



MIND THE GAP

Welcome, my friends—and do mind the Gap. We wouldn't want you falling in there, now would we? Where was I? Ah, yes. Welcome to the Orient Express, a place where the Lords of the Crypts and the Ladies of the Tower come together to do business. Welcome to a place where politics and intrigue mingle with some of the deadliest mercenaries this side of London Below. Welcome to the only place where you might find out the location of our possibly-dearly-departed Lady...if you survive.

This is London Below, a Queendom ruled by the Lady Queen Door—or at least, it was. Our Lady Queen has been missing for the past five years, and no one is quite sure where she is. Some say she's dead. Others say she's on some kind of mission to save our way of life, and still more say she's been captured by one of her enemies.

London Below itself is a place for the forgotten and the lost. We are the homeless man dressed in rags that you ignore as you walk past. We are the girl with the sweet voice begging for change to feed her child. And we are also Lords and Ladies in our own right. We have taken to the trains and the tunnels below London and we have created a world of our own.

This is a place made of dirt and grit. Fashion is largely outdated, since we take what we can scavenge from London Above. Men and women wear layers of clothing—stained dresses and faded suits. Mismatched jewels are sifted out of sewers and sold at the Floating Market, traded for other odds and ends that the denizens of London Below pick up from the refuse and detritus of London Above.

We are not the same sorts of people as those of London Above, either. Many of us have become something more—something other than human. The Rat-speakers have the ability to commune with the Rats, the high-ranking and wise rodents of London Below. The Velvets with their silks and their wiles are barely even human by appearance with their perfect looks and strange abilities. There are men and women who have mastered strange arts as mercenaries—moving with inhuman speed and strength. And, of course, there are those of the noble houses that have their own abilities; even Queen Door is thought to have an inherited ability of her own.

London Above doesn't pay much attention to us. We can walk through city streets on the surface and no one would take a second glance at us. Humans are flawed; they automatically ignore or explain away something that doesn't make sense. We don't bother them, and they don't bother us.

Instead, we live in our constructed city beneath the streets. We've created an entire world with rules and laws that those of London Above wouldn't understand. But it's our world—and we will defend it to the last.

Welcome to London Below.

TIMELINE

- The Earl of the Earl's Court dies
- Dissension between the Noble Houses of London Below increases
- Lord Wall, father of Lady Tower, begins to hire mercenaries from the Floating Market
- The Great War of the Houses begins
- Lord Wall expands as Lord Lucas Camden attempts to hold his territory.
- The Battle of the Tower is waged, one of the bloodiest in the history of London Below
- Lady Door marshals an army behind the Hunter, Richard Mayhew, and the Marquis
- Lord Wall is killed at the Battle of London's Cross
- Lady Door becomes the Lady Queen Door and her glorious reign begins.
- Queen Door chooses the Orient Express as her seat of power.
- New reforms are enacted on behalf of the Lady Queen. The Floating Market is guarded. The Velvets are policed more strictly.
- The Marquis becomes the new Earl of Earl's Court.
- Denizens of London Below begin to go missing, despite safeguards
- The Lady Queen Door vanishes.
- The Lady of the Tower begins to gather resources as Lord Camden expands into the crypts
- Skirmishes break out in the crypts and the subways
- The Rats and their Speakers step in to moderate

RECENT HISTORY

The Lady Queen Door vanished five years ago, leaving London Below in turmoil. Men and women go missing in the night as the Rat-speakers attempt to keep the peace on behalf of the Rats themselves. Lady Tower and Lord Camden, also known as the Lord of the Crypts, have both fought several skirmishes against one another. And while there has been no real bloodshed, it's only a matter of time.

Although all of London Below is on edge, business still runs as usual. The Floating Market makes its appearance, where merchants can sell what they make or glean from London Above. However, there have been a lot more items than usual lately from London Above. It seems that the policing between the two worlds has grown lax recently with no one to keep the door closed.

The Velvets have been almost greedy lately in the absence of Queen Door. No longer policed by the Queen's guards, they've started venturing to London Above to prey on the denizens there. Although the new Earl has sometimes sent messengers to reprimand the Velvets on Queen Door's behalf, though, he's largely remained locked away in his own Court.

Rumors have been floating through London Below, as well. It's said that the Lady of the Tower should be the new queen in Door's absence. While the followers of the Lord of the Crypts rail against this idea, it's started to gain steam.

In the meantime, the Rats continue to search and ferret out information about Queen Door's whereabouts. Now, a new arrival may have the answer they're seeking: the Key to Queen Door.

CULTURAL NOTES

Living in London Below is like no place else. Money is useless here. Instead, people trade favors and items—trinkets that hold powers beyond imagining. A memory is more use than a pound, and objects hold memories for years.

A favor is more than just a favor, as well; it's worth your weight in gold. If you ever break a verbal contract, then you can expect death—or worse. If you've promised a favor and don't want to uphold your end of the bargain, then be ready to run.

Fashion isn't what you'd expect. It's a hodgepodge of dirtied rags and colorful scarves. It's a combination of utility and ridiculous. Layers are the norm for the lower classes within London Below as they bundle up against the cold. The lords and ladies, though, do their best to impress—with interesting results. After all, this is a place where everything slips between the cracks, so fashion in London Below is decades behind that of London Above.

Interactions between denizens usually wind up being harsh. People group up with their "own" and are distrustful of outsiders. And if you do deal with someone, it's usually for a favor. After all, this is a hard world to live in.

Although Queen Door's reign sparked a short renaissance—one that involved the creation of art and music and invention—that has now passed. Some people refer to Queen Door's 20-year reign as the "Golden Age of London Below." But now, London Below has slipped into the Dark Ages. While business continues, people look furtively over their shoulders in the dark tunnels. Skirmishes break out in the streets. And people go missing in the night.

EVENT LOCATION

This is the Orient Express, the seat of what was once the Lady Queen Door's power. Here, Lords and Ladies paid homage to their queen as new laws to protect the citizens of London Below were enacted.

Now, though, the Orient Express is a shadow of its former self. The train remains empty most days, and only the Rats and their Speakers can be found in the area with anything called regularity. The large compartments that were once covered in decorations are now faded and worn. Although the train made it so that Queen Door could see the entirety of her Queendom, it's now become a defunct, old relic.

But a few weeks ago, letters were sent to the Lord and Ladies of London Below from the Rats—a formal request to negotiate a treaty between the Lady of the Tower and the Lord of the Crypts to prevent further skirmishes and possible bloodshed. Yet a rumor has also floated around London Below—a rumor that says that someone will be there with information about the Queen's whereabouts. Now, the Lady of the Tower, the Lord of the Crypts, their armed guards and the Velvets have all flocked to the Orient Express to negotiate—and see if the rumor of information about Queen Door's whereabouts is true.

WHY YOU'RE HERE

The Rats have traveled near and far to bring together some of the most influential men and women of London Below. The hope is to make a temporary peace treaty between Lady Tower and Lord Lucas Camden, also known as the Lord of the Crypts, until Queen Door can be located once more.

And yet Lord Camden and Lady Tower aren't the only ones present. Many who have a stake in the matter have ventured to the Orient Express for this momentous occasion. There are guards, Rat-speakers and those who simply want to ferret out information—or take advantage of the event.

THE DENIZENS OF LONDON BELOW

THE RAT-SPEAKERS

The Rats are a formidable force within London Below. They ferret out information and act as messengers to the Lords and Ladies. And yet Rats can't do everything—and that's why they've recruited the Rat-speakers.

These denizens of London Below exist to serve and, if necessary, translate for the Rats. Usually dressing in layers against the damp and the cold, Rat-speakers look like a typical person off of the street to a casual observer. However, some of them have collected trinkets from their time in London Below—odds and ends that can do more than they appear.

While Rat-speakers are usually wary of others at first, they're also social. After all, their entire purpose is communication and assistance. This means that they often function as go-betweens for the lords and ladies. A neutral party in London Below, the Rat-speakers try to keep the peace as best they can. They also are often privy to more information than most, thanks to the Rats.

THE VELVETS

There are those who dwell in light and those who dwell in darkness. The Velvets are certainly the latter sort. These women, and rarely men, are beautiful beyond compare. Usually dressed well and somewhat provocatively in fine gowns or suits, they act as guides as scouts in London Below. When they venture to London Above, though, they have quite a different purpose in mind.

The Velvets are known to live on neither food nor drink. Instead, they steal the heat from willing sources. Someone need only say "yes," and their heat belongs to the Velvet that asks. While those of London Below are usually wary of a Velvet's wiles, though, those of London Above aren't quite so informed.

No one is quite sure how Velvets first came to be. There are rumors that when a Velvet steals heat from someone, there is a very small chance that they, too, will become a Velvet. Others say that Velvets are those of London Above who have frozen to death—and eventually found their way to London Below. Whatever the case, Velvets are as lovely and as cold as winter itself.

CITIZENS OF LONDON BELOW

The citizens of London Below mostly consist of the lost and the forgotten. There are those of London Above who have slipped through the cracks and eventually made it into the sewers and the crypts and the underground. Here, they live and prosper as best they can.

These citizens are vassals to one lord or other, depending on where they live. They owe their fealty and their lives to their lord or lady—whoever it may be. And they are bound to serve that person if ever called upon to do so.

Yet there are citizens who have managed to evade this type of fealty. There are those who deal with the seedier side of London Below—those who wander and claim no one as a lord or lady.

The citizens of London Below usually dress sensibly—rather like the Rat-speakers. Their clothes are an assortment of odds and ends to protect them against the elements. They look to practicality rather than to fashion, and usually dress depending on what they do for a living—whether it’s a hired mercenary or a shop keeper.

LORDS AND LADIES OF LONDON BELOW

The Lords and Ladies of London Below are very similar to the Citizens of London Below—except that they’re in charge. These are the men and women who have families that have lived in London Below for generations. Their families have slowly clawed their way to power over time. This also means that they often have large targets on their backs.

More interesting is that the noble families of London Below each have a specific gift. An almost mystical ability, these “gifts” allow them to conduct seemingly extraordinary feats. While the Citizens of London Below may have developed some small gifts of their own, the real power belongs to the great Houses of London Below.

These Lords and Ladies dress in whatever finery they can find. Often wearing outdated dresses and suits, these men and women are clearly in a station above everyone else—and make sure that others know it.