

# LEGENDS & LAIRS

INSTANT ADVENTURE



## The Sewer Fiend

by Peter Schweighofer

Requires the use of the  
Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook,  
Third Edition, published by  
Wizards of the Coast®



## How to Use This Product

This adventure is specifically designed to be easily incorporated into any existing D&D campaign. Feel free to alter the names of places and characters and customize the details of the adventure to fit your own world.

You should be able to run this adventure in a single game session. You should read it through at least once and study those sections you will need to know well. In particular, you should familiarize yourself with the features and capabilities of any new monsters, spells, and magic items introduced in the adventure.

You can get the adventure started quickly and easily by reading the intro on the back cover to your players. You may also wish to photocopy the map on pages 8 and 9, both for your own reference and to show to the players, if appropriate.

## Dungeons & Dragons®

This adventure requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast.®

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# THE SEWER FIEND

By Peter Schweighofer

## DM BACKGROUND

The Commandant-Burgher's cat Jasper has gone missing, and the characters must help find it. Unfortunately the feline is unknowingly involved in a sinister plot to ambush the city garrison and wreak chaos throughout Vallidyl.

The cat wanders between its owner, the Commandant-Burgher's ambitious daughter Carnelia, and a warren of tunnels beneath the ruins of burned plague houses. Two years ago, when the pestilence descended upon Vallidyl, constables herded the victims into an old neighborhood at the city's edge. Here the sick were boarded into old buildings, which the guards set afire, purging the disease and its victims in one mighty conflagration. Several innocents were caught in this blaze, including a hermit sorcerer who lived in the district. Horribly disfigured, Meridal managed to escape into the sewers, where he used his magical arts to heal himself. Eventually he formed a plan to raise an army of mutated rat humanoids to exact revenge against the Commandant-Burgher who acted so ruthlessly and indiscriminately to rid his city of the plague.

Now Meridal bides his time in caverns beneath the sewers, slowly raising a ratling army (see New Monster section) and plotting his vengeance. Carnelia and Jasper aid him without knowing his true identity or cause. The daughter believes she corresponds with someone of power who can help her attain great responsibility over Vallidyl. She sends him messages inscribed on small slips of parchment and secreted in Jasper's silver tinkling bell. The cat travels between Carnelia and Meridor, drawn by the latter's promise of catnip and plentiful rats to play with.

## ADVENTURE SUMMARY

*The Sewer Fiend* is a d20 System adventure designed for 4–6 characters of levels 5–7. By adjusting the number of creatures in encounters you can customize the adventure to better suit the composition of the party. *The Sewer Fiend* can fit into any existing campaign or run as a standalone adventure.

A timid clerk working for the city's Commandant-Burgher approaches the characters, offering them 200 gp each immediately to find his liege's missing cat, Jasper. Benthric also gives them a burlap sack in which to carefully transport Jasper once retrieved, and a pouch of dried catnip to lure him into their grasp. Upon returning the creature to the city garrison, Benthric promises to pay them an additional 800 gp each. Although Benthric seems ineffectual and meek, gaining the good graces of his lord could prove useful if the characters remain in Vallidyl.

## PLAGUE HOUSE RUINS

After inquiring about the rather distinct cat at several taverns, the characters follow their leads to the ruins of plague houses at the city's edge. The field of charred timbers, ash piles, and blackened stone has become a favorite haunt for scavengers: crows, dogs, rats, and cats. The city's superstitious citizens avoid this area, fearing it still contains vestiges of the deadly disease or the angry spirits of those burned alive within the plague houses.

Anyone making a DC 5 Spot check notices the cat perched atop some charred timbers, cautiously observing the characters from afar. Before anyone can make a move to capture him (physical, magical, or otherwise), Jasper darts down into the wreckage. Those who made a DC 20 Spot check earlier realize that the bell hanging from Jasper's silk collar makes no sound when he moves (the parchment crammed inside neutralizes the metal ball that normally rattles within).

If they plan on capturing the cat, the characters must make their way into the plague house ruins. A brief inspection of the area where they spotted Jasper reveals a charred staircase descending into what was once the building's basement. The chambers on this level are dimly lit by light filtering in through the rubble above. Although it's enough illumination to function, anyone conducting closer inspection of these rooms requires an additional light source. The ceilings stand only seven feet above the debris-choked floor, so maneuvering might prove difficult.

### 1. GRUESOME BASEMENT

The rickety stairs descend into the charred husk of a basement. Burnt debris litters the floor, while cracked beams hang heavily from the ceiling. As you step carefully over wreckage, your boots crunch on broken pottery, fragile plaster, the remains of people's possessions, and other brittle material you'd rather not ponder. The roughly square space contains two exits hewn from the ground.

Anyone picking through the rubble finds grisly evidence that the plague-infected inhabitants all fell into the basement when the burning house collapsed around them. Those making a Search check (DC 15) manage to collect 16 copper pieces, but also realize that someone has thoroughly picked over this area sometime in the past.

### 2. GLASS BASEMENT

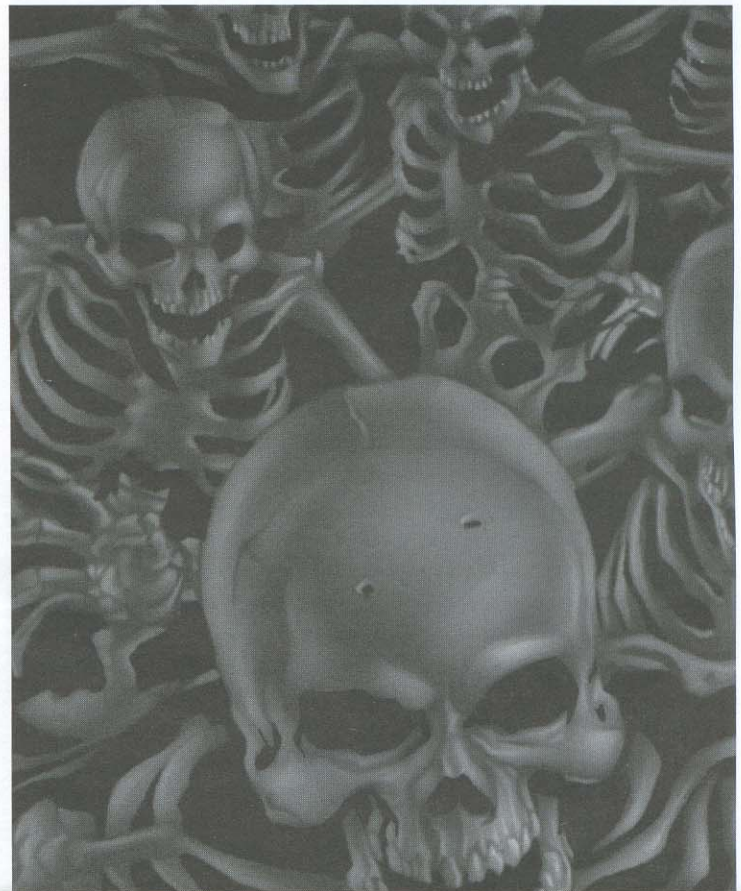
Shards of glass and pottery crunch beneath your feet as you move into the chamber. Charred bookshelves line two of the walls, their contents long since scattered as brittle, burnt leaves. The entrance leads back toward the staircase, while another exit leads deeper into the basements.

Anyone foolish enough to wander into the plague house basements without proper footgear sustains 1d4 points of damage from the preponderance of smashed glass in this room. Those making a closer examination of the debris find the remains of two slate-topped tables that collapsed to the floor when their heavy wooden legs burned.

### 3. HANGING SKELETONS

Burnt wreckage litters this long room, including the charred remains of three great wine casks that crashed through the floor. Two exits lead deeper into the basements.

Characters making Listen checks (DC 15) hear sounds coming from one exit (toward location #5), as if something were disturbing the rubble there. Anyone stepping on the floor before that passage breaks a brittle bottle that sets off a trap. Skeletons suddenly flop down from their concealed places in the ceiling's shadows, dangling menacingly from the rafters. Characters must keep their wits about them—those who don't make a Will save at DC 10 stumble backward in fear, trip, and fall to the debris-strewn floor. Although the skeletons are inanimate and pose no threat, the rubble-strewn floor is peppered with short, upright spikes smeared with filth. Characters who fall sustain 1d4 points of damage from landing on a spike; they must also make a Fortitude save at DC 12 against filth fever (see DMG 75 for disease details).



Characters making a Spot check (DC 20; DC 25 with natural illumination) notice the skeletons laced up in the rafters before anyone springs the trap. Only those who make a Search check (DC 20) notice the short spikes.

**Skeleton Spike Trap:** CR 1; no attack roll necessary (1d4 plus disease); Will save (DC 10) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

## 4. WELL CHAMBER

The wreckage isn't as dense in this smaller room as in other basements. The stone ring of a well stands in one corner. Growling sounds echo up the shaft from below.

With a Climb check (DC 15) characters can use the well to descend to the sewer level below using rope or climbing down the shaft. Since only one can fit into the space at a time, whoever goes first must deal with the creatures below (see location #7).

## 5. CENTIPEDE LAIR

This basement contains piles of wreckage and garbage tossed here from above. Jasper stands atop the trash heap—he hisses at something burrowing around in the mound, then darts down the back into the chamber's corner. Several monstrous centipedes burst from the garbage, peer around, then scurry toward you!

The plentiful trash provides the centipedes with food and nest materials. While the characters distract the insects, Jasper escapes down a sewer grate in the corner of the room, heading down to the sewer level. Once the characters finish off the centipedes, they can wade through the garbage and find the grate. The widely set bars allow anything cat sized to slip through. The characters find lifting the grate from the surrounding stone surprisingly easy. The slippery shaft beyond—wide enough to allow Medium-size creatures access—descends at an incline into the darkness. Anyone making the passage without a rope slides down uncontrollably and lands at location #6.

**Monstrous Centipedes (8):** CR 1/2; Medium-size Vermin; HD 1d8; hp 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 5, 6, 8; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 14; Atk +2 melee (1d6–1 and poison, bite); SQ vermin; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 2.

*Skills:* Climb +8, Hide +8, Spot +8.

*Feats:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

## VALLIDYL SEWERS

The main sewer corridor here runs only a short stretch—a cave-in blocks one end but still allows water to pass, while recently erected bars block the other end (see location #8). A stream of filthy water runs through the passage's center. No light penetrates this deep underground, so those characters relying on natural sight must find some illumination.

## 6. SEWER POOL

The trickling stream of sewage gathers in a shallow subsidence in the passage. The sewer continues in one direction toward a blockage of collapsed stone. The other direction leads past two small access corridors with steps, then turns. Jasper stares back at you from one of the passages then disappears up the steps.

Characters descending through the sewer grate shaft from the centipede lair above emerge at this small pool in the sewer passage. Those who slide down uncontrollably splash into the shallow pool. The dirty water infects anyone who has sustained wounds (even if bandaged)—they must make a Fortitude save at DC 12 against filth fever (see DMG 75 for disease details).

Jasper heads toward location #9 on his journey deeper into the sewers.

## 7. WELL SOURCE

The well from the ruined basements above descends to another chamber. The well shaft continues downward to the water, but five dire rats guard it. They're chained to the far wall, but their bonds are long enough to allow them free reign over the entire room. They don't hesitate to attack any tasty morsels coming down the well.

The rats easily sense anyone climbing down the well. Unless a character takes preemptive measures to neutralize anything "down there," the rats voraciously attack the first character into the room.

**Dire Rats (5):** CR 1/3; Small Animal; HD 1D8+1; hp 6, 7, 7, 8, 9; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15; Atk +4 melee (1d4, bite and poison); SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 4.  
*Skills:* Climb +11, Hide +11, Move Silently +6.  
*Feats:* Weapon Finesse (bite).

Once they vanquish the dire rats, the characters can inspect their surroundings. The small room contains only a mangy pile of skins, with an empty bucket that once contained food and a shallow depression filled with water dripping from the walls and ceiling.

Somebody down here must keep these beasts as guardian pets.

A short flight of stairs leads to the main sewer corridor, where the characters easily spot Jasper staring back at them from the other side passages before he disappears up the steps toward location #9.

## 8. BARRED PASSAGE

At this point a makeshift barrier blocks the sewer passage. Someone braced wooden beams and wedged a few iron bars into the stonework, preventing further access. Beyond, the corridor descends and the water covers much of the floor. This must be the point where the sewer drains into the harbor waters.

Characters wasting any time here eventually hear a low growl in the distance, then the sound of something very large slowly navigating the deeper waters. If they break through the barrier to explore further, or dawdle here too long, they eventually meet the creature against which the barrier was erected: a giant crocodile who hasn't eaten anything substantial for some time.

**Giant Crocodile:** CR 4; Huge Animal; HD 7d8+28 (68 hp); Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20ft., swim 30 ft.; AC 16; Atk +11 melee (2d8+12, bite), or +11 melee (1d12+12, tail slap); SA improved grab; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 27, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

*Skills:* Hide +0 (+12 when submerged), Listen +5, Spot +5.

## 9. WATERWORKS

You enter this room just in time to see Jasper scamper deftly through a nightmarish tangle of water wheels, churning gears, spinning shafts, and sloshing barrels. This contraption was designed years ago when the city thought it might use mechanical pumping and filtration techniques to sift filth from sewer water. The cat disappears through an exit on the other side of this machinery.

Careful characters can crawl, climb, and otherwise squeeze through the contraption with a fair amount of difficulty and discomfort. Although the mechanical monstrosity isn't lethal to characters, it presents many opportunities to mangle their equipment. For each character who fails a Reflex save at DC 10, the contraption snags one of their possessions and mangles it. This might amount to a torn piece of clothing, crushed scrolls, a broken-shafted weapon, or mangled lantern.

If the characters find some way to stop the device (by jamming something into the gearworks, for instance), the machine stops, but the sewage flow doesn't. The chamber slowly fills with filthy water (with the same effects on wounded characters as in location #6). The water floods to a level of two feet before it begins draining off toward the main sewer passage.

## 10. GARBAGE HEAP

A trash heap pours in through an opening in this room's ceiling, filling it with foul-smelling garbage. Two large, tentacled worms with toothy maws gnaw on a few humanoid bodies on one of the lower slopes—they wriggle and thrash about until they pick up your scent and turn on you.

The creatures are carrion crawlers, feasting on two halfling bodies deposited here recently. The characters present a more tasty, warm-blooded meal than the corpses.

**Carrion Crawlers (2):** CR 4; Large Aberration; HD 3D8+6; hp 22, 26; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 17; Atk +3 melee (paralysis, 8 tentacles); -2 melee (1d4+1, bite); SA paralysis; SQ scent; AL N; SV Fort +3, Red +3, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 1, Wis 15, Cha 6.

*Skills:* Climb +10, Listen +6, Spot +6.

*Feats:* Alertness.

After dispatching the carrion crawlers, characters may inspect the bodies. Despite recent gashes from the carrion crawlers, a close examination of the halflings shows they were drained of blood with a butcher's precision. Anyone making a Search check (DC 15) realizes that the bodies did not filter down from the top of the refuse pile (they're not soaked in filth), but were dragged here from deeper within these caverns—specifically from the descending passage hewn from the stone in the chamber's far corner.

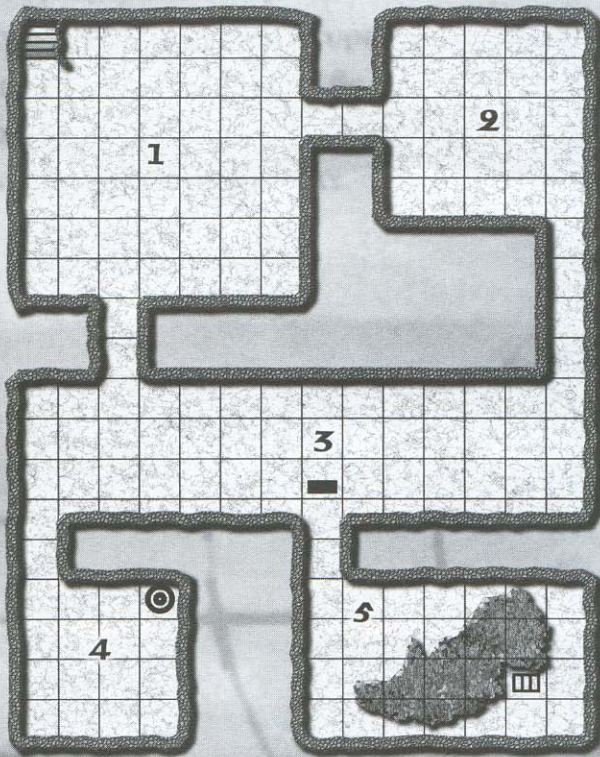
## MERIDAL'S LAIR

The passage leads deeper underground to a series of caves the disfigured and somewhat insane sorcerer Meridal uses to raise his ratling horde. The mutant army is still in the formative stages, so Meridal doesn't have enough creatures for regular patrols. Game information on ratlings comes at the end of the adventure, but individual hit points are provided for each encounter.

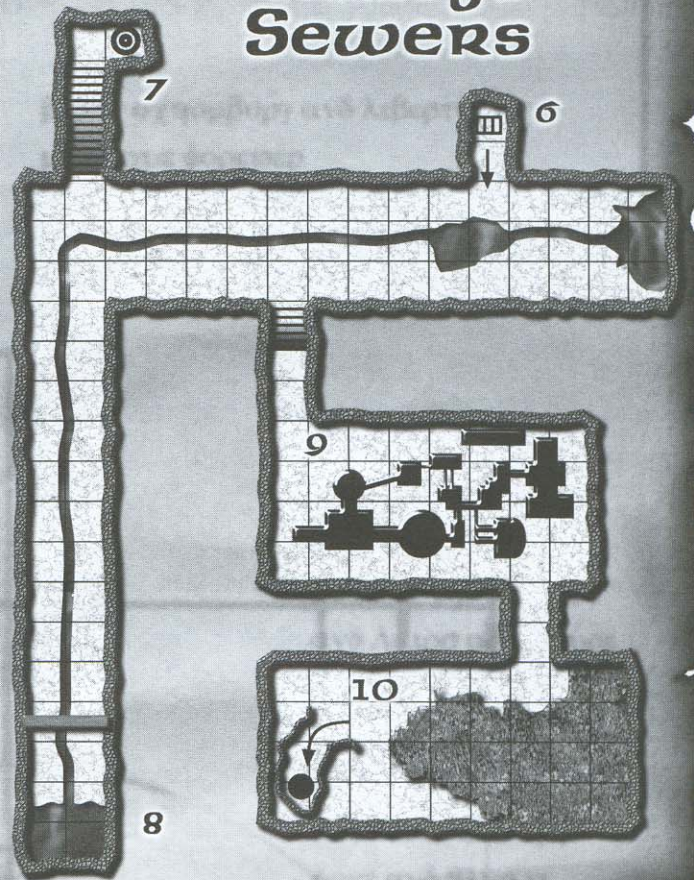
## 11. RAT TRAP CAVERN

More refuse piles crowd this long cavern, filtering down chutes from above. Movement within the heaps indicates rats scavenging for food. You notice odd boxes scattered around the mounds, each with an inverted conical wire-mesh lid. Desperate squeaks from within come from rats trapped inside. After a moment you hear sounds coming from a cave exit to your right. Two halfling-size creatures lumber into the room; although they wear tattered rags that were once clothes, they have the features of humanoid rats. The creatures visit each trap, removing the rats within and depositing them in sacks. After collecting their prey, the rat-creatures leave through the same passage by which they entered, their bags squirming with captured rodents.

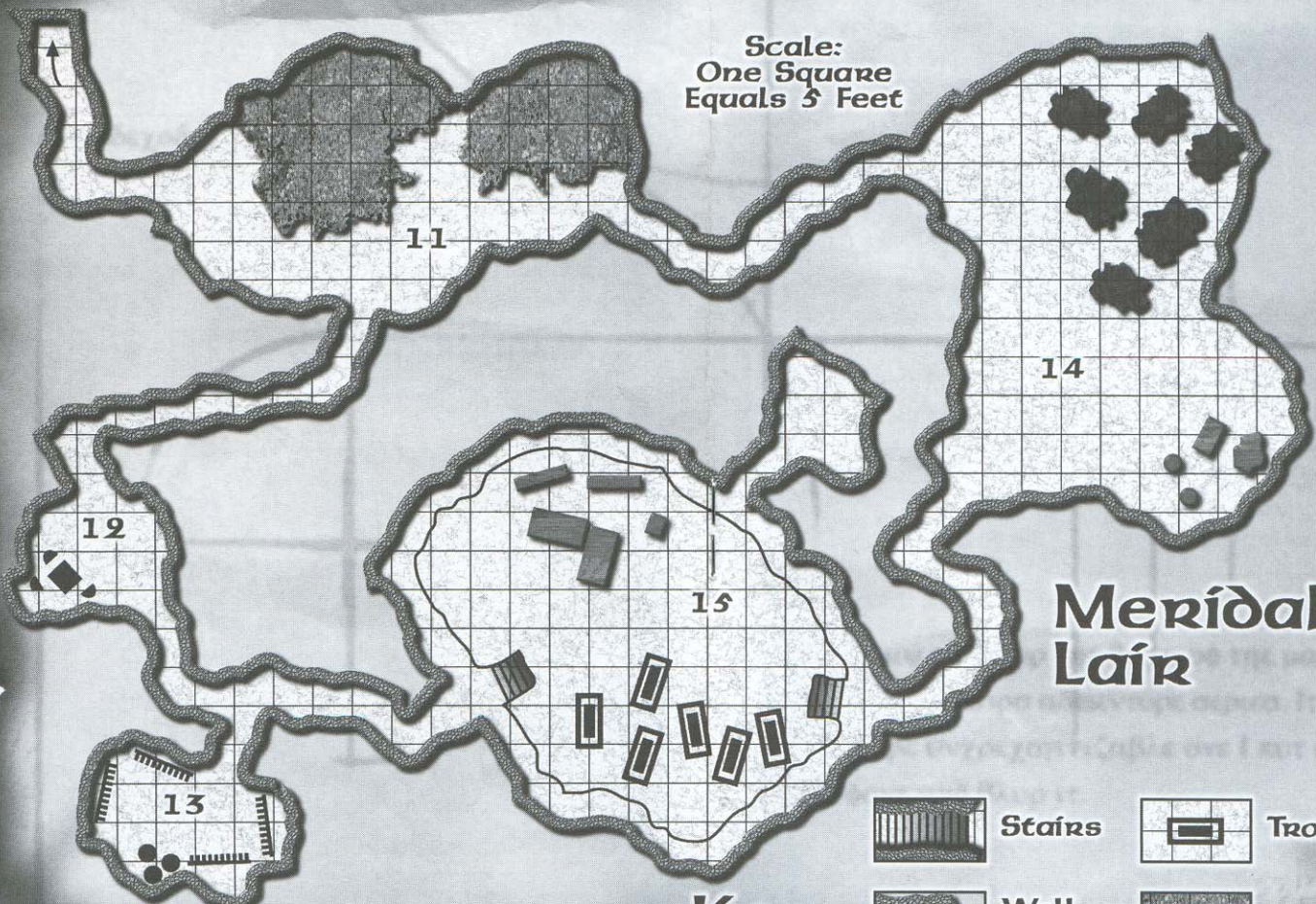
# Basement Level



# Vallidyl Sewers



Scale:  
One Square  
Equals 5 Feet



# Meridal's Lair

## Key



Stairs



Trough



Well Shaft



Garbage

The ratlings—hybrid monsters of Meridal’s creation—collect rats for their master’s abominable experiments. The creatures don’t attack the characters unless they make their presence known to the ratlings. If the characters attack and vanquish these two ratlings (**hp 8, 10**), they only encounter one at location #12.

## 12. GUARD POST

The corridor makes a sharp turn here—and leads you straight into a small room serving as a guard post. Three ratling soldiers leap up from a bench, release two dire rats from their leashes, and ready their weapons!

The ratlings (**hp 8, 10, 11**) let their pets (**hp 6, 7**) attack the first round, moving in on any characters who break through. (Only one ratling remains if the characters vanquished the two checking the traps in location #11.) If the skirmish goes against them, one attempts to flee down the passageway and alert Meridal in location #16.

One ratling on guard is one of Meridal’s more trusted soldiers. If they search the rags that serve as clothing, the characters find a small pouch with 22 gp, a finely crafted silver ring (35 gp), and two gold teeth (20 gp each), personal items from the two dead halflings.

## 13. ARMORY

Someone has hoarded weapons and bits of armor in this small cavern. Racks contain light crossbows, maces, halfspears, and a few daggers. Pieces of leather and chain armor were tossed in a corner pile with a few dented helmets and old bucklers. Two barrels contain light crossbow bolts. On one wall hangs a stained linen sheet with a primitive yet detailed map of the city outlined in ink—it includes all roads, even back alleys, and most buildings. The section occupied by the garrison and its fortifications is indicated only by the outer walls: the interior details are missing.

The ratlings store weapons they’ve stolen in this makeshift armory. Meridal also updates his map based on reports from ratling spies sneaking about Vallidyl at night. He’s still waiting for details on the garrison interior, soon to come from the Commandant-Burgher’s daughter in Jasper’s bell.

Although most of this gear seems battered and well used, some of it is magical. A buckler with some tarnished decorative bracing is actually a *+1 buckler*, and a seemingly mundane heavy mace is a *+2 shock mace*. If the characters dawdle here too long, two patrolling ratlings (**hp 7, 10**) check the armory as part of their routine.

## 14. RATLING NEST

This large cave contains a nestlike area strewn with many furs, tattered carpets, and other soft bits, as well as an alcove lit by cook fires that serves as a simple kitchen and a central cleared area where several ratlings practice combat routines.

As long as the characters avoid attracting attention (by proceeding farther into the cavern, making too much noise, or attacking), the eight ratlings (**hp 7, 7, 8, 9, 9, 10, 10, 13**) continue their training, and the two at the cook pots (**hp 6, 7**) mind the fires. If characters rifle through the nest piles, they find half a flask of oil, a sack of moldy bread, a small steel mirror, 300 cp, and 200 sp. Unfortunately any search attracts the ratlings’ attention.

## 15. LABORATORY

The passageway opens up into an enormous cavern surrounded by a narrow ledge and lit with torch, candle, and oil lamp. Six ratlings scamper around a laboratory. Some mix a foul-smelling liquid in vats, while others pour buckets of the slime into six troughs. Bookshelves stand against the ledge at one point, though only a few volumes sit there. Two slate tables contain alchemical apparatuses constructed from salvaged glass tubes, beakers, and pottery. A hunched human figure slouches near a podium, one scarred hand clutching the pages of an ancient tome. It appears the man is about to complete some kind of arcane ritual involving six caged rats on one of the slate tables. Patiently poking at the rats is Jasper, who seems totally relaxed among such strange company.

If the characters watch from a distance, they observe the beginnings of Meridal’s rituals to *create ratling*, combining the life forces of the caged rats (who eventually find themselves in the troughs) with those of halflings (contained in the foul-smelling liquid). Before the sorcerer can complete the ritual, two ratlings on patrol (**hp 7, 10**) come up behind the characters and attack, raising the alarm. The ratlings assisting Meridal (**hp 8, 8, 10, 11, 11, 12**) grab their weapons and join the fray, while the sorcerer himself continues the ritual. If they don’t stop him in two rounds, he completes the spell and six more ratlings rise from the troughs, stumble around seeking weapons, and join the attack.

**Meridal, Male Human Sor7:** CR 7; Medium-size Human; HD 7d6; hp 11; Init -1; Spd 15 ft.; AC 9 (-1 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d4+1, +1d6 bonus fire damage); SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +8; Str 7, Dex 9, Con 6, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 6.

**Skills:** Alchemy +12, Bluff +6, Concentration +4, Craft (calligraphy) +11, Gather Information +2, Handle Animal +1, Heal +6, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Profession (scribe) +11, Spellcraft



+10.

**Feats:** Brew Potion, Leadership, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Transmutation).

**Possessions:** Cane, +3 flaming dagger, mangy cloak, tome of merge beings.

**Spells Per Day (6/6/6/4):** 0—flare, light, mage hand, mending, open/close; 1st—burning hands, enlarge, erase, feather fall, sleep; 2nd—alter self, endurance, pyrotechnics; 3rd—create ratling, secret page.

Most of the books and alchemical instruments are unremarkable (and may become damaged during a fight). The tome on the podium, however, contains all of Meridal's notes on the *create ratling* spell he's created (see New Spell below). A narrow passage beneath one ledge leads to Meridal's quarters, little more than a primitive bed, a table and chair, and a chest containing personal belongings: threadbare clothes, parchment, ink, quill pen, spare bedroll, and a *potion of alter self*.

When they retrieve Jasper, the characters discover a parchment stuck in his bell—it contains a rendering of the garrison interior, which would have helped Meridal's plans to overthrow Vallidyl's government.

## NEW MONSTER

### MERIDAL'S RATLING



#### Small Humanoid

**Hit Dice:** 2d8 (11 hp)

**Initiative:** +2 (Dex)

**Speed:** 20 ft.

**AC:** 15 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +2 leather)

**Attacks:** Bite +2 melee, light mace +2 melee; or light crossbow +3 ranged

**Damage:** 1d4+1 bite, 1d6+1 light mace, or 1d8 light crossbow

**Face/Reach:** 5 ft./5 ft.

**Special Qualities:** Scent, darkvision 60 ft.

**Saves:** Fort +0, Ref +2, Will -1

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 8

**Skills:** Balance +11, Climb +3, Hide +7, Jump +2, Move Silently +3, Spot +1, Swim +2

**Climate/Terrain:** Temperate land and underground

**Organization:** Pack (5-15), horde (16-30, plus 1 4th level leader)

**Challenge Rating:** 1

**Treasure:** Standard

**Alignment:** Usually chaotic neutral

**Advancement:** By character class



Ratlings are products of abominable experimentation by the disfigured outcast sorcerer Meridal. As a hermit, he first attempted to merge the life essences of various beings, with limited and sometimes gruesome results. He found combining rats with halflings the best combination, and soon began raising a ratling army to exact his revenge on those in Vallidyl who burned him with those herded into the plague houses. Although ratlings are Meridal's creations, other sorcerers have no doubt created similar rat hybrids to serve their nefarious purposes.

Ratlings stand about three feet high, with scrawny limbs, heavy paunches, elongated snouts, round ears, and whip-like tails. They amble about on two legs (the tail helping to maintain balance), but often run on all fours. Ratlings quickly adapt to new conditions, learning to use weapons and armor and growing attached to shiny or valuable objects. Ratlings exhibit simple intelligence, and they prefer to follow strong leaders or the general tendencies of their pack. They flourish in urban areas where garbage, food, and nesting materials are plentiful. In combat, they prefer to swarm superior opponents and often leave allowance for one to run for help in desperate situations.

## NEW SPELL

### CREATE RATLING

#### Transmutation

**Level:** Sor/Wiz 3

**Components:** V, S, M, XP

**Casting Time:** 10 minutes

**Range:** Close (50 feet)

**Target:** One creature per caster's level

**Duration:** Instantaneous

**Saving Throw:** Fortitude negates

**Spell Resistance:** Yes

This transmutation spell began as research into more powerful magic to merge the life essences from different beings into new creature mutations. After two years of experimentation and dozens of failed attempts, Meridal formulated and noted the rituals required to magically merge rats with halflings to form the hybrid ratlings. The material components include a live rat and a specially prepared soup of halfling bodily fluids. The tome on Meridal's podium includes all his experiment notes, instructions for brewing the soup, and details on casting the spell.

*XP Cost:* 50 per ratling.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter Schweighofer lives in Williamsburg, Virginia, where he works at the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and culture, and continues his freelance writing endeavors. He has written material for the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*, published several science fiction and historical fantasy stories, edited two *Star Wars* anthologies, and reported for a newspaper in Connecticut. His work for Fantasy Flight Games includes the Legends & Lairs adventures *The Tuggarth Gauntlet* and *Steam Dragon's Revenge*, plus contributions to *Mythic Races*.

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# DRAGONSTAR

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THE SEWER FIEND

16

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# The Sewer Fiend

Instant Adventure for 4–6 characters levels 5–7



Noribund, Commandant-Burgher of Vallidyl, paced nervously around the empty council chambers in the city garrison. “I’m surprised you’re not worried,” he told his daughter, who draped herself over one of the tall-backed chairs reserved for other burghers. “I haven’t seen Jasper for days.”

“Dad, it’s just a stupid cat. I’m a grown-up girl now. I’m done playing with dolls and silly pets. I wish I had more responsibility, like you.”

“Running this city and defending it from outside threats is no work for a young lady like you, Carnelia.”

“Just forget about it.” Carnelia heaved herself out of the chair and stomped out of the council chambers.

Noribund stroked his beard, mumbling to himself. He suddenly stopped pacing and called out for his clerk.

“Benthric! Visit the taverns and hire some competent mercenaries.”

“But sir, the guard has reached full capacity, the barracks are crowded, and we have no more equipment for new recruits.”

“I want them to find our cat. Jasper’s just as much a part of my family as Carnelia. We would all be crushed if something terrible happened to him,” Noribund said, wringing his hands. “Offer these people 200 gold up front and another 800 gold when they return Jasper alive. He’s a brownish tabby with a bit of a paunch. A silver tinkling bell hangs from a silk collar around his neck.”

“That should be sufficient, sir.” Benthric began sneaking off. “I’ll make the necessary arrangements, and see that your adventurers begin their search for poor Jasper as soon as possible.”

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