

RICHARD/ RAT-SPEAKER

Rat-Speaker: What? What is it? What've you found us?

Richard: What is this? Where am I?

Rat-Speaker: You're with the rats, now, little man. Yes-yes-yes.

Richard: Wait a moment. You can see me?

Rat-Speaker: Nothing wrong with my eyes. I knows what I sees. An Upwolder! (Pulling out a wicked-looking sliver of glass with an improvised grip of fur) I should slit you from gullet to gizzard and tell fortunes with your guts.

Richard: Look, I think you're all making a bit of a mistake here.

Rat-Speaker: (Edging closer) Oh yes. Yes-yes-yes. I knows exactly what I'm going to do with you.

Richard: Wait! Door. Do you know a girl called Door? What about a place called the Floating Market? Please! Can you help me find her?

(A small black RAT skitters up to RICHARD and peers intently. THE LORD RAT-SPEAKER chitters back and forth with the RAT.)

Rat-Speaker: This is Master Longtail, of the clan Gray. He says you looks exceedingly familiar. He wants to know if he's met you afore.

Richard: I suppose it's possible...

Rat-Speaker: He says he was discharging an obligation to the Marquis de Carabas.

Richard: It's that rat? Yes, we've met. Actually, I threw a magazine at it. Hello, good to see you again. Do you know where Door is, Ratty?

Rat-Speaker: You will not address Master Longtail, save through me. Me-me-me! You've got to be taken to the Market, Master Longtail's orders. You don't know how lucky you were, just then.

Richard: Yes, I do. I really do.

Rat-Speaker: No. You don't. You really don't. Ratty...