

Stray God Strut

A lost god is wandering the streets of Ankh-Morpork. As agents of the Temple of Small Gods, you have to find religion - specifically, you have to find his.

When a problem is too supernatural for the Ankh-Morpork City Watch, and too theological for the wizards of Unseen University, who are they going to call? The Temple of the Small Gods, of course. The more important question is: Who are the Temple going to dump the problem on? They really need an elite team of special theurgic operators. But that would be expensive, so you've got the job. And after all, what's the worst that could happen if you messed up? (Apart from howling storms, earthquakes, plagues of locusts, and the Patrician being sarcastic. of course.)

Background

The rats in the basements of the Patrician's palace acquired sapience some time ago, but now they've got religion. Wandering the sewers and tunnels under the city, they stumbled across an ancient shrine to the lost god **Ofponlus**, a deity who (among other things) protected humanity against plague and swarms. In the aspect worshipped in this particular shrine, Ofponlus specifically dealt with plagues of rodents, and so was depicted stomping a mouse beneath his foot. But the statue was a bit chipped and battered, and the depiction was never that good, and it's hard to tell a poorly-depicted mouse from a rat... So it looked to the rats like this god had a rat sidekick or servant or something.

They became quite excited about this, and began talking about religion, and many of them decided that it would be nice if they had a god looking out for them. So they started coming to this shrine and worshipping Ofponlus.

Well, it happened that Ofponlus, despite being largely forgotten, had actually spent the last few centuries hanging on in barely-sentient form from the worship accorded his pantheon in a few out-of-the-way places. Suddenly getting actual worship, of a somewhat unusual flavour, was quite a jolt for him, knocking him right off the astral plane and into existence just outside Ankh-Morpork. However, the completely non-standard form of belief he was receiving left him mentally confused and basically amnesiac. So he wandered into the city looking for somewhere to stay, and a helpful watchman steered him towards the **Y.M.R-C-I-G-B-S.A.**

Unfortunately, the Y.M.R-C-I-G-B-S.A. was established shortly after the city suppressed the cult of **Bel-Shamharoth** a couple of centuries ago, and took over the old temple – without formally deconsecrating it. And there's a general rule among gods that entering each other's temples uninvited is a provocation. Bel-Shamharoth is fairly well locked out of reality these days, and doesn't particularly want back in after some bad experiences, but this was sufficient provocation for him to start sending some of the **Dingy Young of Bel-Shamharoth** to register annoyance.

This caused some panic, and Ofponlus was swept out of the building in the rush. The Watch came in, and faced with Things (albeit fairly small ones) with too many tentacles, they called for some backup from Unseen University. Unfortunately, the first time one of the first response wizards hit one of the Dingy Young with a lightning bolt, it demonstrated the ability to absorb

magic and grow larger. It only took the UU team two attempts to learn their lesson, and then they backed off and decided to offload this problem to the Temple of the Small Gods. One cross-town clacks message later, this is where the PCs come in.

Meanwhile, Ofponlus is wandering the streets of Ankh-Morpork, working trivial miracles and trying to remember who he is. He's already created a few loaves, fishes, and goblets of ambrosia for **CMOT Dibbler**, who is currently endeavouring to maximise his returns on this without getting into trouble, and is wandering towards the Shades. At the same time, he is being observed by **the Death of Rats**, who is aware of a degree of obligation to consult with him regarding the disposition of his worshippers' souls; the Death of Rats is not going to intervene directly – not his job – but will take actions to nudge things towards tidiness, probably using **Quoth the Raven** as his mouthpiece.

The PCs are obliged to deal with this sort of problem; the Watch are busy people and rather keen not to have to worry about religious matters, though they'll provide assistance if approached correctly. Anyway, the PCs have to track Ofponlus down, save him from the situation in which they find him, and then locate his new cult, sort out their relationship, and convince him not to be too much of an interventionist god. Fortunately, getting him to his shrine will help restore his memory; the problem will then be helping everyone understand the situation.

Introduction and Opening Scene

Distribute character sheets, establish players' familiarity with the system, and introduce the characters. Maybe mention Groggy's **Unluckiness** especially, as the GM should pick on him for something bad once per session. The city of Ankh-Morpork can suffer all kinds of problems on occasion, and when one of them seems to have a theological or religious element, it tends to be swatted over to the temples. As the major faiths either bring their own prejudices to dealing with problems or don't see why they should be lumbered with such inconveniences, these calls are then diverted over to the **Temple of the Small Gods** and any lesser priesthood who don't get out of the way in time. After a bit of squabbling, these priesthoods have established a response team – the PCs.

It's a Tuesday afternoon, and the team members are all somewhere in or around the Temple of Small Gods when a junior deacon scurries up to Eugenia with a scrawled note, transcribed from a clacks message. "It's from the Watch, ma'am. It would appear that they require our assistance." The text confirms this.

SERIOUS INCIDENT AT THE YMPA STOP. APPEARS THEOLOGICAL OR DEMONIC CODE 666 STOP. WIZARDS NBU STOP. CLERICAL INTERVENTION REQUESTED STOP. LITTLEBOTTOM STOP.

This should be a cue to muster the team and get moving. Everyone who has spent any time at all in Ankh-Morpork knows the YMPA – the Young Men's Pagan Association, a charitable establishment with no specific religious associations despite the name, which offers cheap, basic accommodation for subsidised prices to people who need such things; it's fortuitously just a couple of blocks away.

A successful **Area Knowledge (Ankh-Morpork)** roll (default is IQ-4) reminds characters that "Young Men's Pagan Association" is technically a nickname; the place is actually called the **Young Men's Reformed-Cultists-of-the-Ichor-God-Bel-Shamharoth Association**. If anyone then asks what this implies, use of any Theology skill can recall the basics of Bel-Shamharoth,

the Soul-Eater, the Soul-Render, the Sender of Eight; it's the kind of entity that any religion warns the faithful against. Lots of tentacles and stuff. The "Reformed" in that name is doing a lot of work, as the Y.M.R-C-I-G-B-S.A. isn't usually regarded as having anything to do with dark cults.

Also, if anyone asks, Area Knowledge (Ankh-Morpork) at -2 identifies "Littlebottom" as Sergeant Littlebottom, a well-regarded dwarf officer of the Watch.

At this point, the team should really be moving towards the YMPA; duty calls. It is indeed just a couple of blocks away, though if anyone wants to use any skills to get there fast or innocuously, that shouldn't be impossible. When they reach the vicinity of the building, it's clear that something is up; a couple of carts have been pulled across the road, and a watchman is trying to prevent a typical Ankh-Morpork crowd from building up and getting too interested, with limited success. The PCs will have some trouble getting through this; social skills can clear the way, or Acrobatics can go over or under.

The priests should then identify themselves to the watchman, who is clearly glad to see them. "*Maybe you can do something about this mess. Bloomin' greeblies...*" He directs them on to speak to Sergeant Littlebottom.

Bug Hunt

Sergeant Cheri Littlebottom (a dwarf in Watch armour with higher heels welded onto her steel boots and sequins on her dress axe; *Discworld RPG* p. 326) and a watch constable with some recent-looking bandages on his face and right hand are watching the YMPA building from a safe distance while talking to a rather irritated-looking wizard (robes, pointy hat, all the standard signs); on the ground between them is what looks like the product of a very bad digestive incident at a seafood restaurant – think starfish, but more tentacular with added mandibles and smelling a lot worse. A harassed-looking middle-aged man in business clothes which have seen better days is also hanging around; this is **Mr Quercus**, duty manager at the YMPA. If the PCs identify themselves, they'll happily start explaining.

The Watch received reports that something hostile started emerging from the cellars of the YMPA an hour or so ago now; Mr Quercus nods. The first watchmen on the scene reported tentacles and such, pulled back, and requested reinforcements and aid from Unseen University. A stronger force of watchmen met some of *these* – indicating the thing on the ground – which proved nasty but killable. "Then Mr Justforry here and his friends showed up, and said they'd deal with things."

(Mr Justforry has the grace to look slightly embarrassed as well as annoyed.)

"So of course they started throwing lightning bolts. And things got worse."

Hopefully one of the PCs will ask what "worse" means. At which point, by the eternal rules of dramatic necessity, a window at the front of the YMPA bursts outwards, and one of the enlarged **Dingy Young of Bel-Shamharoth** slurps its way out and onto the street and lurches toward the group. Sergeant Littlebottom blows her watch whistle, then says "Bother – the rest of the lads are checking the other doors. They'll take a moment to get here..."

At this point, an **Occultism** roll (default is IQ-5) identifies the creature, which may not be great as this will also trigger a **Fright Check** in the person making it, this being a minion of the Soul-Eater, the Soul-Render, the Sender of Eight. **Sacred Texts** (no default) says that it looks a lot like the kind of thing that's regularly doodled in the margins of scrolls by copyists who hate their

jobs, while any **Theology** says that it looks like something from the mephitic pits of the netherworld, to be abjured by all right-thinking folk; neither of those is specific enough to trigger Fright Checks. However, success with Occultism or critical success with any of the other skills will say that this thing doubtless soaks up magical energies to enable it to exist on this plane of existence, where it Should Not Be – which would be why Littlebottom and Justforry are both yelling “Don’t use magic on it!”.

As it comes forward, it’s pretty clear that the PCs are the only things currently standing between this thing and Ankh-Morpork; Sergeant Littlebottom is hefting her axe but doesn’t look that keen to engage, the other watchman is probably too badly injured, and Justforry is swinging his staff but doesn’t look like he knows how to use it in melee. Fortunately, it’s moving fairly slowly, so the PCs have time to deploy as they think best. A **Leadership** roll from someone who takes charge allows them to coordinate in some way, and gives them all +1 on any Fright Checks (+3 on a critical success). An **Observation** roll (default Per-5) notes that it’s keeping to the shadows as best it can; it dislikes sunlight – which might suggest some tactical possibilities. This aversion in fact explains why its current effective stats are a bit mediocre.

Enlarged Dingy Young: ST 10, DX 10, IQ 5, HT 9, Per 9, Will 10.

Dodge 9, DR 2.

Attacks: Twice per turn at the same or different targets, Skill-10, 1d cutting damage; also, the first time anyone is hit, the creature’s hungry gibbering triggers a fright check in the victim.

HP: 10

True Faith repels this creature, but remember that the PC has to spend all their time wielding a holy symbol and concentrating to achieve this result.

Pushing or dragging the creature into full sunlight (the middle of the street), perhaps using **True Faith** for this, causes it to squeal in distress, and stand paralysed for 3 turns, in which time it loses 1 HP/turn; then it tries to lurch back into shadow, losing 1 HP/turn until it succeeds.

This should be a fairly easy win for the PCs, but should illustrate the nature of the problem to the PCs. As Littlebottom and Justforry will explain, a number of smaller creatures have appeared in the YMPA, and magic just transforms them into this bigger type. The Watch took down the first of the larger ones, so there shouldn’t be any more such around now, and they are creating a cordon to contain the problem – but sooner or later, some might get out, and worse, might blunder into some source of magic that enables them to grow further. Justforry is the only wizard still present; the others are seeking medical treatment or very stiff drinks elsewhere.

According to Mr Quercus, these things started coming up from the cellars; he denies that anyone can have been conducting illicit rituals down there. Justforry acknowledges that you might be able to summons such creatures magically, but it’d take some specialist knowledge, and you’d have to be “a total blithering idiot or a priest or something.” After saying that, he winces as Littlebottom kicks his ankle. He also ran some standard tests when he first arrived, and doesn’t think that anyone has been working spell-magic round here very recently. However, this building’s association with Bel-Shamharoth may be indicative. If anyone asks about that, Mr Quercus admits that the place was converted to its modern use after a cult of “some unpleasant god – okay, the Ichor God Bel-Shamharoth...” was ejected, a century or two ago.

Also, at some point, especially if the PCs exploited the Dingy Young’s dislike of sunlight, Sergeant Littlebottom will ask off-handedly if these creatures are likely to be susceptible to fire. That will sound plausible to the PCs; Occultism at +2 confirms the probability (remember the

IQ-5 default). If anyone asks why she wants to know, she'll say "Nothing... Just a stray thought...", but a **Psychology** roll will note that she suddenly looks kind of cheerful. If anyone asks for a flaming torch, note that these are swung using **Shortsword** skill (default DX-5), and do sw cr damage +1 fire damage.

So it now seems that there's *something* meriting investigation in those cellars, and (as Sergeant Littlebottom will point out if necessary), the PCs may be best equipped to handle it. If they request Watch backup or assistance, test her Reaction to the requester, or somebody can try an Influence Skill roll; however, the best she can manage is a promise to send someone in as soon as she has spare people, which will take a good few minutes yet. It would be wise to ask for lanterns; Mr Quercus will tell them that there are some (and some matches) under his desk in his office next to the reception area.

Deconsecrating the Cellar

The interior of the YMPA has a peculiar and disturbing odour, but that's just the result of this being the place of residence of a large number of young single men. It's a bit underlit, but enough sunlight is coming in through windows and skylights to allow the PCs to operate on the ground floor without problems. They *will* need lanterns, though...

Of course, dramatic inevitability ensures that when they find Mr Quercus's office and start rummaging under the desk, they have their first encounter with a smaller Dingy Young.

Lesser Dingy Young: ST 5, DX 10, IQ 5, HT 9, Per 9, Will 10.

SM -3, *Dodge* 9, *DR* 2

Skills: Stealth-10.

Attacks: Twice per turn at the same or different targets, Skill-10, 1d-3 cutting damage; also, the first time anyone is hit, the creature's hungry gibbering triggers a fright check in the victim.

HP: 5

True Faith repels this creature, but remember that the PC has to spend all their time wielding a holy symbol and concentrating to achieve this result.

The creature gets a chance to use its Stealth vs. the first PC's Per when they enter the room, catching them flat-footed if it wins. After the party squimps it, they'll get an encounter with another one on the way down to the cellars, which also gets to try Stealth. Oh, and don't forget to establish who's carrying the lantern or lanterns (and hence tying up one hand)) at this point.

The cellars themselves are a bit of a maze of small rooms, cluttered with cleaning supplies and broken furniture. However, the source of the problem shouldn't be hard to find; the patch of pulsating blackness making "whomp" noises with odd overtones that set your teeth on edge is a clear clue, especially when another Lesser Dingy Young emerges from it.

Entering this room allows everyone to make a Per roll to note something rather obviously odd about it; it has an octagonal floor plan. **Theology**, **Occultism**, or **Sacred Texts**, all at +3, all tell anyone why this is a Bad Thing, and that a certain number Must Not Be Mentioned in this location. If anyone misses this and seems to be about to mention this number anyway, the two nearest people with more clue can have simple DX rolls to slap hands over their mouths; if that fails, well, have three more Lesser Dingy Young and a noticeable size increase in the dark patch.

Looking round the room while wondering what the heck is going on allows a **Per** roll to notice traces of Indescribable Ancient Fell Runes carved on the walls, and then a **Theology** roll to

realise that this shrine to Bel-Shamharoth has been closed down but *never properly deconsecrated*. This was very sloppy of someone. Fortunately, it should be fairly easy to fix, given a few minutes, systematic obliteration of the Indescribable Ancient Fell Runes, and a

Emergency Problem Recovery: If at any point the PCs contrive to screw up or get really bad rolls and the scenario needs recovering, Sergeant Littlebottom pops up from somewhere, yells “Get down!”, and lobs an improvised Molotov cocktail. (Once an alchemist, always an alchemist.) This will obliterate the current threat, and give the PCs the chance to get their stuff together. If anyone asks, she says that she had an idea when someone mentioned fire, and sent a runner to fetch some ingredients.

couple of Religious Ritual rolls – which don’t even have to be for the same religion, as everyone has generic procedures for this stuff. Of course, the people conducting these procedures will need protection from more Lesser Dingy Young while doing so – at least one such, plus one more per failed roll. Once this is successfully accomplished, though, the patch of darkness emits a rather pathetic “prulsssss” noise, folds in on itself, and vanishes.

After which, some PCs may need patching up. The rules are on p. 187; note TLs, equipment, species, etc. If necessary, assume that Sergeant Littlebottom has First Aid/TL4-13 and a decent medical kit, though she may want to try some alchemical salves.

Identifying the Bigger Problem

The players may think that they’ve solved the problem at this point, but Littlebottom and Justforry will quickly disabuse them of that belief. Gateways to Dark Nether Realms don’t just open spontaneously, and even if this one had been sloppily dealt with in the past, it’s been dormant ever since. Something must have stirred things up and so provoked Bel-Shamharoth.

The PCs can say that all sorts of things can provoke gods – even Ichor Gods which are actually Horrible Creatures of the World Below Reality; no roll is required, as you don’t have to study theology for long to learn this. They need more details of possible triggers.

The obvious person to ask is Mr Quercus, who initially shrugs; very little counts as “unusual” in his line of work. Though come to think of it, he did have one new guest this morning who was a bit odd. He appeared to have forgotten his trousers, which isn’t especially unusual, though the chap didn’t appear drunk – just a little vague. “He was obviously a musician. They’re often a bit odd.”

If someone asks, the evidence for him being a musician turns out to be that he was carrying “one o’ them old-fashioned harp things with the curvy bits on each side” – a lyre, it turns out. Anyway, he had the money to pay for a room – “nice fresh-minted coins by the look of it” – so he was admitted. Then things started to get weird, so Mr Quercus lost track of him.

At around this point, a watchman who’s been helping with the cleanup butts in to say that he recognises the description; the fellow was wandering around the city that morning looking a bit lost, so the watchman approached him; he said that he was looking for “a pagan cult that would welcome him,” so the watchman assumed that he wanted the YMPA and directed him there – after all, it’s a place you can hang out...

Hopefully, the PCs will now be thinking that the visitor sounds suspiciously godlike. A **Theology** roll will remind them that there is an accepted rule that gods don’t enter each other’s shrines

without invitations, so it's very likely that one blundering onto what's technically sacred ground would count as a provocation. It seems that the city has a rogue deity on the loose.

If Sergeant Littlebottom hears this, she mutters a "Bother!" and yells at one of her constables "Send a clacks to the station! I'm calling in a Code 666!"

The PCs can also take a look at the YMPA's guest book, as Mr Quercus can say that the newcomer signed in. (He'll suggest that if they ask if he knows the guest's name.) The signature turns out to be in an unfamiliar script which the PCs will likely guess is Classical Ephebean; if they get it to someone who can read that, it decodes as "OFPONLUS."

A success with **Sacred Texts**, or **Research** in an appropriate library, recognises that name just fine. Ofponlus was a god whose cult originated in an outer province of Ephebe perhaps a thousand years ago, and subsequently spread across the Circle Sea region, being popular in Ankh-Morpork for a while. He tended to fill whatever gaps existed in the local pantheon – driving the solar chariot, healing injuries, spreading diseases, inspiring poets and musicians, causing sudden death, whatever. However, he seems to have spread himself too thin, falling out of favour in too many places. He hasn't had a temple of his own for centuries, though it's possible that he's worshipped as part of some pantheons somewhere.

Tracking Ofponlus

All of which is fine, but where is he now?

There are various ways he could be located; after all, a trouserless deity out to be noticeable, even on the streets of Ankh-Morpork. Probably. There are a bunch of possibilities that the players might think of or be prompted to try:

1. Spread out and ask questions. In Ankh-Morpork, asking questions of people on the street requires skills such as **Streetwise** or **Diplomacy**, else those people get dangerously suspicious, but successful rolls and spending an hour or so will pick up rumours of some weird bloke wandering around smiling and talking to people. Specifically locating a Thieves' Guild member and getting a positive response from them gets a slightly embarrassed response; the chap looked well-dressed, but attempting to pick his pocket turned up nothing. He was last seen heading for **Pseudopolis Yard...**
2. Groggy has a **Congregation** of street people. Activating that (requires a roll of 15 or less) turns up similar results to the above.
3. Asking Sergeant Littlebottom for assistance requires use of social skills or a Good or better reaction from her, but having handled things up until now competently will get a +2 on that. She'll send a request for people to keep an eye out to HQ, but the system takes a while to work. The only other thing she can suggest is to check the speed cameras that are located on some of the major streets; it's possible that one of them caught something. In fact, this works out well; a camera on the Brass Bridge has a whole stack of uniquely good-quality images, despite the lack of speeding carts – it seems that the imp was inspired by something. Specifically, they show a figure in a tunic, holding a lyre – and visibly *glowing* while probably walking an inch or two off the ground. Littlebottom can point out that camera imps paint what's really there, not what people see. The figure is heading in the direction of Pseudopolis Yard.
4. Somebody might suggest use of **Tracking** skill. This shouldn't work in a much -walked-on urban environment, but it might be worth a try... And in fact, on an unmodified roll, the tracker will pick up the trail from outside the YMPA (or, later, heading rimward from

Pseudopolis Yard – see below). The muck of the city streets has been transformed into clean dry soil, with some shoots of sweet-scented herbs growing from it.

Pseudopolis Yard: Encounter with CMOT Dibbler

All this should, one way or another, eventually draw the PCs to Pseudopolis Yard. If Sergeant Littlebottom is with them at this point, she'll notice a couple of watchmen on their break lounging against a wall, and go over to have a word with them as they wave their snacks in greeting.

“Oh, hello sarge. Hey, Dibbler has got some really nice pies today.”

This will cause Littlebottom to become quite sarcastic, as any watchman with any sense should regard this event as a sign of deeply suspicious weirdness. Otherwise and anyway, any PC making an **Observation** roll (default Per-5) will note a small but cheerful-looking crowd queuing up to buy something from **CMOT Dibbler**. **Area Knowledge (Ankh-Morpork)** (default IQ-4) at +2 will remind anyone that Mr Dibbler has an uncanny ability to zero in on any unusual events in the city and find the opportunity for profit therein.

Fighting through the queue to speak to Dibbler may require an **Intimidation** roll (default Will-5) to get the citizenry to stand aside; invoking one's standing as a priest turns this into an Influence roll, meaning it gets reaction modifiers. Or the PCs can wait, but this will feel dangerous given the possible urgency of the situation.

When the PCs do reach Dibbler, he'll be happy to help – he always wants to stay on the good side of every faction in the city. The PCs will notice that he has a tray full of *glossy, pleasantly aromatic* pies, along with some open sandwiches topped with fish. They may want to ask about this.

“Oh yuss, today's specials.”

The PCs should demand more details. Dibbler will mutter something about wanting to protect his supply, but a reasonable argument, use of an appropriate social skill, or **Intimidation** skill will quickly make him fold.

“Okay, well, so long as you don't mention this to anyone in the comestibles business... This fella came past earlier – foreigner, I guessed, seeing as he wasn't wearing any trousers. I offered him the chance to purchase from me regular stock, and he tried a pie – paid for it in gold, he did – then pulled a very impolite face, waved his hand, and, well, I found I had this stock. And some specials, if you'd be interested...”

The “specials” turn out, should the PCs be willing to pay a fairly stiff price per sip, to be a couple of flasks of what can only be described as ambrosia, because that's what it is. Consuming it gives a priest a stronger sense of divine connection; +1 on all rolls until they get either a failure or a critical success.

Okay, so Ofponlus was here. Dibbler can only say that he was last seen heading rimward, towards Pon's Bridge. *“Of course, I tried to tell him the Shades was that way, but he jus' smiled. Hope he's alright; he seemed like a nice lad.”*

Oops.

Into the Shades

Yes, it's true; unfortunately, tracking Ofponlus now means following him into the Shades. This will always be a *chancy* prospect, of course, but at least it's daylight. Characters with **Cowardice** should test self-control at this point; if they fail, they can still come along, but will insist on keeping to the centre of the party, will be unable to use any skills effectively. **Area Knowledge (Ankh-Morpork)** (default IQ-4) and **Streetwise** (default IQ-5) rolls will help avoid serious dangers, and Gustav's **Fearsome Stare** will let him use **Intimidation** on anyone who looks at the party funny.

After a little while, however, the PCs will note that their threat level doesn't feel as high as expected. Many people seem oddly *cheerful*, and willing to meet others' gaze. Ofponlus has been protecting himself from the rather obvious threats round here by working a divine miracle; making the Shades safe.

This has the side-effect of making him easy to track; just follow the sense of positivity. However, miracles can only go so far. The god has attracted people whose idea of being nice is to stab you cleanly.

Divine Encounter

The PCs will know Ofponlus when they find him; he's sitting on a bit of broken wall, playing his lyre and reciting Epehebean epic poetry. This has attracted a small crowd of gawpers, but when the PCs arrive, **Observation** (default Per-5) at +2 will pick up that he's also attracted the attention of some hardened sorts who are probably just resolving the question of who should mug him first. Whether he's currently weak enough to succumb to this, or powerful enough to unleash divine wrath, this would probably be a bad idea.

Pulling him out of this situation could mean fighting all these goons, but that could turn into a battle with the entire Shades, so bluff and improvisation might be a better idea. Let the players come up with ideas; the thugs each have Will 10 if it comes to **Intimidation**. If anyone is daft enough to fight them, or things get out of hand, they're all ST 12, DX 10, IQ 8, HT 10, Speed 5, Move 5, and use shortswords with skill-12 to do 1d+2 cut damage. They'll individually fall back if they take more than a couple of points of damage, but there are always more of them.

The other thing they can do is try and get some divine intervention from Ofponlus. Addressing him by name will make him start to remember a bit more ("*Ofponlus? Oh yes, that's my name, isn't it?*"); getting him to do anything useful, though, requires persuasion. **Fast-Talk** (defaults to IQ-5) would be a pretty good option, especially as his functional IQ to oppose it is currently just 8; **Diplomacy** (defaults to IQ-6) might also work, or the PCs could pull something clever with **Public Speaking** or something. If Ofponlus is persuaded to assist, he stands up, straightens his tunic, strikes a pose with his lyre, and starts glowing. This will scare off the thugs, but just leaves the slight problem that he can't work out how to stop, which makes him headache-inducing to look at and attracts attention.

Anyhow, assuming that *something* works, now would be a good time to evacuate the Shades. The PCs can talk to Ofponlus as they go.

Locating the Worshippers

Ofponlus currently seems painfully vague, as even now he remembers his name, he doesn't remember much else. He has a sense that someone is worshipping him, which he likes, but he

doesn't know who; he'll ask the PCs if it's them, and if not, whether they'd like to worship him. He might become tetchy if refused, but the PCs can point out that they're priests of other gods, and poaching priests is supposed to be wrong. Still, some roleplaying, Reaction rolls, and **Diplomacy** checks (default IQ-6) may be indicated. **Savoir-Faire (High Society)** will also work, if anyone asks.

Which said, finding Ofponlus's worshippers should seem like a good idea. How is the question.

The Watchers

Fortunately, there is one being who can offer some clues. The Death of Rats wants to talk to Ofponlus about the disposition of the souls of his worshippers and is currently observing from above while riding Quoth the Raven, flapping along after the PCs as they run and sitting on walls if and when they pause. Once they're clear of the Shades and can afford to look around more, every PC gets a **Per** roll to notice this big black bird following them; **Naturalist** (default IQ-6) at +2 gets that it's a raven. If they all fail the Per check, or decide to play dumb, it just carries on following them until they settle down somewhere; if they wave or whatever, it circles a bit and descends for a chat.

(Shooting at Quoth would be silly, but if they try, roll some dice, then say that Quoth banks to dodge the missile, which falls back down to the PCs' feet – very neatly sliced in half. After that, Quoth and the Death of Rats will ignore the PCs but still talk to Ofponlus.)

Quoth then fixes the PCs with a beady-eyed gaze. *“Good afternoon,”* he says, *“the boss would like a word with Mr Sunshine there.”*

It would be best to find a quiet corner somewhere at this point, but in any case, the PCs are likely to be a bit confused until Quoth is driven to say *“Boss, it might be best if they could see you. I'm sure they'll be sensible.”*

At which point, the PCs all notice the skeletal rat in a black robe, carrying a miniature scythe, just dismounting from Quoth. **Occultism** (default IQ-5) identifies him; there have been stories about this recently.

The Death of Rats stomps up to Ofponlus, and begins squeaking at him while gesturing with his scythe. The god looks down at him and begins squeaking back. They'll ignore the PCs, but Quoth will be happy to chat, though he'll start by asking if anyone has any eyeballs going spare.

If anyone asks (and hopefully someone will), he'll explain that his boss and Ofponlus are just sorting out some technical matters. *“Disposition of souls. A god is allowed some say in what happens to their worshippers after death, y'know, and the boss needs to know what the arrangements are.”*

This should be a large clue that Ofponlus's modern worshippers are small rodents, which Quoth can confirm if asked. He needs a bit of gentle persuasion to say where they are, as he's not supposed to go giving away privileged information like that, but a decent Reaction or a gift of eyeballs should do it. If necessary, he'll get his boss to stop time briefly so that they can go to a butcher's shop or something.

He's going to be a little vague – *“Lot of flying through walls in the dark in this line of work, an' only one or two have popped their clogs so far”* – but yes, they're rats, and they're living under the city. (*“Lovely big sewers you've got here.”*) **Area Knowledge (Ankh-Morpork)** (default IQ-4) reminds anyone that spillages from the University and the Alchemists' Guild have indeed

caused an undue amount of sapience in local urban wildlife. The PCs can try and piece together more information; Quoth is just being chatty, but an **Intelligence Analysis** roll (default IQ-6) can pull some hints about locations and depth from his chatter.

The PCs don't get much more chance to cross-examine him, though, because the Death of Rats wraps up his conference with the god, stomps back, and gives a commanding hollow squeak, and Quoth takes once with an amiable "Be seeing you!"

Which just leaves the problem of locating the community in question – because Ofponlus didn't think to talk the Death of Rats into telling him, *of course*. But until the god knows where his congregation is, he's likely to continue wandering the city causing chaos.

Into the Sewers

There are a number of ways of accomplishing this. It should be obvious by now that the cult is based underground, and that the worshippers are rats. **Theology** tells anyone that resurrecting a semi-defunct god's cult is going to be easier in an extant shrine, and any of the literate PCs can attempt **Research** (default IQ-5) in the Temple of Small Gods library to find his shrine.

(Incidentally, Ofponlus can wander onto that temple's hallowed ground without problems; it's a multi-faith, ecumenical site.) This will turn up old references to a temple to Ofponlus, with an underground shrine for performance of the deeper mysteries, in the area of what is now the Plaza of Broken Moons. That's a start...

Or the PCs could ask the Watch for help; roll a **Reaction** (p. 172), at +3 if they didn't cause too much trouble earlier. given a Neutral or better response, they get a polite response with a promise to see what help they can be sent, followed a bit later by a visit from **Gaspode the Wonder Dog** (p. 316), who is aware that he himself isn't the only thinking animal in the city; he's crossed paths with a few talking rats in his time. (*"Vicious little sods. I mean, you can't really blame me for tryin' to eat them, can you? I'm a dog, and I didn't know that they could talk..."*) He reckons that they show up most often in the vicinity of the Patrician's Palace and the University – which suggests the vicinity of the Plaza of Broken Moons. If the Reaction result was Good or better and they mentioned intelligent rats, **Commander Vimes** himself puts in an appearance to say that, yeah, those things exist – he once met some in the Patrician's dungeons, don't ask what he was doing there. (*"In fact, they're friends of the Patrician, so don't poke that particular bear, right?"*)

Or the PCs could just venture into the sewers with Ofponlus, using him as a divining rod. However, he may take some persuading. (*"I'm pretty sure I'm a sky god, not one of those chthonic weirdoes – and anyway, it smells appalling down there"*) This is what they'll wind up doing sooner or later anyway, but it'll be a lot easier once the PCs can say that they have some idea where his worshippers are. Getting into the sewers is fairly easy, or would be if any of the PCs had **Urban Survival**; still, that's a default Per-5 skill, and this is a routine, +3 sort of task. Or they could ask the Watch (who know their way around every level of the city), or one of Groggy's **Congregation**, or they could ask the Guild of Plumbers.

Remember that the Ankh-Morpork sewers have lots of the traditional, unlikely luminous fungi growing on the walls, so finding one's way around in them isn't hard. It might be worth taking a lantern for dark corners, though.

Anyhow, once Ofponlus is underground, he'll announce that he can hear echoes of prayers; if the group is in the vicinity of the Plaza of Broken Moons, this becomes just a question of following his nose; otherwise, there's rather a lot of tedious triangulation involved.

Finale: The Shrine

The shrine itself is in a partly collapsed chamber down a side-passage off the main sewers. Unfortunately, access is blocked by that partial collapse. A little poking around notes that there are small gaps in the rubble with drafts coming through them, and **Hearing** roll picks up a faint rhythmic squeaking here. Linebarger can fit through those gaps, or the human PCs might start trying to shift the rubble. However, they won't have time to finish that job; sooner or later, Ofponlus will get bored of waiting, and will turn ethereal and walk right through the obstruction.

The shrine is pretty clearly just that; a vaulted chamber, lit by an assortment of salvaged candles as well as that luminous fungus. At the far end stands a very chipped and battered statue of a figure bearing a distinct resemblance to Ofponlus, with one foot raised, and beneath it, some kind of rodent. Before it, a dozen or so rats have adopted postures of prayer, and are chanting. Or squeaking. Sort of both.

It'd be possible for Linebarger to sneak in here, using **Stealth**; the rats have Per 11, but only get one roll for the whole group as they're rather preoccupied just now. He can also attempt some kind of diplomatic approach, or whatever else the players suggest; if he has to leg it, he can try to use **Acrobatics** to get through the rubble ahead of pursuing rats. The rats are SM -6, and bite for 1 point of cutting damage; if they get into a fight with any PCs, use the "Relative Sizes" rule on p. 179.

Ofponlus, though, won't make any attempt to be stealthy; if and when he enters the chamber, he stomps to the front of the room and starts glowing. This naturally causes a surge of belief among the rats, which in turn empowers him enough that he can miraculously clear the rubble from the entrance and give the other PCs admittance.

At this point, the rats are preoccupied by this manifestation of their god, and Ofponlus is just basking in their belief; he can finally remember himself properly, though his power is relatively limited, and anyhow, he'll also remember that he's obliged to be polite to other gods' priests if they're polite to him. So this makes the PCs the most active figures in the scene for the moment.

Obviously, they've achieved their primary objective – finding the cult and restoring the god's memory – but having a new nonhuman cult active under the city could lead to problems, especially if the rats should come into conflict with any civil engineering projects, dwarfs, or whatever. It'd be awfully nice if Ofponlus could propound a belief system that prized cooperation and respect – but let's face it, he's a god, and if anyone listens, he's already offering his followers a glorious future, which could mean *anything*.

On the other hand, anyone making an **IQ** roll might note that the statue looks less like it has a rat companion and more like it's stomping on a mouse. If they can have a quite chat, they might suggest that, if he wants to avoid the Temple of Small Gods conducting any embarrassing historical-theological research, he should, say, reveal to his new priests that they should join the interfaith council at the Temple of Small Gods.

In short, there's plenty of opportunity for roleplaying and diplomacy before Ofponlus heads back to the astral plane and the PCs head back to the surface, perhaps accompanied by a representative of the latest member of Ankh-Morpork's faith community.