Cats vs Rats
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Game 2: An Emotional Scene
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Overview

Cats vs Rats is a 4-5 player turn-based strategy game where a team of Cats is pitted against a team of Rats during the Black Death. Each player has a distinct Attribute which gives that player's forces a unique characteristic, and with these distinctions they must work as a team to be the first to capture 23 towns.

The Story So Far…

The Black Death has swept across 14th century Europe, and now the Rats have migrated in numbers to a tiny Italian peninsula. Word has travelled to the villagers that nothing has been able to drive the plague away from people's homes. Banding together, they agreed that they had only one hope of survival: breeding Cats to kill the Rats and keep them from their towns.

The villagers can only sit and hope that the Cats can save them. Will the Rats continue to spread the plague? Or will the villagers be saved by the Cats? The brave and tactical actions of you, the players, will decide the fate of this Italian peninsula!

Materials

- Game board
- 6 distinctly colored unit marker sets
    - 60 one-unit markers (small wheel-shaped beads)
    - 32 five-units markers (polyhedral beads)
- 30 Witchcraft cards
- 10 Attribute cards
    - 5 Cat Attribute cards
    - 5 Rat Attribute cards
- 1 "Join the Reserves" Cube
- 5 "Towns I Occupy" cards
    - 5 index cards with squares numbered 1-23
    - 6 large wheel-shaped beads (colors correspond to unit markers)
- 2 six-sided dice
- 2 turn tokens
- Bag of spare unit markers

The Game Board

The game board is a symmetrical approximation of a small Italian peninsula. There are **Towns** and a **Sea** that runs along three edges of the board. **Solid lines** that connect Towns are **roads**. Some towns have special markings which will be touched upon later.
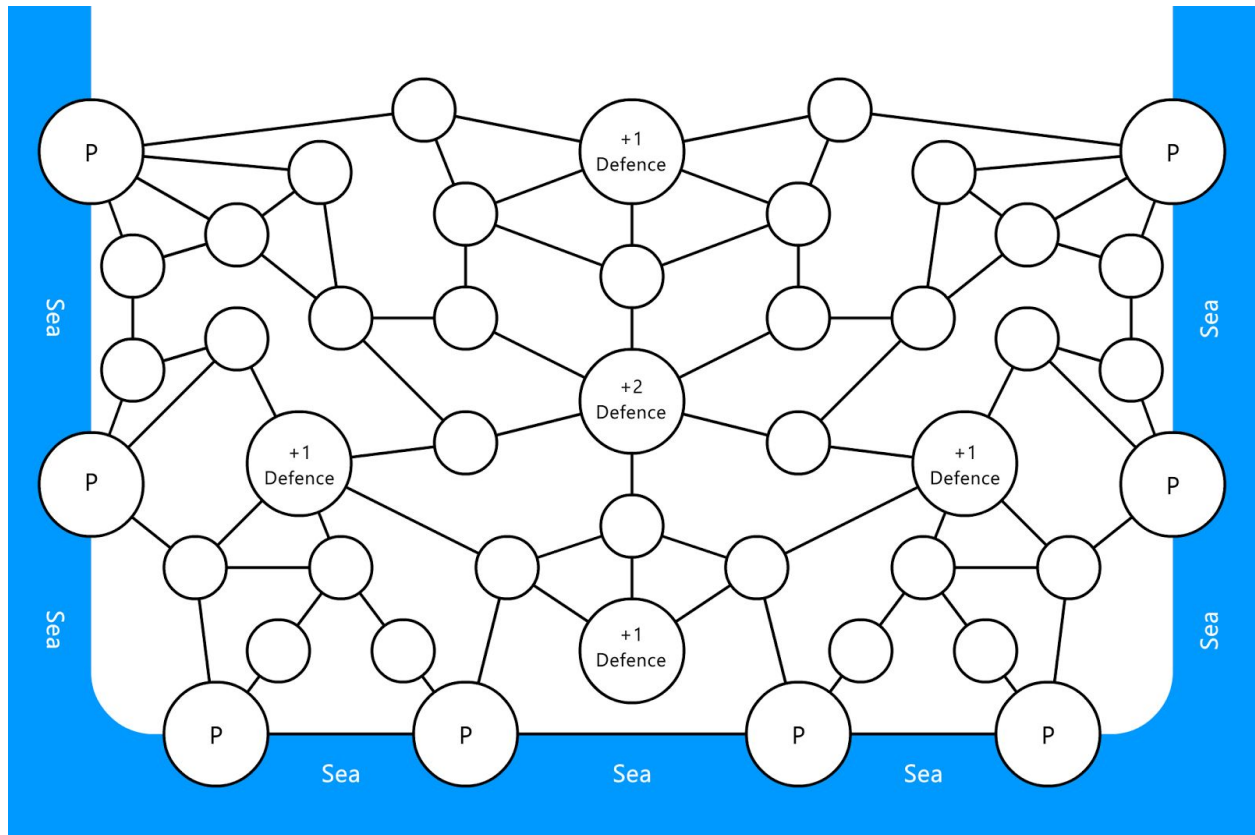
Setup

1. Unfold the game board onto a flat table. Ensure all players can reach different parts of the board with reasonable ease.

2. Pass out the unit marker sets, "Towns I Occupy" cards, and 1 large bead to every player. Set aside the 2 dice and turn tokens.

3. Shuffle all Witchcraft cards and place them in a face-down deck on the game board.

4. Place the Attribute cards on top of the game board in ascending order, separated into two columns (one for Cats and one for Rats) for ease of reading.

Play Summary

This summary helps remind returning players of the rules.
New players are advised to keep reading the rest of the rulebook.

1. Players **choose an Attribute** that they keep for the entire game. This helps form a team of Cats and another team of Rats. The game is either 2v2 or 2v3, with the 3-player side being whichever faction (Cat or Rat, it does not matter).

2. One player on each team rolls a die, and the highest rolling team goes first. Turn orders within teams are determined by the number on each player's Attribute card (lowest number goes first).

3. Taking turns, each player places his/her initial units into **starting towns** of his/her choice. Opposing towns must be at least 2 roads away from one another.

4. Each player **performs actions** such as drawing Witchcraft cards and moving into/attacking towns to occupy them. At the end of a player's turn, his/her units **breed**.

5. Step 4 repeats until **victory** is awarded to the first team to **capture 23 towns**.

Selecting an Attribute and Forming Teams

In Cats vs Rats, both sides have **Attributes** which differentiate players' capabilities. Each Attribute card comes with a description of the capability. Besides reading every card, players can refer to *Appendix: Attributes*.

Ensure that players pick Attributes to form 2v2 or 2v3 teams. Any other composition of players is not allowed. In a 5-player game, it does not matter which (Cats or Rats) is the 3-player team. Each team takes one turn token which comes in play after *Determining Turn Order*.

Cats are more aggressive and are geared towards combat.
Their Attributes utilize teamwork more effectively than Rat counterparts.

Rats are mobile, sneaky, and have
Attributes that allow them to grow in unit count faster than the Cats.

Determining Turn Order

A player from each team rolls a die. The team with the highest roll goes first.

During the game, player turns **alternate** between Cats and Rats. Within each team, the player with the lowest-numbered Attribute card goes first and the highest-numbered Attribute goes last.

Instead of remembering whose turn is next within a team, players pass around turn tokens to indicate whose turn it is and/or whose turn it will be.

Picking Starting Locations

Using the determined turn order, players begin placing units in starting locations.

On a **team of 3**, each player starts with **10** units. Each player is allowed to place their units in **2 road-adjacent towns**. On a **team of 2**, each player gets **15** units and **3 road-adjacent towns**. For more on the different types of towns to choose from, see *Appendix: Towns*.

Opposing towns must be separated by a minimum of **one empty town**; in other words, opposing towns must be at least **2 roads away**.

Players **update** the **values** on their **"Towns I Occupy" cards throughout the game** as the number of towns they occupy changes. Next, players will play Cats vs Rats by using the determined turn order to perform actions.

Performing Actions

Each player can **perform up to 3 actions** in a turn. There are 2 kinds of actions in the game:

➢ Draw a Witchcraft card **(1 action per card drawn)**

- **Players cannot show anyone** what **cards** they have **in their hand**. They can verbally announce them out loud so all players can hear, however.

- Players can have **any number** of Witchcraft **cards during their turn**, but players must **discard** excess Witchcrafts **at the end of their turn** until they are **holding a maximum of 3** cards.

- If the Witchcraft cards **deck is empty**, **reshuffle** the **Discard Pile** and place it face down on the Witchcraft cards spot on the game board.

Useful in combat, Witchcraft cards can turn the tide of many battles. For a list of Witchcraft cards, refer to **Appendix: Witchcraft Cards**

➢ Move/attack with units **(1 action to move 1 town away)**

- This action is considered a **move** if a player's units in one town are moving into an unoccupied town or moving in between occupied towns. An **attack** occurs if a player's units are attempting to move into an opponent's town, usually in the hopes of occupying that town. This places two players in *Combat*.

- The player can **choose how many units in one town to move/attack with**. Thus, a player can leave a few units behind while moving the rest 1 town away.

- If a player moves into an unoccupied town, he/she **immediately updates** his/her "Towns I Occupy" card to reflect the change.

- A player **cannot occupy** an ally's town. However, he/she **can move through** an ally's town in order to end up in another town. This means it takes at least 2 actions to leapfrog an allied town.

- A move/attack from **Port town** to **another Port town** is considered **1 action**.

Combat

Combat can only occur **between two adjacent opposing towns**, with few exceptions coming from Attributes and Witchcrafts. Players cannot attack their allies' towns.

➢ Combat Phases

1. **Deploy:** An **attacker** declares an attack on a **defender**'s town. The attacker **chooses** how many units from his/her own adjacent town to **deploy**. Undeployed units stay behind while attacking units are placed inside the defender's town. The defender **must defend using all units** in the defending town. **Players cannot turn back from Combat once they have deployed units**.

2. **Carding:** The **attacker declares first** if he/she is using one Witchcraft card. If so, he/she places the card **face down** on the table. Next, the defender declares and potentially places a card in the same way. Players **cannot swap out** the face-down card once it has been placed.

3. **Reveal:** Witchcraft cards being used in the battle are simultaneously **flipped face up**. Apply the cards' effects immediately, if applicable.

4. **Execution:** Each player rolls **one die** then **adds** the rolled **number** to the **strength of his/her units** (usually just the number of units, strength can be modified by Witchcrafts and Attributes) **in battle**.

5. **Resolution**: Determine the consequences of the battle and discard Witchcraft cards that were in play. Players update the values on their "Towns I Occupy" cards.

If players **forget** to factor **Attributes** and/or **Witchcrafts** after the resolution phase has ended, players **cannot "undo"** battles and attempt to **correct their mistakes**.

➢ Resolution (Win/Loss/Tie) Consequences

● If the **attacker** wins, the **defender** loses **all units** in the conquered town. The attacker loses half (rounded **down**) of his/her attacking units, and remaining units move into town.

● If the **attacker** loses, the **attacker** loses **2 units** and any remaining attackers return to their town. The **defender** loses **1 unit** in the battle but still holds onto the town if that town has remaining defenders; otherwise, the town becomes unoccupied.

● If there is a **tie**, **both** sides lose **1 unit**, and the remaining attackers return to their town. The defender still holds onto the town unless the loss of 1 unit meant he/she has no

more defenders in that town. In that case, the town becomes unoccupied.

Breeding

Breeding occurs after a player has performed 3 actions or chooses to Breed earlier and skip performing remaining actions. **The number of units he/she has bred equals the number of towns he/she occupies.** The player is allowed to place bred units across any towns he/she occupies.

These bred units do not necessarily have to all be placed in one single town.
They can be spread amongst multiple towns to defend a wider area of the map.

Wiping Out an Opponent

If an opponent is down to his/her last town, he/she is close to being wiped off the map. There are two ways a player can be wiped off the map:

1. He/she attacks with and loses all remaining units in the usual combat procedures.

2. He/she unsuccessfully defends with his/her final town, losing all remaining units.
    ○ If this happens, the attacker **does not lose any attacking units**, unlike normal combat procedures.

In both cases, the wiped out player **comes back** into the game on **his/her next turn** by placing **10 units** on **any single unoccupied town** on the map.

As the player with few units remaining, it may be better to attack with your last town and come back with 10 new units elsewhere. Conversely, as the team in the lead, it is typically better to leave opposing players in their weakened state.

Winning the Game

The first team to occupy 23 towns on the map at the end of a player's turn wins the game.

Appendix: Attributes

	Name	Description
Cat Attribute 1	Sharp Claws	+2 strength when attacking.
Cat Attribute 2	Taunt	When Rats attack allies, you can choose during the Deploy phase to have them attack your town if it is road-adjacent to the Rat's town.
Cat Attribute 3	Dispatcher	On your turn, you can perform move/attack actions with your ally's cats. Your ally's Attribute applies to his/her cats.
Cat Attribute 4	Crusader	Attacking does not cost an action, but combat still occurs.
Cat Attribute 5	Cat Drop	You can attack towns up to 2 roads away. Upon victory, any remaining attacking units must move into that remote town.
Rat Attribute 1	Fortification	+2 strength when defending.
Rat Attribute 2	Rat Tunnel	Moving your units from one town you occupy to any other town you occupy counts as performing 1 action. This action is repeatable.
Rat Attribute 3	Allied Bridge	You can move/attack from a road network of allied towns to a town at the end of the line. This is repeatable and costs 1 action each time.
Rat Attribute 4	Join the Reserves	After *Breeding*, you can add up to all them into the "Join the Reserves" cube. Before *Carding*, the *entire* reserve can be deployed.
Rat Attribute 5	Spawning	At the start of your turn, choose one town you occupy. Spawn 1 rat in each road-adjacent town you occupy.

*If a Cat has **Taunt**, Rats must be careful of the battles they pick.*
*If a Rat has **Join the Reserves**, Cats may want to pay close attention when the Rat is Breeding.*

Appendix: Towns

There are **45 towns** in total on the map. Of those 45, **4** have **+1 Defence**, **1** has **+2 Defence**, and **8** are **Ports**.

Defence towns **add** to the **total strength** of defending units in that town during combat. +1 and

+2 values **do not represent physical units**: they **do not protect** players **from losing units**.

Ports use the Sea, which allows players to move from one port to any other port with 1 action. **Port towns that are not directly linked by road are not adjacent to one another**. This key distinction is crucial in comprehending the Spawning Attribute and some Witchcraft cards.

Appendix: Witchcraft Cards

Witchcraft cards affect Combat and positioning of units on the game board. They can be drawn and cost 1 action per card drawn. At the end of a player's turn, he/she can only hold a maximum of 3 Witchcraft cards. Any excess cards must be discarded.

If the Witchcraft cards deck is empty, shuffle the Discard Pile and place it face down on the Witchcraft cards spot on the game board.

There are 30 Witchcraft cards in total. Below is a list of the 13 unique Witchcrafts available:

Quantity	Description
4	Your opponent immediately loses 2 units. If there are no more enemy units, you win the battle and lose no units.
3	-2 to the number rolled by your opponent. The die value cannot go below 0.
3	Double the die value.
3	You can re-roll your die.
3	Your opponent discards his/her Witchcraft card. This card has priority. If he/she did not use one, this card returns to your hand.
3	Upon winning a battle, you do not lose any of your attacking units.
2	If you lose your town, at most 3 units from that town can be placed in a road-adjacent town you occupy.
2	Your opponent switches his/her Witchcraft card with another in his/her hand. Your opponent does not play a card if he/she has no other Witchcraft cards.
2	If you win the battle, you can choose to attack another town (adjacent by road and/or sea) with your remaining attackers.
2	Rally half (rounded up) of your ally's units from a town road-adjacent to your attacking town. During Resolution, deduct from your units first. Return your ally's remaining units back to their town after Resolution.
1	If defending, permanently switch your units with those in a road-adjacent allied town. Combat now applies between your opponent and your ally's units.
1	Switch die values if your opponent rolls a higher number.

1	Discard this card to use one Witchcraft card from the discard pile.