

# the rat-GOD'S GIRLFRIEND

A game of love, bizarre circumstances, and rats.

By Kirk Mitchell (Copywrite 2005)

This game is about a God of Rats and his human girlfriend. It is about their relationship as they try and do things normal people do. Y'know, go out shopping, have coffee together, romantic moonlit dinners...as well as deal with the strangeness that generally goes hand-in-hand with being a god.

The game was started at 1:20 pm on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> AUS Eastern Standard Time, written for the 24 hour RPG design competition, the Ronnies, using exactly two of the terms provided: Girlfriend and Rat.

At least three people are required to play this game. And lots of four sided dice. Why d4s? "They are more rattish." replies Prophet Chk'tlk Scree. You can't argue with Chk'tlk Scree.

## WHO IS THIS RAT-GOD?

The Rat-God is the ruler of all rats, far and wide. It is said by the Prophet Chk'tlk Scree that he was not born as a rat, but rather sprung fully formed from the sewers of the world. He brings many new teachings and learnings. New ways of hiding and stealing. New darknesses and new wet cold steels. The Prophet Chk'tlk Scree writes his teachings upon the walls of his cage, and the Chosen bring the knowledge to ratkind. Within those writings, upon which the Prophet Chk'tlk Scree still labours, the Prophet speaks of the Rat-God's form. The Rat-God is not a rat, as you or I. His form is everchanging. One moment, a great silver rat with claws of sewersteel and eyes of watercold, the next he is a Man. A miracle and a dangerous mystery both, the Rat-God is.

But being the only of his kind, he is very lonely. Very powerful, and very lonely.

---

One of players is the Rat-God. Name him however you like, from a distinctly rattish name such as Kittl'rch, to something more human. Like Rottcodd. Or even Hank. Rats flock to him, the Chosen worship him, just about everybody else wants to kill him and his girlfriend just wants a normal life with him. Unfortunately, things get a bit out of hand from time to time.

Being the God of Rats, it makes sense that you have narrative control over the Rat-God character, as well as every non-Chosen rat. You also have jurisdiction when concerning the physical description of sewers and other rat-like places.

The Rat-God has five tokens of Magic that can be spent to either completely bypass a Conflict roll and narrate the result, or increase the Love pool by five points. This represents his magical and godly nature. Honestly, what's a god without some kickass powers?

This is a finite resource and cannot be increased.

## **AND SO WHO'S HIS GIRLFRIEND?**

So one day, I was, like, walking down the street and there's this guy. He's sitting on a corner, looks kinda sad. Kinda familiar too, for some weird reason. I'm in a good mood, and he's not, so I sit down next to him and ask what's wrong, you know? He looks at me and he's got these big cold eyes. No Iris. Just black. Deep and black, like. He's kinda cute. Not drop dead gorgeous or anything, but alright. He tells me that there was a problem, but he's better now. Smiles softly at me. I, like, still can't get over those eyes. Then he asks if I want to go and grab a drink.

Sure, I think and then say. Why not.

---

-

One of the players is the Girlfriend. Give her a human name, like Hilary or Marion. She is dating a god. Not just any god, but the God of Rats. Lucky her. As the Rat-God's girlfriend, there are some perks though. Being worshipped (albeit by rats) and inheriting some of the Rat-God's command over the worshippers certainly has its ups. Occasionally though, she gets in a bit over her head.

As the Rat-God's girlfriend, you have narrative control over the Girlfriend character, all of the Human characters as well as having narrative control over non-Chosen rats, but only with the permission of the Rat-God. You also have narrative control when concerning the physical description of any man-made areas (with the exception of rat-like places).

The Girlfriend has five tokens of Girlfriend that can be spent to either completely bypass a Conflict roll and narrate the result, or increase the Love pool by five points. Well, y'know...girlfriends. Everybody, rat and human, knows that girlfriends have got *some* sort of super-power.

This is a finite resource and cannot be increased.

## **AND THOSE CREEPY CHOSEN GUYS?**

Hey, Rkt Ree. Git over here. Listen, the Chosen are movin in this way. Yeah, you heard me. I heard them doing their freaky chantin while I was fishing. Git back to the encampment and tell everybody to lay low awhile. GO! I swear, nothin ever good came outa dose Damned-to-Cat Chosen.

---

-

All the rest of the players control the Chosen. If there are more than one extra players, split the Chosen into factions and divide the narrative control of the factions amongst yourselves. The Chosen are the sacred bodyguards and religious order surrounding the Rat-God. Wherever the Rat-God goes, the Chosen follow, kissing the very ground upon which his feet and paws tread upon. They live and die for the Rat-God, and with that responsibility and honour comes power. Girlfriends just confuse the issue.

The Chosen players have control over all of the Chosen rats, as well as the physical world beyond that which the Rat-God and the Girlfriend have jurisdiction over.

The Chosen players have one pool of five Rat tokens that can be spent to either completely bypass a Conflict roll and narrate the result, or increase the power pool by five points. This represents huge masses of rats, the expendability of rats and their attempts to succeed no matter the cost.

This is a finite resource and cannot be increased.

## Love

*The Rat-God's Girlfriend* is all about love. Rats too, but mostly love. The relationship between the Rat-God and the Girlfriend, and whether it will blossom into love, is very important. Those in love would argue it is the most important thing in the world. In fact, it is the only mechanic that the Rat-God and the Girlfriend possess: A pool of four sided dice that represents the strength of their relationship.

The Love pool is increased by one whenever either the Rat-God or the Girlfriend narrates the result of a Conflict with the two characters working together. Witty adjinders at the same time are good too.

The Love pool starts off with 10 dice.

## THE POWER OF THE RAT

On a completely different note from love, we have rats. For a human, rats may not exactly be the symbol synonymous with power, but dammit they've got a lot of it. A human just wouldn't be thinking in the right way. The Chosen have only one mechanic as well, and that is the Power of the Rat, generally shortened to "Power" for the sake of brevity: A pool of four sided dice that represents the collective power of the Chosen.

The Power pool is increased by one whenever a Chosen player narrates the result of a conflict in a powerful and heavy-handed manner.

Same as the Love pool, the Power pool starts off with 10 dice.

## ON a date TONIGHT

*The Rat-God's Girlfriend* is structured into a series of Dates, where the Rat-God and the Girlfriend go out for something seemingly innocuous. I say seemingly, because they usually end up doing something...not so innocuous. Like slaying demons. Unless that happens to be an everyday event in your oh-so-exciting life, in which case you could probably try and find something more interesting for the Rat-God and his Girlfriend to do.

Dates are fairly simple and straightforward to start off. As a group, discuss where you want the Rat-God and the Girlfriend to go, and what you want them to be doing. Going to the zoo to feed the new baby leopards might be a good starting point. Lots of insanity can come out of a zoo. Ask any parent.

A date is ended when a Moment of Tenderness is reached.

## MOMENTS OF TRANSITION

The Dates in *The Rat-God's Girlfriend* are divided into what are called Moments. Moments are short scenes which set up, develop and conclude the story of the Date. The majority of moments will be what are called Moments of Transition.

Moments of Transition are the Moments that create the majority of the story. They set up scenes, characters, incidents and conflicts, ready to be mashed together in a Moment of Revelation. Moments of Transition do not necessarily have to include the Rat-God or the Girlfriend. They can be used to set up outside parties and external situations that will be brought in later, similar to when movies cut to the bad-guys plotting before moving back to the protagonists.

First, decide the order of Moment declaration. This could be in clockwise order, widdershins, in order of a dice roll or any other method. Once you have decided the order, in that order each player declares a Moment concept or scene starter. This could be a location, the beginning of a situation or anything to give the Moment of Transition focus and order.

Once the Moment concept has been declared, each player then narrates a short situation within the scene, so long as it is within their narrative control.

If there is a conflict of player interests, or character interests at any point during a Moment of Transition, a Conflict begins.

The Moment ends when all of the players have added their narration and all Conflicts have been resolved. A Moment of Transition is always followed by another Moment of Transition until a player declares a Moment of Revelation.

## CONFLICT!

A conflict is just that it says on the box: It is a situation of conflict between characters within the game world. This includes conflicts of interest, even when the character is not directly involved with the scene.

When a Conflict is declared, all involved players roll a number of four sided dice

equal to their respective pools. The player with the highest occurrence of matching numbers gets to narrate the result of the Conflict. This narration, however, must be augmented by an Aspect of the Rat. This aspect is selected by the number of which there was the highest occurrence of. Yes, this does apply to the Girlfriend. You live with rats, you have to live by their rules.

### **tail -1**

The Tail signifies the clever and mischievous aspect of the Rat. The Conflict must be resolved in a tricky and mischievous manner.

### **claw -2**

The Claw aspect is the symbol of violence and bravery in the Rat. The Conflict must be resolved with violence and brutality.

### **Eye -3**

The Eye aspect is the wise and ancient Rat, the seeker and the seer of knowledge and understanding. The Conflict is to be resolved in a considered, thoughtful manner, with respect.

### **ear -4**

The Ear is the symbol of the quiet and quivering aspect of the Rat, the sneaking and stealing. The Conflict must be resolved subtly and quietly.

### **TENSION!**

Tension is a measure of exactly that: the tension that is built up over the successive series of Moments of Transition. Tension can become either Love for the Rat-God and the Girlfriend, or Power for the Chosen. But Tension is a risk. The more Tension, the greater the risk, but also the greater the rewards.

Tension begins at 0 at the start of a Date, and increases by one every Moment of Transition.

### **MOMENTS OF REVELATION**

Moments of Revelation are where a sudden point of crises is reached. All of the threads that were being constructed in Moments of Transition are now pulled together into one big mess. That mysterious guy with the poodle you narrated in the first Moment of Transition will now come back and kick some serious ass.

When a Moment of Revelation is declared by a player, make a Conflict roll as per normal. However, there is a difference with this conflict roll. The number of dice that the conflict is won by (how many more matching dice than the other player) is the number of dice from the other player's pool you may take as your own. The limit to the number that you are allowed to take is equal to the Tension. All conflicts that take place within a Moment of Revelation are risky in this way.

When narrating the result of the Conflict, draw together all of the previous Moments of Transition and the scenes that took place within them.

Another player may interject and declare another Conflict if he or she wants to introduce a previous Moment of Transition in a particular way, or may try and shift narrative control to themselves. Roll for Conflict. If conflict Conflict is won, the winning player gains narrative control.

A Moment of Revelation is over when the action has come to a reasonable conclusion of events.

## MOMENTS OF TENDERNESS

After a Moment of Revelation there is a Moment of Tenderness, where the Rat-God and the Girlfriend get their breath back and sink into each other's arms for a moment.

Of course, an amount of Love points could have been lost, so the narration of the Moment of Tenderness should be dictated by the results of the Moment of Revelation. If more points of Love were gained, then the Moment would indeed be Tender as the two get closer and closer to each other emotionally. However, should points be lost, the Date should be narrated to have had a rather unsatisfactory ending, and so the Moment could be anything but Tender.

## DEATH

Characters dying in *The Rat-God's Girlfriend* is a very big thing, particularly when concerning the Girlfriend and the Rat-God. Essentially, it is up to the group whether the Girlfriend and Rat-God can die. This will alter how you narrate Conflicts, both setting them up and their results. It is suggested that you make it that the Girlfriend and the Rat-God cannot die, except when it is particularly poignant and powerful. However, even this may not suit the theme of the game you are playing. If it is lighthearted, keep the violence cartoony. If it is a serious game dealing with serious moral issues, death can be more common.

## SAMPLE DATE

Rat-God: So this is the second date. What do you think we should do.

Girlfriend: How about we go to the zoo.

Chosen: Yeah! Maybe there's a rat exhibit.

Rat-God: Hmmm. Rat exhibit.

Girlfriend: Well, Sharlene isn't going anywhere near a rat exhibit. I know what you're going to do.

Rat-God: This could be fun...

Girlfriend: We'll go to "Pet the baby tiger". Then you can throw in some rats.

Chosen: Cool by me.

Rat-God: Sure.

*All the players agree on the setting of the date. They decide that the Girlfriend should narrate the first Moment of Transition.*

Girlfriend: So, we're standing in the zoo, having paid our tickets...

Rat-God: The rats would have stolen them for us.

Girlfriend: Ok. We're standing in the zoo with our stolen tickets, in line to go and pet the cute little baby Bengal tiger that was born last month.

*The Girlfriend motions for the next person to add their narration.*

Rat-God: I notice something out of the corner of my eye. Its a rat being caught can killed by one of the adult tigers.

*The Rat-God nods at the Chosen.*

Chosen: The Chosen Guard-Rat Dkt'Scra is using this as a diversion to open the cage. One of the adult tigers looks at Sharlene and starks stalking towards her.

Girlfriend: CONFLICT!

*The Girlfriend and the Chosen roll their dice pools. The Girlfriend gets 4 threes, while the Chosen gets 6 ones. The Chosen has won the narration rights for the result of the Conflict, and must narrate the conflict in the manner of the Tail. The Tail signifies cleverness and trickery.*

Chosen: Ha, HA! Anyways. The tiger stops for a moment, sniffing the air. Then it leaps forwards, claws outstretched. Suddenly, out of the air comes a rat of the Chosen, Guard-Rat Dkt'Scra, swinging on a rope. On the end of the rope is a large rock. Guiding the rope, Dkt'Scra slams the rock into the tiger's head, knocking it to the side and sending sprawling. The tiger hisses and scrabbles back to the cage.

*The players have all made their narrations and now decide the Moment of Transition is over, moving on to another one. Potentially, another Conflict could be declared, perhaps over the fact that the Chosen Guard-Rat let the tiger loose, only to disable it, to gain the Rat-God's favour. The next player (the Rat-God) decides to move to an entirely different scene.*

Rat-God: In a dimly lit room, deep beneath the zoo, a rat pores over a scrawl written upon the side of an old 2-minute noodle carton. The scrawl is ratwriting...

## DESIGNER'S NOTES

This game is obviously very raw. The rules are rather basic and light, and much of the game is left up to the players. I think I put a little too much trust in player interactions, and that would be why the mechanics are quite light. I wanted to try out some ideas that had been bouncing about in my head awhile, namely the Moments. The concept of allowing the players to structure their game similarly to a movie or multi-threaded book and draw all the threads together at the last moment in one big



bang of crises and other such fun-ness. I'm not sure that it worked as well as I would have liked it (or even if it works at all), but for a first shot at trying to get the concept out I think it is a decent go. Not that anything here is unique. There are other heavily structured games, games about dating and games about crazy hijinks. What this game needs most at this point in time is for somebody to really shred it to pieces (critically) so that it can start to take its form. I like the concept, but am not totally satisfied with the way that it turned out.

Also, I can't write examples.