

IT Waits



An *Over the Edge* Adventure Resource
by Robert "Doc" Cross

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Big thanks to the real Bob the Dog for being one cool pooch!

***Over the Edge*TM was written by Jonathan Tweet with Robin D. Laws.**

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Want to keep up to date on OTETM? Check out *Alarums & Excursions*, a superlative monthly apa in which Jonathan Tweet, Robin Laws and John Nephew appear pretty regularly. For a sample copy, send \$2.00 plus Book Rate postage (as of April 1993, that makes \$3.05 total) to Lee Gold, 3965 Alla Road, Los Angeles, CA 90066.

Another great place to look: America Online (the company screen name is AtlasGames). We have a support folder in AOL's Gaming Information Exchange (keyword "GIX"). You can find the electronic ghosts of Jonathan Tweet and John Nephew wandering that region of netspace. If you're connected to the Internet, you can also send questions, comments, criticisms, outrageous flattery, or your favorite demented conspiracy theories to our address: AtlasGames@aol.com.

For those of you who aren't jacked into the net, we still have a slugmail address, too: P.O. Box 406, Northfield, MN, 55057, USA. Send us a self-addressed, stamped envelope, and we'll send you back some propaganda, like our latest catalog. This is the place for writers' and artists' guidelines, too.

Hey! Did you know the OTE fanzine, *EdgeWork*, is probably out by the time that you read this? Drop us a line for more info.

About This Adventure

The basic plot line of *It Waits...* is pretty simple: the PCs are searching for three telepathic, intelligent, tool-using rats. Of course, there is the matter of the rats not wanting to be found, but aside from that it's just a basic rat-hunting adventure.

Well, OK, that's a lie. The main reason I wrote *It Waits...* was to introduce several new lifeforms and three new locations to Al Amarja. You see, in order to track down these mutant rats, the PCs have to journey through a garbage dump in Skylla, a haunted area called Deadville, and the dark, dangerous sewers beneath the Edge. In each of these places, the PCs encounter strange lifeforms. Some are plants, some are animals, and some are something else entirely. A few are harmless, many are dangerous and a couple just plain deadly. The characters will only find out which is which through trial and error.

Besides the strange locales and even stranger creatures, *It Waits...* also contains a potential Secret Race (the mutant rats), a new and dangerous GMC, and another GMC who may be the PCs' best friend or their worst enemy. I hope that you also find lots of plot hooks to use in future OTE sessions.

Because I've tried to make this adventure as open-ended as possible, GMs are encouraged to fill in any details that I have left vague. I strongly urge you to twist things around to best suit your particular series, especially when it comes to getting the PCs involved in this adventure. Although I've tried to cover several ways of getting characters involved, I couldn't possibly think of everything! Depending upon the PCs and the situations in your series, you may need to get pretty creative.

A Word About The Title: I could have called this adventure "Rat Hunt," "SewerQuest," or "The Wild, the Innocent and the Deadville Shuffle," but I felt *It Waits...* would inspire more fear in players who just get a glimpse of the cover. Make the most of this when they ask what the adventure is about. A pitying look and an evil chuckle will set the mood quite nicely.

GM Information

One of the most important things to think about before running this adventure is how it will fit into your present series. In all probability, your players have created a very diverse group of PCs with different backgrounds, goals, philosophies, traits and flaws. So how do you interest them in taking a job as rat hunters? By knowing how to press the right buttons! Everyone has their price/obsession/dream/addiction/whatever. Here are a few suggestions on how to get certain types of PCs involved in this adventure.

A Need For Money

Lack of funds is a common problem for many PCs. The ten grand that HyperGen is offering for the rats should be enough to generate some interest. If it isn't, have someone else offer them even more money for the rats. "Look, if you can bring me whatever HyperGen is after, there's 25 Gs in it for

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ya. Just to show ya I'm serious, here's a two grand deposit." Whether this new party reveals their name or motives is up to you, but few impoverished PCs will pass up 25 big ones. Truly capitalistic PCs will realize that they can auction the rats off to the highest bidder.

The Great God Science/ Masters of the Mystic Arts

Any scientist or occultist worth his salt will want in on this venture. Just mention things like "several undiscovered new species" or "the source of many ghost sightings" or "strange paranormal energy readings." You'll probably want to customize these tantalizing tidbits to fit in with the PC scientist's or occultist's field of study.

Power Corrupts

If a PC is looking for a new tool in her quest for power, she could do a lot worse than an army of mutant rats. This sort of PC will no doubt be a member of some power group. She might be ordered by her superiors to take the mission and grab the rats or, barring that, kill the rats so that no other group can have them. It could work out that all of the PCs are working for different power groups. Of course, such a gathering of Control Freaks would almost certainly attract the attention of the Cut-Ups. Things would then get very interesting!

A Monkey On My Back

By far the easiest PCs to manipulate are those with serious drug addictions. Offer them new drugs, a cure, or even more of what they need. Unless they

happen to be very wealthy, they'll jump at the chance to get what you offer.

Big Sister Is Watching

If addicts are the easiest PCs to get into the adventure, then undercover agents must come second. They could be working (willingly or otherwise) for Her Exaltedness, the Peace Force, a power group, an alien race, a secret society, or one of HyperGen's competitors.

The Voices Guide Me

If any of the PCs are guided by a real or imagined higher power, have that higher power take an interest in the rats. Depending on the nature of the "voice," this could mean that the PC wants to help the rats ("Show them the One True Path"), harm the rats ("They are an Abomination") or even worship the rats ("The Almighty has many faces"). How this sort of PC will react to the other PCs (and their goals) is another matter.

It may be necessary to use a mixture of the above to convince a PC that she should take HyperGen's job offer. Do whatever it takes and remember that it is OK to distort the truth about any or all aspects of the job. In fact, many PCs won't believe the truth even if you tell it to them.

Starting Things Off

The PCs are contacted, individually or as a group, by whatever sort of agent you think HyperGen might hire. A GMC such as "Teeth," described in the *New Faces* supplement, would do nicely (and suggest that HyperGen is a subsidiary or partner of the Roentgen corporation). She will tell them that her "employers" would like to hire them to "find some missing merchandise" and is willing to pay ten grand each for their trouble. Once you have used whatever it takes to get them to accept the job, have the PCs go to HyperGen HQ. You can place the HyperGen building anywhere on Al Amarja you like, but I recommend putting it somewhere in the Edge.

Once the PCs are there, a typical corporate lawyer type and a woman scientist will give them a briefing about the mission and what they are looking for. Read the following to your players or paraphrase the scene through role-playing.

The lawyer starts things off: "All of you have agreed to work for the HyperGen corporation as 'misplaced materials specialists.' In simple terms, you've been hired to find some escaped lab animals. The pay is \$10,000.00 each if you return the animals alive and in good health. The pay rate drops to \$2,000.00 each if you kill or mutilate them. HyperGen is supplying you with equipment and a cover story to aid in the safe and rapid capture of the animals.

"One thing that HyperGen insists upon is absolute secrecy concerning all aspects of this mission. Should you be questioned at any time, your cover story is that you are out searching for disease-carrying vermin that pose a threat to the peace and

tranquility of Al Amarja. To make this story more believable, especially to members of the Peace Force, HyperGen is supplying you with several containers holding dead rats and mice. Each container is labelled with the name of a particularly nasty disease, including Bubonic Plague and AIDS. If that doesn't deter further questioning, HyperGen suggests taking whatever steps are necessary to maintain the mission's covert status. What those steps might be are up to you.

"You will be accompanied on this mission by Dr. Wendy Banner, head of the team that was studying the rats. And now, here's Dr. Banner to explain more about the animals you are looking for."

Dr. Banner is a short, petite woman of about 30. She has a pleasant voice, but seems a bit intense. She has a palm sized cellular phone clipped onto her belt.

Dr. Banner begins: "You will be looking for three white rats with blue eyes, about the size of large house cats. Specifically, you need to find the female. Capturing the two males would be nice, but is of secondary importance. These rats are mutants and were created by me in our laboratory and were being used in the study of increasing perceptive abilities through gene splicing. The rats escaped during a fire that destroyed the laboratory. We don't know if they were injured in any way. They are harmless and gentle most of the time, but since they are not used to the outside world and its dangers, they may try to bite you when you corner them. Despite this, you must not harm the female during capture! We want to absolutely minimize any stress she undergoes.

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"We aren't 100% sure where the rats might have gone, but we feel that they will head for areas of minimal human activity. The closest and most likely areas that fit this description are Deadville, four square blocks of abandoned buildings in Great Men; a small garbage dump in Skylla; and the sewers and storm drains that run under most of The Edge. Fortunately, we can track the rats using a trained dog. Unfortunately, this means that we will have to visit each of the areas until the dog locates the scent. With any luck, it shouldn't take too long for that to happen. Now, are there any questions before we pick up our equipment and leave?"

GM Information

Use the information in this adventure to answer the PCs questions, but remember to minimize the dangers associated with the mission, don't tell them

too much more about the rats and generally make the job seem like a piece of cake.

As to the question of equipment, let the PCs take any personal belongings they have on them plus the following items that HyperGen will provide:

- 6 small bottles of sulfuric acid (X3 damage)
- 1 large hunting knife each (X2 damage)
- 1 metal club (half a meter long, X2 damage)
- 1 taser (5 meter range, 6 shots, X5 stunning damage)
- 1 small, weighted net for capturing the rats
- White overalls, reinforced (1 point of armor), with the words "Toxic Materials Team" written on the back in big red letters
- 1 belt holding several sample jars and bags. Most of these are empty, but some hold dead rats and other vermin.
- 1 powerful flashlight
- 1 small two-way radio with an effective range of 1 km above ground
- 1 pair of rubber gloves



Dr. Banner has cages to put the rats in once they're captured.

In addition to all of the above items, the team will also have the previously mentioned tracking dog. Since Bob (that's his name), is a most singular canine (his description is given in the "Things That Not Even HyperGen Knows" section on page 8).

GMC

Dr. Wendy Banner

Whacked-Out Fringe Scientist

The personality description given earlier of Dr. Banner is only a front. In reality, Dr. Banner is obsessed by two things: the creation of new life forms and using those life forms to acquire wealth and power. Even though she lives in a modern, upperclass neighborhood, she is a twisted genius in the great tradition of Victor Frankenstein. Just add lightning and a hunchbacked assistant.

Dr. Banner carries a hypodermic injector gun filled with a paralyzing drug. One shot will paralyze a 60 kilo human in less than a minute and keep him that way for half an hour. More than a couple of shots will kill the average human. The gun holds 12

shots and won't penetrate anything tougher than light street clothing, so she will probably try for a neck shot if she needs to resort to this weapon.

She also has a cellular phone, a collapsible cage for the rats, heavy leather gloves, a small first aid kit (for her needs, not the PCs'), a miniature camcorder, and a set of infrared nightvision goggles in case the flashlights go out or get lost.

US white woman, 31 years old, 158 cm, 49kg. Green eyes, short, auburn hair. Prefers casual clothing when not in the laboratory. 4 cm scar on left hand.

Languages: American English, Spanish, German, Latin.

Traits

Fringe Genetic Scientist, 4 dice — Dr. Banner is Al Amarja's leading expert on recombinant genetics. She has created and altered dozens of lifeforms in her quest for knowledge and power. (Analyzes living things for their potential usefulness)

Excellent Memory, 3 dice — Can remember things in vivid detail. (Corrects people if they leave out details)

Obsessive Personality — Dr. Banner's obsessions often affect her decisions adversely. (Can't be swayed from her goals)

GM's Eyes Only

The Truth About What's Going On

Unless this is the very first time the characters have done anything on Al Amarja, they will probably think that the HyperGen people haven't been

completely truthful with them. Of course, they're right! HyperGen has plenty of reasons to hide the truth about the rats and they will go to great lengths to do so. Once you've read the following facts, you'll understand why.

FACT 1: The escaped lab rats really are harmless, gentle, and about the size of house cats. They are also at least as intelligent as the average human, have semi-opposable thumbs, understand several human languages, and can communicate telepathi-

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cally with each other and certain other creatures. On top of all that, the female is pregnant! On the open market, the rats would be worth hundreds of millions of dollars. HyperGen would like that money to be theirs.

FACT 2: The research project that created the rat was done in utmost secrecy. Even the agents of Her Exaltedness didn't know about it. This is a definite no-no on Al Amarja. If the government had found out, the project would have probably been shut down (creating sentient and/or psychic animals is forbidden by law) and the notes turned over to Dr. Nusbaum (who is exempt from the law). Even worse, once the government realized that it had been shut out of a big bucks deal, heads would roll! Literally! The HyperGen folks are very attached to their heads.

FACT 3: The rats' escape was engineered by the rats themselves. The lab records, cell samples, computer programs, and the entire lab were destroyed by an intensely hot fire. Twelve of the rats gave their lives to accomplish that, while two more fled with the pregnant female. They are still with her, acting as guards. The HyperGen scientists realize that these rats could form the basis of a new sentient race and this scares them. After all, who wants to be the Hated Enemy of an entire race?

FACT 4: HyperGen knows that other organizations and individuals know about the rat and are already looking for it. This has them in a panic and they might even go so far as to send word to Dr. Banner to destroy the rats (and possibly the PCs) rather than let them fall into enemy hands. It is very doubtful that Dr. Banner will do it, since she has her own plans for the rats (and possibly for the PCs).

Things That Not Even HyperGen Knows

The following are a couple of things that only a very few beings (if any) involved in this adventure know. You can decide if any of the PCs or GMCs learn any of this and if so, how they managed to find out. You may ignore or change any of this that you don't like.

Dr. Banner's Plans

Dr. Banner wants to use the rats in further genetic experiments. She plans on taking them to the secret laboratory beneath her house and then telling HyperGen that the rats had to be destroyed. She doesn't care what happens to the PCs. Or does she?

Bob the Dog: Double Agent

The rats knew that when they escaped the lab, HyperGen would lose no time in tracking them down. Since the logical way of doing this would be to use a dog, and Bob was another of Dr. Banner's experiments, it seemed likely that he would be the one they would use. The rats therefore wasted no time in winning Bob over as a friend. The rats soon found out that Bob was a friendly, kind hearted fellow who was just as smart as they were. Even better, he has no love for HyperGen or Dr. Banner, who were planning on neutering him! When the rats escaped, Bob stayed behind in order to act out his role as a rat tracker. When the time is right, he will lead the humans into a trap that the rats have de-

vised. After the rats deal with the humans, Bob will stay with his rodent friends for awhile. Once he's sure they're safe, Bob will leave them, because he has plans of his own.

Bob the Dog

Mutant Pooch

Bob is a small, short-haired terrier of uncertain parentage. His coat is light brown, his ears fold down in front and his face is very expressive. If you stare into his eyes you get the feeling that he's a lot smarter than most dogs. In point of fact, he's a lot smarter than most humans. Bob was the subject of an earlier and similar version of the experiment that created the mutant rats. He doesn't have any psychic powers and his paws are still just paws, but via telepathy the rats have taught Bob quite a few useful skills. He can understand three human languages in both written and spoken forms, knows basic mathematics, can write in any of the three languages using a pencil held in his mouth or a computer keyboard and has pretty decent knowledge of the world in general and Al Amarja in particular. Nobody but Bob and the rats know just how smart Bob is. When around the PCs/GMCs, Bob acts like a normal dog. By the way, the rats are in constant telepathic touch with Bob.

Bob loves the rats and will do anything to help them. They, in turn, will do the same for him. Despite his dislike for the folks at HyperGen, Bob still likes most humans and can sense when they like him. He will be a good friend to such people, but if forced to choose between them and the rats, he will choose the rats.

Being a dog, Bob has no equipment or weapons other than those he was born with. He can, however, use simple tools like levers as long as they don't require hands to operate.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, French, Spanish

Attack: 2 dice, X2 damage with bite

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 12 (small, but tough)



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Traits

Keen Senses, 4 dice — Exceptional sense of smell and hearing. Very good color vision, thanks to being a mutant. (Always sniffing and listening)

Infiltration, 4 dice — As a small, nondescript dog, Bob can get into places that humans and other animals can't. (Goes unnoticed by most people)

Other Possible Rat Hunters

It's up to you, the GM, to decide if other groups are aware of what's going down. You may not want any other groups running around. If you do want them, the Movers are the most likely to have found out HyperGen's secret. The Pharoahs, Kergillians, the Net, and the Neutralizers might also have gotten wind of what's up. The first three mentioned will want the rats for their own nefarious purposes, but the Neutralizers will just want to kill them. Having a few members from each group meet up with the PCs in some out of the way spot will make for some heated combat (or possibly some heated deal-making).

The other group who might be included in the sewers/dump/Deadville rat hunting are the Cut-Ups. The Cut-Ups may have found out about the rats in some way that most of us couldn't hope to understand. Since the rats are attempting to stay out of the hands of a group of Control Freaks (and the HyperGen scientists are exactly that), the Cut-Ups will try to help them in any way they can. This will mean that the PCs are opposing the Cut-Ups and are fair game for whatever strangeness gets thrown at them. Or maybe the Cut-Ups will try to win them over to their way of thinking by writing "inspirational" graffiti in the immediate area. As with any time you use the Cut-Ups, remember that just about anything goes.

Encountering any of the above groups (or any GMCs or groups you create) should generate a few plot-hooks for future use or shed light on plotlines already in play. Be creative and see how many

different emotions you can wring out of the PCs (and Players) each time they learn something new. If you can make the phrase "Eat at Joe's" cause anger, fear, lust, joy, puzzlement, laughter, sorrow, nervousness, righteous indignation and paranoia among a small group of PCs, you're doing fine.

Running This Adventure

Since Bob the Dog knows exactly where the rats are, but has to keep the humans occupied until the rats' trap is ready (or better yet, until the humans are too tired or scared to go on), you can have him lead them anywhere! If the PCs should decide to start out in the sewers, have Bob lead them away from the rats' lair. He can always have the trail lead to another sewer entrance later. Although I have placed the rats' nest in the sewers, you can move it to any location you wish. The basement of Peace Force HQ, Dr. Nusbaums back yard or the attic of Sad Mary's Bar & Girl would all be interesting places to visit. Of course, depending on the location you choose, you may have to modify the rats' human trap to fit in.

Have Bob lead the PCs through the most dangerous, terrifying and disgusting parts of the three main areas. A little side trip through a barrio or two is also a possibility. Remember, Bob will sense danger long before most humans, so he's not too worried. And don't forget that he can understand the PCs and GMCs and will know what they're planning. This will allow him to decide whether to help or hinder them.

Deadville

Deadville is four square blocks of abandoned (?) tenements in the Great Men barrio near Skylla. The government means to tear Deadville down someday, but that could be years from now or never. Most of the buildings are pretty much intact, but a few have been damaged by fire.

Most zeroes who live in Deadville are either insane or too drunk/drugged to care about where they are. They may be maniacally violent, or harmless, or first harmless and then maniacally violent. None of them are armed with more than rocks, clubs, or broken bottles. A few of them constantly talk to themselves or some imaginary (?) and invisible friend. This is a great way to throw out clues that tie in with this adventure, future adventures or even clues from past adventures. "Yep, that's right, I seen 'em! They looked like men and women, but there wasn't anything between their legs and their skin was *orange*! One of 'em had *homs*!"

Despite the above information, the zeroes will probably be the least of the PCs' worries while in Deadville. Far more troublesome are the Ghost Clan and the Psi Cats.

The Ghost Clan

Type: Family? Gang? Secret Race?

Rep: Protectors of the 'Hood

Brief: A group of what appear to be ghosts, living in Deadville. They keep the crime rate low.

Allies: The Local People, maybe the Psi Cats

Enemies: None, so far.

Anyone entering Deadville will soon catch a glimpse of one or more ghostly looking people. The locals have named them "The Ghost Clan," but they may or may not be ghosts or a clan. They could be really strange mutants, possessors of a weird fringe power, aliens, the visible manifestations of somebody's

dreams or the results of an experiment gone wrong. Although at least twenty-five different members of the Ghost Clan have been spotted by local residents, there is no reason to assume that they are part of an organized group. The largest group sighted so far was only three strong. The Ghost Clanners could all live together or might just band together in times of need.

The Ghost Clanners are a diverse looking lot, with members ranging from a very young girl (5 years old, at best) to an old man of about 80 to an incredibly muscular woman, to a mutant with a face like a frog. All of them seem to be able to "fade away" into invisibility or intangibility. They also have a clanwide hatred of crime and will not tolerate it in or near Deadville. This keeps the maniacs inside Deadville from hanging around very long. Exactly how they deal with criminals is a matter of rumor; few bodies have ever been found. If any PCs or GMCs commit crimes in Deadville, the Ghost Clan will probably deal with them. You may want to give the victim a chance to talk his or her way out of whatever punishment the Clan has in mind.

The people whose homes border Deadville have a habit of leaving plates of food in some of the abandoned buildings. They seldom discuss this habit with outsiders, but among themselves they call this habit "feeding the Ghost Clan." They do this as payment for the protection they receive. The plates are always empty and sparkling clean when they reappear on the food-givers' doorsteps.

Psi Cats

Fringe Felines

Cats have always been associated with the occult and paranormal activity, so it was inevitable that some fringe scientist would see just how close the association ran. By the time the experiment was done, the scientist

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was dead and the first Psi Cats were running loose on Al Amarja.

Psi Cats look just like any other cats and can come in any of the colors or patterns that normal cats do. They will eat just about anything, including dead or not quite dead human tissue. The half-eaten bodies that occasionally turn up around the Edge are usually (but not always) the work of a Psi Cat who found a badly injured human. Psi Cats are usually shy, solitary creatures, but gather in Deadville once or twice a year to mate. It is during this time that they are the most dangerous to the psychic world.

Adult Psi Cats have the ability to absorb huge amounts of psychic energy from any source within 100 meters. Since Al Amarja is a major center for psychic activity, the felines soon have a healthy psychic charge built up. Then, when the time comes to mate, both male and female Psi Cats release about half of their stored energy in an effort to attract a mate. The energy rushes out in all directions and affects any psi-sensitive or psi-using beings or machines within half a kilometer. Effects on machines can range from slightly altered meter readings to sudden explosions to a complete alteration of a machine's function. The effect on living psychics can include disruption of autonomic nerve functions, changes in personality, altering of psychic powers, spontaneous cranial explosions, and good old madness. Those are, of course, just a few of the possibilities. Most of the effects are weird, unsettling, but not terribly damaging.

As bad as all of the above sounds, things get even worse once a Psi Cat locates a mate! The male and female travel around for a few days until they have built their psychic charges back up to full power. Once this is done, they head for Deadville and start copulating. When the moment of climax arrives for the male, he releases not only all of his own stored energy, but that of the female as well! As far as a kilometer and a half away, all things psychic go completely ape. When you consider that several pairs of cats will repeat this scene over a two week period, you can imagine how strange things can get in the psychic community.

If you have a warped sense of humor, have the PCs visit Deadville at the height of the mating season.

Attack: 3 dice, negligible (X1/2) damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 8 (tough kitties)

Traits

Silent, 4 dice — Hey, they're cats. When was the last time you heard a cat's footsteps? (can't hear them moving)

Excellent Senses, 4 dice — This includes really great night vision, a keen sense of smell, and great hearing. (hard to surprise)

Impervious to Psionic Powers, 6 dice — Psi attacks are just absorbed. (invisible to psychic detection, except when mating)

Rat-Hunters In Deadville

Deadville is a creepy place and you should do everything you can to reinforce this feeling in the players and PCs. Describe the "dead, deserted buildings" with "glassless windows that look like empty eye sockets." Make casual mention of strange noises or glimpses of shadows in alleyways. Tell them that they all feel something (don't say "someone") watching them. Have a zero run past them screaming in terror or laughing insanely. Make the wind suddenly start blowing.

If a fight breaks out between the PCs and another group, remember that the Ghost Clan may or may not get involved. If they do, you can be as imaginative as you like in deciding what happens. In playtesting this adventure, the Ghost Clan interrupted a fight between the PCs and a small group of Net musclemen. Two of the Net goons were possessed and forced to kill one another. One of the PCs was so filled with terror (of what, he had no idea) that he ran aimlessly until he dropped from exhaustion. Everyone else (including Bob the Dog) took one look at the two Ghost Clanners and ran like hell!

The Garbage Dump

Most of the Edge's garbage and trash goes over the Brink and into the hands of the Garbagemen. Skylla, however, has no Garbagemen. Instead, they just dump their trash in any convenient spot. This dump is very large, perhaps a quarter of a kilometer on a side, and the trash has been piled fairly high. There are winding pathways running between the hills of garbage and much of the ground is wet and muddy. In a few spots, the water is a lot deeper than it appears, and any character who falls into one of these holes gets soaked with foul-smelling water that could have poisonous, mutagenic, or hallucinatory effects. (Al Amarja has no hazardous waste disposal laws to speak of, on the grounds they might inhibit manufacturers from being both competitive and profitable in the tough global marketplace.)

Nobody lives in this dump, but sometimes a zero or two passes through. They will leave the PCs alone if they aren't bothered. There are usually lots of stray dogs and cats here, because the dump has an enormous rat and mouse population. In a very few places, strangely mutated trees and bushes have taken root.

There are a few animals (and other things) living in this dump that you might enjoy terrorizing your PCs with. Remember that most of the creatures know this place well and should get a bonus die or two when stalking or chasing outsiders.

Flora and Fauna of the Dump

Grabbing Willows

Mutant Plant

Grabbing Willows look like normal willow trees, but they seldom get more than 4 meters tall and their trunks are very thick. Their long branches hang down to the ground. The willow senses the body heat of its prey and uses these branches to grab any warm thing that comes within range. They slowly lift victims to an opening at the top of the trunk (up where the branches fork), where hundreds of tough rootlets suck the body fluids from the victim.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 1 die

Armor: 1 die

Hit Points: 28 (big and woody)

Traits

Multiple Attacks, 3 dice each — Can attack up to 3 victims at one time with several limbs each. (Make one roll per target.) A successful roll indicates that the tree has grabbed the target. In two rounds, it will bring the target up to its "mouth," which does 2 dice of damage per round. (lots of long limbs)

Immobile — Grabbing Willows are rooted in one place and can't walk around. (It's a tree!)

Ant Mice

Tiny Mutant Mice

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Not much is known about Ant Mice, since they tend to set up their colonies in out-of-the-way places. They are definitely a mutant form of the common white laboratory mouse, but who or what was responsible for the mutation is unknown.

Ant Mice are only about one quarter the size of normal mice, but otherwise look just like them. Female Ant Mice do most of the food gathering for a colony and always outnumber males by 3 to 1. In addition, females always seem to be pregnant. They give birth to their babies in a communal nursery. There is no such thing as an Ant Mouse "Queen," which is about the only way these tiny rodents differ from ants.

Male Ant Mice are scouts or protectors. They have extremely sharp teeth and secrete a mild neurotoxin into their saliva. This toxin is only fatal to humans or large animals if they are bitten repeatedly in a short period of time. Given the fact that the Ant Mice are usually found in large numbers, this becomes quite likely. Death by Ant Mouse toxin is very painful.

Ant Mouse colonies are usually found underground or inside large piles of trash. There are several entrances and the nursery is always at the center of the colony. Sleeping dens and food storage tunnels are located between the nursery and the surface.

In combat with Ant Mice, a character can kill one Mouse for each point scored above the Mice's collective defense roll.

Attack: 1 die per 5 mice, X1 with toxic bite

Defense: 1 die

Hit Points: 1 (tiny)

Traits

Rapid Communication, 3 dice — Like ants or bees, Ant Mice seem to be able to communicate with astounding speed and coordinate their actions almost as rapidly. (often react simultaneously)

The Sludge

Semi-Sentient Organic/Inorganic Muck

Two years ago, lightning struck a garbage can that had been left at this dump by a "medical supply company." The can was full of assorted organic materials, including several cancerous internal organs, about six quarts of blood, and some experimental drugs. The lightning bolt caused the can of gunk to spill over and mix with a pool of toxic (and mildly radioactive) waste. Nothing happened for a few days after that, until a zero stepped into the sludge on his way through the dump. The sludge rapidly oozed up his body until he was completely covered by it. It then digested him at an amazing rate and oozed off in search of more food.

The Sludge is about 9 cubic meters of dark red, semi-solid organic matter covered by a thin gray layer of semi-solid inorganic matter. The inorganic material seems to act as a "skin" that protects the Sludge from damage by things like fire, caustic chemicals, and dehydration. The Sludge is extremely resistant to physical damage due to its amorphous form. Bullets just pass through it and other weapons have much the same effect. What would happen if the Sludge were exposed to hard radiation or high voltage is unknown. Since nobody has ever survived an encounter with the Sludge, nobody knows what (if anything) might destroy it.

After feeding, the Sludge shows an increase in size proportional to the size of what it ate. If it eats a lot (say, an elephant or a group of rat hunters), the Sludge could become huge. Fortunately, it gradually returns to its normal size as it expends energy in movement and other functions and sloughs off wastes.

"Dead" to psychic detection, completely silent, able to hide in places that a solid creature could never hope to enter, the Sludge is nearly impossible to detect unless you actually see it moving. And by then, it's usually too late. Give potential victims at least one penalty die on their first defense roll against the thing. The Sludge gives off a very faint, but unique, chemical odor that may help rat hunters detect it the second or third time they encounter it.

Attack: 3 dice, X3 with digestive chemicals

Defense: 2 dice

Armor: 2 dice (crusty & amorphous)

Hit Points: 33 (large and tough)

Traits

Dead to Psionics — The Sludge gives off no recognizable psychic energy. Attempts to locate, control or harm it using psionic powers are doomed to failure. (no psychic “fingerprint”)

Euphoria Flies

Virus-Carrying Flies

These are just common houseflies, but they harbor a strange virus that affects the brain’s pleasure centers. The virus can be introduced into the victim via open wounds or oral ingestion (if one of the flies deposits some on your food or if the virus otherwise gets into your mouth). The virus gets 3 dice versus the intended victim’s general health and constitution. The virus has an incubation period of about 6 hours and then begins to work its devious mischief.

The first symptom is a general “up” feeling; the victim smiles a lot and feels friendly toward his fellow man. After an hour or so, the victim begins feeling intense pleasure from the slightest sensory input. The smell of fresh paint might send chills up his spine and the taste of burnt toast might cause him to achieve orgasm. As you’ve probably guessed, this reduces the victim’s attention span to nearly zero. This hypersensitivity lasts for anywhere from 20 minutes to 2 hours. By then, the victim’s body and mind are just plain worn out. The victim collapses into a deep sleep for at least 6 hours. Upon awakening, he is weak, disoriented, and ravenously hungry. How long this lasts depends on his general constitution and how soon he gets to eat.

Hit Points: 1 (tiny)

Hypnospiders

Weavers Of Non-Euclidian Webs

Hypnospiders are found only in this garbage dump, although there is no physical reason why they couldn’t exist in other places. They look like very

large black widow spiders, but are deep red with iridescent blue markings. These spiders have a passive ability to stun their prey, which are usually Ant Mice or Euphoria Flies, by weaving webs that use non-Euclidian geometry. These web patterns tend to “short out” the mental patterns of the prey or any other animal that looks at them. The stunned animal simply stops moving and stares, transfixed, at the web. If the animal is small enough, the spider then walks over to it and gives it a paralytic bite and then feeds off it at its leisure. If the animal is *too large* for the poison to paralyze, the spider ignores it. A hypnospider only bites humans who disturb it.

Any animal stunned by a hypnospider’s web remains that way until either the web is removed (webs only last 6-12 hours due to fragility), the animal is subjected to enough outside stimuli (loud noise, pain, attack), or its view of the web is blocked. Once a creature has gazed at a hypnospider’s web and then been freed of its power, it will get a 2 dice chance to resist further entrapments. Humans and certain other dreaming animals may also have very strange dreams for the next few weeks.

Hit Points: 1 (tiny)

Traits

Hypnotism, 4 dice — Their bizarre webs cause most other lifeforms to stop and stare blankly. (Really weird web patterns)

Poison — The hypnospider’s poison does 1 die of paralytic damage (100% recovery within an hour). Heavy doses cause sickness or even death. (It’s a spider!)

Rat-Hunters in the Garbage Dump

While the Dump is not as creepy as Deadville, it is still a damned unnerving place. It’s also gross and disgusting. Be sickeningly detailed when you describe the Dump to the players. Use words and phrases like rotten, rusty, festering, moldy, slimy, sickening, gooey, bubbling, noxious, nauseating,



decomposing, foul, gross, fungus-coated, filth-encrusted, disease-ridden and stagnant. Remember that in Al Amarja, it's not unheard of to find human (or whatever) body parts or organs in a dump or trash heap. Of course, in this dump, that will probably mean that the Sludge is close by!

Scaring characters in the Dump is even easier than it is in Deadville. Have a pile of trash collapse for no reason. Let the characters hear strange sounds and smell weird smells. Have a few thousand Ant Mice cross their path. In the playtest for this adventure, a large can of tomato sauce exploded due to gasses caused by decomposition. The boom was very loud and panicked the characters, while the resulting rain of foul-smelling red gunk convinced them that a derelict had inexplicably exploded. They were scared out of their wits, and when they found

out what had really happened, they all had a good laugh at their silliness. Then the Sludge attacked them and they stopped laughing.

The Sludge is by far the most terrifying creature in the Dump, but used properly, the Ant Mice and roving groups of wild dogs can be almost as scary. Grabbing Willows are horrifying things, but after the first encounter are easy to avoid. Don't forget that all dumps have lots of big, mean, disease-ridden rats. For rat stats, use the information provided for Al Amarjan Sewer Rats (p. 18).

Bob the Dog doesn't like the dump very much, so he may lead the team there and then run off for a while. Bob is able to identify the Sludge by smell. Whether he uses this ability to help the team is up to him.

The Sewers

This is where the rats really are. "Sewers" is a generic term that encompasses not only sewers, but access tunnels, forgotten sub-basements, and even some natural caverns. The sewers of the Edge are strange, scary, dimly-lit, and exceptionally dangerous. The architecture and composition of the tunnels changes dramatically every hundred meters or so. One section is made up of bricks and look as though it were built in the 19th century, but after a couple of twists and turns, it gives way to huge, gleaming tubes of stainless steel. Still later, it turns into natural caverns, complete with stalactites and stalagmites. You might even include a stretch of tunnel that appears to be composed of living intestinal matter! Maybe different sections of sewer lead to alternate realities, different times or other worlds. The truth of this is for you to decide, but it could make for some interesting side trips.

You can also change the smells and the sounds of the tunnels as the PCs travel through them. In the playtest, the PCs got extremely nervous when the tunnels went from dead quiet to a throbbing, organic pulse.

Changing the layout of the tunnels after the team has passed through them will definitely keep them guessing. You should be subtle when you do this. Make a side tunnel change from a left turn to a right turn. Shorten that last long straight section from half a kilometer to a hundred meters. Put a six-way intersection where a four-way intersection used to be. Even something as subtle as making a level stretch of sewer acquire an uphill or downhill slant will make the PCs wonder what the hell is going on.

Encounters

As with the other locations in this adventure, the placement, frequency and deadliness of encounters is up to you. I will, however, describe several frightening and/or just plain weird denizens of the sewer. Modify them as you see fit.

Terrorgators

Giant Alligators

In most cities of the world, legends of sewer dwelling alligators are just fiction. That isn't the case under the Edge. Not only are there alligators in the sewers, but they're much larger than normal alligators and perfectly adapted to living in the dark tunnels. The average terrorgator is about 8 meters long and weighs around two metric tons. They have a lot of very sharp teeth and a thick hide that will stop anything short of an artillery round. Living in the foul, polluted waters of the sewer has caused the terrorgators to evolve a natural immunity (3 or more dice) to most poisons, toxins, and even low-level radiation. Terrorgators are tough! Fortunately, they lead a solitary existence and pairs are only encountered during the breeding season.

If the PCs should find themselves being chased by a terrorgator, the only real hope for escape will be to find a side tunnel that the gator can't fit into. Some fringe powers or occult spells might stop the attack, but they would have to be fast-acting. There might also be drugs or viruses that would affect a terrorgator, but how do you administer them? If it should come down to a fight, remember that it is relatively simple to hold a gator's mouth shut and damned hard to keep it from shutting once it's open. Once a terrorgators mouth is tied shut, all you have

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to worry about is his thrashing tail, razor sharp claws, and crushing weight.

One way to have the PCs meet a Terrorgator without getting attacked immediately is to have them come upon one that's asleep. A recently fed gator will sleep soundly enough for the PCs to walk past it if they do so very quietly.

Attack: 4 dice, X3 w/ bite; or 3 dice, X2 w/ tail swat or claws

Defense: 2 dice

Armor: 3 dice

Hit Points: 50 (huge and tough)

Al Amarjan Sewer Rats

Big Mean Rats

Al Amarjan sewer rats differ from their brethren around the world in size only. They are much larger, weighing as much as 4 kg. Although tough and fearless, they will only attack larger creatures if they are starving or protecting their lair. A sewer rat's sharp teeth will go right through ordinary leather clothing. A bite from a sewer rat stands a very good chance of becoming infected unless treated immediately.

The mutant rats are able to mentally control up to a dozen sewer rats and are using them to guard their lair.

Attack: 2 dice, X1 with bite (plus a chance of infection)

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 10 (hard to kill)

Mobile Moss

Mutant Plant

Attack: None

Defense: 1 point

Armor: None

Hit Points: 14-30, depending on size.

This is a common, semi-sentient form of plant that can move along sewer floors, walls or ceilings at speeds up to a fast walk. It especially likes to follow

sentient creatures, which it can sense at up to 100 meters. Mobile Moss is usually found in chunks massing 60 kg, but chunks as large as 250 kg can and do exist. The moss is absolutely harmless, but most humans don't believe this. They tend to fear Mobile Moss and the longer it follows them, the more fearful they get. Often, their preoccupation with the moss will cause them not to notice real danger until it's too late.

There are several subspecies of Mobile Moss, each with its own unique qualities. I've listed one of them below. GMs should think up a few new ones if the PCs ever go back into the sewers.

Mimicking Mobile Moss will choose one of the beings it is following and slowly begin to shape itself into a duplicate of that being. It means no harm, but the person being mimicked seldom knows or believes that. When the transformation is done, the moss will begin to mimic the person's every move. It will do this until the person can get out of the moss's range (100 meters).

ICTM 7

Brain Creature

This creature is yet another laboratory escapee. Its full name is Independent Cerebral Tissue Mass #7 and it looks like 200 pounds of brains, because that's what it is! It doesn't seem to be intelligent, at least by any accepted definition of that term. It moves very slowly, but can shoot out pseudopods to grab its prey. It does no physical harm to the victim unless its life is threatened. In that case, it will send telekinetic punches raining down on its attackers.

Potentially worse (and certainly scarier) are the mental side effects caused by ICTM 7 "feeding" on the emotions and thoughts of those it grabs. While the "feeding" only takes a couple of minutes, the side effects can last for days and include hallucinations, unprovoked emotional outbursts, psychosis, uncontrollable psychic powers and hysterical blindness. Any side effects are chosen at random by the GM.

Attack: 3 dice (grab) and 4 dice, X2 (telekinetic punch)

Defense: 1 die

Armor: 2 points

Hit Points: 36 (large size)

Other Sewers Dwellers

You can have any other sort of lifeforms you want living in the sewers. Large insects and reptiles are naturals, but so are lab escapees or just unwanted pets that got flushed down the toilet. (That's where the Terrorgators came from.) You can even have tribes of humans or alien invaders down there.

The Lair Of The Rats

Once Bob knows the human trap is ready, he will use whatever entryway is closest to take the team into the sewers. This can be close to the rats' lair or kilometers away, whichever you choose. Bob will then make a beeline for the lair. There should be at least a couple of encounters with sewer-dwelling creatures along the way. When the party finally arrives at the rats' nest, they face two dangers: the guard rats and the human trap.

The guard rats are a dozen sewer rats under the control of the mutant rats. They not only defend the lair against invaders, they bring food and other items to their masters. They also helped build the human trap. They have been ordered to attack the team, but not to inflict really bad injuries. This attack is mostly a smokescreen to keep the rat hunters from thinking that entering the lair is too easy. After a minute or so of fighting, the guard rats will run away (actually going into the lair via secret tunnels) in "fear." Bob will then lead the humans into the trap.

As you can see from the map on page 20, the human trap is a round room about 4 meters across and 6 meters tall. The entrance tunnel is on one side

and a smaller tunnel is on the other. Note also that the rats' lair (also pictured on the map) is a couple of meters above the trap. Once all of the team is in the room, Bob will race over to the small tunnel, bark several times and then run up it. A few seconds after that, the entrance tunnel will collapse and be filled with an impassable wall of rubble. PCs with precognitive powers, danger sense or those who take the time to check out the tunnel *very* closely will realize that it is about to collapse a few seconds before it actually does. These characters should get a chance to warn the others, run back to the main tunnel or whatever seems reasonable in the time allowed.

Give the team a few seconds to realize this is a trap and then have water start pouring in through fist sized holes in the ceiling and the small tunnel that Bob just went up. Bob, of course, took a small side tunnel to the rats' lair and is high and dry. The water will fill the room to within half a meter of the ceiling and then stop. Any PCs who can't swim are screwed unless another PC helps keep them afloat or they have some power that can aid them. After the water stops, the PCs will hear a soft feminine voice speak-

THE HUMAN TRAP

└──┘ = 1 meter

OVERHEAD VIEW

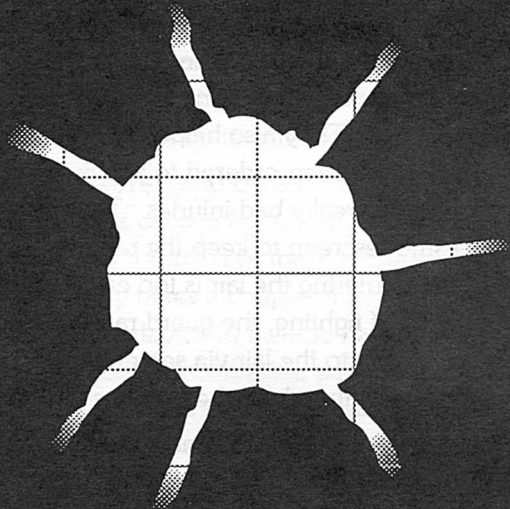


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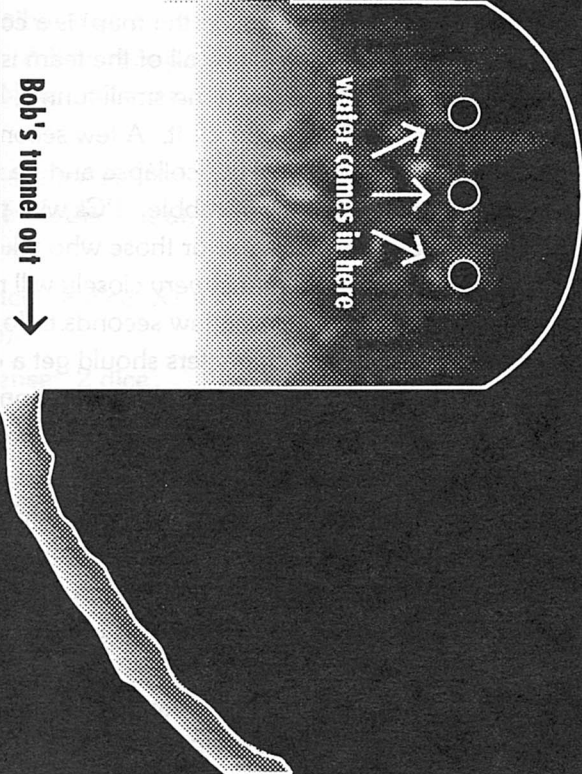
RAT'S LAIR
(Many tunnels
in and out)

Rat's Lair seen
from above →



○ ○ ○
↖ ↗
water comes in here

Bob's tunnel out →



ing to them telepathically. Read the following or some variation of it.

"Welcome to our home. We've been expecting you. Our friend Bob did an excellent job of leading you here. We hope none of you were too seriously injured during the trip. We are a peaceful race and hate to see others suffer needlessly. Which brings us to your present situation."

"First of all, you can agree to leave this place and never return. We wish no contact with humankind. We only want to be left in peace. A great many humans would like to enslave us or, barring that, destroy us. How many of you would be party to genocide? If you say that we were destroyed, they will go on to other business."

"Your other option is to remain in this trap and die. We would regret this deeply, but would still allow it to happen in order to save ourselves. The choice is yours."

GM's Note: The PCs will know that the rat is telling the truth. Dr. Banner may try to lie about her plans for the rats, but nobody will believe her. The PCs can ask the rats questions and the rats will answer most of them. They won't answer questions that would endanger them or Bob. Use the information in this book (or make things up) for the rats' answers.

The Mutant Rats

Sentient Rats

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, American English, French, Spanish, Latin and Greek.

Attack: 2 dice, X1 (bite) plus risk of infection

Defense: 2 dice

Armor: 2 points

Hit Points: 10 (very healthy)

Psychic Pool: 6 shots

Traits

Fringe Power: Telepathy, 4 dice — The rats can send and receive thoughts easily. (strong psychic "fingerprint")

Fringe Power: Mental Control, 3 dice — This works only on Al Amarjan Sewer Rats and uses a shot from the psychic pool. The effects last for several days before the rats need to reinforce it. (always have sewer rats serving them)

What Might Happen Next

Surrender

If the PCs agree to go away, the rats will drain the room and tell them to crawl through the small tunnel. The tunnel is about 50 meters long, goes gradually upward and leads to a much larger tunnel. From there, Bob (who will maintain a safe distance from the PCs) will show them to a ladder leading to the surface. At the bottom of the ladder is an old attache case containing \$25,000.00 in gold coins, a sort of consolation prize from the rats.

Escaping From The Trap

There are several ways that the PCs might escape from the trap. If one of the PCs swims up the small tunnel, he'll find it blocked by a grating. Fortunately, this grating can be lifted easily and the PC will find that the tunnel soon rises above the waterline. From there, the characters must find their own way out of the sewers. They are far too large to go up the tunnels that lead to the rats lair.

Another way out is to blast the rubble away from the entryway. Of course, this will require some waterproof explosive and a detonator. The resulting shockwave might also severely injure the PCs. It could also cause the room to collapse.

Fringe powers like teleportation or superstrength might help, but then again, they might not. How

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would a PC know for sure where it was safe to teleport to? Mind controlling the rats could work, but the rats should get a healthy resistance to such things.

Finally, there is the possibility that one or more PC did not enter the room with the rest. This character might be able to help, or might be fighting for his life against the guard rats or a roaming terrorgator.

Killing The Rats

Once out of the trap (by escape or capitulation), the PCs might decide to kill the rats anyway. This should be pretty hard, but not impossible. If someone has high explosives, poison gas or some similar instrument of death, they can stuff it up one of the tunnels and use it to kill the rats and Bob. Or will it? Unless they tear apart several cubic yards of sewer walls (or have some detection powers), they can't be sure. Using explosives will collapse a huge section of tunnel, making verification even harder. If the characters use fringe powers to attack the rats, you will have to decide what happens. Of course, you might just have the rats escape and avoid all of this.

Dealing with Dr. Banner

It is highly unlikely that Dr. Banner will want to go off and leave the rats alone. She will get more obsessed and crazy by the minute. So how should a GM handle this? Here are a few ideas.

In the playtest, two of the PCs just said to hell with it and stabbed her to death. This could well happen in your version of the adventure. Whether HyperGen ever finds out about this is up to you. The playtest PCs simply reported her as "eaten by a giant alligator" and HyperGen believed them. Or the PCs might subdue her and drag her out of the sewer.

If some or all of the PCs should want to help her with her plans, have the rats inform them that she will probably try to dispose of them after they have

served their purpose. That should make most of them have second thoughts.

Any PCs with mind control powers could just control Dr. Banner and get her out of the sewer, leaving the rats to worry about her eventual return. Naturally, Dr. Banner will not like this sort of treatment and may try to seek revenge. This provides a good reason to have her pop up in a future adventure.

The best idea for dealing with the good doctor is to have her go nuts at the thought of having her plans thwarted by her own creations. She can make a long, ranting speech about being cheated and betrayed by the rats and how the world hasn't seen the last of Dr. Wendy Banner. Then have her run off down a tunnel before the PCs can stop her (assuming they even try). As with the previous idea, this is a great setup for a recurring villain.

But What About The Rats and Bob?

That's up to you. In my series, the rats went even deeper into the sewer and are busy building a civilization there. Bob stuck around for a while, but then went on to other adventures. Will any of them ever show up again? Maybe. You never know what will happen next on Al Amarja.

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Suggested Retail Price
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"This is the weather the
cuckoo likes, armored
division submissive to
vernacular the world
into a gambling bird-
house velocity."

— *The Cut-Ups' alternate motto*



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