
RIDDLE OF THE GOLDEN RAT



Riddle of the Golden Rat

Rumours & Hooks:

The *Golden Rat*, an enchanted idol from a prior age, is said to grant the power to summon and control vermin of all kinds.

"Oh Rool, you and that stupid rat dream!"

- Franjean the brownie to his friend Rool (also a brownie) in the 1988 movie *Willow*.¹

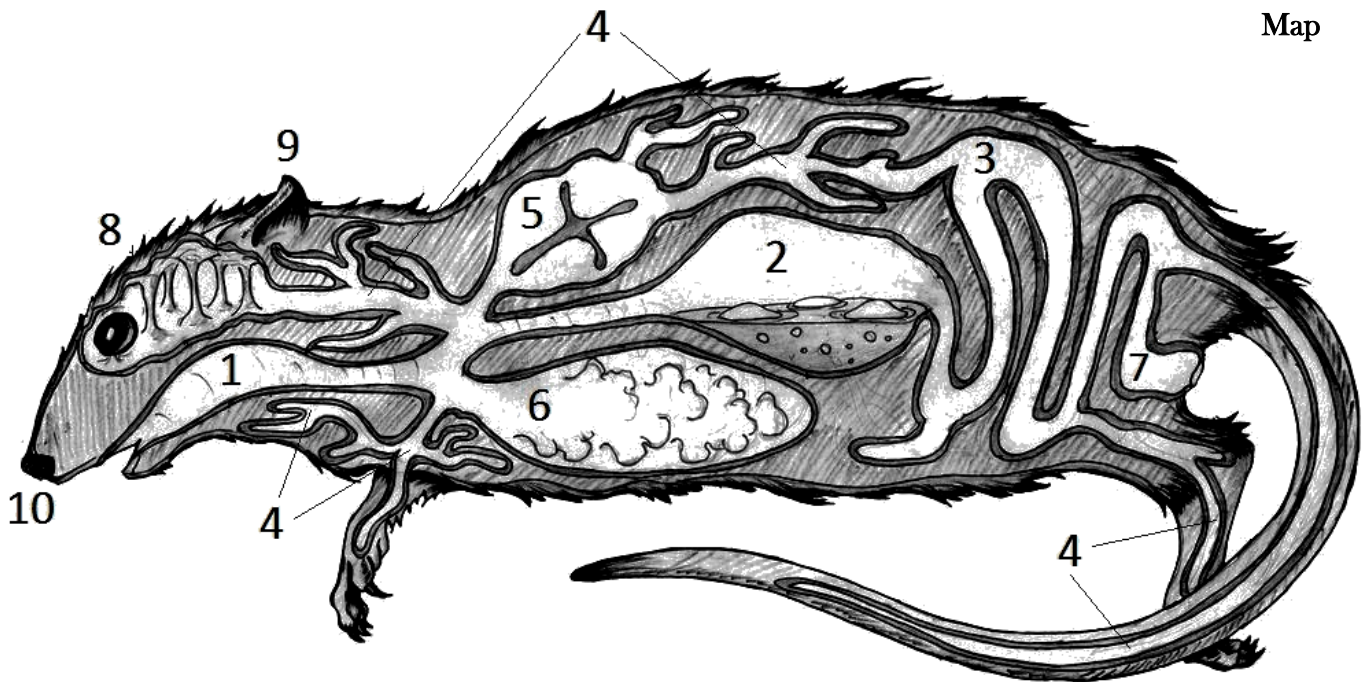
Crafted by the capricious hag *Menethorri* during a past age, the *Golden Rat* is a 4 inch statuette of pure gold, shaped to resemble a field mouse standing on its hind legs, pawing at the sky.

In fact, the idol is a trap; a cursed object intended to punish greed and school mankind in the importance of perspective, vulnerability and wonderment.

Infused with the blood of the unseelie crone herself, the idol's magic is especially potent, insusceptible to *Cure Malady* or *Dispel Magic* spells (but may be countered by *Reflection* or *Forbidden Wish*).

Any human touching the idol triggers its curse, instantly affecting not only the touching mortal but all other humans in a 30 ft radius. Targets immediately feel nauseas and sway precariously, dropping to one knee or grabbing hold of a nearby wall to steady themselves. After a moment, the true curse is unleashed, rapidly shrinking all mortal targets to a mere 3 mm tall (including their gear); no larger than a tiny bug!

Furthermore, as the PCs shrink, the idol begins to move, its metallic form transmuting into a common variety field rat. Scrunching up its nose, the furry colossi issues a deafening squeal before scooping up any tiny humans and swallowing them whole. At the GM's option, PCs with a cunning plan or the right magic might be able to



Map

¹ If you you're never seen *Willow*, stop reading this and go watch it right now! You're welcome.

avoid this fate (eg: perhaps by turning invisible and immediately flying away). If some PCs do escape, they have successfully avoided this adventure, and might like to join the GM behind the screen or play a trapped henchmen, hireling, faithful hound, etc instead. Escaped PCs return to normal size when the trapped PCs escape, or in 4d6 hours, whichever occurs first.

The rat cannot be defeated through brute force, magical or otherwise. It is immune to hostile sorcery, including charms and suggestions, and its outer flesh far too thick to be pierced by tiny weapons. The vermin has an acute sense of smell, good enough to track down a slow moving invisible target, and is much too fast to outrun.

Swallowed PCs are immediately engulfed in darkness, soaked in saliva and battered by the tongue and oesophageal pipe before being shunted into the stomach moments later (see Area 2 below).

The PCs might become involved in this adventure by (i) finding the Golden Rat as treasure, (ii) being paid to retrieve it by a wealthy antique collector, or (iii) the GM running the scenario as a dream the whole party shares when camped in the deep woods one night during a blood moon.

Fluctuating Size

As the adventure progresses, the party continues to change size, sometimes shrinking to microscopic form, other times enlarging back to a few millimetres tall. Upon escaping the rat they are restored to normal size.

At the microscopic level, a bluish bioluminescence covers everything, allowing the PCs to see long distances (relatively speaking). Additionally, while at this size, their basic life functions are magically maintained without the need to drink, eat or breathe. This elementary protection does not extend to injuries, exhaustion, disease and so on.

Although magically shifting size is not ideal from a consistency point of view, it allows the PCs to interact with a wider variety of locations and hazards within the rat's body. Given the degree of

suspension of disbelief already required for this adventure, a little more probably won't hurt.

Ain't nobody said nothin bout no science

At this stage some GMs might be concerned that their players have a better knowledge of anatomy, chemistry or micro physics than them. Phah! Use your best judgment, and if any complex sciency issues arise that you can't explain or don't make sense, consider deploying one of the following venerable GM solutions:

1. *"I dunno, it's magic or something".*
2. *"Bloody stupid adventure writer obviously didn't think about that. Let's handwave it for now."*
3. *"I hear what you're saying, but hold up let me just check something... (rolls dice) uhuh, RANDOM ENCOUNTER!"*

Random Encounters

The party's first stop is the stomach (see Area 2) where they must contend with bubbling acid and grinding walls. If they survive that location, the PCs are pushed through a number of other dangerous places before any real chance of escape arises.

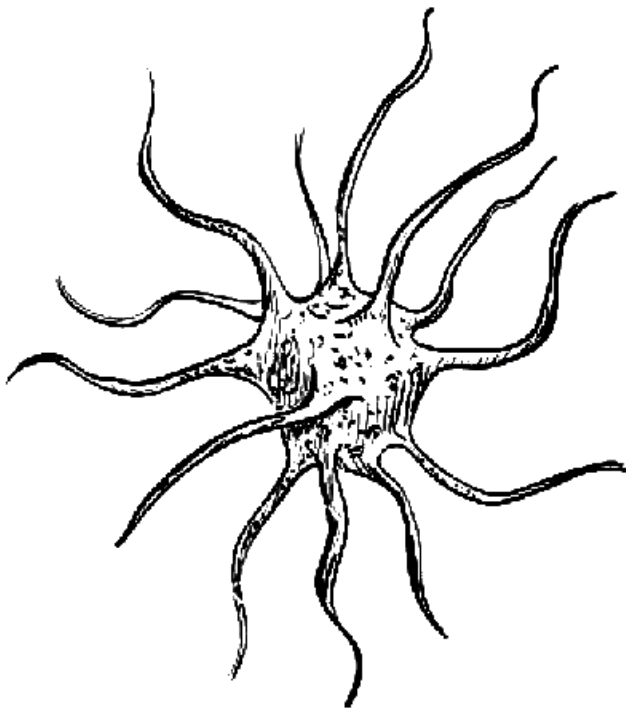
Whilst moving between locations, there is a 90% chance of a random encounter. If an encounter occurs, roll 1d6:

1. 2d6 *White Blood Cells* appear from the blood steam or emerge from membrane walls. They instinctively attack the PCs as foreign bodies, seeking to absorb and neutralise them.

White Blood Cells, AC 13, HD 3, Partial Ingestion 2d4+1, 19: special, S16 D7 C16 I- P12 W- Ch-, L6, Mv 30 ft. White Blood Cells absorb foreign bodies, breaking down their constituent parts and eradicating them. On a 19+ attack roll, a piece of random non-magical equipment is destroyed (1d4: (i) weapon, (ii) armour, (iii) shield, (iv) other). The cells are relentless; if an

adventurer is reduced to zero hp, and the body not recovered in one round, the PC dies.

2. *Rush of Blood.* An adrenaline burst causes a rush of blood, flushing the party downstream. The roller coaster like ride causes PCs to knock into each other, organ walls and red blood cells, causing 2d6 damage (*Luck* (Con) save resists). After the rush stops, the party could be anywhere in the body (determine location randomly).



3. 1d6+1 *Cancer Cells* (see Area 5) peel themselves off some discoloured red blood cells and swim towards the PCs, intending to fuse with them.
4. A random permanent magical item (LFG p.152) comes floating down the blood stream, or is embedded in a flesh wall, etc. Although the poor sod that owned the item is long dead, his/her supernatural trinket still endures.

5. The rat suffers an injury (bitten by some random predator), and is losing blood. Platelets are already forming around the wound, but up to 1d4 PCs might be able to escape before the hole is sealed (a Dex check at -2 is required). Any PCs that make it out immediately morph back to normal size, but may have to deal with up to 2d6 random predators (GM discretion). Escapees may also want to catch hold of the rat if any PCs remain trapped inside.
6. *Quake!* The rat goes for a tumble, falling while climbing or thrown by a predator. The PCs collide with such force that they must roll on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (LFG p.54, a *Luck* (Con) save resists).

Organ Locations

Area 1 - Mouth Cavity

If the party makes their way back up towards the rat's mouth cavity, the enchantment begins to reverse, the PCs enlarging up to three millimetres tall. The mouth cavity is a dark red cavern, foul smelling and lined with slippery saliva, the tongue a roiling mass of pink doom.

The tongue, saliva and jaws are deadly hazards at this size; anyone attempting to traverse the rolling tongue must make up to 1d4 Dex (Athletics or Acrobatics) checks to avoid being crushed against the wall of the mouth (50% chance, 3d6 damage) or thrown into a pool of diseased saliva (*Luck* (Con) save or infected with lethal (for humans) *Purple Cankers* (bloody mouth and throat sores, spread by coughing up fetid purple phlegm, causing 1 Con loss per day. The disease may be cured by an Apothecary with the right healing herbs, recovering 1 Con per week).

Passing through the yellowed fangs is to court death itself. The rat is liable to open its jaws at any time, but just as likely to snap them shut again, biting at small insects or responding to

strange itching along its gums (ie the PCs). A successful Str (Athletics) check is required to climb the teeth to a suitable height for crossing, and a *Luck* (Dex) save to cross the fangs at the right moment. On a fail, the PC either dies instantly (50%, torn to pieces by the towering fangs), or is reduced to zero hit points (50%, crushed against the teeth by the flailing tongue, before dropping to the gum line, still inside the teeth perimeter).

PCs attempting to use torches or fire, and/or by irritating the ulvula, to encourage the jaws to open are met with a thrashing head and waves of saliva instead (Str check at disadvantage or swept down into the stomach). If the party manages to cross the teeth they earn their freedom.

Area 2 – Stomach

After being thrust down the oesophagus, the party is dropped into an almighty, lightless chamber, half filled with acidic digestive juices. The stomach acids are bubbling and echoing as walls of muscle grind against each other in an attempt to break down food into smaller components. And to top things off, the PCs are still shrinking, now down to about 1 mm in height.

Being submerged in the acid extinguishes torches and lanterns. A PC with quick reflexes might be able to use a grapple rope (or blade thrust into stomach lining) to hang from a wall, and keep their light lit.

Those in digestive juices suffer 2d4 acidic and grinding damage at the start of each round. Those hanging from flesh walls suffer 1d4 damage (grinding only).

There are two main exits from the stomach:

1. Scaling the stomach walls, forcing open the upper sphincter, and climbing back up into the oesophagus (requires three Str checks at disad vs Str 19), or

2. Being sucked and/or squeezed out the lower sphincter into the digestive tract. After 2d6 rounds in the stomach, PCs must make a successful Str check each round to avoid being pushed or washed into Area 3.

PCs attempting to make their own exit by hacking through a flesh wall find it surprisingly rubbery and resilient. Small holes can be made with time, however such damage causes the stomach walls to grind that area with extra force, causing 1d6 extra damage and forcing a Str contest (as above) to avoid being squeezed out of the lower sphincter.

Area 3 – Digestive Tract

The tubing of the digestive tract is a nightmare of biblical proportions: a colossal tunnel of undulating flesh, grinding and folding together to squeeze food along as it melts in digestive juices. Foul gasses fill the tunnel, which is partially filled with organic acid.

Each round a PC remains in the digestive juices causes 1d4 damage, and requires a Dex check to avoid being hurled or pushed further along the tube. The intestines stretch far longer than any PC could possibly survive, but happily for them, they don't have to stay here.

Shortly after entering the tract, the PCs shrink down to microscopic size (comparatively speaking about half the size of a red blood cell, or a quarter of the size of a white blood cell). In this miniscule form, the tract becomes all encompassing, so large that the far walls cannot be seen, the juices a veritable sea, dominated by a sickly white, fleshy sky. By now, even the most hardened adventurer is struggling to hold it together, and all PCs must make a *Luck* (Will) save or suffer a moderate madness (LFG p.91; recurring night terrors of being eaten by a colossal rat, and/or waking delusions of the same).

More importantly, the PCs become small enough to squeeze through the tube walls and enter the veins and arteries of the rat, gaining them access to other organs. The party will see red (and occasional white) blood cells doing exactly this; wriggling their way through fleshly crevices in the translucent walls. A Str check is required to pass through.

Area 4 – Veins & Arteries

If the party enter the veins or arteries, they are microscopic and swept along in a surging torrent of clear yellow plasma, within which hundreds of red blood cells are travelling nearby, tumbling and jostling with each other as they ride the circulatory system.

PCs caught up in the general flotsam are inevitably hammered by careening red blood cells, causing 1d10 damage. The party might be able to protect themselves against bombardment by hitching a ride on a red blood cell or other benign organism (requires a Dex check at disadvantage), by forming a protective ring of their own and deflecting cells with long weapons or tools (requiring a successful attack roll vs AC 13), or by some other means at the GM's discretion.

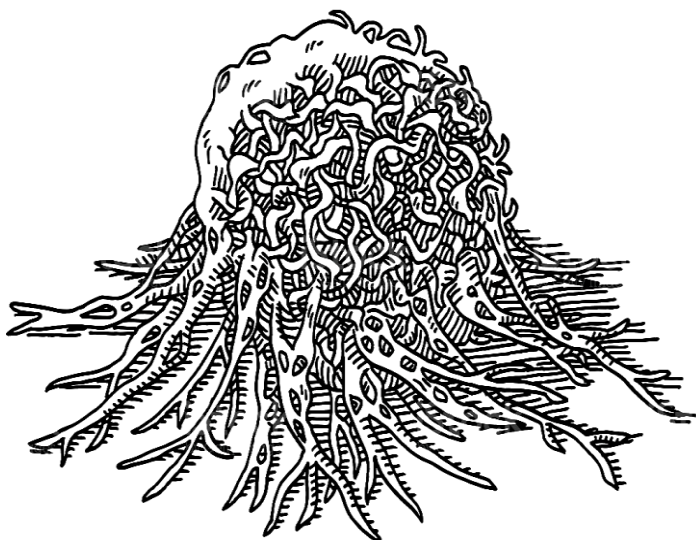
In any event, the party are largely at the mercy of the rat's circulatory system, and might be hived off into any location within the body. At the GM's option, riding a red blood cell (or by some other means) might enable the PCs to "steer" towards (or away from) specific locations, granting a +1 bonus on the following 1d8 roll (max 8). The party may not visit the same location twice before visiting another new location (reroll).

1. No exit this time. The party is caught up in a turbulent artery and suffers 1d10 damage due to bombardment (or must make a check, as noted above).

2. As above, but instead of hp damage, each PC must make a Con check or suffer 1 Str loss due to exhaustion.
3. The PCs are deposited into Area 5 – the Heart.
4. The PCs are deposited into Area 8 – the Brain.
5. The PCs are deposited into Area 6 – the Lungs.
6. The PCs are deposited into Area 2 – the Stomach.
7. The PCs are deposited into Area 3 – the Digestive Tract.
8. The PCs are deposited into... roll 1d4: (i) Area 1 (Mouth Cavity), (ii) Area 2 (Poop Chute), (iii) Area 9 (Ear Canal) or (iv) Area 10 (Nasal Cavity).

Area 5 – Heart

PCs deposited into the heart do so at microscopic size, emerging into a gigantic chamber that thrums with sound so loud it cannot be heard by the party, only felt. The shockwave of the beating heart causes nausea and disorientation, requiring a *Luck* (Con) save to avoid 1d3 Str loss.



Upon stabilising to the environment (as much as that is possible), the adventurers find themselves in a relatively stable corner of a lower chamber near a partially blocked valve. The cause of the blockage is immediately obvious: a black, slimy looking cancerous growth. Within a few rounds, the cancer detects the party and spawns 2d6 *Cancer Cells* to feed on them.

Cancer Cells, AC 15, HD 5, Cankorous Polyp 3d4+1, 19: special, S19 D9 C18 I- P9 W- Ch-, L8, Mv 30 ft. Cancer cells appear as black, misshapen growths with grasping polyps. They seek to attach and meld with other living tissue, then multiply out of control. On a 19+ attack roll, a random body part is lost; transmuted into a new cancer cell (1d6: (i) foot, (ii) below knee, (iii) hand, (iv) below elbow, (v) arm, (vi) head), per the *Injuries & Setbacks* table (loss of head causes death). A *Luck* (Con) save resists this effect.



If the party fend off the cancer pods, they may resume their travels through the circulatory system (Area 4). The colossal source cancer cannot detach itself from the valve it has melded

with, and has the equivalent of 30 HD, strikes for 4d10 damage, and *Causes Injuries* on a 17+ attack roll.

Area 6 - Lungs

PCs deposited into the lungs do so at microscopic level, floating through a vast void, between sponge like cliffs that tower higher than any mountain. The lungs spread out in all directions; a honeycomb morass of pasty white air sacks drawing in oxygen and expunging carbon dioxide.

The atmosphere in the lungs is highly toxic, filled with CO₂. Whilst the PCs need not breathe, mere skin exposure to this (relative) volume of noxious gas requires a *Luck* (Con) check to avoid 4d6 damage.

Those that survive initial exposure are either drawn into the sponge like air sacks when the rat inhales (50%), or expelled into the mouth cavity when the rat exhales (50%, see Area 1).

A PC sucked towards the air sacks may make a Str or Dex check (their choice) to grab hold of a stringy air sack web or lip, preventing them from being drawn in. If drawn in however, the PC has one round to be freed or braced by his/her allies, else they are automatically bound by the sticky fibres of the deep lungs (helpless). At this point, if allies cannot come up with a plan to retrieve their comrade, 2d6 *White Blood Cells* emerge from nearby flesh walls in 3d6 rounds to annihilate the foreign body.

Area 7 - Poop Chute

PCs entering the bowel pass through the flesh wall in microscopic form, but swiftly grow to about 1 mm tall. The lower digestive tract is a revolting, feculent tunnel of discoloured flesh, mostly filled with reeking excreta. Swimming through the sloshing faeces is horrendous at best and debilitating at worst, requiring a *Luck* (Con) check to avoid contracting *Vermín Palsy* (causing 1 Dex loss within 1d4 hours, and over the course of a week paralysis in one random limb. The disease may be cured by an apothecary with the right healing herbs).

As the PCs navigate the bowel, they come upon a solidified island, upon which 3d6+20 strange, mushroom like creatures are milling about.

The creatures are approximately 0.5 mm tall, with mushroom like heads, twin eye stalks and leg like tentacles. They are sentient, but without language, making only a series of “*Flurp*” noises as they scoop excrement into their undermaws. The Flurps have never seen humans before, and are highly territorial. Whether they can come to some understanding with the party is up to the GM. If not, the Flurps attack.

Flurp, AC 14, HD 1, Tentacle Slap 1d6+1, 19: special, S12 D15 C10 I4 P10 W10 Ch6, L7, Mv 40 ft. Flurps employ a swift, loping movement, flowing across terrain on their many tentacles. They make excellent floaters due to their muffin top bodies. On a 19+ attack roll the flurp’s gas filled torso explodes, causing 1d8 damage in a 5 ft radius and causing humans to gag uncontrollably on nasty after fumes (helpless for one round, Con check resists). During the explosion, miniscule baby flurps scatter across nearby terrain like dandelion puffs (some of which the party might unwittingly carry into the outside world, enlarging to 1 inch tall if so).

If the Flurps are defeated, it is only a matter of time before the rat relieves itself, and the party is released back into the world via a ghastly commotion of excrement.

Area 8 - Brain

PC’s deposited into the brain press through the protective membrane in microscopic form. The brain landscape appears as an all-encompassing field of white flesh, interlaced with huge, scarlet red fissures of canyon like proportions. Between the brain and skull floats a colourless sea which the PCs effectively float in; the cerebral fluid. Movement in this area is effectively swimming.

The hazards of the brain include 3d6 *White Blood Cells* (see Random Encounter 1) somewhere in the vicinity of the PCs (either cleaning up some random toxin or “patrolling”),

and make a bee line for the party if they detect them.

Secondly, the brain is constantly firing off and receiving electrical nerve impulses, some of which lose their way and escape into the brain fluid. There is a 30% chance of this occurring every 1d10 rounds that the party spend here (causing 6d6 hp damage and rendering the target blind for 1d2 months (*Luck* (Dex) save for half and to negate the blindness).

Being in the brain however allows the PCs to orientate themselves with respect to three possible exits: (i) the nasal cavity, (ii) the mouth cavity, or (iii) the ear canals. If the party attempts to move in one of these directions, a successful Int (Apothecary) check steers them to veins that will deposit them in the intended location. Otherwise the party ends up back in the veins/arteries at large (Area 4).

Area 9 - Ear Canal

When the party first emerge into the ear, they do so at microscopic size, but quickly enlarge to a height matching that of some black hairs lining the canal. The enormous chamber magnifies sounds many times over. A Perc (Detection) check picks up a hint of odd clicking noises coming from the outer ear.



Further along, in the outer ear canal, are 3d6 *Ear Mites*. The bugs, slightly larger than the PCs, are carrion feeders, gnawing on dead rat flesh or wax

covered hairs. They are easily spoked and unlikely to respond favourably to the party, intent on defending their feeding grounds. Intruders such as the PCs must be killed or driven away.

Ear Mite, AC 16, HD 2, Bite 1d8+1, 19: special, S16 D8 C14 I4 P10 W11 Ch5, L5, Mv 30 ft. These scaly, beetle like insects have a hardened carapace, six powerful legs and snapping, beakish jaws. On a 19+ attack roll they crush their foe beneath their rigid bulk, requiring a *Luck* (Con) save to avoid rolling on the *Injuries & Setbacks* table.

If the party defeats or bypasses the mites, they may exit the rat's body via the outer ear.

Area 10 - Nasal cavity

The party enters the nasal cavity in microscopic form, floating in an immense space, the far walls fading to black. Hairs the size of mountains poke out from the flesh wall the party entered through, but on the horizon is a bright light (either daylight, moonlight or torchlight from beyond the rat's nostrils).

The rat's back nasal passage is completely blocked with mucus, so much so that it cannot breathe through its nose. As a result of the blockage, there is no chance the party will be inhaled back down into the lungs.

Unfortunately it also means the adventurers must "swim" through air towards the nostril exits using their own motion, an ordeal that will take some considerable time, sped along by outside breezes circulating through the nasal cavity. At the GM's discretion, a random encounter check might be called for.

Before the PCs may escape, there is one final hazard to contend with. A cold virus has been multiplying here, and millions of wriggling, spasming virions (virus particles that have not yet attached to a living cell) are tumbling in the air, forming a kind of biological asteroid field.

Navigating the virions without incident requires 1d4 successful Dex checks. If failed, the PC and some virus particles end up on a collision course. A final *Luck* (Dex) save is permitted to avoid

being engulfed. If failed, the PC dies: instantaneously transformed into a gloopy, amoeba like virus cell, drifting down to implant in the nasal cavity. If the virions are avoided, the party may exit the rat's body via the outer nostrils.

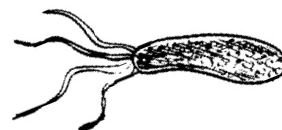
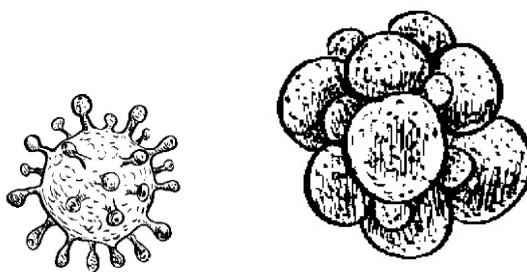
Aftermath

If the PCs make it out of the rat, they immediately begin to revert to normal size, slowly expanding until they reach their full proportions (most likely soaked in various bodily fluids).

While this process is going on, the rat stands up on its hind legs, pawing at the air, then hardens back into a statue before vanishing in a flash of golden fire. Whether the idol reappears elsewhere in the game world is a matter for the GM.

Although there is no obvious reward at the end of this adventure (apart from perhaps a tall tale that not even their grandchildren will believe), if the party meet any rats, giant rats or dire rats in the future, the verminous beasts are automatically cowed by the PCs, bowing their heads in submission before slinking away.

At the GM's discretion, a single PC might develop this ability further over time (similar to additional magical item attunements). With study and practice, the PC unravels the riddle of the golden rat, learning to summon and control vermin and vermin like monsters.



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