

BRONZE RAT

A tourist wanders into a back-alley antique shop in San Francisco's Chinatown. Picking through the objects on display he discovers a detailed life-sized bronze sculpture of a rat. The sculpture is so interesting and unique that he picks it up and asks the shop owner what it costs.

"Twelve dollars for the rat sir," says the shop owner, "and a thousand dollars more for the story behind it."

"You can keep the story, old man," he replies, "but I'll take the rat."

The transaction complete, the tourist leaves the store with the bronze rat under his arm. As he crosses the street in front of the store two live rats emerge from a sewer drain and fall into step behind him.

Nervously looking over his shoulder he begins to walk faster but every time he passes another sewer drain more rats come out and follow him. By the time he's walked two blocks, at least a hundred rats are at his heels and people begin to point and shout.

He walks even faster and soon breaks into a trot as multitudes of rats swarm from sewers, basements, vacant lots and abandoned cars. Rats by the thousands are at his heels and as he sees the waterfront at the bottom of the hill he panics and starts to run full tilt.

No matter how fast he runs the rats keep up, squealing hideously now not just thousands but millions, so that by the time he comes rushing up to the water's edge a trail of rats twelve city blocks long is behind him. Making a mighty leap, he jumps up onto a light post, grasping it with one arm while he hurls the bronze rat into San Francisco Bay with the other, as far as he can heave it.

Pulling his legs up and clinging to the light post he watches in amazement as the seething tide of rats surges over the breakwater into the sea where they drown. Shaken and mumbling he makes his way back to the antique shop.

"Ah, so you've come back for the rest of the story," says the owner.

"No," says the tourist, "I was wondering if you have a bronze lawyer."

