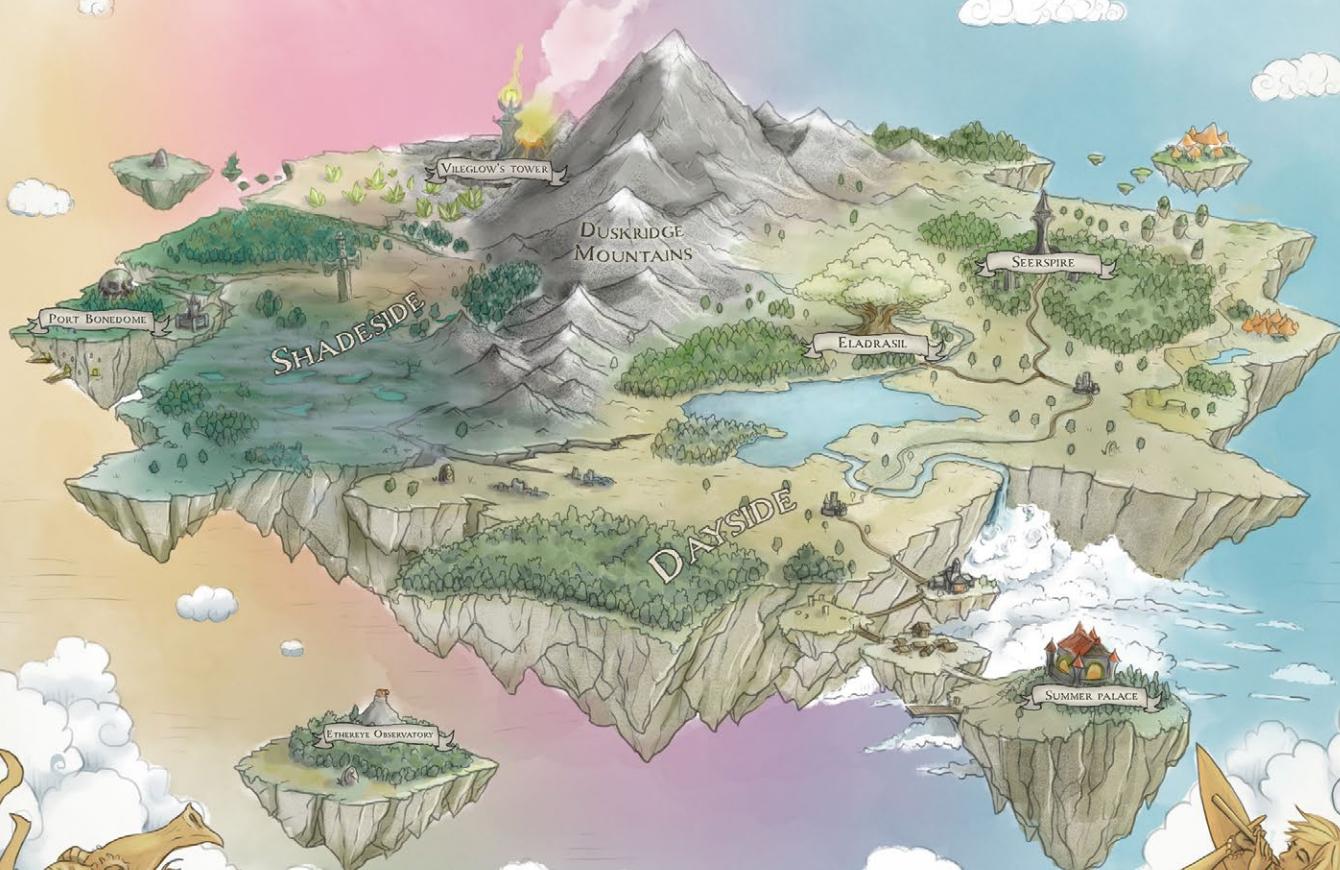


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Feyshard



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If you know of the Blackweald, odds are that no one knows you.

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et toutefois il n'a pas

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



The fourth edition of the world's most popular role-playing game got me my job. You might be saying, "But James! ARCADIA is a fifth edition magazine! That doesn't make any sense. And don't a lot of people dislike that edition? Why would you admit such a thing to thousands of customers?" Because I love fourth edition, and I think you should try it. (To be clear, I also love fifth edition and pretty much any game with both dungeons and dragons.) [You could also try 13th Age](#), which is a spiritual successor to fourth edition in many ways ([Rob Heinsoo](#) led the design of both) and an incredible d20 fantasy game in its own right. In fact, *13th Age* might be fun for you if you tried fourth edition and didn't like it, but that's another letter.

Lots of what I loved about fourth edition made it into fifth edition. For example, before fourth edition, cantrips used spell slots, which meant that a low-level spellcaster would cast about two spells, then poorly wield a crossbow from behind their meat shields for the rest of the day. Fourth edition also gave us short rests, level-based bonuses (known as proficiency bonus in fifth edition), ritual spellcasting, and many ideas now incorporated into the fighter and warlock class features. Fourth edition also made the beloved dragonborn and tiefling core character options!

While it was far from a perfect game, fourth edition has a lot of cool ideas that didn't make it into fifth. Characters were far more customizable; monsters had unique and interesting powers in their stat blocks; buying magic items was part of the core rules (they were in the player book, not the GM book); encounter building was easy, fast, and fun; and a special kind of foe, minions, went down in a single hit.

Probably the most common complaint about fourth edition when it launched was that it didn't feel like previous editions of the game, and that's a legitimate criticism, but it was also the point. Fourth edition isn't about tracking rations and spell components as you crawl through dungeons. It's heroic fantasy done incredibly well. From level 1, the player characters were

superheroes by design. Players who were totally new to the game loved it. Many old players who wanted a new experience ate it up with a spoon. I saw it as a combination of many of my favorite things.

Fourth edition wasn't around for long. For one thing, its many customization options combined with an ambitious release schedule of one official book a month meant that the game's [power creep](#) was more like a power jetpack. But in that time, I ran a lot of one-shots, short adventures, and two glorious campaigns from levels 1 to 30. Yeah—it went to 30. When fifth edition came, I made the switch fast. I was a little worn out on fourth, and it did have other issues I was looking forward to leaving behind. Still, I missed the customization, cooler monsters, and superheroic feel of fourth edition.

I was surprised when I saw MCDM put out a call for writers. I only knew Matt from a handful of running the game videos I had seen and from the splash *Kingdoms & Warfare* made on Kickstarter. But I knew I had to throw my hat in the ring when I saw right there in the posting that MCDM wanted to "add a little fourth edition to fifth." I wanted that, too, and I said so in my cover letter. Matt called that out as a detail he remembered when we first chatted.

ARCADIA is part of the mission of putting some fourth edition into fifth. This issue brings dope, purchasable equipment for PCs in [Jamie Flecknoe's](#) "Masterwork Artisan," a legendary creature that's fun to run in [Ahmed Aljabry's](#) "The Crowned Genie," and an adventure location that requires some real (super) heroes in [Michael E. Shea's](#) "The Blackweald."

If you like what we're putting out into the world, why not give fourth edition, or *13th Age*, a try?

Ex animo,
James Introcaso
Managing Editor

MASTERWORK ARTISANS

BECAUSE WHO CAN AFFORD A MAGICAL ITEM
ON AN ENTRY-LEVEL ADVENTURER'S SALARY?

by Jamie Flecknoe

WHEN LOVE AND SKILL
WORK TOGETHER,
EXPECT A MASTERPIECE.

—JOHN RUSKIN

Imagine this: your adventuring party arrives in town, coin purses heavy with their most recent reward, seeking out a magic item shop. You, their fearless GM, list the prices of several low-end magic items and watch as they discover that they don't have enough to make a purchase. The heroes exit the shop, defeat pasted across their faces, as you call their attention to the "ting-ting" sound of a local blacksmith. They all sigh and collectively agree—they do not need another basic weapon. But as they approach, they notice that this blacksmith holds the title of masterwork artisan.

This blacksmith is unique. She forges items using rare metals and imbues them with special attributes, creating nonmagical armor and weapons more powerful than their standard counterparts. These items are perfect for your lower-level party and in their price range.

You, their GM, are now the true hero of the story! The bard writes a song about you, praising your ingenuity while practicing with their new mithral longsword. The cleric praises your name as they succeed on a Dexterity (Stealth) check in heavy armor thanks to its camouflaging properties. And the rogue's alignment takes a turn for the better as they smile at you, their daggers dealing extra bleed damage on the [BBEG](#) instead of on a random stranger who looked at them wrong. All because you decided to add masterwork artisans to your campaign, bridging that

dreaded gap between starter and magical weapons and armor.

This article contains information about who masterwork artisans are, what they can craft, and a couple masterwork artisan NPCs you can drop right into your current game.

WHO IS A MASTER-WORK ARTISAN?

Masterwork artisans take their love for forging armor and weapons to the next level. They've refined their skills—they can work with rare materials and imbue specific attributes into their creations. Anyone with an interest in this work can become a masterwork artisan if they can find a willing mentor to teach them the skills, though mastering each technique takes years of practice.

Some masterwork artisans settle down in one city, buy a shop, and craft wares to sell to fellow citizens and visitors. Others prefer to travel, selling their goods in one market before moving to the next. No matter where they are, they are well connected, maintaining healthy relationships with mining companies and adventurers who supply them with rare materials.

CREATING WORKS OF ART

Each masterwork artisan specializes in working with one or two materials and a handful of attributes—no one has the time to master it all. Artisans with longer lifespans may learn to work with more materials and attributes, but a lack of access to rare metals and skilled mentors may limit how much they can learn.



While a masterwork artisan may have a couple of pre-made items in their shop or at their stall, items are usually made to order based on the needs of the customer. Some artisans accept a rush job for extra coin, but perfection can only be quickened to an extent. Artisans typically have the materials required to craft an item, and the material cost is included in the price.

METALS AND ALTERNATIVES

The Masterwork Metals Prices table lists the materials masterwork artisans use to craft weapons and armor, as well as the price of items crafted with these materials. Any sword, axe, metal-tipped weapon (such as a spear), or metal-tipped ammunition (such as bolts and arrows) can be made from these materials. If a material appears in this article and another sourcebook, these rules are meant to replace the ones in the sourcebook.

MASTERWORK METALS PRICES

MATERIAL	PRICE*
Adamantine	300 gp + base cost
Celestial silver	300 gp + base cost
Frost steel	300 gp + base cost
Meteorite iron	275 gp + base cost
Mithral	225 gp + base cost
Obsidian	200 gp + base cost

*Price is per weapon or per twenty pieces of ammunition.

Adamantine. Adamantine is a hard, black metal that, in its polished form, reflects a green sheen under normal light and a purple-white sheen under magical light. It is a rare, heavy metal, found most often in lava flows and meteorite landing sites. Due to adamantine's density, items made of it are 25 percent heavier than their mundane counterparts.

- While wearing adamantine armor, any critical hit against you that deals nonmagical bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage becomes a normal hit.
- Weapon attacks made with an adamantine weapon or ammunition score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

Celestial Silver. When veins of silver develop deep within the earth alongside rare gems known as moonstones, the exposure creates a prized metal known as celestial silver. When worked properly with a special cooling process, this highly effective metal can repel some forms of evil. Though celestial silver is generally safe to work with, wear, and use, some masterwork artisans claim that a curse is left upon those who handle the metal with ill intentions.

Weapons made of celestial silver are different than weapons that are silvered.

- When wearing celestial silver armor, you have advantage on saving throws against being cursed or diseased, and when you take necrotic damage, it is reduced by 1d4 (to a minimum of 1).
- A celestial silver weapon counts as silvered for the purpose of overcoming damage resistances and immunities. Once per turn, when you hit a target with a celestial silver weapon, the target takes an extra 1d6 radiant damage.

Frost Steel. Iron ore bathed in a monster's icy breath can absorb some of the energy and glow blue. It is rare and dangerous to find—most often in the hoard of a white dragon—but worth the hunt for those brave enough. Once obtained, frost steel is easy enough for a masterwork artisan to use and mold.

- While you're wearing frost steel armor and a creature within 5 feet of you hits you with a melee attack, the attacker takes 1d4 cold damage. You can only deal damage this way once per turn.
- Once per turn when you hit a creature that isn't resistant or immune to cold damage with a frost steel weapon or ammunition, you can reduce the target's movement speed by 10 feet until the end of their next turn. Critical hits made with a frost steel weapon or ammunition deal an extra 1d6 cold damage.

Meteorite Iron. When refined, meteorite iron is heavier and less brittle than basic iron. It is flecked with orange

hues, which makes it easy to identify. Many ancient civilizations depleted the surface beds, leaving the remaining deposits buried deep in the Underdark or in remote, unexplored lands. It is a pliable metal, making it beginner friendly.

- While wearing heavy armor made from meteorite iron, you have resistance to bludgeoning damage.
- When you score a critical hit with a meteorite iron weapon or ammunition that deals bludgeoning damage, you maximize your weapon damage dice. This doesn't apply to a rogue's Sneak Attack, a paladin's Divine Smite, the spell *hunter's mark*, or similar spells and effects.

Mithral. A rare metal, mithral is dark and silvery. It is strong like steel and half the weight, and thus an ideal material for folks looking for the lighter side of powerful weapons. Mined from the deepest tunnels of the oldest mines, mithral is hard to find, but deposits yield an abundance of it. Artisans craft gorgeous wares with intricate details with this lightweight metal, and due to its density, items made of it are 25 percent lighter than their mundane counterparts.

- If armor normally imposes disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks or has a Strength requirement, the mithral version of the armor doesn't.
- A Small creature can wield a weapon with the heavy property made from mithral without disadvantage on attack rolls, and melee weapons made from mithral that don't have the heavy property gain the finesse property if they don't already have it. In addition, mithral weapons with the thrown property and ammunition have an increased normal and long range of 50 percent (to a minimum of 5 feet and a maximum of 50 feet). For instance, a mithral dagger has a normal range of 30 feet and a long range of 90 feet.

Obsidian. A volcanic glass, obsidian is brittle until properly worked with and molded, a process that makes it strong and able to absorb force. Obsidian is a relatively common material found most often near mountainous rivers. Due to its rigid nature, obsidian can be purposefully broken while working it in the forge to form sharp, jagged edges, which tear the flesh at odd angles and make healing more challenging. It is shiny and black, so not only is it effective, it is perfect for the brooding character in your campaign.

- While wearing obsidian armor, any attack that meets but doesn't exceed your Armor Class deals half damage to you.
- When you score a critical hit with an obsidian weapon or ammunition that deals piercing or slashing damage, the target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to half the damage it takes from the attack. This reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest.

WOOD

The Masterwork Wood Prices table lists the materials masterwork artisans use to craft weapons made of wood, as well as the price of items crafted with these materials. These unique woods provide distinctive benefits to weapons such as bows, staffs, and clubs.

MASTERWORK WOOD PRICES

MATERIAL	PRICE
Desert ironwood	300 gp + base cost
Stout blackwood	225 gp + base cost
Yellowwood	150 gp + base cost

Desert Ironwood. A tree with a thin trunk and many narrow branches, desert ironwood is both dense and strong. Because they only flower and fruit four years per decade, desert ironwood is scarce, but where one tree is found, there are others nearby. These trees, which thrive anywhere from lush oases to barren deserts, provide the ecosystem with shade and food, granting all manner of desert creatures refuge within the canopies. Because desert ironwood twists and knots as it grows, finding a tree with a suitable piece of wood is a challenge, and only advanced masterwork artisans can work with this dense, unyielding wood.

Desert ironwood is dark, with reddish hues and violet striations throughout. Its density makes it durable, though quite heavy; items made of it are 25 percent heavier than their mundane counterparts.

- A ranged weapon made from desert ironwood has an increased normal range equal to half of its current normal range. For instance, a shortbow made of desert ironwood has a normal range of 120 feet and a long range of 480 feet.
- Weapon attacks made with a melee weapon made of desert ironwood score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

Stout Blackwood. Characterized by their ability to survive in the harshest weather, stout blackwood trees are found in remote locations throughout mountainous regions. Stout blackwoods have thinner trunks, heavily ringed with the passing of short, rough growing seasons. They tend to grow in abundance in valleys where snow and rain collect or near glacier-fed rivers. Their leaves

are tiny and needle-like, staying on year-round to gather whatever bits of sunlight filter through the cloudy, snowy days. In the first weeks of warmer weather, stout blackwoods flower and fruit, attracting creatures emerging from hibernation.

While the bark of stout blackwood trees is white, the wood inside is a rich black. These trees produce stiff, sturdy wood that creates extreme tension in ranged weapons; stout blackwood shortbows and longbows are hard to use, but crossbows made of it are granted heightened accuracy and impact. This wood also absorbs the force of impact, which makes it particularly useful in crafting melee weapons. Stout blackwood is a superb material for masterwork artisans ranging in skill from beginner to advanced.

- When you score a critical hit using a ranged weapon made from stout blackwood that has the loading property, you deal an extra 1d4 damage of the weapon's type.
- Once per turn when you hit a creature using a two-handed melee weapon made from stout blackwood, you can make a Strength (Athletics) check contested by the target's Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check (the target chooses the ability to use). If you succeed, you either knock the target prone or push them 5 feet away from you (your choice).

Yellowwood. Found in tropical environments, yellowwood trees grow on hillsides and along rivers and streams. The trees grow tall, reaching above the canopy for light. Due to year-round sun and a wet climate, there are very few rings in the trunks of yellowwood trees. The bark of these trees is dark brown and can be peeled back easily, revealing much lighter wood underneath.

The wood of a yellowwood tree is flexible and lightweight. It can be challenging to work with, as it tends to overextend when shaped. Due to yellowwood's density, items made of it are 50 percent lighter than their mundane counterparts.

- While you're wielding a yellowwood longbow or shortbow, being within 5 feet of a hostile creature doesn't impose disadvantage on your ranged attack rolls.
- When you take the Attack action and attack with a melee weapon made of yellowwood, you can use a bonus action to make an additional attack with that weapon. You don't add your ability modifier to the damage of the bonus attack, unless that modifier is negative.

ATTRIBUTES

Attributes add powerful benefits to armor, ammunition, and weapons. Due to the delicate and specific nature of the attributes, only one can be applied to an item, and masterwork artisans must make items with an attribute from scratch. The following tables show the costs and benefits of attributes.

Weapons that use ammunition can't have attributes for the weapons themselves—instead, they are crafted with attributes listed on the Ammunition Attributes table.

ARMOR ATTRIBUTES

ATTRIBUTE	BENEFIT	PRICE
Agile	You gain a +1 bonus to Dexterity saving throws.	75 gp + base cost
Camouflaged	You gain a +1 bonus to Dexterity (Stealth) checks.	45 gp + base cost
Frightening	You gain a +1 bonus to Charisma (Intimidation) checks.	45 gp + base cost
Locking joints (heavy armor only)	You gain a +1 bonus to Strength saving throws.	75 gp + base cost
Ornate	You gain a +1 bonus to Charisma (Persuasion) checks.	45 gp + base cost
Spiked	A creature that grapples you or you grapple takes 1d4 piercing damage at the start of your turns.	30 gp + base cost

WEAPON ATTRIBUTES

ATTRIBUTE	PREREQUISITE	BENEFIT	PRICE
Barbed	Weapon deals piercing damage	When you hit with this weapon and deal at least 5 damage, the target takes an extra 1d6 damage of the weapon's type.	100 gp + base cost
Guarded	Greatclub, greatsword, longsword, quarterstaff, rapier, scimitar, shortsword, or a weapon with the reach property	You gain a +2 to AC until the start of your next turn when you take the Dodge action while wielding this weapon.	45 gp + base cost
Honed	Weapon deals piercing or slashing damage	When you hit with an attack using this weapon, roll the damage dice twice and use the higher result.	125 gp + base cost
Perfectly balanced	Two-handed weapon	The weapon's damage die increases one size. (For example, a halberd's d10 damage die becomes a d12. A maul's 2d6 damage dice become 2d8. If a die is already a d12, then add an extra 1d4 to damage rolls instead of increasing the size.)	135 gp + base cost
Reinforced	None	This weapon can't be broken by nonmagical means. If the weapon deals bludgeoning damage, it deals an extra 1d4 damage on a hit.	60 gp + base cost
Serrated	Weapon deals piercing or slashing damage	When you score a critical hit against a creature with this weapon, the target loses 2d4 hit points at the start of their next turn.	75 gp + base cost
Weighted	Weapon deals bludgeoning damage	If you make an attack roll with this weapon and miss, the attack still deals half damage to the target. You can use this benefit twice, regaining all uses when you finish a long rest.	50 gp + base cost

AMMUNITION ATTRIBUTES

ATTRIBUTE	PREREQUISITE	BENEFITS	PRICE*
Barbed	Arrows and bolts only	When you hit with an attack using this ammunition and deal at least 5 damage, the target takes an extra 1d6 damage of the weapon's type.	60 gp
Blunted	Arrows and bolts only	A target concentrating on a spell who is hit with this ammunition has disadvantage on their Constitution saving throw made to maintain concentration. No matter the weapon used, an attack with this ammunition deals bludgeoning damage instead of its normal damage.	40 gp
Dousing	None	This ammunition is affixed with a vial of water and extinguishes any nonmagical flames in a 5-foot-cube centered on where it lands.	10 gp
Flash powder	Sling bullets only	This ammunition emits a flash of light on impact. When it hits a target in dim light or darkness, the target and each creature within 5 feet of the target must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of their next turn.	40 gp
Oiled	Arrows and bolts only	You can choose to light this ammunition on fire as part of an Attack action using it. When you hit with an attack using this ammunition while it is on fire, the target takes an extra 1d4 fire damage.	45 gp
Serrated	Arrows only	When you score a critical hit against a target using this ammunition, the target loses 1d6 hit points at the start of their next turn.	60 gp
Splintering	Arrows and bolts only	When you hit with an attack using this ammunition, all creatures within 5 feet of the target must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 1d6 piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If you are hidden and miss with an attack using this ammunition, making the attack doesn't reveal your position.	55 gp
Tarred	Arrows and bolts only	You can choose to light this ammunition on fire as part of an Attack action using it. When you shoot this ammunition while it is on fire, the fire goes out after the impact and creates a 10-foot cube of black smoke that lasts for 3 rounds. The cube spreads around corners, and its area is heavily obscured. The smoke can be dispersed early by a light wind of at least 10 mph.	40 gp

*Price is per twenty pieces of ammunition.

NPCS AND SHOPS

Masterwork artisans come in all shapes and sizes, each with interesting backstories of how they learned their trade. These seasoned blacksmiths can be integral to the campaign's story or simply merchants who provide wares to the characters.

DELANYS: CITY BLACKSMITH

Delanys (DEH-LAHN-us) is a half-elf in her late nineties. She left home in her youth to train when her family's blacksmith shop, Made of Metal, struggled for business. For fifty years she apprenticed under a couple of masterwork artisans, but by the time she returned, her family's shop was closed, and they were working on a farm outside the city. Delanys used the coin she earned apprenticesing to reopen the shop, and with the support of her family, she's been crafting fine wares for the past twenty years.

APPEARANCE

Delanys has short hair that is shaved on one side and brushed over to her ear on the other. Her hair, a rich reddish-brown, sports a few singed spots from stray embers and sparks. Deep concentration lines mark her forehead and a handful of round burn marks dot her chin. Delanys's skin is copper with undertones of olive, and her eyes are silvery-gray. While average in build and height, her arms are muscular from work. Her clothes are pocked with small burn marks, and when she is in the shop, she wears a heavy, ash-smeared apron.

PERSONALITY

Delanys is assertive and focused when working at her forge, but easily excitable and flooded with ideas when planning a new commission. She is kindhearted, putting her family first. Focused on their well-being, Delanys doesn't easily budge on the cost of her items, though she is willing to barter and trade for goods that support her household.

CRAFTING

In addition to standard armor and weapons, Delanys can use the following materials to craft items:

- Frost steel
- Mithral
- Obsidian

She can craft items with the following attributes:

- Locking joints (armor)
- Ornate (armor)
- Honed (weapon)
- Serrated (weapon)
- Weighted (weapon)
- Blunted (ammunition)
- Serrated (ammunition)



MADE OF METAL

The front half of Made of Metal is a one-story stone-and-cement building that houses the shop and workspace. A pair of small windows flank the front door, and a hand-painted sign boasting the shop's name hangs above the door. The back half of the building, which is two stories and made mostly of wood, houses Delanys and her family.

Delanys's shop is cozy and welcoming. While there is generally no need for a fire due to the heat produced by the smelter, a hearth lined with lit candles sits in the storefront. The floor is made of worn, dark wood. A comfortable couch lines one wall with a couple of armchairs positioned across from it, creating a relaxed area where Delaynys and customers sit to discuss commissions. A long, glass cabinet displays beautiful weapons on another wall, and a breastplate and longsword are mounted above the case.



MADE OF METAL'S INVENTORY

ITEM	QUANTITY	PRICE
Blunted bolt	100, sold in sets of 20	40 gp
Mithral longsword	1	240 gp
Ornate breastplate	1	445 gp
Obsidian serrated dagger	2	277 gp
Honed handaxe	2	130 gp

VOYAGE: TRAVELING MERCHANT

Voyage (VOY-IJ), or V, doesn't spend much time in any location, preferring to venture anywhere from crossroads markets to large cities and peddle their wares and services to adventurers. To create commissioned pieces, they make deals with local blacksmiths to use their shop in return for a cut of the profits. Voyage only stays in one place for a while if a local masterwork artisan is willing to teach them a new skill.

Voyage, a tiefling in their late forties, spends most of their time traveling alongside their trusted donkey Expedition, or X. The tiefling boasts that their traveling shop, World-Class Wares, has handcrafted items from around the world.

APPEARANCE

Voyage's skin is powder white. Their horns twist once, pointing almost directly upward, and are the color of balsa wood. The tiefling's round eyes are light blue, which matches streaks in their snow-colored hair. Voyage is tall, and a lifetime of traveling and hauling their overflowing pack around has left Voyage muscular and strong.

PERSONALITY

Exuberant, chatty, and always looking to make a deal, Voyage strikes up a conversation with anyone willing to talk, though they prefer chatting with folks who exude wealth. The tiefling tells stories about places they've traveled, old clients, and past adventures—some of which are more embellished than others. Haggling for a good deal is one of Voyage's favorite pastimes. It takes a lot of persuading or an offer of a rare item to bring down the tiefling's prices.

CRAFTING

In addition to standard armor and weapons, Voyage can use the following materials to craft items:

- Adamantine
- Celestial silver

They can craft items with the following attributes:

- Agile (armor)
- Camouflaged (armor)
- Guarded (weapon)

- Perfectly balanced (weapon)
- Blunted (ammunition)
- Dousing (ammunition)
- Oiled (ammunition)

WORLD-CLASS WARES

Often little more than a rented table at a market, World-Class Wares is a traveling shop. Voyage and Expedition carry enough unique material to forge weapons or armor for commissions, as well as a plethora of premade items available for immediate purchase.

WORLD-CLASS WARES' INVENTORY

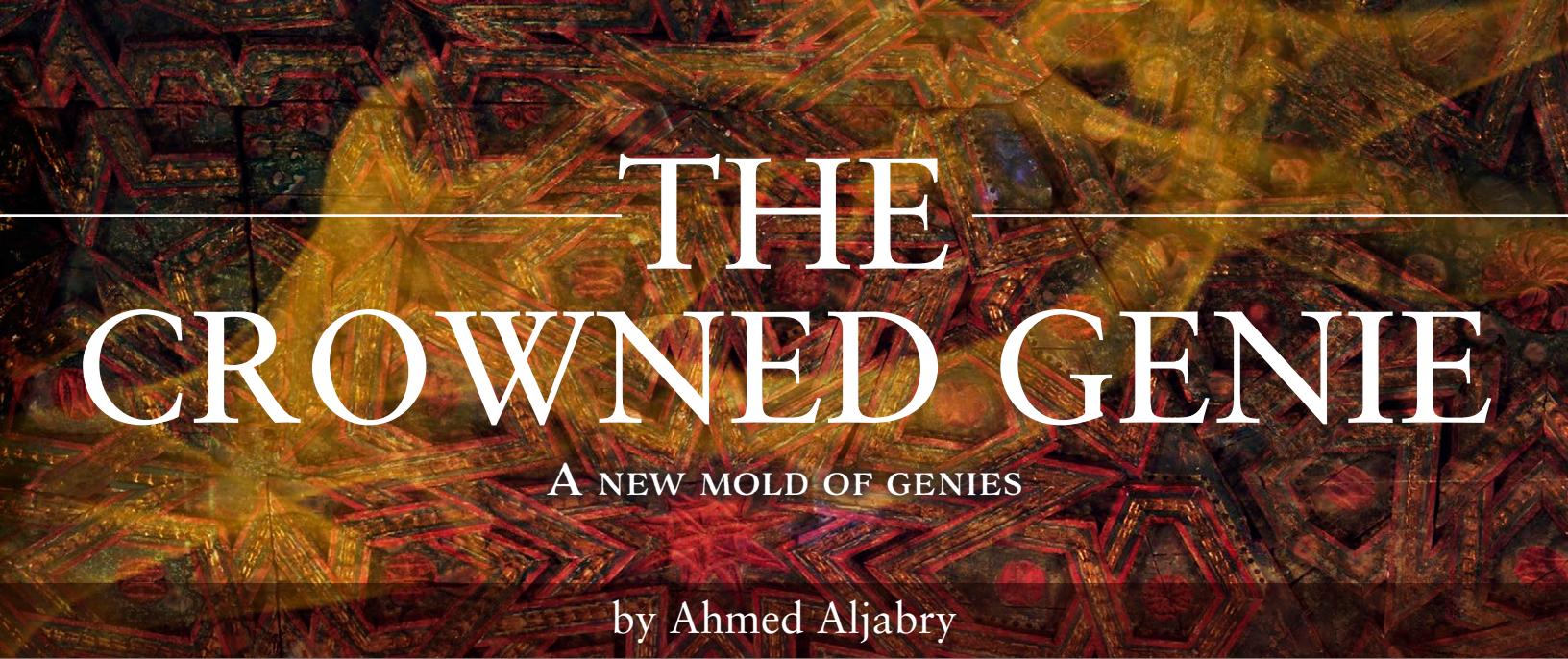
ITEM	QUANTITY	PRICE
Adamantine chain mail	1	375 gp
Adamantine dagger	4	302 gp
Agile breastplate	2	475 gp
Camouflaged chain shirt	1	95 gp
Dousing sling bullets	40, sold in sets of 20	10 gp
Guarded longsword	2	60 gp
Obsidian shortsword	2	210 gp
Oiled bolt	100, sold in sets of 20	45 gp
Perfectly balanced, celestial silver greatsword	2	485 gp

PLOT HOOKS

Now that you know masterwork artisans exist, expeditions to volcanoes, white dragon lairs, and other far reaches of the land in search of rare materials are in your future. Here are some plot hooks to get those adventures started:

MASTERWORK ARTISAN PLOT HOOKS

d8	PLOT HOOK
1	Your party is hired by a masterwork artisan to infiltrate a dragon's lair for rare materials.
2	Your party is contracted by a noble family to safely escort their ambitious youngest child to a masterwork artisan's workshop to be the artisan's next apprentice.
3	A masterwork artisan works for one of your party member's enemies and outfitted their enemy with a powerful weapon. The artisan is also the only one who knows how to protect against the weapon's power.
4	A mysterious benefactor offers to outfit your party with masterwork artisan gear. All they ask for in return is a precious metal found deep within the Underdark.
5	A greedy prince captured a masterwork artisan and forced them to mass-produce armor and weapons for the prince's army, which is currently encroaching on the border of a party member's hometown.
6	Your party is employed by a masterwork artisan to seek out a paladin who wields the first masterwork item the artisan crafted. The paladin set out to investigate a cursed temple, but has yet to return.
7	A debt owed by a party member is called in. A masterwork artisan for a local guild requests the characters seek out stout blackwood, which can only be found near the highest peaks of a distant mountain range.
8	A masterwork artisan desperately seeks out your party, as the artisan is being set up for a crime they didn't commit. The artisan offers three items as payment in return for the party's help.



THE CROWNED GENIE

A NEW MOLD OF GENIES

by Ahmed Aljabry

A LARGE AMETHYST SITS AT THE CENTER OF JAMSHAT'S FOREHEAD, WHILE A CLUSTER OF SMALLER ONES HOVERS CLOSELY, CIRCULATING HIS HEAD LIKE A CROWN OF JEWELS. EACH IS FILLED WITH ARCANE KNOWLEDGE THAT GODS AND LICHES ENVY.

—SCHOLAR DARUD MAISON

Only a handful of crowned genies have ever existed. Their souls grow in rare gems rather than in elements, and thus they emerge with great strength, a crown of precious stones circulating their head and a prominent jewel embedded in their forehead.

Other genies—including their sultans and padishah—are wary and fearful of the monumental power these gem-born Elementals wield. Even in the best cases, crowned genies are banned from cities and citadels at early ages in fear of what they could become.

This article presents two crowned genie NPCs to use in your campaigns.

JAMSHAT, A BEJEWELED EXISTENCE

Jamshat emerged from his amethyst geode amidst the molten boundaries of the Planes of Fire and Earth. In his early days, Jamshat lived on the outskirts of great cities among lesser genies. He worked the deep mines of the earth and made his first connection with xorin, the only creatures that treated him with respect. It wasn't long before his ambitions surpassed what the slums could offer, and he left his birthplace to build his fortune.

TEMPTATIONS & DESIRES

When a mortal dies, gods and devils bicker over their soul and nature reclaims the body, but knowledge and experience are forever lost. Jamshat saw the opportunity in what others let go to waste.

He came to the Material Plane and asked willing mortals for permission to scry on their lives, watching their experiences through magic amethysts. Eventually, he gave them his gems to collect more of their lives without actively needing to watch his favorite mortals. But as these gems were traded, sold, and borrowed, the knowledge within them became muddled and useless.

Hungry for more knowledge, Jamshat changed tactics. The best way to ensure that a mortal kept their assigned amethyst was to embed them into objects useful to the recipient, such as a hoe for a farmer. The genie imbued these objects with magic, making them even more valuable.

Still, Jamshat's greed grew—soon, he was no longer satisfied by simple observations and average civilians. He imbued a curse into his jeweled gifts, one that imprisons the recipient and drains them of knowledge. Then he turned his sights higher: he forged powerful armor, weapons, and other objects desired by adventurers, who explore parts of the world no other mortals witness and gain knowledge no others possess. The genie grants explorers these gifts to aid their journeys, never mentioning the accompanying curse.

JAMSHAT'S GIFT

Any nonconsumable magic item created by Jamshat contains a small amethyst and is cursed.

Curse. This item is cursed. Attuning to it curses you until you are targeted by the *remove curse* spell or similar magic. When you start your turn with 0 hit points while attuned to this item, the item casts the *imprisonment* spell on you using the Minimus Containment effect (spell save DC 15). If you fail the saving throw, you are captured within the item's amethyst and you become stable. A **xorn** loyal to Jamshat comes to collect the item 1d10 days later.

If you remain trapped in the gem for 1,001 nights, you die and your soul and body are released from the gem, leaving all your knowledge and memories in the amethyst. Jamshat can extract and use that knowledge by implanting it into an **amethyst servant** or dividing it into magic items that allow the wielder access to your knowledge in the form of proficiencies, properties, or spells.

AMETHYST ATHENEUM

Embedding knowledge into magic gems is easier than inscribing words into heavy tablets and more lasting than writing on perishable parchments. With his amethysts, Jamshat has imprisoned the minds of countless victims and turned them into obedient constructs—including even powerful dragons and other genies.

He keeps his magic items, amethysts, and gem servants in a massive subterranean atheneum. The caverns and tunnels filled with amethysts are tended to by servants, who also constantly expand the atheneum through mining efforts.

Jamshat spends most of his time in the scrying chamber, a large room perfectly cut into the shape of a sphere. A single 10-foot-wide bridge connects the entrance to the center of the room, where a throne of pure amethyst stands. This *scrying throne* allows him to see nearly anything he wishes (see below).

To the unfamiliar, the atheneum appears to sprawl without logic or reason, but Jamshat has a system for organizing his chambers. Each room contains amethysts with expertise in a particular area of knowledge, and multiple paths connect one chamber to others that contain gems with related areas of knowledge. For example, a large chamber with general knowledge about magic is connected to a smaller chamber dedicated to evocation magic and another with gems containing the history of magic.

While in his atheneum, Jamshat can instantly recall any knowledge captured inside the gems.

SCRYING THRONE

Wondrous Item, Legendary (Requires Attunement)

While sitting on this throne, you can use an action to cast the *scrying* spell (save DC 25), viewing the image you see as a magical projection before you. While scrying with the throne, you have truesight out to a range of 120 feet centered on the spell's sensor. If you are familiar with or possess a body part of the target, the target has a disadvantage on their saving throw and you can scry on them across any plane of existence.

This throne is fixed in its location and can't be removed except by Jamshat or with a *wish* spell.

JAMSHAT PLOT HOOKS

To introduce Jamshat into your campaign, you can choose or roll for a plot hook on the Jamshat Plot Hooks table.

JAMSHAT PLOT HOOKS

D6	PLOT HOOK
1	One of the characters or an NPC who travels with them finds a magic item made by Jamshat and falls victim to the curse.
2	The characters search for a missing wizard and instead find a xorn returning to Jamshat with the mage trapped inside a cursed magic item.
3	While scrying on a potential victim, Jamshat notices the characters and invites them to his atheneum, hoping to convince them to take a cursed magical item and add their knowledge to his collection.
4	During an underground adventure, the characters stumble upon the Amethyst Atheneum.
5	Jamshat's xorn relentlessly track the characters to retrieve a magic item they carry with a creature captured in it.
6	Jamshat hires the characters to retrieve a magic item for him that his xorn failed to retrieve.

FIKRAH THE FIRST THOUGHT

A vibrant green agate rises from the center of Fikrah's forehead, horn-like with a round tip, with four smaller ones floating on each side to form this genie's crown. Like Jamshat, Fikrah craves knowledge, although she pursues to share rather than hoard.

In her early years, Fikrah disguised herself as a human adventurer and traveled among mortals, meeting a rainbow of peoples and cultures. She grew to love them and made many mortal friends—and when she outlived them all, Fikrah's heart was heavy with sorrow.

In grief, she gave life to her memories of departed companions. Fikrah implanted these thoughts into new bodies known today as Fikrawis. The genie nurtured them, passing her knowledge and experience to these constructs as if they were her children. As the centuries passed, the Fikrawis evolved into unique individuals beyond the memories that birthed them.

CITY OF LIDDAH

Fikrah built Fikrawis for decades, until her small hidden lair in the mountain could no longer hold her children. She found a hill near a river and built a haven on it, which she called Liddah.

It didn't take long for nearby settlements to notice the Fikrawis. In fear, they sent warriors, but these small armies fell against Fikrah's power. Foreseeing the violence that would unfold, the genie persuaded Jabir Al-Adi, the sultan of the region, to sign a truce. Some historians claim this peace was magically forged, but for many generations now Liddah has coexisted peacefully with nearby powers.

Liddah is an independent meritocracy populated primarily by Fikrawis and governed by the genie. The city sits on mines filled with unnatural amounts of gems, which the Fikrawis trade with nearby settlements, as well as inventions fueled by Liddah's academic prowess in magic and science.

The city is divided into three sections: Mirkaaz, Al-Maraam, and As-Sahlaan. Mirkaaz, the inner circle at the center of the city, contains Fikrah's palace and the city's government offices. The highest tower of the palace can be seen for miles outside of the city, its gem-covered minarets refracting light in every direction and color.

Beyond the inner circle, Fikrawis who share similar pursuits cluster together in Al-Maraam,

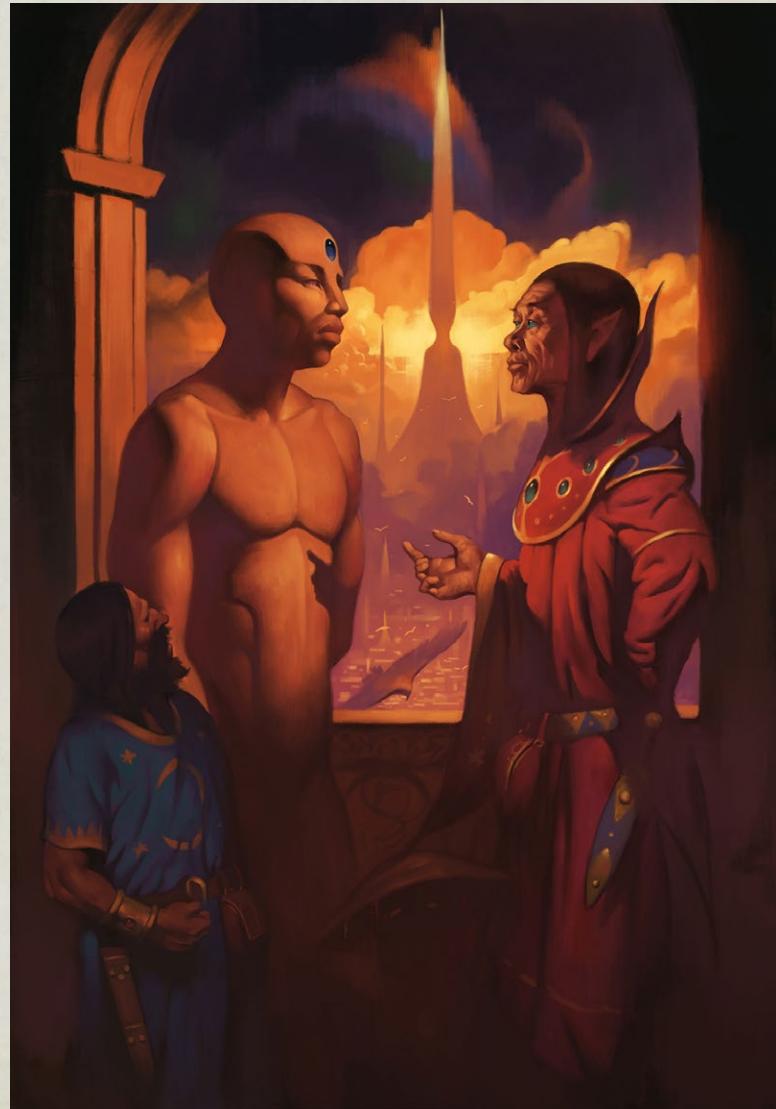
a district made up of neighborhoods like the Arcanist Assembly and Crafters Creed.

Just outside the walls of the city, the Fikrah Academy provides extensive education to any wishing to study, including non-Fikrawis. The area surrounding the academy has a village of its own, called As-Sahlaan.

THE CHILDREN OF FIKRAH

Fikrawis are genderless humanoids given life by Fikrah the First Thought. At first, Fikrah created many children. Now, the nursery in Liddah is abandoned, and new generations are only made when adult Fikrawis request a child, as Fikrawis aren't able to reproduce by themselves.

Some Fikrawis believe their self-sufficiency is a strength, and their city should continue to be isolated and forbid non-Fikrawis from entering beyond the walls. Others, typically adventuring Fikrawis who have experienced lands beyond Liddah, believe that growth will only come from being open to the outside world.



FIKRAWIS, AWAKENED THOUGHT

A Fikrawi is clay molded into a humanoid shape, with a single small agate placed in the center of their forehead. The agate contains their awakened thoughts, which shape the clay over 1,001 nights until the Fikrawi awakens on the final night.

FIKRAWI TRAITS

As a Fikrawi, you have the following traits.

Ability Score Increase. Your Intelligence score increases by 2, and your Charisma score increases by 1. Alternatively, you can increase one score by 2 and increase a different score by 1, or increase three different scores by 1.

Age. Upon awakening, a Fikrawi matures and lives at the same rate as a human.

Creature Type. You are a Construct.

Size. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your walking speed is 30 feet.

Languages. You speak Common, Terran, and one language of your choice.

Implanted Talent. You gain proficiency in one skill of your choice that you associate with the dreams and goals you pursue in life, granted by the thought that spurred your awakening.

Molded Thought. You have advantage on saving throws against any spell or effect that would alter your form against your will.

Genie Magic. You know the *minor illusion* cantrip. Starting at 3rd level, you can cast the *levitate* spell with this trait, without requiring a material component. Starting at 5th level, you can cast the *enlarge/reduce* spell with this trait, without requiring a material component. Once you cast *levitate* or *enlarge/reduce* with this trait, you can't cast that spell with it again until you finish a long

rest. You can also cast either of those spells using any spell slots you have of the appropriate level.

Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma is your spellcasting ability for these spells when you cast them with this trait (choose when you select this ancestry).

CYCLE OF REBIRTH

Fikrah taught funeral rites to the Fikrawi. Only her closest advisors are aware of the rites' true purpose: the funeral ritual reclaims the agate on their foreheads and reawakens the thoughts within, while wiping the memories of the Fikrawi's life.

Fikrah hasn't been able to awaken new children for a while—even her *wish* spell failed to solve this problem. No one has noticed that the gems are being reused ... yet. A few reawakened Fikrawis regained memories of a previous life, but they were quickly cured by Fikrah casting *modify memory*.

Other problems have befallen Liddah as Fikrah's powers mysteriously weaken. The miners complain that gems are more scarce. It's only a matter of time before Fikrah's waning power reveals her lies and manipulations, and all the adoration, love, and trust they have for her falls apart.

The true reason behind Fikrah's fading power is yours to decide. It may be that an enemy has placed a secret curse on her, she has run out of memories and needs help harvesting more, or she has simply made the maximum number of children her power allows.

FIKRAH PLOT HOOKS

To introduce Fikrah into your campaign, you can choose or roll for a plot hook on the Fikrah Plot Hooks table.

FIKRAH PLOT HOOKS

D6	PLOT HOOK
1	Fikrah asks the characters to find a missing Fikrawi, who fled their home after regaining memories of a previous life.
2	One of the characters or an NPC who travels with them is a Fikrawi and suddenly regains memories of a previous life.
3	Fikrah, aiming to regain her power, hires the characters to find a rare magic-infused agate, which a dragon currently hoards.
4	Undercover isolationist Fikrawis hire the characters to steal an item within the city, but the job is a ruse intended to propagate fear of outsiders in Liddah.
5	A group of xorn nest in the mines, and the miners hire the characters to clear them.
6	Jabir III, the sultan of the region, wishes to invade and reclaim the lands upon which Liddah sits, which his ancestors gave to Fikrah. He hires the characters to infiltrate Liddah and find its weakness.

CROWNED GENIE

Large Elemental, Typically Any Chaotic Alignment

ARMOR CLASS 16 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 250 (20d10 + 140)

SPEED 30 ft., burrow 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13 (+1)	16 (+3)	24 (+7)	24 (+7)	18 (+4)	19 (+4)

SAVING THROWS Int +13, Wis +10, Cha +10

SKILLS Arcana +13, History +13, Insight +10

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES thunder

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES psychic

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, petrified

SENSES blindsight 60 ft, darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 14

LANGUAGES all, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 18 (20,000 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +6

Elemental Demise. If the genie dies, their body disintegrates into crystalline powder, leaving behind only the equipment the genie was wearing or carrying.

Genie Wish. Once a year, the genie can cast the *wish* spell with no limitations.

Immutable Form. The genie is immune to any spell or effect that would alter their form.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the genie fails a saving throw, they can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. The genie has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The genie makes four attacks, each of which can be a Refraction Beam or a Telekinetic Punch attack. The genie can replace one attack with a use of Spellcasting.

Refraction Beam. *Ranged Spell Attack:* +13 to hit, range 30 ft., one target. *Hit:* 18 (2d10 + 7) radiant damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or their vision becomes blurry and they have disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks that rely on sight until the start of the genie's next turn.

Telekinetic Punch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 16 (2d8 + 7) force damage, and the target must succeed on a DC 21 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Spellcasting (Psionics). The genie can cast one of the following spells, requiring no components and using Intelligence as the spellcasting ability (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks):

At will: *calm emotions, detect evil and good, detect magic, detect thoughts, disguise self, levitate, stone shape*
3/day each: *dimension door, move earth, passwall, scrying, telekinesis*

1/day each: *earthquake, mass suggestion, modify memory, plane shift, prismatic spray, wall of force, wish* (duplicating other spells only)

BONUS ACTIONS

Blinding Light. A burst of light emanates from the genie's crown. Each creature within 30 feet of the genie that can see them must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the start of the creature's next turn.

REACTIONS

Gem Reflection (3/Day). If the genie makes a successful saving throw against a spell or a spell attack misses it, the genie can choose another creature (including the spellcaster) it can see within 30 feet of it. The spell targets the chosen creature instead of the genie. If the spell forced a saving throw, the chosen creature makes their own save. If the spell was an attack, the attack roll is rerolled against the chosen creature.

VARIANT: JAMSHAT'S VILLAIN ACTIONS

Jamshat is an action-oriented genie with the following villain actions and a challenge rating of 20 (25,000 XP). The genie has three villain actions. He can take each action once during an encounter after an enemy creature's turn. He takes villain action 1 during the first round of combat, villain action 2 during the second round, and villain action 3 during the third round.

Villain Action 1: Amethyst Conjuring. Jamshat conjures two **blank amethyst servants**, two **amethyst servant assassins**, and two **amethyst servant mages** in unoccupied spaces he can see within 120 feet of him. The servants act immediately when they appear and on the same initiative count each round.

Villain Action 2: Implant Thought. Jamshat chooses one creature he can see within 30 feet of an amethyst servant. The target must succeed on a DC 21 Charisma saving throw or become magically imprisoned inside the servant. If the target is attuned to a magical item that carries Jamshat's curse, they automatically fail their saving throw. The imprisonment lasts until the amethyst servant is destroyed or the effect is dispelled with a 9th-level *dispel magic* spell or similar magic. While imprisoned in them, the amethyst servant uses the target's statistics modified by the amethyst servant template (see below). If a target succeeds on its saving throw against this villain action, Jamshat can use this villain action again in a following round.

If all conjured amethyst servants are destroyed, the genie instead conjures four **blank amethyst servants**.

Villain Action 3: Mental Release. Jamshat chooses an amethyst servant within 120 feet of him. The amethyst servant moves up to their speed then explodes in a burst of psionic energy. Each creature of Jamshat's choice within 20 feet of the servant when they explode must make a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw, taking 55 (10d10) psychic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

If all conjured amethyst servants are destroyed, the genie instead conjures an **amethyst servant mage**.

LAIR ACTIONS

When fighting inside their lair, the genie can use lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), the genie can take one of the following lair actions; the genie can't take the same lair action two rounds in a row:

- The ground within 30 feet of the genie becomes difficult terrain for creatures the genie chooses until initiative count 20 on the next round. In addition, each creature chosen that is standing on the ground in the area must succeed on a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone.
- The genie conjures a 30-foot-radius sphere of magical darkness centered on a point they choose within 120 feet of them, which lasts until initiative count 20 on the next round..
- A floating gem appears in an unoccupied space within 120 feet of the genie and disappears on initiative count 20 of the following round. Each creature within 10 feet of the gem that can see it when it appears must succeed on a DC 21 Wisdom saving throw, or become charmed by the genie until the gem disappears. While charmed in this way, a creature is incapacitated and has a speed of 0. The effect ends if the creature takes damage or if someone takes an action to shake the creature out of its stupor.

REGIONAL EFFECTS

The territory within 5 miles of a crowned genie is altered by the creature's psionic and crystalline presence, creating one or more of the following effects:

- Mines abound with gems and crystals.
- Xorn are common in the region and seek gems in the mines.
- Once per day, each creature allied with the genie can roll a d4 and add the number to an Intelligence check.

If the genie dies, these effects immediately end.

AMETHYST SERVANT TEMPLATE

When a creature's knowledge is transferred to one of Jamshat's amethyst servants, the construct's body transforms to resemble the creature whose knowledge it now contains. Additionally, the servant's body grows the nonmagical equipment that creature carried when it was imprisoned. The servant uses that creature's statistics with the following changes.

Creature Type. The amethyst servant is a Construct.

Alignment. The servant is unaligned. It gains all the information and experiences of the creature whose knowledge it contains, but it is unquestionably loyal to Jamshat.

Damage Vulnerabilities. The servant is vulnerable to thunder damage.

Condition Immunities. The servant can't be charmed or petrified.

Senses. The servant has blindsight out to a range of 30 feet and is blind beyond this radius.



BLANK AMETHYST SERVANT

Medium Construct, Unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 13 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 18 (4d8)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES thunder
CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, petrified
SENSES blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES understands all the languages of their creator but can't speak

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +2

ACTIONS

Sharp Edges. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (3d8) slashing damage.

AMETHYST SERVANT ASSASSIN

Medium Construct, Unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 15 (studded leather)

HIT POINTS 78 (12d8 + 24)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

SAVING THROWS Dex +6, Int +4

SKILLS Acrobatics +6, Deception +3, Perception +3, Stealth +9

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES thunder

DAMAGE RESISTANCES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, petrified

SENSES blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES thieves' cant plus any two languages

CHALLENGE 8 (3,900 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +3

Assassinate. During their first turn, the assassin has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that hasn't taken a turn. Any hit the assassin scores against a surprised creature is a critical hit.

Evasion. If the assassin is subjected to an effect that allows them to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, the assassin instead takes no damage if they succeed on the saving throw, and only half damage if they fail.

Sneak Attack. Once per turn, the assassin deals an extra 14 (4d6) damage when they hit a target with a weapon attack and have advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of the assassin that isn't incapacitated and the assassin doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The assassin makes two Shortsword attacks.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, range 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

AMETHYST SERVANT MAGE

Medium Construct, Unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 12 (15 with *mage armor*)

HIT POINTS 40 (9d8)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)

SAVING THROWS Int +6, Wis +4

SKILLS Arcana +6, History +6

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES thunder

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, petrified

SENSES blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES any four languages

CHALLENGE 6 (2,300 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +3

Spellcasting. The mage is a 9th-level spellcaster. Their spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). The mage has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt, light, mage hand, prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic, mage armor, magic missile, shield*

2nd level (3 slots): *misty step, suggestion*

3rd level (3 slots): *counterspell, fireball, fly*

4th level (3 slots): *greater invisibility, ice storm*

5th level (1 slot): *cone of cold*

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) piercing damage.

AMETHYST SERVANT VETERAN

Medium Construct, Unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 17 (splint)

HIT POINTS 58 (9d8 + 18)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)

SKILLS Athletics +5, Perception +2

DAMAGE VULNERABILITIES thunder

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, petrified

SENSES blindsight 30 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 12

LANGUAGES any one language (usually Common)

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +2

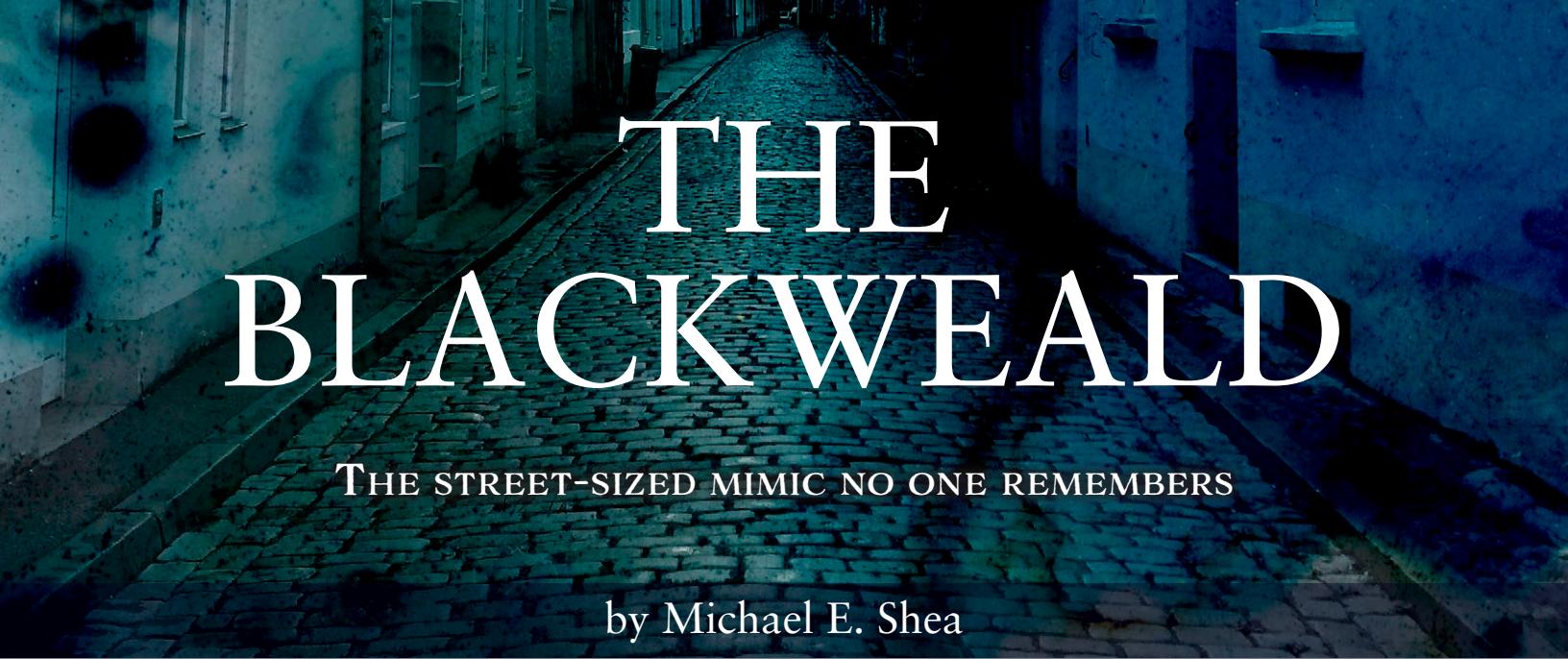
ACTIONS

Multiattack. The veteran makes two Longsword attacks. If they have a shortsword drawn, they can also make a Shortsword attack.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) slashing damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) slashing damage if used with two hands.

Shortsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) piercing damage.

Heavy Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d10 + 1) piercing damage.



THE BLACKWEALD

THE STREET-SIZED MIMIC NO ONE REMEMBERS

by Michael E. Shea

The people of Mercy Street have held a secret for centuries, a secret lost even in their own minds. A millennia-old monstrosity hunts in the shadows of this grim neighborhood, using the locals who have lived there all their lives as its camouflage. This formless, shapeshifting horror mimics not a chest, or a cart, or a doorway, but an entire city street. Tendrils twist through cobblestone paths and into dwellings, connecting it to false cupboards, dressers, easy chairs, and water barrels. Hidden in plain sight, it watches and hunts.

The name of this horror lies inked in forgotten tomes or scrawled in blood upon crumbling walls of abandoned sewers: the Blackweald.

The Blackweald hunts slowly, using thralls to bait prey until they fall into its acidic maw, striking out with sticky tendrils and burning away the skin of its victims. As its prey slowly disintegrates, so too do the memories of their very existence in the minds of their friends, loved ones, and anyone they've ever met. Thus none know of nor remember the Blackweald's existence except for the few strange and disconnected physical clues left behind in its wake.

This article describes the Blackweald, a block-sized mimic hiding its existence both physically and in the erased minds of those its victims leave behind. This creature is a suitable threat for four or five 7th level characters.

THE BLACKWEALD

This huge mimic has lived in the shadows of Mercy Street for centuries. The Blackweald's fleshy roots and tendrils snake through the neighborhood, piercing the stone of the street and buildings and forming individual, smaller Blackweald mimics. The bulk of its body fills out a side street known as Greywater Alley where it lures would-be victims into its viscid, burning grasp.

Restoring Memories. As the GM, you can decide if memories erased by the Blackweald can be restored by magical means, such as a *greater restoration* spell, or if only the *wish* spell could reverse these effects.

HOMAGE TO THE FALSE HYDRA

The concept behind the Blackweald's ability to eat the memories of its victims comes from a monstrous concept called the [False Hydra](#), which was originally written by [Arnold Kemp](#) on the blog [Goblin Punch](#). The concept of a memory-eating monster has drawn much attention among homebrew RPG GMs since its original description. This article seeks to incorporate these concepts and offer flexibility for the level of gaslighting the GM is willing to inflict upon their players (with their permission, of course).

BLACKWEALD MIMICS

The Blackweald's tendrils weave underneath the cobblestones and through the floors of Mercy Street, connecting to a network of smaller Blackweald mimics throughout the neighborhood. Many of the buildings on Mercy Street have at least one Blackweald mimic lurking within them, masquerading as everyday objects like dressers, desks, chairs, and barrels. The Blackweald rarely uses these mimics to attack or devour its victims; instead, they serve a far more strategic purpose. Through its offshoots, the Blackweald charms residents of Mercy Street, who in turn work to hide the Blackweald's existence and lure visitors

to the Ramhorn Inn or Greywater Alley, where the Blackweald devours them.

Although the Blackweald mimics don't seek to consume victims, they defend themselves if they're discovered or attacked. When a Blackweald mimic is killed, or the tendril connecting it to the Blackweald is severed, the remaining tendril withdraws through the floor and disappears, and the detached mimic dies after 1 minute, dissolving into a puddle of organic goo. In addition, if the Blackweald is slain, any connected mimics harmlessly thrash around for 1 minute, at which point they die and turn into puddles of organic goo.



THE BLACKWEALD

Gargantuan Monstrosity (*Shapechanger*), Neutral Evil

ARMOR CLASS 12 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 245 (14d20 + 98)

SPEED 10 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	24 (+7)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	7 (-2)

SKILLS Deception +6, Perception +12, Stealth +3

SAVING THROWS Con +11, Wis +8, Cha +2

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES acid

CONDITION IMMUNITIES blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, prone, stunned

SENSES blindsight 100 ft., passive Perception 22

LANGUAGES all, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 12 (8,400 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +4

Shapechanger. The Blackweald can use its action to polymorph into an object of Gargantuan size or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Adhesive (Object Form Only). The Blackweald can choose to adhere to anything that touches it. A creature adhered to the Blackweald is also grappled by it (escape DC 16). Ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage. A creature that starts their turn grappled by the Blackweald takes 10 (3d6) acid damage.

Connected Telepathy. The Blackweald can magically communicate with any Blackweald mimic to which it is physically connected.

Memory Devourer. When the Blackweald kills a creature, all other creatures (living or dead) lose their memories of the deceased creature and no longer recall that the creature existed.

False Appearance (Object Form Only). While the Blackweald remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary city street (or whatever object it chooses to imitate).

Grappler. The Blackweald has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the Blackweald fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Massive Size. The Blackweald is a citystreet-sized creature up to 50 feet wide and 100 feet long. Other creatures can occupy the Blackweald's space. The Blackweald doesn't suffer disadvantage on ranged attacks for being within 5 feet of a hostile creature. Creatures in its space suffer disadvantage on ranged attacks for being within 5 feet of the Blackweald.

Opportunistic Attacker. The Blackweald can make an opportunity attack against any creature that moves 15 feet or more within the Blackweald's space or reach.

ACTIONS

Multattack. The Blackweald makes two Pseudopod attacks. It can replace one Pseudopod attack with a Spit Acid attack or a use of Engulf.

Pseudopod. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. **Hit:** 17 (3d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage and the target is subjected to the Blackweald's Adhesive trait.

Spit Acid. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 40/80 ft., one target. **Hit:** 14 (4d6) acid damage.

Engulf. The Blackweald targets one creature currently subjected to its Adhesive trait. The creature takes 14 (4d6) acid damage and must make a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature is engulfed by the Blackweald. The engulfed creature can't breathe, is restrained, and takes 21 (6d6) acid damage at the start of each of the Blackweald's turns. An engulfed creature can try to escape by using an action to make a DC 16 Strength check. On a success, the creature escapes. The Blackweald can engulf up to three creatures at a time.

Blackweald Charm (3/Day). The Blackweald targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it or any Blackweald mimic to which it is connected. The target must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by the Blackweald for 24 hours. While the target is charmed, the Blackweald can perceive through the target's senses and has a telepathic link with them as long as the creature is on the same plane of existence as the Blackweald. The Blackweald can use this telepathic link to issue commands to the target (no action required), which the target does their best to obey. Each time the creature takes damage, they can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on themselves on a success. A *lesser restoration* spell or similar magic also removes the effect. A creature charmed this way loses all memories of the Blackweald even after the condition ends.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

The Blackweald can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. The Blackweald regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Attack. The Blackweald makes one Pseudopod or Spit Acid attack.

Blackweald Domination. The Blackweald targets one creature it can see within 60 feet of it. The target must make a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, the Blackweald forces the target to use their reaction, if available, to move up to their speed and make one weapon attack against a creature of the Blackweald's choice.

Spore Cloud (Costs 2 Actions). The Blackweald emits a blast of poisonous spores that fills the area containing the Blackweald and within 20 feet of it. The area within the spore cloud is heavily obscured. When a creature other than the Blackweald or its mimics starts their turn within the cloud or enters the area for the first time on a turn, they must make a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. The spore cloud lasts for 10 minutes or until a strong wind disperses the cloud.

BLACKWEALD MIMIC

Medium Monstrosity (*Shapechanger*), Neutral Evil

ARMOR CLASS 12

HIT POINTS 58 (9d8 + 18)

SPEED 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	18 (+4)	8 (-1)

SKILLS Deception +3, Perception +8, Stealth +5

SAVING THROWS Con +4, Wis +6

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES acid

CONDITION IMMUNITIES prone

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

PROFICIENCY BONUS +2

Shapechanger. The Blackweald mimic can use its action to polymorph into an object or back into its true, amorphous form. Its statistics are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Adhesive (Object Form Only). The Blackweald mimic adheres to anything that touches it. A Huge or smaller creature adhered to the mimic is also grappled by it (escape DC 13). Ability checks made to escape this grapple have disadvantage.

Blackweald Tendril. A thick fleshy tendril connects this mimic to the Blackweald. The mimic can't move more than 20 feet from the place where this tendril emerges from the larger Blackweald. The tendril has AC 12, 20 hit points, and immunity to acid damage. When this tendril is reduced to 0 hit points, the connected mimic loses hit points equal to half its hit point maximum and can move freely. The mimic dies 1 minute after its tendril is severed and turns into a puddle of organic goo.

False Appearance (Object Form Only). While the Blackweald mimic remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from an ordinary object.

Grappler. The Blackweald mimic has advantage on attack rolls against any creature grappled by it.

Limited Telepathy. The mimic can magically transmit simple messages and images to any creature within 30 feet of it that can understand a language. This form of telepathy doesn't allow the receiving creature to telepathically respond.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Blackweald mimic makes two Pseudopod or Spit Acid attacks. It can replace one of the attacks with a Bite attack.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 4 (1d8) acid damage.

Pseudopod. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the Blackweald mimic is in object form, the target is subjected to its Adhesive trait.

Spit Acid. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 20/40 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) acid damage.

Blackweald Charm (3/Day). The Blackweald mimic targets one creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be magically charmed by the Blackweald for 24 hours. While the target is charmed, the Blackweald can perceive through the target's senses and has a telepathic link with them as long as the creature is on the same plane of existence as the Blackweald. The Blackweald can use this telepathic link to issue commands to the target (no action required), which the target does their best to obey. Each time the creature takes damage, they can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on themselves on a success. A *lesser restoration* spell or similar magic also removes the effect. A creature charmed this way loses all memories of the Blackweald even after the condition ends.

VARYING BLACKWEALD MIMICS

At your discretion, you can give any Blackweald mimic one of the following features to make repeated encounters with the mimics a little more interesting:

- The Blackweald mimic wears a suit of chainmail and clumsily carries a shield, giving it an AC of 18.
- The Blackweald mimic grows to a hulking size, giving it twice as many hit points (for a total of 116 hp) and dealing 16 (3d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage with its pseudopod attack.
- The Blackweald mimic can use a bonus action to hurl a nearby piece of furniture (that might be another mimic!) at a target within 30 feet. This ranged weapon attack has +3 bonus to hit; on a hit, the target takes 7 (2d6) bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone.
- The Blackweald mimic can use a bonus action to attack with an improvised weapon. This melee weapon attack has a reach of 5 feet, a +3 bonus to hit, and deals 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage (depending on the object) on a hit.

Adding one of these extra features increases the mimic's challenge rating to 4 (1,100 XP).

BLACKWEALD TACTICS

Though it often uses Greywater Alley as its primary lair, the Blackweald can move, albeit slowly, to another location. Hollowed-out buildings reveal the previous lairs of the enormous abomination, and—if it needs to literally lay low—it sometimes even retreats into the abandoned sewer chambers throughout the neighborhood. Through centuries of practice, the Blackweald has learned to be cunning and patient when selecting its prey. Its connected mimics charm the citizens of Mercy Street so the Blackweald can observe visitors through their eyes, evaluating prospective prey to choose those who can vanish from existence without leaving a trace. While many visitors safely leave Mercy Street with little more than a vague impression of oddness, those selected by the Blackweald are lured to their deaths.

When the Blackweald finally attacks its prey, it grasps victims with its acidic pseudopods, burning the skin from their bodies until only bones remain. The disintegrating bones of hundreds of former victims, some centuries old, litter its massive, bloated body. In combat, the Blackweald spits large gobs of acid at distant enemies and defends itself from ranged attacks with its Spore Cloud legendary action. It also uses its Blackweald Domination legendary action to target creatures with strong weapon attacks and force them to attack their ranged allies.

MERCY STREET

Mercy Street, the longtime lair of the Blackweald, can be dropped into any medium or large city. Tucked away from the hustle and bustle of the city's thoroughfares, the people of Mercy Street enjoy a quieter life. The buildings along Mercy Street are old and weathered; they lean hither and thither, shored up with newer walls or thick wooden braces. A handful of shops are clustered at the end of the street closer to the rest of the city, while residences and merchants catering to the locals line the road further in.

An ancient sewer system keeps the streets relatively clean with yawning, rusted grates sunken into the curbs on each block. No one recalls anyone attempting to maintain the Mercy Street sewers, and no city workers ever enter them—at least not any workers that the residents can remember. If asked, the people of Mercy Street don't recommend entering the sewers, since the system seems to work fine.

In truth, the sewers serve as the Blackweald's conduits to the buildings and streets above. Its thick, fleshy tendrils connect to mimics that reside in many of the buildings of Mercy Street. If the characters travel into these sewers, they might find these tendrils; if the tendrils are severed, four **Blackweald mimics** emerge from the nearby sewers and attack the characters.

The Blackweald lairs at the far end of Mercy Street, in Greywater Alley. The locals find themselves avoiding the alley completely, unless summoned by the Blackweald while under its control. Instead, the alley serves as the ancient creature's main lair from which its tendrils weave through the neighborhood. It is in this alley that the Blackweald ambushes any group foolish enough to hunt it.

MERCY STREET LOCATIONS

The following descriptions outline a handful of locations found along Mercy Street.

GREYWATER ALLEY

Greywater Alley lies between two rows of dilapidated two-story apartments. While the Blackweald typically uses the Ramhorn Inn to devour visitors to Mercy Street, it brings more dangerous prey that put up more of a fight to its main lair in Greywater Alley.

The alley itself is a dead end. Doors leading into the rears of nearby buildings don't open. Smaller alleyways filled with trash and rubble likewise block off escape. A single sewer grate at the end of the block leads down into the sewers beneath Mercy Street. Victims led to Greywater Alley find that the entire block animates around them, smashing, engulfing, and drawing them in to be devoured by the Blackweald.

HEARTLACE'S HANDMADES

Exemplifying Mercy Street's preference towards stores offering mostly useless products (thanks to the influence of the Blackweald, which wants to ensure the street never becomes *too* popular and thus risk its exposure), Heartlace's Handmades is a high-end dress shop for dolls. The storefront displays a number of dolls arranged in a wedding procession, each with exquisite handcrafted garments. Inside the store, customers find a dozen tiny mannequins each sporting dusty yet ornate clothes created by Corva Heartlace, the store's human proprietor and seamstress. Corva can often be found behind her counter sewing a small suit that must take months to complete. The prices of the dresses start at 500 gp. If asked about the high prices, Corva explains that she caters to exclusive clientele who understand the quality of her wares.

Two full-sized undressed mannequins in the back corners of the room are actually **Blackweald mimics**; they're both telepathically connected to Corva and physically connected to the Blackweald through tendrils running underneath the store's floorboards. The Blackweald uses these mimics to study Corva's customers.

KRAVAUL'S CARVINGS

This hole-in-the-wall shop has a creaky, off-center door flanked by two pillars made from tree trunks, carved into the likenesses of a humanoid male and female with smooth faces and tentacles for arms. Numerous rough wood carvings of tentacled humanoids adorn every surface. Their creator, a burly half-orc woman named Kravaul Oakbinder, models these creatures on images from her dreams, visions courtesy of the telepathic influence of the Blackweald. Two tall wooden carvings of a human queen and king sitting in the back corners of the shop have no tentacled appendages and are, in fact, **Blackweald mimics** connected to the Blackweald. If the characters ask Kravaul about them, she waves the characters off and says she doesn't remember when she carved them. Kravaul's strange carvings cost 25 gp for small handheld pieces and up to 500 gp for the tall, free-standing statues.



RAMHORN INN AND TAVERN

At the T-intersection of Mercy Street and the narrower Eelrun Avenue stands the Ramhorn Inn and Tavern. This two-story building leans heavily to the left, and thick wooden braces keep it from collapsing. The main room holds a grimy bar and four tables, as well as two regulars who linger in the bar day and night. These two hooded figures sit at a back table, one continually rolling a set of dice while the other watches, sometimes pushing a 200-year-old coin across the table and sometimes taking it back. These are the Blackweald's early attempts at creating mimics of living beings. If poked, prodded, or otherwise investigated, the **Blackweald mimics** attack, though no one else in the tavern appears to pay attention or simply falls asleep, as directed by the Blackweald's telepathic commands.

Rose Felder, the Ramhorn's proprietor, is a hunched, elderly human **commoner** who has lived on Mercy Street her whole life. Her husband, Castigan, also a human **commoner**, cooks and cleans, serving food that is barely edible and yet raved about by the tavern's regular patrons. If confronted about the mimics residing at the back table, Rose is noncommittal, saying something along the lines of "I never did trust those two" and answering that she can't rightly recollect when they started staying here. In reality, the two mimics have been sitting at that table rolling the same set of dice for years.

The Blackweald often uses the Ramhorn Inn and Tavern to devour adventurers and other visitors to Mercy Street. Locals recommend the inn as a place for a warm meal and a soft bed for a reasonable price. Once the visitor enters the inn, the Blackweald studies its potential victims and, if it feels they'll be easily defeated, commands Rose and Castigan to hire the adventurers to deal with some overgrown rats in the cellar of the inn. A sewer grate in the bottom of the cellar, they explain, often brings nasty rats from the pipes below the city. When the adventurers go into the cellar, the door above slams shut and multiple crates and barrels in the cellar animate into **Blackweald mimics** that attempt to knock out the victims. Rose and Castigan then bring the unconscious prey to Greywater Alley so the Blackweald can eat. If the travelers aren't the adventurous type, Rose and Castigan try other ruses to get the victims into the cellar, such as mentioning a particularly wonderful wine they can't reach because of their bad knees and the cellar's rickety steps.

If confronted after such a ruse, Rose and Castigan claim innocence. They didn't know of any such creatures in the basement, thinking they heard only rats. Indeed, this is as much as they know. They believe the stories they tell.

SEPPHA'S SPICES

One of the shops catering to clientele outside of Mercy Street, Seppha's Spices deals in imported spices. Twice a year, an outside vendor delivers spices to Seppha Oakbrook, a middle-aged half-elf **commoner**, who mixes them, packages them up in small paper packages, and sells them for exorbitant prices. Seppha has a few wealthy patrons from the larger city who partake in her wares, but most citizens find her prices too steep. This never seems to bother Seppha, who may go days at a time without a single customer as she reads the same worn book from cover to cover, each time believing she reads it anew (the Blackweald's continual telepathic influence has damaged Seppha's memory).

The shop contains three large counters with racks of paper-wrapped spices, each with a hand-drawn diagram of the leaf or mineral from which the spice is derived and a clever name such as Baleroott's Blessing, Pinchen's Puff-powder, or Salt of the Underearth. An empty rack in the corner of the store, chipped and abandoned, is actually a **Blackweald mimic** that keeps Seppha charmed so the Blackweald can examine potential visitors to Mercy Street through her eyes.

TEMPLE TO OUR LADY OF MERCY

This rundown, single-story temple of rough stone sits between two taller three-story apartments. Inside, two sets of rotted-wooden pews sit before an altar with a headless statue of a female goddess, her arms outstretched to both sides. Four people often reside here, heads down in prayer and whispering. Three of the parishioners are Humanoid cultists of various races and genders. The fourth is a cloaked and hooded **Blackweald mimic**, sitting on a pew that's actually another mimic.

Up close, the supposed humanoid looks half-formed, with a drooping face like melted wax. If questioned, the remaining parishioners say they never paid that "person" much mind and can't say when they may have come here. The pew and false parishioner mimics are both connected to the Blackweald through a tendril that rises through the stone floor of the temple. If attacked, the Blackweald mimics defend themselves—and are defended by the three cultists, who are charmed by the Blackweald. If the cultists survive the attack, they have no memory of the incident.

The temple is overseen by twin brothers Aval and Geryn Wintersong, human **cult fanatics** who claim to be priests. They are noncommittal if asked who they worship, saying that such questions are best held internally. They simply claim that their faith protects them: something out there loves them, and that's good enough for them.

DEVOURER OF MEMORIES

The Blackweald's ability to consume the entire existence of its prey has kept it alive for millennia. When it physically devours one of its victims, all memories of that creature disappear from those who once knew them. A wife of thirty years forgets she ever had a husband, and regulars at a bar forget the friend they drank with for two decades, and even a dog forgets its loyal master. However, only memories are devoured this way. Physical evidence such as clothing, travel bags, notes, and journals, remain, creating strange paradoxes for those investigating the missing memories.

As a GM running an adventure with the Blackweald, you choose how much or how little you want to reinforce this feature in your game. On one side, players could become frustrated as evidence seems to disappear all around them. They sometimes have a hard enough time keeping track of a story without missing memories! On the other hand, your players may love the idea of people, even their own characters, losing memories as the Blackweald devours NPCs they once knew, requiring that they piece together their remaining recollections to end the threat. As NPCs get devoured by the Blackweald off-screen, you may stop referencing NPCs the players once knew, feigning ignorance and questioning their own notes or memories of these NPCs and other events.

Mixing these in-world and out-of-game elements of mystery can turn this scenario into something unique. One creative GM who tested this scenario planned ahead of time for one of their players to leave and never come back during a break in the game, further adding to the strange meta-mystery of the Blackweald's destruction of memories.

Before including the Blackweald in your game, ensure your players are comfortable with their characters being gaslighted like this. Ensure you're using safety tools so players have a way to back out or step out of character if things get too strange or intense and you have a way to talk about the situation outside of the game. Consider implementing lines and veils, script change, or the X-Card system, for example. You may find the [Safety Tool Guide maintained by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk](#) or Monte Cook Games's [Consent in Gaming](#) template useful for this topic.

If you choose to use this memory-eating feature of the Blackweald, it may progress as the characters explore the situation. Below is a description of one possible path: The Strange Case of Mary Bathins.

THE STRANGE CASE OF MARY BATHINS

To begin this scenario, an NPC named Mary Bathins hires the characters to find her sister, Margaret, who went missing on Mercy Street after traveling there to meet her secret lover. Mary asks the characters to meet her at the Ramhorn Inn—but when they arrive, Mary has no memory of her sister. She has no sister, she insists. (Of course, the Blackweald has devoured Margaret, and thus all memory of her has faded.) Mary remembers meeting the characters but doesn't recall why she hired them. No matter what the characters say, she has no memory of her sister and builds false stories to fill in the blanks in her head.

As the characters ponder this and begin to investigate, the players may ask you, the GM, question about Mary after their conversation with her. When they do so after leaving the Ramhorn Inn, you should ask the players to whom they are referring. The characters have never met Mary before. Maybe they find notes in a quest journal about Mary and a missing sister Margaret with notes on her conversations with other NPCs around the street, but their characters have no memory of this whatsoever. Suggest the characters explore other locations in the town, or drop written clues that lead them to explore more of the street. If the players get frustrated or begin to lose the hook, one character can come across a note in their pocket that clearly describes a woman named Mary and her missing sister Margaret, but the characters have no memories of the experience. Asking around at the Ramhorn Inn reveals that no one there knows of Mary or Margaret.

If the party takes a long rest during their investigation, the characters wake up to find an entire extra set of adventurer's gear along with their own. Looking through it, they find the journal of an additional party member with a name, a background, and relationships to the characters. The journal describes the adventurer's plan to take a quick look on their own down in the cellars of the Ramhorn Inn to see if they could learn more about these disappearances. The players won't remember this extra party member, nor do the characters, but clearly they had one. If they follow the clues in the journal, the characters wind up in the Ramhorn Inn or in Greywater Alley where they face the Blackweald.

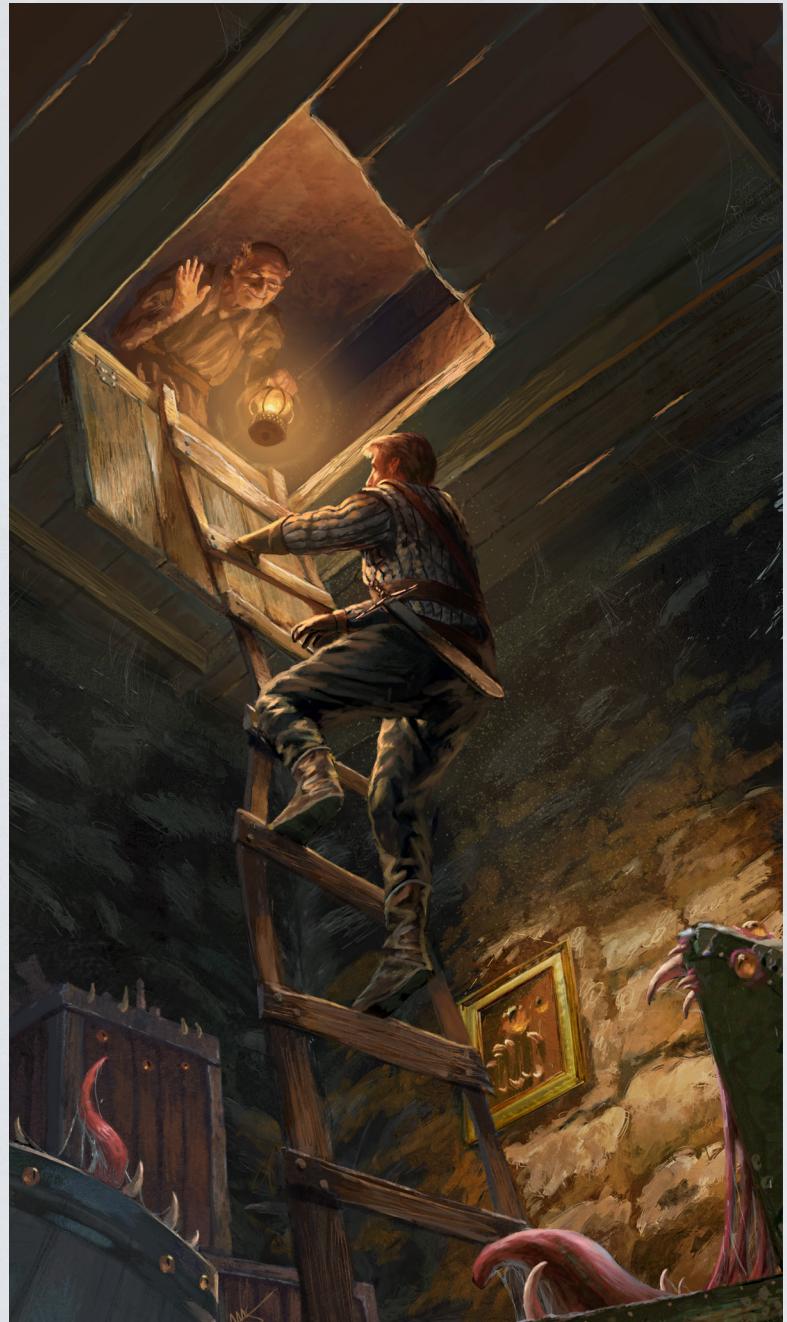
GM ADVICE

Keep in mind that the players need to have enough information to conduct an actual investigation. Even without their memories, physical evidence continues to give them clues. Journals left behind by those devoured. Notes scrawled on walls. The name “Blackweald” painted in a room no one has supposedly entered in decades. While the Blackweald removes memories of its victims and can see through the eyes of those it has charmed, it can’t see everywhere and can’t remove all evidence of its existence.

You can also run this concept with a lighter hand, avoiding the concepts of player characters and out-of-town NPCs forgetting their victims and instead limit that forgetfulness to only affect the citizens of Mercy Street. This makes the whole encounter with the Blackweald follow a more traditional monster hunt. Use the Blackweald however you think it best fits your interest and that of your group.

RECOVERING MEMORIES

As the GM, you determine the resolution of the characters’ and NPCs’ memory loss. It may be that killing the Blackweald restores all the memories the creature destroyed, or that a *greater restoration* spell or similar magic can restore an individual person’s memories. You could also decide that a quest is in order or that there simply is no way to recover what the Blackweald consumed. If their memories aren’t restored, NPCs might notice the gaps in their memories, but they also might patch the holes with invented recollections of other events. Collectively, the residents of Mercy Street may build stories of common problems to explain the aftermath of their horrific experience with the Blackweald. Or, you can decide that the locals are able to piece together what happened from the remaining clues, or that their memories are restored when the Blackweald’s dies. Then again, it’s also possible that every memory of the Blackweald also disappear into nothingness once the monster is slain, forever forgotten in the depths of Mercy Street.





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