

Perry Fehr



Labyrinth Lord Compatible Product

RETURN OF THE RAT CULT

A Labyrinth Lords Adventure for 4-6 level 2 or 3 characters.

BACKGROUND

The town of Felton, a grain and livestock center for the region, has been plagued over the years with infestations of rats seeking the bounty of stored grain, animal flesh, and the offal of both. It rains a lot in Felton, and cats, the usual solution, do not do well in the damp... Many adventuring careers here have started out with the skills of rat-catcher. There are some, however, who sought a different answer to the problem- elevating the prevalent vermin to the status of indestructible god, and giving worship.

The Servants of the Small God, usually referred to as the Rat Cult, emerge from time to time, especially after a particularly despoiled harvest in Felton. Fringe citizens or farmers driven mad by the loss of their livelihood dress in gray robes, grow their fingernails out, and carve three lines on each cheek- the sign of the Servants. They squeak and jibber in the streets, implore the populace to offer sacrifices, and usually get tossed in jail, where they eventually commit suicide.

Recently though, after a particularly bad harvest, the Cult rose with a vengeance. Typically never numbering over a half-dozen, nearly twenty rat-cultists staged a rally near the granaries, demanding one bin be spilled on the ground as sacrifice, to appease the Small God. Militia appeared, deputies were called, and a riot broke out. Eight militia and deputies, and half a dozen cultists died, and a dozen citizens have disappeared, feared kidnapped by the retreating cultists, including their leader, Nimmus, who was once a priest of the local 'Grain God. '

As the party arrives in town, the situation is dire. The militia has nearly been wiped out; only four remain, wounded, and the chief deputy has been killed. A dozen of the townsfolk have disappeared, and the full moon, typical time of sacrifice as demanded by the Servants, is fast approaching. Panic is beginning to set in, and time is short.

THE ADVENTURE

A small committee consisting of the mayor, Ding Fergus (an old man of 63), Brother Green (1st level acolyte of the grain god) and Brent (sole standing member of the militia, as a Merchant; see Labyrinth LordTM) comes to the party, either in the middle of the road near the riot scene, or at a suitable inn. The situation is laid out, and background explained. Every captive of the dozen returned will net a 10 gp reward, every cultist killed a 5 gp reward. A decoration over the door of the church, the +1 *shield of plenty* (see appendix), is offered for the head of Nimmus, the renegade priest. The committee has no idea where the cult might have its base; they disappeared so quickly, no one saw their escape from town.

PARTY ACTIONS

The party has several choices, and must hurry- sundown is in 2 hours. They can choose to:

- Further question the committee and press for resources: this will take half an hour, and requires a Charisma ability check on d20. If successful, they can obtain some or all of the following, depending on roleplay: a flask of holy water from Brother Green; a 10 gp advance from Mayor Fergus; or have Brent join the party (for full share of treasurehe has a morale of 8)
- Ask for horses and search the countryside: roll 2d20 and check the Wilderness Encounter table for 'Inhabited Lands', (see Labyrinth Lord[™] rulebook). If 21+ is rolled, no sign of the cult is found anywhere, and an hour is lost. If an encounter is met, it will be either on the road, or in an abandoned barn with the sign of the Servants daubed in paint, depending on the monster. The only treasure (or clue, in the case of friendly encounters) is the silver star of the deputies of Felton, found nearby. This is a clue towards the jail in Felton.
- Examine the dead cultists: The bodies of two of them are still moving—one contains 6 rot grubs, which will attack on contact. The other body is that of a cultist that consumed a *potion of rat swarm* (see appendix), and 12 rats will burst from his body if disturbed. Apart from daggers, the only objects on the cultists are halves of a broken key, on each of the tainted corpses. This is a clue towards the jail in Felton; this search takes half an hour.
- Search the town and question the citizens:

Whether by spreading out or gathering as a group, rumors can be followed, and buildings searched. One rumor can be found per character, plus their Charisma modifier number; this will take an hour.

d10	Rumor
1	Giant birds with rat heads carried them off!
2	The cultists have the right idea- more sacrifice!
3	Isn't it obvious? They are in Nimmus' church!
4	Things ain't been the same since they blew up the holy book (see Labyrinth Room 4)
5	I heard there was an abandoned barn where they made sinister sacrifices (see Party Ac- tions)
6	In ancient times, strange creatures lived under the earth, right under where we stand! (True enough)
7	Here! I found this gray cloak, right in the middle of main street, with fresh blood on it! (Dropped in the retreat)
8	They kept throwin' those culties in jail, some- times they wouldn't come out! (Pretty direct)
9	The only place strangers stay is the Inn. I'm just sayin'
10	Look for rats in the sewer! That's where the garbage goes!

In Town: Businesses and places of interest include the following, and possible results of searches there. A map should not be necessary, the party can easily access any place in town.

The Tavern (The Greedy Scythe): Will turn up a "missing" townsperson, drunk as a skunk and sleeping it off upstairs. One party member will also suffer a pickpocketing attempt from a 3rd level thief who works there.

Church of the Grain God: Currently boarded up. A rune of divine wrath is painted on the front doors. The first person to set foot on the floor receives a *bestow curse* spell, reducing a random ability score by half, until the curse is lifted. Rat's blood and grain is poured on the altar, but there is nothing more unusual here, though the floor is very wet, with stinky water.

General Store (Filberg's): A normal store, where any regular goods can be bought. If the party is due a lot

of money, they will probably get half of it in credit at Filberg's. He has *potions of growth*, *healing*, *delusion (flying)*, *climbing*, and a *philter of love* under the counter, for 'special' customer. Fint Filberg has a long nose and scratchy whiskers, looking unfortunately like a rat. Use the statistic for 'Merchant' for him (see Labyrinth Lord^{TM).}

The Town Well: This is where townsfolk with nothing to do hang out, gossip, and do informal trading. If party members insist on exploring it, via a rope, a cult member (as a Berserker, p. 87) in the crowd will attempt to cut the rope. If an explorer in the well can pass a Constitution ability check to hold their breath, they will splash down in Room 2 of the labyrinth, taking 1d3 points of damage and meeting the denizens there.

Deputies' Shack and Jail: This ramshackle building has been attacked many times by cultists and vigilantes alike. A 0-level human militiaman is on duty, wielding a creaky crossbow. One of the two jail-cells has a secret door in the back (behind some thick bushes) to the outside, and the cell itself has a secret trap door, which leads to Room 1 of the labyrinth lair of the Servants of the Small God, the Rat Cult.

Private Homes: If, for some reason, the party wants to do a house-to-house search, they will waste half an hour and find nothing. It is 50% likely that a pot will be thrown at a random party member, dealing 1 point of damage per house so intruded upon.

'Look in the Sewer': An extensive system of tunnels housed the first settlers, and was used for drains, but has been sealed for generations, with only small pipes draining the older homes' sewage. A 6' pipe can be shown in any large business or home, and squeaking faintly heard.

Time Passing: It is important to note how much time is spent finding the cult's lair and the stolen villagers. In two hours, the full moon will be up, and Nimmus will start sacrificing the captives in Room 5 of the Labyrinth, either killing them with a knife, or biting them to induce wererat lycanthropy. The party should be made well aware of this timeline, from villagers' gossip or statements of NPCs.

THE LABYRINTH: SEWERS AND TEMPLE OF THE RAT CULT

Passages and Rooms: Passages are modified sewer tunnels, irregular and haphazardly cobbled, constantly dripping water from the roof, with puddles on the floor. Line of sight is not dependable (-1 on missile attacks in tunnels) Rooms are drier, lined with cobbles and pieces of wood. Doors require normal opening rolls.

Lighting: Rooms 1, 3, and 5 have torches mounted in the walls. The dais in Room 6 glows with eerie magical radiance, enough for poor illumination, whereas everywhere else is completely dark.

Unfinished/collapsed passages: The collapsed passages west of 2 and east of 5 can be dug through in 6 turns, attracting a level 1 wandering monster. Digging or

examining an unfinished passage will yield one of the following, once:

- 1. Passage collapse—all take 1d6 damage
- 2. Find an abandoned digging tool, use as club
- 3. 1-3 giant rats emerge and attack
- 4. Buried sacrificial victim, clutching a silver dagger or a key to the locked eastern doors...
- 5. Find 1d6 copper coins
- 6. Clear out a 10' square.

Twisting passages: Moving within 10' of the end of a twisting, unlabeled passage reveals one of the following; the tunnels are too irregular and dripping with ceiling water to see very clearly to the end.

1-3	11-20 rats, attack as swarm
4-5	1-6 giant rats
6	Fleeing/hiding kidnap victim: (AL N, Mv 120' (40'), AC 9, Hp 4, #AT 1, DG 1-2 (fist), SV Normal Human, ML 5) If found, subtract from total in Room 5.



Room 1- The Old Gaol

The passage beneath the holding cell leads narrowly down, past rusty rivets and shattered manacles, and fragments of chains clank beneath your feet. You enter a large, dirt-and stone chamber with similar pieces of metal jammed into the walls, and a burning torch in a sconce. A huge rodent, big as a carriage, squats in the center of the chamber.

The 'giant rat' is an illusion, cast by a cult magic-user in the southwest alcove. A cult thief lurks in the southeast and cult warriors in the other three alcoves. If the explorers are distracted ie. attack the 'giant rat', The thief will gain a +8% bonus to move silently and hide in shadows, and attempt a back stab. The other warriors will scream and charge with short swords; the warrior in the northeast alcove will cover them with a crossbow. The doors to the northwest and west are waterlogged and jammed; requiring 1-3 on d6 to open, and the door east is locked. Spending the time to bash it down results in a level 2 wandering monster to appear!

Risset, cult wizard: [3rd level human magic-user; AL C, MV 120' (40'), AC 7, Hp 10, #AT 1, DG 1d4 (dagger), Spells (*darkness, charm person, phantasmal force* {used}), SV MU 3, ML 7] S10 I16 W15 D16 Co11 Ch 9

Thert, cult thief: [2nd level human thief; AL C, MV 120' (40'), AC 5 (leather armor), Hp 7, #AT 1, DG 1d6+1 (short sword), SV T2, ML 7] S13 I8 W9 D17 Co12 Ch10 [Move silently 27% +bonus, Hide in shadows 17% + bonus]

3 cult warriors: [1st level human fighters; AL C, MV 90' (30'), AC 4/5 (chain mail {& shield}), Hp 8, AT 1, DG 1d6+2 (mace) or 1d6 (crossbow), SV F1, ML 8] S16 I8 W10 D10 Co12 Ch9]

Each cultist has a bottle of wine and a pouch of grain, symbols of their cult; consuming any of it requires a save vs. poison or lose 1 point of Constitution for 1 day. Thert has a jeweled service goblet from the church worth 100 gp on his person; Risset has 8 sp and a *potion of invisibility*. The others have 4 sp each.

Room 2- Sewer Waterfall

The roar of noise from this area can be heard as soon as you move around the corner. The chamber is a hemispheric curve, apparently, joined in the north by a slanted shaft receiving a cascade of dirty water from above. Bits and pieces of... things bob in the murk.

The southern area of the chamber is a bowl 10' deep in the middle, lined with cobbles slick with algae; there is no ledge. A total of 17 giant rats will be in the water or on ledges in the northern area of the chamber. They will attack in small groups, but at least 7 will stay in the northern area, attacking only if the players trespass. They are bolder in this, their home nest, with large numbers. Players will have to do a Dexterity ability check at -2 if they want to walk on the slick cobbles there, with the water falling! A pile of metal can be seen in the northwest corner; though it looks like armor, it is a collection of discarded kitchen pots. If the whole area is searched, a metal plate on the northeast wall is engraved with the sign of the rain goddess, wife of the grain god. Touching it and praying heals the observer 1d8 hit points, and gives him the ability to cast *light* once, before the day is over.

17 Giant Rats: [AL N, MV 120' (40')/ swim 90' (30'), AC 7, HD 4 hp each, #AT 1 (bite) DG 1d3 + disease, SV F1, ML 8 {special}]

Room 3- Cultist Quarters

Beyond the damp-swollen door, you see a squalid sight; 4 mumbling humans in ragged clothing decorated with what looks like cat-skins groveling at the feet of a half-human, half rat 'thing' licking the blood from a wickedly curved blade. The source of the blood is a hacked villager, laying on a crude platform, surrounded by tiny, smoky candles.

The east door is trapped with a crude 'mousetrap' device; dealing 1d6 damage if not detected and dealt with. The cultists inside can deactivate the trap if a knock of three, then three more is given.

The humans are petitioners to the cult, who fled at the first sign of violence back at the village. They have brought a kidnap victim to the wererat acolyte of Nimmus, in supplication. They will attempt to rush intruders to prove their faith, and hold them for the wererat to kill with his cursed blade. Wererat: [AL C, MV 120' (40'), AC 7, HD 3 (hp 13), #AT 1, DG see below, SV F3, ML 8] Carries a *sword of pain*; (see appendix)

4 Cultist Petitioners: [Normal humans; AL C, MV 120' (40'), AC 9, Hp 3 each, #AT 1 (grapple) DG special, SV Normal human, ML 10] Each petitioner will throw himself on an intruder, at +2 to hit. If successful, the character cannot move, and can only attack with a fist or small weapon, losing their dexterity bonus.

There is little among the trash of the cultists that is valuable; 1d10 copper pieces, a stolen cloth-of-gold altar cloth thrown in a corner, worth 80 gp, a *potion of rat swarm* half buried in the ash, and a wax stamper from the mayor's office, who knows how it got there...

Room 4 -Abandoned Access

The door to this room is blown off its hinges, as though the walls were imploded by some titanic, fiery force. A cobbled access once led upward, but is collapsed by scorched beams and scalded earth and stone- and what looks like a golden carpet covering the stones at its base. Another carpet seems to be thrown in the northeast corner, and another to your left, on the piles of rubble. You hear a strange clicking sound, but there is too much dust in the air to see.

This room was destroyed by a fireball down a sewer access some time ago, in a previous attempt to wipe out the cult. The cultists then had stolen a sacred book from the grain god's church (see Rumors) and it was presumed to have been destroyed. It was not, and lies under the northeast pile of rubble, and one of three 'golden carpets'- colonies of yellow mold. Feeding on and immune to the mold are 6 subterranean locusts, making the clicking noise, preparatory to making the attractive whine, which will check the 1st level wandering monster table.

The sacred book is bound in gold dragon hide (thus immune to fire) and titled 'The Holy Granary', using it can cast each of the following spells once per week; *cure light wounds, purify food and drink, find traps, cure disease, speak with plants.* Each time a spell is cast from the book, the caster must make a Wisdom ability check; failing it results in being struck with a quest to return the book to a temple of the grain god.

Room 5- Chamber of Sacrifice

Once past the foul wire traps, the scene before you stops your blood; nearly a dozen men, women and children chained in a huddled mass against the north wall, guarded by three gray-robed cultists, elves, by the look, with wicked blades. Perched on top of a glistening stone dais is a ratlike man in a shredded cleric's robe of golden yellow, foully soiled. "More prospective members, how nice..." the creature squeaks, and then transforms into something like a giant rat in a man's clothing...

Both doors to this chamber are trapped with the 'mousetrap' wires as in room 3, tripped on a 2 in d6, if not detected and dealt with, doing 1d6 damage. No secret knock will bypass these, though... Nimmus, renegade cleric and currently a wererat, is quite glad the adventurers have come, to add to his growing cult- the addition of three fanatical elves has convinced him his time has come. The four of them will cast their spells before entering combat, as the player characters cannot reach them in melee through the mass of captives.

Nimmus, wererat cleric: [AL C, MV 120' (40'), AC 6 (tattered leather), HD 3, hp 20, #AT 1 (bite) DG 1d4, Spells (*cause fear, protection from good*) SV F3/C2{best of both} ML 9]

3 elven cultists: [AL C, MV 120' (40), AC 4, HD 1+1, hp 6 each, #AT 1 (sword), DG 1d8, Spells (*magic missile, sleep, hold portal* [west]),SV E1, ML 8]

10 Villagers: [AL L, MV 120' (40'), AC 9, HD 3 hp, #AT 1 (fist), DG 1d2, SV Normal Human, ML 6]

Each elf is richly dressed, with silver tattoos instead of scars for the cult mark. Each bears a purse of 5 gold and 3 silver pieces; one wears a ruby ring worth 50 gp, another has three +1 arrows in a quiver, for his shortbow stashed in a corner. The third has a scroll tube containing a spell scroll of arcane mark, and a treasure map detailing the entire complex, with area 6 circled. They wear stylized armor made of many steel bands. Nimmus has nothing except a stained dagger resting on the dais, and a cursed scroll of lycanthropy; the reader contracts the disease as if he had been bitten and failed his save. If the reader currently has just contracted lycanthropy, he immediately turns into a wererat monster. A dented pot in a corner holds the cult's treasury;



1,200 silver pieces and 4 roughly cut gems worth 75 gp each.

Room 6- Statues of the Ancients

This vast chamber is different from the rest of the labyrinth; tiled with green, dressed stone, squared off corners and a 20' high ceiling. Doors in the north and south are green stone slabs, but the north one is shattered on the floor. Small chambers in the corners are decorated with bas-relief of twisted, curling tails, which catch and draw the eye in their patterns. The center 'island' is 10' lower than the rest of the space, but slightly raised above the level of the water that surrounds it, black and murky. On the island are three statues; the north end is of a fat, comical human, hands full of food; the south of a mangy cat, cross-eyed and scraggly; in the center, on a three-level dais that glows slightly with a yellow radiance, is a sleek, plump, clever-looking rat, on a copper platform. The rat holds what looks like a set of copper plates, perhaps a book.

The island can be jumped to quite easily, but returning may be more difficult; the dressed stone is rather slick. Searching here (as for a secret door) reveals only that the center statue is hinged, and by moving the statue so that it exactly resembles a scurrying rat, on its face, a spiraling tunnel descends into the earth. If the Labyrinth Lord wishes to continue the adventure, the passage can continue on to deeper levels of the underworld, perhaps to a lair of the masterminds behind the Servants of the Small God!

If the Labyrinth Lord wishes to end the adventure here, the tunnel leads down to a 10' diameter almost-spherical chamber with 20 sides, each bearing a face upon it, of animals, humanoids, and things not of the worldand a number from one to 20; the number one is inset with red crystal, the others in white. Roll randomly to see what number the intruder is standing on; it will glow. If more than one intruder stands on a number, the chamber will glow ominously and begin to grow warmer. If the second intruder does not exit the chamber, any present will take 1 point of damage for every round there is more than 1 standing on a facet- the effect will immediately cease when there is only one on a facet. Those who wish to access the chamber's secret must push or strike a facet that is three higher or lower than the facet he stands upon, and progress in either

direction until all of the facets in the chamber have been pressed and lit up, ex; 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 1. (or) 4, 1, 18, 15, 12, etc. Activating an incorrect facet will trigger an ominous glow, and the next mistake will inflict 1 point of electricity damage to the user; every other mistake will inflict damage- being reduced to 0 hit points will incinerate the user. If the proper sequence has been completed (20 facets), the last facet will open, to a small compartment. Within is a *helm of telepathy*, that also add 1 point to Intelligence and Wisdom; it is shaped like a silver rat's head.

Lurking in the channel surrounding the island are 2 tentacleeches; a variant of giant leech that possesses three slimy tentacles on the sides of its eyeless head. They will wake from their underwater slumber if loud noises are made in the chamber, such as moving the statue or combat.

Tentacleech: [AL N, MV 120' (40'), AC 7, HD 6, hp 27 each, #AT 3 (tentacle grab) or 1 (drain blood), DG special or 1d6/ round, SV F3, ML 10; XP 650]

A hit on a tentacle with a bladed weapon will sever it; in the round after a tentacle hits, the victim is drawn into the water, where the leech can attack with its bite. A tentacleech without tentacles will retreat to the bottom of the 10' deep channel. In the water is a solid gold belt buckle, worth 180 gp.

APPENDIX: NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Potion of Rat Swarm: This thick liquid looks as though it contains a lot of hairs, and it does... It has two applications; if poured on the ground, it summons a rat swarm of 12-22 rats, exactly like the monster entry, except that the pourer directs their activities. They are real rats that will do the pourer's bidding for 10 minutes, and then run away. If consumed, the potion has no effect unless the imbiber is killed, whereupon they will emerge from the drinker's body, forcing all who see the event to save vs. poison or be paralyzed for 1 round. The rats will then attack any suitable nearby target until killed or driven off. **Shield of Plenty:** This large, curved shield has heraldry depicting harvests and farmers on it, and can be of +1, +2 or +3 quality. Once per day, the wielder of the shield can share the shield bonus of the *shield of plenty* with as many allies and as many rounds of combat as he has Charisma points ie. A +1 *shield of plenty* wielded by a fighter with 12 Charisma subtracts 1 (not 2) from his AC and the AC of 12 others for 12 rounds a day, when activated, all rounds consecutive. When not using this ability, it acts as a normal +1 *shield* for the owner.

Sword of Pain: These cruel longswords have jagged, unwrapped grips, and can be of +1, +2 or +3 quality. They do extra damage to a struck target, and to the wielder. A +1 sword of pain does 1d4 to the target, 1d2 to the wielder, +2 does 1d6/1d3, and a +3 sword does 1d8/1d4 extra damage.

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