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### CLOACA MAXIMA: SOMETHING WICKED LURKS BENEATH THE CITY STREETS

The first hint players of *Gods & Heroes: Rome Rising™* (G&H) will get that all is not right in the great city of Roma is the counterfeit money turning up across the Republic's territories. If you choose to pursue the matter you'll be sent to Roma to alert an important official who will, in turn, ask you to head down into Cloaca Maxima, the sewers beneath the city, to put an end to the counterfeit scheme, which threatens to completely wreck the Republic's economy.



In the course of doing your Heroic duty you'll realize that there is a much more nefarious plot afoot in Cloaca Maxima than anyone has guessed. Some serious trouble is brewing beneath the teeming streets of the Republic's majestic capitol city, and it's much more serious than a few fake denarii. Cloaca Maxima is the first high-level instance you will encounter in *G&H*, and it is chock full of nasty creatures and evil enemies of Rome. Eventually, the quests you complete there will point you towards an even more epic confrontation with the enemies of Rome.



Cloaca Maxima is actually two separate instances, Cloaca Maximi Circi and Cryptae Subrae, both of which will require you to be about level 25 or 26.

As you pursue the counterfeit money questline, you will be instructed to head down to Cloaca Circi Maximi, the first half of the Cloaca Maxima instance, which is located underneath the Circus Maximus in Rome (hence the name). This is where you'll encounter the counterfeiters and their forges, but first you must speak with Mucius, the self-proclaimed Flamen of Venus Cloacina.



"It's really uncertain exactly why Venus, the goddess of love, and Cloacina, the goddess of the sewers, are connected," says Michael Fiegel, a quest writer for *G&H*. "But the two are connected, and there's a guy down in Cloaca Circi Maximi who is self-proclaimed Flamen of Venus Cloacina. It's not an official title. Most of the Flamens are officially appointed by the Pontifex, but he just took the office on himself."

This eccentric character will inform you that Venus Cloacina is unhappy because things are not right in her domain. Mucius will ask you to set everything to rights on his goddess' behalf. Your first task will be to rid Cloacina's Passage of the crocodiles who have overrun the area. It seems a few crocs have escaped from the gladiatorial arena above and, "as is traditional with crocodiles in sewers, they have bred and propagated," says Michael.



After Cloacina's Passage, you will enter Laverna's Sanctuary. This is where the counterfeiters, a group that calls themselves the Midas Syndicate, have set up their operation. It's a fitting place for them, too, since Laverna is the Roman goddess of thieves. You'll be required to smash the forges used by the Midas Syndicate to press their coins as well as punish a few of the counterfeiters themselves to complete this portion of the questline.



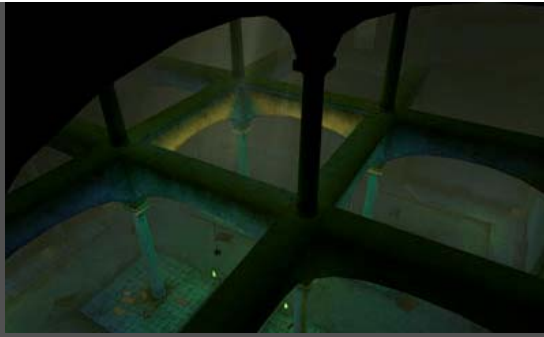
You'll then move on to Lacun Serpentis, which is not only overrun by snakes but also inhabited by a Gorgon. Exactly why such a foul creature has taken up residence beneath Rome will not be immediately clear, but you will soon learn that this Gorgon is the least of Rome's worries.



When you return to Mucius, you'll be told that Venus Cloacina is still upset – in fact, the goddess might even appear to tell you so herself. Mucius will then give you a key that allows you to enter Cryptae Suburae.

So named because it is located beneath Roma's Subura district, Cryptae Suburae is the second portion of the Cloaca Maxima instance. Its entrance is near the Colosseum, and before you descend to Cryptae Suburae you'll encounter several people upset that their favorite gladiator or gladiatrix has recently gone missing. One of them, a man named Titus Simplex, thinks they may have been kidnapped and taken into the sewers, and asks you to go in search of his favorite contender.

The first sub-area of Cryptae Suburae is called Canalis Effluones. Once you get there, a Haruspex named Stercius – self-proclaimed Haruspex to the self-proclaimed Flamen of Venus Cloacina – will guide your efforts. (A Haruspex is someone who examines the entrails of animals as a means of divination. Sounds strange, but, like the name of Cloaca Maxima and its sub-areas, Haruspicy is taken straight out of ancient Roman history.)



Canalis Effluones is where you'll begin to discover what is really going on in the sewers of Roma. You'll find the missing gladiator Titus Simplex asked you to find and many others, all in cages. It seems there is a slave trading operation being run out of Canalis Effluones. As you free the prisoners and punish the slave traders, you'll find yourself fighting some Telchinist summoners as well, and only then will the full scale of what is going on be made evident to you: The Telchinists are running their Hero-kidnapping operation out of Roma's basement!

When you first start the game you find yourself on an island controlled by the Telchinists, having been kidnapped by slave traders much like the ones you'll encounter in Canalis Effluones. This time, however, your first priority will be to make sure the Telchinists pay rather than to escape their island. Smashing their kidnapping ring is the first blow you'll strike against the Telchinists in Cryptae Suburae, but hopefully not the last.



The next area into which you'll venture is Puteus Dedecorus. This sub-area, like all of Cloaca Maxima, is derived from historical records, but this bit of history is probably better forgotten. "It's not actually the nicest thing to know about Rome, but heretics, traitors, and other people who'd done harm to the city were often just dragged to the sewers, thrown in, and left to rot there rather than being given a proper burial," Michael explains.

It is this makeshift crypt that you'll find yourself walking through as you enter Puteus Dedecorus. Unfortunately, thanks to the presence of Telchinist summoners, many of the dead bodies that have been thrown into the area have not stayed dead. You'll have to fight your way through many Larvae in order to reach Letalis, the undead boss who controls Puteus Dedecorus.



Defeating Letalis will be the easy part, however, as the next area, Sanctum Immundum, is where a most powerful and insidious Telchinist by the name of Omenia is attempting to summon her dark masters back from exile in the depths of the underworld. Omenia is of course surrounded by plenty of Telchinist bodyguards, and once you've fought your way through them and bested Omenia, your problems have only just begun. Though you've interrupted her in her summoning, the Telchinist priestess was close to bringing one of the Telchines back to the mortal realm, and you will have to face off against its misty but no-less-threatening incarnation if you want to escape alive.



This will set the stage for your later encounters with those Telchine gods who have returned to Earth in a completely corporeal form, which will begin at about level 30. Cloaca Maxima will help you get ready for those encounters, as a number of side quests and even a minion who you'll be able to acquire only through a rare drop (meaning you'll have to hunt a bit for her Pactum Bellicum) will keep you coming back to the sewers repeatedly. This should carry you through to level 28 or so. But in all likelihood, you still may not be ready for the pure evil that is the Telchines...

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