level of First Aid mastery allows a +2 bonus.

These checks represent a knowledgeable attempt to make sure the patient is getting the right amount of fluids and nutrition, and may include other folk remedies. A character with the Major Effect of a disease can, in this way, reduce the severity of a disease to the Minor Effect. A character with the Minor Effect who makes such a check is brought back to full health in 2d8 hours (or the natural end of the diseases' symptoms, whichever is sooner).

In addition, the Clerical spell *Treat Disease* can be used to similarly treat disease (see Cleric Spells in the *Player's Handbook* for full rules).

Conditions	Base Chance for Disease Presence
Wilderness:	2%
Rural:	4%
City:	6%
Shipboard:	6%
Crowded encampment:	8%
Conditional Modifiers	
a) Terrain/Season	
<i>Marsh, swamp</i>	+6%
<i>Tropical climate</i>	+4%
<i>Sub-tropical climate</i>	+2%
<i>Mountainous terrain</i>	-2%
<i>Sub-arctic climate</i>	-2%
<i>Desert climate</i>	-2%
<i>Summer</i>	+2%
<i>Winter</i>	-2%
<i>Arctic climate</i>	-4%
<i>Shipboard (at sea) >2 weeks</i>	-4%
b) Level of Sanitation	
<i>Filthy</i>	+20%
<i>Average</i>	+1%
<i>Above average</i>	-1%
<i>Extremely sanitary</i>	-3%
c) Other	
<i>PC has eaten improperly cooked meat</i>	+2%
<i>PC drinks polluted water</i>	+10%