

MADNESS OF THE RAT KING

A FIFTH EDITION ADVENTURE SUPPLEMENT FOR ALL LEVELS

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INTRODUCTION

Madness of the Rat King is an adventure for a party of low-level characters. Short and sweet, this romp through a mad alchemist's lair can be run from start to finish in about one or two gaming sessions. The module requires little planning beforehand aside from reading it over. Everything you need to run the game, from maps to monster stats, is contained within these pages. The adventure has enough encounters and challenges to advance the party by one level by the end of it.

DUNGEON BACKGROUND

An ambitious were-rat alchemist known only as "the Rat King" set up a base of operations down in these caverns a year ago. He has been working tirelessly in his laboratory since then, using alchemy and magic to mutate and breed loyal rat minions to suit his needs: for example, combining rats with aberrant beholder essence to create loyal "laser rats" with the ability to float and shoot fiery rays, as alchemists are wont to do. To sustain his operations, he sends his rat minions out into the world to collect supplies, from food/drink to other necessary equipment.

The initial motives for the Rat King's experimentation is a mystery even to himself. At some point during his time in these caverns, a dark influence took hold of him, slowly driving him insane. The Rat King now has one clear goal in his crazed mind: to create an army of mutant rats and take over the surface, to escape and protect the world from what he calls "the Old Voice," a malicious entity that whispers to him endlessly from the deep.

Unknown to all the current cavern inhabitants is that in ancient times long forgotten, this was a meeting place for a nefarious cult that worshipped the Old Voice. The cultists left the surface world long ago, but dark remnants remain: a shrine here, an altar there. The poor fools that spend too much time near these sinister devices are susceptible to the Old Voice's whispers, inviting them to join it in the deep waters below.

USING THE APPENDICES

To keep things organized and easy to navigate, this adventure provides appendices for information that you may potentially refer to multiple times throughout the game. The sections are:

- **APPENDIX A: CREATURES.** All monsters and NPCs encountered in this adventure will have their game statistics displayed here, along with a description and preferred combat tactics.
- **APPENDIX B: MAGIC ITEMS.** Any special loot found in the adventure, such as potions and magic weapons, will have their full descriptions and statistics here.
- **APPENDIX C: CAMPAIGN NOTES.** Here you'll find information that ties *Madness of the Rat King* to its optional partner supplement, *Fiery Grog Tavern*.

ADDING THIS ADVENTURE TO YOUR CAMPAIGN

Madness of the Rat King is designed for play as both a stand-alone module, or accompanied by the *Fiery Grog Tavern* supplement which you can download here. In order to maintain its playability as a stand-alone adventure, many notations and descriptions that connect the module to the *Fiery Grog Tavern* have been moved into **APPENDIX C: CAMPAIGN NOTES**. This material contains new developments in the tavern as the PCs progress through the cavern below, alternative or more in-depth descriptions of certain items, and additional information for some encounters.

If using the *Fiery Grog Tavern* supplement, this module takes place in a cave system below the tavern and is accessed through its cellar.

If you are not using the *Fiery Grog Tavern*, you can place the entrance to the cavern anywhere it makes sense to be in your story; any underground location can lead into the Rat King's domain.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Here are some hooks that may be used or adapted to lure the party into the adventure:

- **Kill Those Rats!** If you're using the *Fiery Grog Tavern* supplement, Tofdir Duflame may have hired the PCs to exterminate the source of the rat infestation plaguing his cellar. See Appendix C for more developments.
- **Searching For Missing Kin.** If you're using the *Fiery Grog Tavern* supplement, Sylana Vallejo may have contacted the PCs to find her missing grandmother, Emeria. See Appendix C for more developments.
- **Rescue Mission.** Bryce Halfheart, a restless teen with an adventurer's spirit, has gone missing. His father, a blacksmith named Ilfen Halfheart, fears that the boy got lost in a nearby cave network after hearing rumors that some sort of treasure might be down there. Ilfen offers a 100 gp reward for his safe return.
- **The Armor of Invulnerability.** The PCs overhear some drunken mercenaries talking about the legendary *armor of invulnerability*, once the prized possession of legendary wizard name Oswald the Tailor. Supposedly it was lost deep within a nearby cave network. The mercenaries argue over the details of this rumor -- who owned the armor, how strong it really was, how it was lost -- but they all agree that it's somewhere in the caves. Many have journeyed down into the depths to retrieve the armor, but none have returned. The mercenaries boast that they'll claim the armor for themselves, but right now they're too busy drinking / working / chasing wenches / recovering from injuries etc.

ADJUSTING DIFFICULTY

This module is designed for characters early in their adventuring careers and is recommended for 1st, 2nd, or 3rd level characters. Each combat encounter in the adventure will note its **INTENDED DIFFICULTY RANKING**. The rankings are defined as follows and assume the party don't get a surprise round:

- **EASY:** The party can take down this encounter with just their regular attacks and will only lose a negligible amount of hit points.
- **MEDIUM:** The party may need to use a few of their more potent spells or abilities to overcome this encounter or they may lose a decent chunk of hit points.
- **HARD:** This encounter usually requires a significant amount of the party's limited spells and abilities to overcome it or else they may lose a big chunk of hit points.
- **DEADLY:** Careful! The party will likely need their most powerful spells and abilities to overcome this encounter and will likely lose a lot of hit points in the process.

The module provides the recommended statistics of each encounter for a party of four adventurers of 1st, 2nd, or 3rd level. For different sized parties or more powerful characters, you can adjust the amount of monsters present in each encounter to fit the intended difficulty. All monster statistics, along with recommended monster tactics, can be found in **APPENDIX A: CREATURES**.

sources to see.

Ceilings and Walls: The natural caverns vary between 10 to 30 feet high. The jagged and uneven walls have many hand and footholds, but they are slick with moisture; climbing the walls in these locations requires a DC 15 Strength or Dexterity check, and failure by 5 or more results in a fall (1d6 bludgeoning damage per 10 feet fallen).

Tunnels: The natural tunnels are vary between 10 to 15 feet high.

Stalagmites and stalactites of various sizes jut out from the rough natural tunnels, potentially offering cover and hiding spots but not impeding general travel.

RANDOM PATROLS

The Rat King's lair is infested with his mutant rat minions, and it's possible that a random pack of them will run into the PCs as they explore the cavern. These rat encounters can happen in **areas A, B, D, J, and K**.

If the PCs are making liberal use of short and long rests between clearing out sections of the dungeon, the Rat King may be alerted of intruders by scouting rats and starts sending out patrols.

Additionally, if the PCs are looking to control a specific type of mutant rat with a *potion of rat control* (**APPENDIX B**) but cannot find one in the dungeon, it may be a good idea to throw a random patrol at them containing the rat they seek.

Here is one sample patrol, but feel free to customize it by swapping out rats while keeping a similar Adjusted Experience Points Total:

INTENDED DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

Level 1: giant rat, explodey-rat, spider rat

Level 2: explodey-rat, spider rat, dragon rat

Level 3: rat-bear-pig, spider rat, squeaker rat

RUNNING THE GAME

CONTROLLING THE RATS

At two points in the adventure (**area B** and **J**), the PCs will have a chance to acquire a *potion of rat control* (**APPENDIX B**). This will allow a PC to take control of the mutant rats that they'll encounter. The controlled rat can be used in combat, but their unique attributes may also be used as alternative means to overcome obstacles, such as using the rat-bear-pig's keen snout to identify dangerous violet fungus at a distance, or using a spider-rat to retrieve treasure from an otherwise unreachable location.

While use of the potion is completely optional and is in no way required to overcome any of the obstacles found within the adventure, it does give the adventure a unique flair, so it's encouraged to subtley emphasize the potions when the PCs discover them.

COMMON FEATURES

The caverns are dank, musty, and dirty. Typical sounds include the dripping of water from stalactites, the echoing chitter of rats, and the soft murmur of a stream. As the player characters explore the caverns, they'll discover several recurring features throughout:

Lighting: All areas within the cavern are unlit unless noted otherwise. Characters must rely on darkvision or their own light



This is a downsized overview map. The full-sized maps come with the purchase of this adventure. All maps are made by Ross McConnel at 2minutetabletop.com

CHAMBERS AND ENCOUNTERS

AREA A: CAVE ENTRANCE

This tunnel is the main entrance into the Rat King's domain. His rat minions bring in the food they forage from outside through here. A DC 10 Perception or Investigation check spots a small trail of food crumbs -- bread, cheese, salted pork -- leading deeper into the cavern to **area B**.

COMBAT

A mix of **giant rats** and **spider rats** guard the entrance. They watch the tunnel from their hiding spots: the giant rats peeking out of holes in the bumpy tunnel walls and the spider rats clinging to stalactites hanging from the ceiling. A DC 14 Perception check spots the giant rats; a DC 18 Perception check spots the spider-rats.

If the spider-rats aren't spotted before it attacks, read or paraphrase when they strike:

A high-pitched hiss alerts you to trouble from above. On the ceiling is an eight-legged, multi-eyed rodent. It bares its needle-like teeth before leaping off the ceiling at your face!

The giant rats attempt to gang up on the same targets to get the most use out of their *pack tactics* trait. The spider-rats leap at a PC's face and tries to use their *face hug* ability, followed up with bites. All the rats here fight to the death.

INTENDED DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

Level 1: 3 giant rats, 1 spider rat

Level 2: 4 giant rats, 2 spider rats

Level 3: 4 giant rats, 4 spider rats

AREA B: STORAGE ROOM

This open cave room has been carved out from the main tunnel. All food foraged/stolen by the rats from outside the cavern is gathered here, where they are carefully organized and stored for later distribution. There is a secret door in the northern wall of the chamber (see "SECRET DOOR").

Large musty wooden barrels line the walls of this cave room. Piled atop the barrels or propped beside them are smaller casks of wine and ale. A small leather book sits on one of the barrels, alongside a small glass vial containing a strange liquid.

PCs investigating the room can easily find wine, ale, salted pork and beef, dried fruit, nuts, and stale bread.

SWINGING AXE TRAP

A 5-foot square of the cave floor near the entrance has been transformed into a clever pressure plate trap. The cavern inhabitants know to avoid stepping on it.

Detecting the Trap: A successful DC 12 Perception or

Investigation check reveals the edges of worked stone along the pressure plate's boundaries. Alternatively, the PCs may spot a large axe suspended along the ceiling.

Triggering the Trap: The pressure plate triggers if at least 20 pounds of pressure is placed on it. Once triggered, an axe suspended along the ceiling by ropes is released, its blade swinging down like a pendulum at anyone standing on the pressure plate's square. The target must make a DC 11 Dexterity check, taking 2d6 slashing damage on a failed save or half as much damage on a successful one.

THE RAT KING'S JOURNAL (#1)

A small leather-bound journal sits on one of the barrels in plain view. This is one of the Rat King's many journals, which he pours his addled thoughts before he misplaces and forgets it. The chicken-scratch entries are mostly insane ramblings. A PC trying to glean information from the journal must succeed a DC 12 Investigation check pick out the following excerpts as important:

"I have finally perfected my potion rat domination. Unfortunately, the ingredients must be harvested from the fungus chamber, and it's impossible to identify the deadly violet fungus hiding there. Many of my minions have perished collecting what I need."

"My genius knows no bounds! My latest creation, the mighty rat-bear-pig, is a complete success. Its keen snout can safely sniff out the violet fungus so I can avoid them and collect my ingredients unharmed."

"Potion of rat control ingredients: yellow puffball and weeping wig, both found in the fungus chamber. The ingredients are then distilled and mixed in my lab to create the potion. Don't forget! Always forgetting! Damn that Old Voice's buzzing!"

POTION OF RAT CONTROL

A thin corked glass vial rests beside the Rat King's journal. The vial is filled with an opaque yellow liquid. A PC looking to identify the *potion of rat control* can do so by taking a small sip, immediately knowing its properties (**APPENDIX B**).

SECRET DOOR

A successful DC 15 Investigate check notices a crease in the northern wall. The wall is hinged and can be opened outward by gripping crevices in the wall as makeshift handles, revealing a secret chamber (**area C**).

AREA C: SECRET CHAMBER

This cavern was used long ago by cultists of the Old Voice. Back then, the cultists would leave their final earthly possessions in this small room before proceeding down into the waters below.

This small square room is layered thick with dust and cobwebs. Random bits of old clothing are strewn about the floor haphazardly. Staring out you with bulbous eyes is a strange fish-like humanoid statue garbed in priestly robes. At its webbed stone

feet lays a pile of coins.

The ancient clothing on the floor here is mundane, moldy, and covered in dust.

The surface of the statue secretes a thin layer of dark mucous. The pile of treasure at its feet contains 400 cp, 160 sp, 8 gp, and a citrine worth 10 gp.

Within the pockets of one of the discarded robes is a medallion that oddly shimmers in the dark. Anyone to staring at the medallion intently begins to have a nagging sensation of unease. This was an emblem of the cult and may be used as a hook for future cult-related campaigns: perhaps they take these emblems to a collector and learn more about the cult, or use the emblems to infiltrate a cult gathering. If not, they might pawn it off to an interested buyer for 15 gp.

AREA D: CAVERN CROSSROAD

The main tunnel expands into a large chamber that divides into three more tunnels heading southwest, south, and north. A subteranean stream spills into the chamber through the northeast and continues down the southern tunnel.

THE STREAM

The stream that winds its way through the complex is shallow, averaging $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 ft in depth. The cavern floor beneath the stream is coated with slick layers of moss and algae. PCs moving at a normal walking speed will be able to avoid slipping. PCs moving quickly, such as running around in combat, must make a DC 10 Dexterity check to avoid slipping.

ALARM

The Rat King has cast an *alarm* spell on the northern entrance of this chamber to alert his minions of any intruders. Characters detecting magic notice a faint aura of abjuration. As soon as any Medium-sized humanoid passes through the northern exit, the sound of a hand bell begins to ring loudly for 10 seconds, alerting nearby rats and initiating combat.

COMBAT

If the *alarm* is triggered, nearby rats arrive from the north and southwest tunnels. One **explodey-rat** arrives from each tunnel; divide the rest of the rats similarly between both entrances.

INTENDED DIFFICULTY: HARD

Level 1: 2 explodey rats, 1 dragon rat, 1 giant rat

Level 2: 2 explodey rats, 2 dragon rats, 1 laser rat

Level 3: 2 explodey rats, 3 dragon rats, 2 laser rat

were emergency funds for the Rat King in case a situation arose where he had to flee in a hurry.

Reaching the satchel will be difficult: the ceiling here is 30 feet high and there's no apparent means of climbing up. Let the PCs figure out a way to reach it; they can control a **spider rat** to climb up and retrieve it, for example, or use spells or mundane means.

AREA E: FUNGUS ROOM

A variety of fungi grow in these chamber, bathed in a dim purple light. The Rat King collects many alchemical ingredients from this area, using a rat-bear-pig's keen smell to avoid the violet fungus hiding here (see Combat).

A forest of fungi covers the cavern here. They come in a variety of shapes and sizes, some squatting down to the floor and wiggling strange appendages, others towering up 20 or more feet into the air and puffing out golden glittery spores every so often. Orbs of violet light shine from the walls and ceiling, casting a lavender glow on the area.

The orbs of violet light are **giant fire beetles**. Eating these local mushrooms has changed their typical reddish orange glow to violet. Their glow illuminates the entire chamber with dim light. The beetles aren't hostile to the PCs, and if attacked they'd rather flee than fight.

A PC examining the various fungi growing here can make a Nature check: on a result of 12 or more, the PC identifies the fungi yellow puffball and weeping wig, which are used for multiple alchemical brews, including potions of rat control.

COMBAT

Violet fungus hide amongst the other fungi. Place them spread throughout the area. While motionless, they are indistinguishable from the surrounding fungi. A violet fungus attacks once a PC wanders within its range.

INTENDED DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

Level 1: 3 violet fungus

Level 2: 6 violet fungus

Level 3: 8 violet fungus

Sniffing Out Trouble: Although the violet fungi are nearly impossible to detect visually from their benign surroundings, there are ways for the PCs to avoid walking into their slithering embrace. One way is to control a rat-bear-pig with a *potion of rat control* (**APPENDIX B**) and have it identify the violet fungi at a safe distance with its keen smell. Or maybe the PCs just light everything on fire. Whatever works!

AREA F: ALTAR OF FORBIDDEN POWER

Tucked at the end of the fungus chamber is another altar dedicated to the entity known as the Old Voice. The creature's

corrupting influence still manifests here, tempting mortals with power.

A shallow pool of water covers the floor of this small round chamber. Floating serenely atop the water's surface are two large dark purple lotuses, whose seed pods glow faintly in the darkness. Standing at the center of the room is a stone statue of a fish-like humanoid garbed in priestly robes, its entire surface glistening with a thin blackish mucous. Held in its outstretched webbed hands is a ceremonial bowl filled with a dark purplish liquid.

As you enter the room, a primal thought begins to throb in your head persistently. The thought coalesces into a message, a command, growing more enticing and horrible with every repetition. It says, "mix the blood. Take the power."

Characters inside the room will find their hearing severely dampened, unable to hear anything but the loudest sounds as faint echoes, their minds preoccupied with the message repeating in their heads. A PC's hearing gradually returns to normal and the thought disappears after about a minute once they have left the room.

BLACK LOTUS

The two black lotuses float on the water's surface. These incredibly rare flowers are currently in full bloom. Tiny, delicate wisps of raw magic dance off the glowing seed pods, dissipating into the air. The lotuses both blossomed earlier today and will die in a few hours.

While the market for black lotus is very small -- most people haven't even heard of them, and others know only half-remembered legends -- there are powerful and wealthy individuals that would happily pay hundreds of gold for even a withered black lotus seed pod.

The demon door in **area L** will open if a player places one of these black lotuses inside it.

OFFER FROM THE DEEP

The fish-like humanoid statue is slick with a thin blackish mucous. Its bulbous, lidless eyes seem to follow the PCs in the room and have a flicker of malvolent intelligence to them.

The bowl carries a purplish liquid that smells of blood but doesn't congeal. Any PC staring at the bowl innately (and oddly) understands that the alien thought in their head wants them to add their own blood to the bowl. A PC that willingly adds some of their own blood to the bowl becomes cursed with the *Mark of the Deep* (**APPENDIX B**).

AREA G: FLOODED TUNNEL

The stream from **area D** flows south through this wide tunnel before dropping off into the unknown. A smaller tunnel branches off from it at a fork near the northern end. None of the Rat King's minions venture into this part of the cavern, as the shallow stream is too deep for tiny rats.

A stream covers this tunnel's floor, rushing southward over slick

rocks before dropping off into the abyss. Rising up from the bubbling waters at the edge of the falls is a sinister stone altar.

A smaller, dry tunnel branches off from the main flooded tunnel. The skeletal remains of a humanoid can be spotted near the entrance.

THE STREAM

The stream from **area D** is flowing faster at this point and averaging 2 to 3½ ft in depth. The cavern floor beneath the stream is overgrown with mossy sludge. As a result, wading through the stream here counts as difficult terrain, and PCs moving quickly (such as running in combat) must make a DC 12 Dexterity check to avoid slipping.

SHINY RING

Characters may spot a simple gold ring gleaming in the water. Even if not attuned to the ring, wearing it heightens the wearer's senses slightly: sounds are slightly louder, they can see a bit farther and make out more details, etc. This is a *ring of alertness* (**APPENDIX B**).

COMBAT

Dangers lurk here in the waters: a **gray ooze** and **skeletons** lay motionless at the bottom of the stream, waiting for living prey to devour. Place each monster spread out throughout the stream in this area.

The skeletons are covered in a thick layer of moss at the bottom of the stream, requiring a PC to succeed on a DC 18 Perception check to notice them.

While motionless, the gray ooze is nearly indistinguishable from one of the many wet rocks that make up the stream's floor, save for one feature: unlike most of the other rocks, no moss grows on the ooze. A PC must succeed on a DC 16 Perception check to notice this oddity underneath the water. After spotting the clean "rock," the PCs can make a DC 12 Nature check to correctly identify it as a gray ooze.

Both the skeletons and gray ooze attack when the PCs wander close enough, or whenever combat breaks out here. They fight to the death.

You hear the clattering of bones and the splash of water as moss-covered skeletons rise from the stream. Your gaze shifts from their rusted scimitars to an even stranger sight: an oily pool slithers atop the water toward you, rising to strike like a liquid snake.

INTENDED DIFFICULTY: HARD

Level 1: 2 skeletons, 1 gray ooze

Level 2: 3 skeletons, 2 gray ooze

Level 3: 5 skeletons, 3 gray ooze

ALTAR OF THE FALSE GOD

A crumbling altar of blackened stone looms over the precipice of the falls. The base of the altar has been carved to resemble a pile of bones. Its flat top is stained red with old blood.

PCs carefully searching the altar can find a small hidden compartment in the altar by succeeding a DC 14 Investigation

check. Inside is a dagger with a wicked twisting blade glistening with black ichor; treat it as a *dagger of sacrifice* (**APPENDIX B**).

SECRET TUNNEL ENTRANCE

A pile of stone rubble at the edge of the falls hides the entrance to a tunnel (**area H**). PCs inspecting the area can find the tunnel by succeeding on a DC 12 Investigation check.

FALLING TO DOOM

The stream ends at the southern point of the tunnel, dropping down an unknown distance into the darkness below. The bottom of the falls is beyond the scope of this adventure.

Avoiding going over the falls should be simple enough: the stream's current isn't strong enough to sweep an unwilling PC over, and moving carefully around the edge should minimize any risk of falling over. However, in the situation that a PC is unfortunate enough to go over the falls, it's up to you to determine the outcome. One suggestion is that the PC will plummet hundreds of feet into an abyss home to unfathomable terrors. If that happens, either the PC dies from the fall; or perhaps becomes the prisoner or thrall of an ancient evil, such as an aboleth, or the Old Voice itself, and may make a reappearance later in the campaign.

AREA H: UNUSED TUNNEL

This tunnel connects the southern end of the flooded tunnel (**area G**) with the Rat King's laboratory (**area N**). The exit to the flooded tunnel is sealed off with stone rubble and debris that has sat here undisturbed for ages. The seemingly dead end can be pushed aside to reveal the tunnel entrance.

The Rat King is convinced that the tunnel leads to a dead end and makes no effort to keep watch for intruders emerging from it. A quiet PC approaching the lab from the tunnel without a light source could potentially catch him unaware.

AREA I: STORM'S REST

Resting at the end of this chamber is *Storm's Herald*, a magical warhammer of great reknown. The faint humming it emits has drawn a colony of darkmantles to the area.

The skeletal remains of robed humanoid leans against the wall at the entrance of this chamber, its bony hand clutching a yellowed piece of paper and a lantern by its side. The entire ceiling of this chasm drips downward with hundreds of stalactites of various sizes. At the end of the chamber, laying on a raised platform, is an exquisite warhammer that glows blue in the darkness and emits a faint humming noise that reverberates softly throughout the chamber.

EMERIA'S REMAINS

The skeleton at the entrance of this chamber was once an elven wizard named Emeria. Long ago, she led a party of adventurers down here in search of *Storm's Herald*. Emeria, along with the

remainder of her party, met their end here when they were ambushed by the darkmantles in the chamber. The wizard managed to drag herself to the chamber's entrance and write a final message before succumbing to her wounds.

PCs searching through the skeleton's robes will find a small pouch containing 25 sp and 6 gp, along with a spellbook that clearly suffered heavy water damage. Most of the pages are stuck together and the ink is smeared or washed away completely. A PC searching for anything legible must succeed on a DC 10 Investigation check to find the following spells intact: *darkvision*, *detect magic*, and *grease*.

The hooded lantern beside the skeleton is in oddly pristine condition. The lantern's iron casing is flecked with a shimmering silver that mirrors a star-filled night sky. Treat it as a *lantern of revealing* (**APPENDIX B**).

Clutched in the skeleton's hand is a note written on the back of a *scroll of silence*. The note reads in common (alternatively, change the script to elven if you know a PC can read it):

"The chamber ahead is packed with darkmantles. They caught us unaware. Too many to fight off. I managed to escape the attack but my wounds are fatal. Dying here, in sight of Storm's Herald, makes my failure even more bitter. Retrieve the hammer and bring it to Lord Stormkirk. He will reward you handsomely."

COMBAT

Some of the stalactites hanging from the ceiling are actually **darkmantles**. They are indistinguishable from the natural rock around them when remaining motionless. They wait until their prey travels under them before dropping down to attack. The darkmantles have been drawn to the humming sound of *Storm's Herald* and do not leave this area until the sound ceases, instead returning to perch on the ceiling if their prey leaves the boundary.

There are far too many darkmantles here to take head-on in a fair fight. If the PCs do not heed the note's warning and enter anyway, for every 30 feet of movement into the chamber, a group of darkmantles drop from the ceiling overhead and attack.

INTENDED DIFFICULTY: DEADLY

Level 1: 3 darkmantles

Level 2: 4 darkmantles

Level 3: 6 darkmantles

If a PC attacks a random stalactite, there is a 10% chance it is a darkmantle. This either triggers one of the encounters detailed above if the PCs are inside the chamber, otherwise it flies further into the chamber and hides somewhere else.

Deaf, Dumb, and Blind: The darkmantles rely on echolocation to "see." One way to skip past combat with them is to deafen them, rendering them blind and unable to attack. A PC controlling a squeaker rat or using the *scroll of silence* can deafen the darkmantles for a long enough time to retrieve *Storm's Herald* and get out.

Of course, those are only two solutions to defeating this obstacle. The PCs may come up with other clever ideas to bypass or defeat the darkmantles. Run with it and see how it goes!

STORM'S HERALD

The legendary warhammer, *Storm's Herald*, rests in this chamber, all but forgotten by the world. Centuries of disuse has caused its powers to wane: the faint hum and glow is all it can currently muster. When first picked up, the humming and glowing ceases, and the warhammer briefly flickers with magic.

AREA J: BREEDING CHAMBER

The Rat King uses this room to breed more of his mutant rats. He has left his right-hand rat, **Nibbles**, to oversee operations here while he works in the laboratory.

Rows of long wood tables hog most of the space in this filthy room. Dozens of metal cages sit atop the tables, most containing rats of all shapes and sizes. The air is filled with the sound of chittering and the foul smell of rat droppings.

As you approach the entrance, a voice squeaks in your head, "Stay your weapons! Nibbles wishes to speak with you. Perhaps we can help each other out?"

Nibbles keeps a careful watch of the entrance while *invisible*. If the PCs turn down his offer to talk and appear hostile, the awakened rat rushes to open the rat cages (see Combat).

NEGOTIATING WITH NIBBLES

The smartest and most cunning rat of his litter, Nibbles "Brains" Pinkerton was awakened by the Rat King and given magical augmentations, with the intention of being groomed to become second in command. For the past few weeks, however, the Rat King has buried himself in his latest experiments at expense of all other duties, neglecting Nibbles in the process.

Much like his master, Nibbles is ambitious and secretly dreams of taking over the world. He knows the Rat King has slipped irreversibly into madness and believes the elf's schemes should be stopped. The rat views the arrival of the PCs as an opportunity to switch allegiances and pursue his own agenda.

If the PCs put away their weapons and convince the rat that they're willing to talk, Nibbles offers them information in exchange for allowing him to join their party, at least until they reach the surface world. The rat states his desire to collect arcane knowledge throughout the world and will show interest in like-minded PCs, perhaps even offering to act as their familiar.

Here is some information that Nibbles can provide:

- He has knowledge about **areas A, B, D, J, and K**. He also knows that there is a prisoner being held in the torture room (**area K**), a young human, but doesn't know anything else about him.
- Nibbles knows that the Rat King's chamber and laboratory are somewhere beyond the demon doors (**area L**) but has never been allowed inside, though he has noticed that the

Rat King always carries a purple flower with him when he approaches the "demon door."

- He knows about Rat King's plan to take over the surface world and is concerned about the elf's descent into madness, but does not know the cause of it.
- Nibbles has seen the Rat King travel into the fungus chamber (**area E**) with a ratbearpig to forage for alchemical ingredients.
- If the PCs haven't found it already, Nibbles retrieves the *potion of rat control* (**APPENDIX B**) from this chamber (see below) and explains its use. Nibbles is too intelligent to be controlled by the potion.

RAT CAGES

Dozens of iron cages sit atop the long tables, filled with filthy straw beddings and scraps of food. Most contain litters of either ordinary rats or giant rats, but six of them are far larger and contain the following special mutant rats:

- 2 dragon rats
- 2 rat-bear-pig
- 2 squaker rats
- 2 laser rats
- 1 explodey rat
- 2 spider rats

All the rats are docile and essentially helpless in their cages, but if released they immediately become aggressive to the PCs and attack. Releasing them is as simple as opening a small latch on the top of the cages.

POTION OF RAT CONTROL

Stashed away beneath the straw bedding of an empty cage is a thin corked glass vial. A PC investigating the cages can find the vial by succeeding a DC 12 Investigation check. Alternatively, Nibbles will gift the vial to a PC if they negotiate with him.

The vial is filled with an opaque yellow liquid. A PC looking to identify the *potion of rat control* can do so by taking a small sip, immediately knowing its properties (**APPENDIX B**).

COMBAT

If Nibbles believes that the PCs entering the chamber are hostile, he will scurry over to the rat cages containing the mutant rats and begin opening them, releasing aggressive rats to attack the PCs. Opening a cage requires an action, so Nibbles can only open up to one cage per round. Doing so does not drop Nibbles' *invisibility*.

If Nibbles feels his life is in danger -- the PCs defeated all the rats, or they have a way to negate his *invisibility* -- then he surrenders and begs for his life to be spared, offering all the information he knows.

AREA K: TORTURE ROOM

The Rat King keeps captured intruders locked up in this room. Characters taken prisoner by the Rat King or his minions will

be manacled here and have their possessions tossed into the wooden barrel, which also contains dirty, bloodstained clothing of previous victims.

At the center of this room is a table displaying an array of cruel looking metal utensils used either for torture, surgery, or both. An open wooden barrel stands by the wall filled with a bundle of crumpled clothing. Manacled to a bloodstained wall is a human, his once white silken shirt now stained brown and red with dirt and blood.

The keys to the manacles can be found in the Rat King's bedroom (area 8), or they can be opened with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools.

KIDNAPPED YOUTH

A human teenager named Bryce Halfheart is chained to the wall here. The youth was lured to these caverns by grand tales of a legendary armor called the *armor of invulnerability*, which supposedly was lost down here long ago. An aspiring adventurer, Bryce foolishly thought he could sneak down into the caverns and retrieve the armor all by himself. Instead of finding the armor, however, Bryce was quickly captured by the Rat King and has been imprisoned here ever since. His father, the blacksmith Ilfen Halfheart, will pay as much as he can for his son's safe return.

Bryce is open and honest about answering any questions the PCs have. He knows little about the cavern or its inhabitants, as he was ambushed by the rats guarding the entrance and knocked unconscious before waking up chained here. He briefly spoke to the Rat King, and mentions that the elf was an odd, twitchy fellow with sharp teeth, muttering about experiments and how they would save the world.

The boy is frightened and his primary concern is to be freed and escape from the caverns before the Rat King returns. Bryce looks up to any PCs that display martial prowess; the youth wishes to become a famous warrior like his grandfather was.

Secret Curse: Unbeknownst to him, Bryce was bit by the Rat King while he was unconscious and has been afflicted with the curse of lycanthropy. A PC carefully looking over Bryce's wounds and rolling up his sleeve notices a swollen bite mark on his arm. A DC 12 Nature check recognizes the bite originated from a huge rat. A DC 15 Religion check confirms that it is a sign of lycanthropy.

During the next full moon, the youth will transform uncontrollably into a murderous wererat. At the start of his transformation, Bryce will grow pale and burst into a cold sweat, complaining about being dizzy. Moments later he will complete his transformation into a half man, half rat hybrid and his newborn beastial conscious will take over. When exactly the next full moon occurs is up to you.

PRISONER'S POSSESSIONS

An open barrel stands beside the manacled wall. It holds a pile of discarded bloodstained clothing -- the remains of previous

prisoners. A PC searching through the clothes will find 13 gp, 23 sp, and 33 cp.

If any character is taken prisoner during the adventure, their belongings will also be found in this barrel.

AREA L: THE DEMON DOOR

A large iron door, shaped to resemble the face of a balor, blocks the southern end of the tunnel. In ancient times, the demon door served as a rite of passage for cultists of the Old Voice. The Rat King figured out how to bypass the door safely and now takes advantage of the protection it offers to his bedroom and laboratory beyond.

As you head south, the bumpy surfaces of the natural cave tunnel abruptly become smooth and worked. Covering the walls are faded frescos of robed humanoids with fish-like heads, each carrying a purple lotus in their webbed hands. They move in solemn procession southwards to the end of this hall, where a huge fiendish face of iron awaits them.

The demon door is a thick iron door whose surface resembles the face of a balor: two front-swept horns flank its sides, and its cruel eyes leer down over its short snout. Its fanged mouth is ajar and stained with purple dye that dribbles down to the floor.

LOTUS OFFERING

To open the demon door, a PC must place a black lotus (from area) in its mouth. The door hungrily devours the lotus before opening outward, revealing the bedroom ([area M](#)).

Any hostile attempts taken against the door, such as attacking it or trying to force it open, triggers **combat**. Persistent PCs can manage to pry the door open, however, such as with a crowbar and enough brute strength or magic.

COMBAT

If the wrong offering is placed or hostile actions are taken against the demon door, the cultists on the frescoes animate, darting along the walls, floor, and ceiling to attack as **fresco spirits**. The spirits will pursue the party a maximum of 5 rounds beyond this room before returning to their original positions.

INTENDED DIFFICULTY: HARD

Level 1: 2 fresco spirits

Level 2: 3 fresco spirits

Level 3: 5 fresco spirits

AREA M: RAT KING'S BEDROOM

The Rat King has hardly used his bedroom as of late, spending day and night toiling in his laboratory while ignoring the rest of his lair. The elf's "pet" **mimic** acts as the chamber's hidden guardian.

Beyond the door is a cramped bedroom filled with amneties

absent from the rest of the cavern: a large bed and small bedside table take up the northeast corner; a tall wooden wardrobe takes up the northwest corner; a reinforced wooden chest sits beside a desk; a tassled red rug is sprawled across the smooth stone floor.

The bed appears unused (the Rat King is an elf and doesn't sleep). A small stack of unfinished letters sit on the bedside table. Each letter is addressed to governors or royalty, and while most of the contents are rambling and largely illegible, each appears to be a declaration from the Rat King to surrender their kingdoms to him "for the good of humanity."

Strewn about a simple wooden desk are maps, some depicting local areas, others displaying the entire continent. Sitting atop the maps is a small leather-bound journal (see below).

THE RAT KING'S JOURNAL (#2)

This is one of the Rat King's many journals, which he pours his addled thoughts before he misplaces and forgets it. The chicken-scratch entries are mostly insane ramblings. A PC trying to glean information from the journal must succeed a DC 12 Investigation check picks out the following excerpts as important:

"The Old Voice buzzes in my ears relentlessly. Its call pulls me towards to the waters, to the deep, to its domain. I don't know how long I can fight it. I must finish my work! The surface must be warned, and I shall be its savior."

"My mind is drowning in a sea of whispers. My thoughts flee from me, only to be replaced by something alien. I must write everything down. The work must be completed! The world needs me. I shall not fail!"

ARMOIRE OF INVULNERABILITY

A dusty wardrobe made of rich mahogany wood stands in one corner of the chamber. Some plain clothing is neatly arranged inside. Tucked away in the back is a luxurious silk vest with a baby blue and silvery patterning that resembles a cheerful sky. This is Oswald's magnificent vest ([APPENDIX B](#)).

A PC carefully inspecting the exterior of the wardrobe may notice with a DC 10 Investigation check that the wardrobe's surface is completely free of any knicks or scratches. A PC detecting for magic on the wardrobe will notice a blindingly intense aura of abjuration emanating from it. Attacking the wardrobe in any way will reveal that it's completely impervious to harm.

This unassuming wardrobe is, in fact, the legendary *armoire of invulnerability* ([APPENDIX B](#)). Rumors of an "armor of invulnerability" lost in these caverns are actually talking about this artifact, though it seems a key detail was lost in translation.

THAT'S NO CHEST

A **mimic** hides in plain sight in this chamber disguised as a reinforced wooden chest, concealing the trapdoor beneath it. The Rat King has gained some degree of loyalty from the

creature by regularly feeding it rats to keep the mimic docile. However, the mimic has been neglected for weeks now, and it hungers for a meal.

If a character physically examines the wooden chest, they are automatically affected by the mimic's *adhesive* trait (becoming grappled), and the mimic attacks them while they are surprised.

The wooden chest suddenly springs to life. Its "lid" flies open, revealing a giant gaping maw adorned with razor-sharp teeth and a long, powerful tongue curling back as if ready to swat at you.

INTENDED DIFFICULTY: MEDIUM

Level 1: 1 lesser mimic

Level 2: 1 mimic

Level 3: 1 mimic

HIDDEN TRAPDOOR

A trapdoor is concealed amidst the elevated wooden floor at the south end of the chamber, right underneath where the mimic initially sits. A PC searching this area can discover the door by succeeding on a DC 12 Investigate check. The trapdoor leads down a short flight of stairs into the laboratory ([area N](#)).

AREA N: LABORATORY

The Rat King works tirelessly on his various experiments here, hell-bent on his delusional plans of world domination. He is constantly coming up with (and often discarding) new alchemical brews or rat mutations to build an unstoppable army. There is no end to his tinkering and half-baked schemes.

The cool air in this laboratory crackles with an energy that leaves hair standing on end and metals buzzing. A jungle of alchemical equipment sprawls over the tables on the southern end. Glass containers of various shapes and sizes hold bubbling and hissing chemicals that cast a green glowing mist about the lab.

The Rat King can be currently found here in his elven form, grinding some herbs with a mortar and pestle while fussing over temperatures and ingredient ratios in the alchemical liquids that are currently brewing. He is too engrossed in his work to be bothered keeping an eye on the rest of his lair, relying on his rat minions to keep things in order.

A high-strung elf in a long white coat impatiently strides from table to table, his head jerking quickly to examine the bubbling liquids as he twitches his nose while sniffing their contents. His hands busily work a mortar and pestle, the awkward jerking movements spilling half its contents on the floor.

If he spots an intruder or is attacked, the wererat engages in **combat**. It will be difficult for a PC to talk him down from a fight, but not impossible; perhaps flattering him by recognizing his "genius" could momentarily lower his guard.

"Intruders!" the elf yells in a high-pitched shriek, revealing sharp feral teeth, "how dare you enter my royal sanctum? I will teach you to interfere with my work!"

COMBAT

Being a wererat, the Rat King is immune to most mundane weaponry, making him a dangerous foe for unprepared parties. He will try to take cover behind one of the tables filled with alchemical equipment and throw random beakers and vials at the PCs.

If running this encounter with additional rat minions, the Rat King calls the rats to his aid during his first turn. The rats rush out from gaps and crevices in the southern wall; put their turns at the bottom of the initiative order.

Note that the Rat King's challenge rating relies heavily on being immune to at least some of the PC's attacks. If the party is well-equipped to bypass his defenses with spells and magical weapons then it's recommended to increase the Rat King's hit points to 70 and his AC to 14.

INTENDED DIFFICULTY: HARD

Level 1: The Rat King

Level 2: The Rat King, dragon rat

Level 3: The Rat King, 1 dragon rat, 2 exploding rats, 1 spider rat, 1 squeaker rat

DEVELOPMENTS

The elf is not one to surrender, however he will attempt to flee if he feels he is outmatched. If the PCs manage to take the Rat King prisoner, the elf's arrogance quickly gives way to horror: he is completely and utterly terrified of the maddening whispers in his head, which he only knows as "the Old Voice." He begs the party to free him so he can continue his work to save the world from the malicious entity that lives "in the deep." The Rat King's madness cannot be cured easily, but with enough time and therapy, it's possibly his sanity could be restored.

TREASURE

Propped up against the wall is a wooden walking cane, carved to resemble a mass of rats tied together by their tails. This is the *Staff of the Rat King* ([APPENDIX B](#)).

The laboratory is littered with specialized alchemical devices and half-finished experiments: glass tubes with monstrous rat-like fetuses suspended in liquid, jars full of pickled organs, anatomical charts for both human and beast, and vats of alchemical liquids. In total, there's about 350 gp worth of alchemical materials that can be used for crafting potions, along with the equipment to do so.

A character examining the laboratory for easily lootable things will find ten empty vials and stoppers, four *vials of acid*, three *potions of healing*, and two *alchemist's fire* ([APPENDIX B](#)).

CONCLUSION

You can use this information to wrap up the adventure as the PCs accomplish their goals:

LEVEL UP!

The party levels up once they complete the mission that brought them to the cavern.

THE RAT KING DEFEATED

Once the Rat King is defeated, his rat minions disperse over the next few days. There may be rumors in nearby villages of mutant rats scurrying into the wilderness, but no more complaints of food and other supplies being stolen.

STORM'S HERALD RETRIEVED

The legendary warhammer, *Storm's Herald* ([APPENDIX B](#)), was thought lost to the ages, but there are still a few prominent individuals that seek the weapon for their own ends. Lord Stormkirk is one of those few, claiming the weapon as his birthright. Rumors of the weapon in the hands of the PCs may find their way to him, which may prompt him to seek them out. What Lord Stormkirk's ultimate goal with the weapon is up to you.

NIBBLES JOINS THE PARTY

If the party successfully negotiated an alliance, Nibbles will join the party, offering to act as a familiar to one of them. He wishes to acquire arcane knowledge and sees a group of adventurers as good traveling partners for his pursuits. He isn't a servant, however, and if mistreated, or the party takes actions against his interests, he may end his service as a familiar and part ways with them.

BRYCE RESCUED

If the party rescues Bryce, his father, Ilfen, rewards them with 100 gp. Though it may not seem like much, it's a large sum for the blacksmith, and to give much more than that would be very hard on his family. He will, however, offer a discount on his wares and services.

THE OLD VOICE

The PCs may have indirectly encountered the mysterious entity known only as "the Old Voice," along with remains of an ancient cult that worshipped it. Some groups will ignore this plot hook, while others may be interested in learning more. Ultimately, what the Old Voice is depends on you, but initially when writing the adventure, the author had in mind a Lovecraftian horror slumbering in the deep with a cult looking to awaken it. If you're looking for a more tangible and confrontable foe that isn't epic level, an aboleth can fit this description.

APPENDIX A: CREATURES

This section contains stat blocks and short descriptions for the creatures that appear in *Madness of the Rat King*.

BRYCE HALFHEART

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic good

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 11 (2d8 + 2)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Senses passive Perception 10

Languages Common

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Keen Smell. Bryce has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

ACTIONS

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage.

Description: Bryce is a teenager with an adventurer's spirit. He looks to follow in the footsteps of his grandmother, who was an adventurer and warrior of great reknown. Courageous but inexperienced, the youth is a loyal friend that will selflessly protect those in need.

Unknown to him, however, he has been afflicted with lycanthropy (some traits have already manifested, such as damage immunities), and he will lose control when he turns into a wererat.

Combat Tactics: Bryce can do little while unarmed and unarmored. He is proficient with simple weapons and light armor, so his combat statistics can be improved if given some equipment.

WERERAT

Medium humanoid (human, shapechanger), lawful evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 33 (6d8 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical weapons that aren't silvered

Senses darkvision (rat form only) 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages Common (can't speak in rat form)

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Shapechanger. The wererat can use its action to polymorph into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. Its statistics, other than its size and AC, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Keen Smell. The wererat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The wererat makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

Bite (Rat Or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

Description: When the full moon rises, Bryce loses control of his mind and body, transforming into a wererat. This beastial form is wiry and twitchy, its body covered in a thin grey fur. Avarice is the primary motivator in this wild state: the wererat will look to steal a victim's valuables, even kill for them.

Combat Tactics: The creature prefers ambush tactics rather than a fair fight, and is quick to flee from combat if they can't secure an easy victory.

DARKMANTLE

Small monstrosity, unaligned

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 22 (5d6 + 5)

Speed 10 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	5 (-3)

Skills Stealth +3

Senses blindsight 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Echolocation. The darkmantle can't use its blindsight while deafened.

False Appearance. While the darkmantle remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a cave formation such as a stalactite or stalagmite.

ACTIONS

Crush. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6+3) damage and the darkmantle attaches to the target. If the target is Medium or smaller and the darkmantle has advantage on the attack roll, it attaches by engulfing the target's head, and the target is also blind and unable to breathe while the darkmantle is attached in this way. While attached to the target, the darkmantle can attack no other creature except the target but has advantage on its attack rolls. The darkmantle's speed also becomes 0, it can't benefit from any bonus to its speed, and it moves with the target. A creature can detach the darkmantle by making a successful DC 13 Strength check as an action. On its turn, the darkmantle can detach itself from the target using 5 feet of movement.

Darkness Aura (1/Day). A 15-foot radius of magical darkness extends out from the darkmantle, moves with it, and spreads around corners. The darkness lasts as long as the darkmantle maintains concentration, up to 10 minutes (as if concentrating on a spell). Darkvision can't penetrate this darkness, and no natural light can illuminate it. If any of the darkness overlaps with an area of light created by a spell of 2nd level or lower, the spell creating the light is dispelled.

Description: Darkmantles are squid-like dark-skinned subterranean predators. Their natural camouflage allows them to hide easily in underground caverns and wait for prey to pass beneath them.

Combat Tactics: A darkmantle will often wait until its prey passes beneath it, at which point it drops and swoops down to attack its victim, slamming its body against the foe and attempting to wrap its webbed tentacles around the target's head. If grievously injured, the creature flutters back up to the ceiling to hide and hope its "prey" leaves it alone.

DRAGON RAT (BLUE)

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 24 (7d6)

Speed 30 ft., fly 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	15 (+2)	10 (+0)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	7 (-2)

Damage Resistances lightning

Senses darkvision 60 ft., blindsight 10 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

ACTIONS

Lightning Breath (Recharge 5-6). The rat exhales lightning in a 30-foot line that is 5 feet wide. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 7 (2d6) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage and 3 (1d6) fire damage.

Description: Giant rats imbued with dragon's blood, dragon rats sport the colored scales and physical prowess of their draconic heritage but none of the cunning. They have a compulsion to hoard shiny objects, which they carry up to their nests on their tiny but surprisingly flight-capable wings. The blue dragon rat has a large ridged horn protruding from its head and its azure scales carry a whiff of ozone.

Combat Tactics: Dragon rats use their breath weapon as often as possible, trying to hit the most enemies with it, even if that means hitting allies as well. They usually find themselves at the front line of a battle and are either too arrogant or dumb to retreat.

Customizing: Dragon rats come in a variety of colors based on the type of chromatic dragon used in its creation. To create a different chromatic variant, simply change the dragon rat's damage resistance and breath weapon to match its heritage, as shown below:

Dragon	Damage Type	Breath Weapon
Black	Acid	5 ft. by 30 ft. line
Green	Poison	15 ft. cone
Red	Fire	15 ft. cone
White	Cold	15 ft. cone

EXPLODEY RAT

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 5 (2d6 - 2)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	11 (+0)	8 (-1)	2 (-4)	8 (-1)	4 (-3)

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 9

Languages -

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Death Burst. The rat explodes when it drops to 0 hit points. Each creature within 10 feet of it must succeed on a DC 11 Dexterity saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) acid damage on a failed save, or half as much on a successful one.

ACTIONS

Headbutt. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target.

Hit: 2 (1d4) bludgeoning damage. The rat takes this damage as well.

Description: Explodey rats are perhaps the most miserable creatures to ever have been artificially engineered. These poor creatures are living vessels of highly unstable acidic substances sloshing inside their bloated bodies. The acids glow bright neon green and emit dim light through the rat's transparent skin. The rats have a singular purpose in life: explode on intruders entering the Rat King's lair.

Combat Tactics: Explodey rats waddle their bloated bodies over to their enemy and then die, at which point the volatile chemical concoction inside their bodies erupts in an acidic explosion.

FRESCO SPIRIT

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
6 (-2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)	10 (+0)	8 (-1)

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

2-Dimensional. The spirit can only move along solid surfaces (including walls and ceilings) and between small gaps of adjacent surfaces within its reach. The spirit can occupy another creature's space and vice versa.

Amorphous. The spirit can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

ACTIONS

Wisdom Drain. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) necrotic damage, and the target's Wisdom score is reduced by 1d4. The target dies if this reduces its Wisdom to 0. Otherwise, the reduction lasts until the target finishes a short or long rest.

Description: Created as guardians for malevolent entities, these spirits appear as faded frescoes of robed humanoids with fish-like heads and webbed appendages. When disturbed, the paintings animate, darting across the walls, ceiling, and floor to attack their foes.

Combat Tactics: Fresco spirits move to a surface adjacent to their target, such as the floor beneath their feet, and reach out with their 2-dimensional webbed hands to drain the victim's sanity. They fight to the death protecting whatever they are tasked with guarding, not straying too far from their watch.

GIANT FIRE BEETLE

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	7 (-2)	3 (-4)

Senses blindsight 30 ft. passive Perception 8

Languages -

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Illumination. The beetle sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +1 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6-1) slashing damage.

Description: It's like a firefly, but a giant beetle version.

Combat Tactics: Giant fire beetles avoid combat when possible. If forced into a corner, they will bite whatever comes close.

GIANT RAT

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 7 (2d6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	15 (+2)	11 (+0)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Keen Smell. The rat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Pack Tactics. The rat has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the rat's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't Incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage.

Description: It's a rat, but giant-sized.

Combat Tactics: Giant rats attempt to attack enemies distracted by its allies to take advantage of its *pack tactics*. Otherwise, they will attack whichever target is convenient or looks the least physically strong. They will usually try to flee if brought below 4 hit points.

GRAY OOZE

Medium ooze, unaligned

Armor Class 8

Hit Points 22 (3d8 + 9)

Speed 10 ft., climb 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	6 (-2)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	6 (-2)	2 (-4)

Skills Stealth +2

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire

Condition Immunities blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone

Senses blindsight 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius) passive

Perception 8

Languages -

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Amorphous. The ooze can move through a space as narrow as 1 inch wide without squeezing.

Corrode Metal. Any nonmagical weapon made of metal that hits the ooze corrodes. After dealing damage, the weapon takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to damage rolls. If the penalty drops to -5, the weapon is destroyed. Nonmagical ammunition made of metal that hits the ooze is destroyed after dealing damage. The ooze can eat through 2-inch-thick, nonmagical metal in 1 round.

False Appearance. While the ooze remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an oily pool or wet rock.

ACTIONS

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) bludgeoning damage plus 7 (2d6) acid damage, and if the target is wearing nonmagical metal armor, its armor is partly corroded and takes a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to the AC it offers. The armor is destroyed if the penalty reduces its AC to 10.

Description: Slinking their way through cold swamps and bleary marshlands, or sometimes even dungeons and caverns, gray oozes consume any organic and metal materials they encounter. While the ooze cannot move quickly, its habit of lurking in the thick mud that lines the banks of marsh pools or lying in harmless-looking pools on dull-colored dungeon floors makes it dangerously easy to overlook and step on.

Combat Tactics: A gray ooze will often wait for an unsuspecting prey to wander into striking distance before attacking. The ooze never retreats, slithering like a snake after its victim and not backing down until it loses sight of its prey.

LASER RAT

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 27 (6d6 + 6)

Speed 20 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Skills Perception +4

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages -

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Floating. The rat naturally hovers 5 feet over the ground beneath it.

Keen Smell. The rat has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

ACTIONS

Eye Rays. The rat shoots one of the following magical eye rays at a creature it can see within 90 feet of it:

1. Confusion Ray. The target must succeed on a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw, or it can't take reactions until the end of its next turn. On its turn, the target can't move, and it uses its action to make a melee or ranged attack against a randomly determined creature within range. If the target can't attack, it does nothing on its turn.

2. Wounding Ray. The target must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw, taking 10 (3d6) damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Description: Laser rats appear as giant rats that have been inflated like a balloon with alchemical gases. Grafted onto their raised bloated bellies is a great beholder eye, along with two eyestalks writhing at its sides. Why? Because SCIENCE, that's why!

Combat Tactics: Laser rats use their *confusion ray* on the most physically strong looking enemies, and their *wounding ray* on the physically weakest looking enemies.

MIMIC

Medium monstrosity (shapechanger), true neutral

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	5 (-3)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +5

Damage Immunities acid

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 11

Languages -

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Shapechanger. The mimic can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it was wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Adhesive (Object Form Only). The mimic adheres to anything that touches it. A Huge or smaller creature adhered to the mimic is also grappled by it (escape DC 13). Ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage.

False Appearance (Object Form Only). While the mimic remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary object.

Grappler. The mimic has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

ACTIONS

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) damage. If the mimic is in object form, the target is subjected to its Adhesive trait.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

MIMIC, LESSER

Small monstrosity (shapechanger), true neutral

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 38 (7d6 + 14)

Speed 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	5 (-3)	13 (+1)	8 (-1)

Skills Stealth +5

Damage Immunities acid

Condition Immunities prone

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 11

Languages -

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Shapechanger. The mimic can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it was wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Adhesive (Object Form Only). The mimic adheres to anything that touches it. A Huge or smaller creature adhered to the mimic is also grappled by it (escape DC 13). Ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage.

False Appearance (Object Form Only). While the mimic remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary object.

Grappler. The mimic has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

ACTIONS

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) bludgeoning damage. If the mimic is in object form, the target is subjected to its Adhesive trait.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8+2) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

NIBBLES

Tiny beast, true neutral

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 21 (6d4 + 6)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
5 (-3)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)

Skills Stealth +5

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 11

Languages Common, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Familiar. Nibbles can serve another creature as a familiar, forming a telepathic bond with its willing master. While the two are bonded, the master can sense what Nibbles senses as long as they are within 1 mile of each other. At any time and for any reason, Nibbles can end its service as a familiar, ending the telepathic bond.

Keen Smell. Nibbles has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Magic Resistance. Nibbles has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

Invisibility. Nibbles magically turns invisible until it attacks or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). Any equipment Nibbles wears or carries is invisible with it.

Description: Nibbles “Brains” Pinkerton is an albino rat with an unusually large cranium. Chosen by the Rat King as the most cunning of his litter, Nibbles’ animal mind was awakened and augmented by his master through alchemy and magic. Nibbles covets arcane knowledge above all else and dreams of becoming the greatest archmage. Due to obvious physical limitations, Nibbles looks to accompany humanoids to accomplish his goals.

Combat Tactics: Nibbles tries to avoid combat entirely. That’s what bodyguards are for.

RAT-BEAR-PIG

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 51 (6d10 + 18)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13, darkvision 60 ft.

Languages -

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Keen Smell. The ratbearpig has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Charge. If the ratbearpig moves at least 20 feet straight toward a target and then hits it with a tusk attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The ratbearpig makes two attacks: one with its tusk and one with its claws.

Tusk. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) slashing damage.

Claw. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8+4) slashing damage.

Description: The strength of a bear, the keen snout of a boar, and the skittishness of a rat, the mighty rat-bear-pig is a strange mix indeed. Initially created by the Rat King to sniff out the deadly violet fungi growing in the fungus chamber, the rat-bear-pig also serves as a powerful bodyguard and beast of burden.

Combat Tactics: When angered, rat-bear-pigs charge headlong into combat, goring their enemies with their tusks and hacking them to pieces with their claws. Wounding them just makes them angrier!

SKELETON

Medium undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 13 (armor scraps)

Hit Points 13 (2d8 + 4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	6 (-2)	8 (-1)	5 (-3)

Damage Immunities poison

Damage Vulnerabilities bludgeoning

Condition Immunities exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 9

Languages understands all languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

ACTIONS

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

Shortbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6+2) piercing damage.

Description: These are the skeletal remains of the fallen adventurers who were sent with Emeria to retrieve Storm's Herald. Foul magic in the cavern infused their bones with unlife, and now they attack any living thing that crosses their path in incomprehensible hatred. The torn and rusted scraps of armor clinging to their bony frames were of well-crafted elven make.

Combat Tactics: These skeletons have an overwhelming urge to extinguish all life and fight until destroyed. They have enough cunning to coordinate attacks to a degree, focusing on the weakest or most wounded looking foes.

SPIDER RAT

Tiny beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 22 (5d4 + 10)

Speed 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	4 (-3)

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages -

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Spider Climb. The spider-rat can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

Standing Leap. The spider-rat's long jump is up to 20 feet and its high jump is up to 10 feet, with or without a running start.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 3 (1d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Face Hug. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage. Can only be used on creatures Medium or smaller. The spider-rat engulfs the target's head, and the target is also blinded and unable to breathe while the spider-rat is attached in this way. While attached to the target, the spider-rat can attack no other creature except the target but has advantage on its attack rolls. The spider-rat's speed also becomes 0, it can't benefit from any bonus to its speed, and it moves with the target. A creature can detach the spider-rat by making a successful DC 11 Strength check as an action. On its turn, the spider-rat can detach itself from the target by using 5 feet of movement.

Description: "Oh gods! What in the nine hells is that thi--RGHRLBLB"- Last words of Bilfar the Stout.

Combat Tactics: Spider rats just want to hug your face. To death.

SQUEAKER RAT

Tiny beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 15 (6d4)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
7 (-2)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	4 (-3)

Senses passive Perception 10, darkvision 60 ft.

Languages -

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Deafening Squeak. The rat can emit a painfully loud high-pitched squeak which it can maintain for up to 1 minute as a bonus action. Creatures within 30 feet of the rat are deafened for the duration of the squeak. After the squeak ends, the rat gains one level of exhaustion.

ACTIONS

Big Squeak. The rat blasts out a thunderous squeak. Each creature within 5 feet of the rat must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 7 (2d6) thunder damage and is pushed 5 feet away from the rat and knocked prone. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't pushed or knocked prone.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

Description: Squeaker rats are covered in canary-yellow down feathers and have beaks instead of mouths. They appear innocent enough until they suck in air, puffing themselves up to three times their original size, and let out a deafening high-pitched squeak.

Combat Tactics: The rat will try to scurry into a position where it can hit multiple foes with its *big squeak*.

SWARM OF RATS

Medium swarm of Tiny beasts, unaligned

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 24 (7d8 - 7)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

Damage Immunities charmed, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained, stunned

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing

Senses darkvision 30 ft. passive Perception 10

Languages -

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

Keen Smell. The swarm has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Swarm. The swarm can occupy another creature's space and vice versa, and the swarm can move through any opening large enough for a Tiny rat. The swarm can't regain hit points or gain temporary hit points.

ACTIONS

Bites. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 0 ft., one target in the swarm's space. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) piercing damage, or 3 (1d6) piercing damage if the swarm has half of its hit points or fewer.

Description: A bunch of rats, all together!

Combat Tactics: Rat swarms are bold when at full strength and will try to take creatures head-on for a meal. If more than half of the swarm is killed, however, the rat swarm will likely disperse and flee.

THE RAT KING

Medium humanoid (shapechanger), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 12

Hit Points 38 (7d8 + 7)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	7 (-2)	8 (-1)

Skills Perception +2, Stealth +4

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

Senses darkvision 60 ft. passive Perception 8

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Fey Ancestry. The Rat King has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put the Rat King to sleep.

Keen Smell. The Rat King has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Shapechanger. The Rat King can use his action to polymorph into a rat-humanoid hybrid or into a giant rat, or back into its true form, which is humanoid. His statistics, other than his size, are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. He reverts to its true form if he dies.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Rat King makes two attacks, only one of which can be a bite.

Bite (Rat Or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4+2) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 11 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with wererat lycanthropy.

Vial Of Acid. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (2d6) acid damage.

Alchemist's Fire. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 20 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d6) fire damage. On a hit, the target takes 1d4 fire damage at the start of each of its turns. A creature can end this damage by using its action to make a DC 10 Dexterity check to extinguish the flames.

Tanglefoot Bag (Recharge 5-6). The Rat King throws a small sack filled with tar, resin, and other sticky substances at a point within a 20 ft. range, which then releases an explosion of goo. Each creature within a 10 foot radius sphere centered on that point must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw, becoming restrained on a failed save. A creature restrained by the goo can use its action to make a DC 13 Strength check, freeing itself on a success. The explosion radius counts as difficult terrain.

Description: Once a respected alchemist serving his community, the Rat King was cast out of society when he was afflicted with lycanthropy and framed for murders he did not commit. The elf eventually made his lair in the caverns where this adventure takes place and was driven mad by the incessant

whispering of the Old Voice. Now he frantically works towards creating an unstoppable rat army to take over the world and prepare it against the Old Voice's eventual return.

The elf is wiry, skittish, and has unusually sharp teeth. He hardly rests, working around the clock on his experiments, constantly muttering to himself and shrieking in horror when the Old Voice whispers in his mind.

Combat Tactics: The Rat King prefers to fight at range, chucking random vials and alchemy equipment from his laboratory tables at the intruders. Surrendering is not an option, but retreating is.

VIOLET FUNGUS

Medium plant, unaligned

Armor Class 5

Hit Points 18 (4d8)

Speed 5 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3 (-4)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)

Condition Immunities blinded, deafened, frightened

Senses blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius) passive Perception 6

Languages -

Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)

False Appearance. While the violet fungus remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary fungus.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The fungus makes 1d4 Rotting Touch attacks.

Rotting Touch. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) necrotic damage.

APPENDIX B: MAGIC ITEMS

The following items can potentially be found in *Madness of the Rat King*.

ALCHEMIST'S FIRE

Flask, common

This sticky, adhesive fluid ignites when exposed to air. As an action, you can throw this flask up to 20 feet, shattering it on impact. Make a ranged attack against a creature or object, treating the alchemist's fire as an improvised weapon. On a hit, the target takes 1d4 fire damage at the start of each of its turns. A creature can end this damage by using its action to make a DC 10 Dexterity check to extinguish the flames.

ARMOIRE OF INVULNERABILITY

Wondrous item, legendary

This ornate wardrobe is made of rich mahogany, with shelves and hanging rails for all your clothing accessories. It's also immune to damage of any kind. Why its original owner, the legendary wizard named Oswald the Tailor, needed an invulnerable armoire is a tale now lost to the ages.

DAGGER OF SACRIFICE

Weapon (dagger), rare

You can use a bonus action to cause thick, black poison to coat the blade of this magic dagger. The poison remains for 1 minute or until an attack using this weapon hits a creature. That creature must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 3d6 poison damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. The dagger can't be used this way again until the next dawn.

Devour Soul. Whenever you use it to reduce a creature to 0 hit points, the dagger slays the creature and devours its soul, unless it is a construct or an undead. Souls devoured this way become prisoners of the Old Voice and can be restored to life only by a *wish* spell.

When it devours a soul, the dagger grants you temporary hit points equal to twice your character level. These hit points fade after 24 hours.

DUST OF DRYNESS

Wondrous item, uncommon

This small packet contains $1d6 + 4$ pinches of dust. You can use an action to sprinkle a pinch of it over water. The dust turns a cube of water 15 feet on a side into one marble-sized pellet, which floats or rests near where the dust was sprinkled. The pellet's weight is negligible.

Someone can use an action to smash the pellet against a hard surface, causing the pellet to shatter and release the water the dust absorbed. Doing so ends that pellet's magic.

An elemental composed mostly of water that is exposed to a pinch of the dust must make a DC 13 Constitution saving throw, taking $10d6$ necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

LANTERN OF REVEALING

Wondrous item, uncommon

The lantern's iron casing is flecked with a shimmering silver that mirrors a star-filled night sky. While lit, this hooded lantern burns for 6 hours on 1 pint of oil, shedding bright light in a 30-foot radius and dim light for an additional 30 feet. Invisible creatures and objects are visible as long as they are in the lantern's bright light. You can use an action to lower the hood, reducing the light to dim light in a 5-foot radius.

MARK OF THE DEEP

Curse, rare

A creature cursed with this mark begins its slow transformation into a Deep One, a strange fish-like humanoid aberration that live in the sea and serve the Old Voice. A creature with this curse should not instantly know the following details, however they may learn information with appropriate History or Religion checks, certain spells, or finding NPCs with knowledge of the curse.

The beginning of the transformation could be seen as beneficial: the creature immediately gains darkvision 60 feet if they didn't already have it, along with a swim speed equal to their movement speed. A few months later, they begin having strange dreams of underwater cities both magnificent and terrible, with strange architectures that seem to defy regular geometry. They feel a compulsion towards entering the water, and slowly in their dreams they contact the Old Voice, who invites the creature to join it in the sea.

As the transformation continues, the creature gains gills and the ability to breathe underwater; their hair falls out, they gain a pronounced slouch, their eyes begin to bulge out and they stop blinking. Slowly but surely, they undergo a full transformation.

While the transformation is still undergoing, the creature can be cured with a *remove curse* spell or similar ability. Once fully transformed into a Deep One, however, the curse can only be reversed with the most powerful magic, such as the *wish* spell.

What exactly a Deep One and the Old Voice are is subject to the DM's interpretation. If you're looking for monster statistics, a Deep One could use kuo-toa statistics, while the Old Voice could use aboleth statistics.

OSWALD'S MAGNIFICENT VEST

Wondrous item, uncommon

This luxurious silk vest has a baby blue and silvery patterning that resembles a cheerful sky. While wearing this vest, you can cast the *prestidigitation* spell at will.

POTION OF HEALING

Potion, common

You regain $2d4 + 2$ hit points when you drink this potion. The potion's red liquid glimmers when agitated.

POTION OF RAT CONTROL

Potion, uncommon

When you drink this potion, you can force a rat to serve you. As an action, you can force a rat that you can see within 30 feet of you to make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the rat is under your control for the potion's duration, or until you choose to end your control over it. Rats with an Intelligence of 5 or greater (like Nibbles) are immune to this ability.

On each of your turns, you can use your action to mentally command a controlled rat, deciding what action the creature will take and where it will move during its next turn. If you issue no commands on a turn, the creature does nothing.

You can only control one rat this way at a time. If you take control of a rat while already controlling one, the previous controlled rat becomes free-willed. The potion lasts 6 hours.

RING OF ALERTNESS

Ring, rare (requires attunement)

While wearing this plain-looking gold ring, you have a +3 bonus to your passive Wisdom (Perception) and passive Intelligence (Investigation) scores.

Curse. This ring is cursed. Attuning to it curses you until you are targeted by the *remove curse* spell or similar magic. At the start of your turn, if you can see a creature within 50 feet of you that you consider hostile, a booming voice from the ring shouts "HEY! WATCH OUT!!"

STAFF OF THE RAT KING

Staff, rare (requires attunement)

This wooden staff is carved to resemble a mass of rats tied together by their tails. You have advantage on Animal Handling checks with rats while you hold this staff.

The staff has 3 charges. While holding it, you can use an action to expend 1 or more charges, summoning a **swarm of rats** for

each charge expended. The swarms are friendly to you and your companions. Roll initiative for the summoned creatures as a group, which has its own turns. They obey any verbal commands that you issue to them (no action required by you). If you don't issue any commands to them, they defend themselves from hostile creatures, but otherwise take no actions.

The staff regains 1d3 charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, a swarm of rats consumes and destroys the staff, then disperses.

STORM'S HERALD

Weapon (warhammer), legendary (requires attunement)

Long ago, the high priestess of the golden dwarves had a dream of the end times, Ragnarok. In that dream she gazed upon a warhammer that would herald both the end and the new beginning. When she awoke, she called upon the finest smiths in the kingdom and tasked them to create the weapon imprinted in her mind. Thus, *Storm's Herald* was created.

Dwarven runes of power are etched along the surface of this exquisite magic weapon. The warhammer feels unnaturally light when wielded yet it strikes with tremendous force. The wielder has advantage on Diplomacy and Intimidate checks when dealing with dwarves.

You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with *Storm's Herald*. In addition, while you carry the warhammer, you can strike the ground with it to cast the *thunderwave* spell (save DC 15). You can't use this property again until you finish a long rest.

Legacy Weapon. The wielder unlocks additional powers if they are at least a certain level:

- **Level 8:** You can point *Storm's Herald* forward to cast the *lightning bolt* spell. You can't use this property again until you finish a long rest.
- **Level 12:** You gain an additional +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon.
- **Level 16:** You can cast *call lightning* as an 8th level spell. You can't use this property again until you finish a long rest.
- **Level 20:** You gain an additional +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with this weapon. Additionally, you can raise *Storm's Herald* up to the sky to cast the *meteor swarm* spell. You can't use this property again until you finish a long rest.

VIAL OF ACID

Vial, common

As an action, you can splash the contents of this vial onto a creature within 5 feet of you or throw the vial up to 20 feet, shattering it on impact. In either case, make a ranged attack against a creature or object, treating the acid as an improvised weapon. On a hit, the target takes $2d6$ acid damage.

APPENDIX C: CAMPAIGN NOTES

If you are running this adventure with the *Fiery Grog Tavern* supplement, ongoing developments in this adventure will affect how NPCs in the tavern interact with the PCs. Below are some suggestions on how the tavern inhabitants react to news that the PCs bring them:

SECRET CAVERN DISCOVERED

None of the tavern inhabitants, including Tofdir Duflame, knew that the tavern was built on top of a cavern system. If the characters announce this discovery, some NPCs will have notable reactions:

Increased Pay. Once Tofdir Duflame confirms that there is a cavern entrance in his cellar, the gnome views this cavern system underneath his premises as a lucrative surprise for his businesses. He offers an additional lump sum of 100 gp to the PCs to clear out the cavern of the rat problem and to buy their silence on not telling the local authorities about this discovery. Savvy PCs can haggle this price up to 200 gp.

Find Emeria. If Sylana Vallejo hears about the cavern discovery, she asks the PCs to speak with her privately. The elf explains that she is here looking to find out what happened to her grandmother, Emeria, who disappeared in this area long ago. Emeria was a scholar, like her granddaughter, and came here on a secretive mission, but never returned. Sylana will pay the PCs 50 gp if they find out anything about Emeria's fate while exploring the caverns.

RECRUITING MORE EXPLORERS

The opportunity to explore a newly discovered cavern system might catch the interest of some of the tavern patrons.

New PCs. If a new PC needs to be introduced to the party, he/she could be hooked into joining by hearing about the discovery. The new PC could even take the role of one of the previously established NPCs, such as Tofdir or Sylana.

Recruiting NPCs. If the party is finding the encounters in the adventure more difficult than intended (if they are a party of less than four, for example) than it may be helpful to let them recruit an NPC from the tavern to help explore the caverns.

DISCOVERED TREASURES

Some of the loot that the PCs bring back from the adventure may be recognized by some of the NPCs in the tavern.

Emeria's Remains. Sylana will recognize items brought back from Emeria's skeleton; her handwriting, her lantern, etc. If shown Emeria's final note, she recognizes Lord Stormkirk's name, knowing nothing about him but that he's still alive. Sylana allows the PCs to keep whatever they found after looking them over.

Storm's Herald. Nobody in the tavern knows the history of Storm's Herald, but all can tell that the warhammer is a one of a kind masterpiece. Rumors will spread around the area of adventurers finding a magical warhammer. What notable people hear about it is up to you.

Black Lotus. It's unlikely that anyone will know anything

about the black lotuses growing in the caverns below. It's possible that an alchemist or herbalist would know the legends surrounding the flower and be able to point a character in the right direction. Black lotuses are the prized possessions of some of the most powerful individuals in the multiverse; it's said that the Grand Sultan in the City of Brass would be eager to purchase black lotus seeds.

Cult of the Old Voice. Remnants of the forgotten cult can be found in the cavern. They can be used as hooks for future encounters with the cult and the Old Voice at your discretion.

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