

LEVELS 8-10



The Bleak Harvest

AN ADVENTURE OF INSANITY AND HORROR

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The Bleak Harvest

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Challenge Rating

The Bleak Harvest is a horror-themed adventure for 8th- to 9th-level characters. Written for the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game and Fifth Edition Fantasy, this adventure can be dropped into any pre-existing campaign with minimal changes required. The party should include a mixture of different character classes, including spellcasters, to stand the best chances for success. We recommend a party of APL 8 for a group of five or six characters, and at least APL 9 for a party of four characters.

This module is recommended for mature players as it contains adult situations, mental illness, nudity, the possibility of the PCs needing to commit evil acts, and a very real chance players must give up some of their characters' control in order to survive. Self-sacrifice may be necessary and the final encounter may result in a TPK. GMs should take these warnings under consideration and consult their players as to whether this is the right style of adventure for their group.

The Bleak Harvest is basically a traditional dungeon crawl except, while most dungeons are location-based and only allow PCs to advance through a succession of rooms, this adventure is character-based. This means new locations are introduced only through NPC interaction.

Likewise, a traditional dungeon crawl typically features a "MacGuffin" object (such as a magical sword) that helps assure victory. Since this is a horror-themed adventure, the MacGuffin presents itself in the form of a lobotomy, allowing the PCs to better "equip" themselves to fight the big bad—a Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath—but requiring self-sacrifice and trust in their fellow party members to overcome the final challenge.

Twists on common horror tropes present themselves in the form of a "mad scientist," a werewolf, the ghost-like asphyx, and a

mystery fraught with red herrings that must be solved through inquiry. The goal was to create a compelling adventure that challenges each player's concepts of good and evil.

Many of the encounters herein include options for ramping up the challenge, or, if necessary, reducing the challenge for groups of lower-level characters.

The Ends Justify the Means

The patients of a mental hospital are in trouble.

Every day, another patient at the Willowbrook Sanitarium falls victim to an unseen menace that leaves them practically catatonic. Every night, the survivors become easy prey to a servant of madness who has infiltrated the sanitarium, hoping to gather sufficient tributes for a massive sacrifice—a ceremony that will herald the arrival of an incomprehensible evil to the land.

A duke, cousin of the king, is caught in the middle, and it will take a band of extraordinary heroes to unravel the webs of deceit, rescue the duke, and lead a band of lunatics to disrupt the cataclysmic event known as The Harvest.

GM Background

A little over nine months ago, a middle-aged acolyte of a minor temple, Deocar Foedo, suffered a series of tragedies. First, he lost his wife, Fiona, when she died in childbirth. His faith died shortly thereafter, especially since he begged the temple priests to save Fiona's life. Although the priests did what they could, their magic failed to save the life of the mother or her unborn child.

Deocar struggled to find meaning in his loss. His behavior became erratic and he could no

longer sleep. At first, the priests showed compassion and patience, even offering him time to recuperate. Eventually, as Deocar's attitudes worsened and he became increasingly morbid, the priests relieved him of his duties. This left him homeless and penniless, without friends or family to turn to.

After more than a month absent sleep, everything changed for Deocar. He awoke in a dream-like state within a calm, peaceful forest. The wind soothed his turmoil and the sun on his face promised life.

And then the voice spoke. It seemed like a woman's voice, although deep and resonant, a chorus of different sounds. The voice promised a new life, not only for Deocar, but for his wife and child as well. The gods cared nothing for their mortal servants, it whispered. This being, however, served a far greater and more powerful master—the Lord of the Wood. The chorus promised Deocar everything he could wish for in exchange for loyal service. Not only would he be reunited with his family, but he could decide how best to punish the faithless priests who turned him away in his time of need.

A vibrant, manic energy suffused him. He now saw purpose for his life. The voice commanded him to go to a place known as Willowbrook Sanitarium. It tasked him with bringing the wisdom of the Lord of the Wood to the souls trapped at the site. To aid in these efforts, Deocar received great power and forbidden secrets. The chorus whispered that, should Deocar succeed, he would receive the ultimate reward for his service.

A little less than six months ago, Deocar arrived at Willowbrook, the most exclusive asylum in the entire kingdom, and immediately set to work. He ingratiated himself among the staff and demonstrated his willingness to tackle any chore, no matter how disgusting or menial. He

became indispensable. Deocar found it especially pleasing that he could inflict suffering on the nobility, the wealthy, and others of their ilk who never cared about his pain. Although Deocar doesn't know it, one patient in particular has connections in high places; the king's cousin, Duke Berard, who has been at the sanitarium almost a year.

Over the past three months as Deocar performed his mission, life at the facility worsened. Several patients slipped into catatonia, while others erupted into mania. Little by little, the atmosphere and the mood changed for the darker. People heard inexplicable voices and saw shadows move without cause. Everyone, patient or otherwise, came to doubt their sanity. Unwilling to remain, most of the staff abandoned their posts. The patients remained as virtual prisoners and continued to deteriorate.

Working in secret, Deocar has paved the way for an upcoming ceremony. His goal is to gather 25 sacrificial victims to be fed to the Lord of the Wood's servant—an alien being known as a Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath. To facilitate this, Deocar has imprinted countless eldritch marks throughout the sanitarium and the surrounding grounds. These marks pollute the area with dark magic that corrupts the mind and twists the soul. A few of these marks, strategically placed at the front entrance to the grounds, served to keep out new arrivals—including couriers and guards sent by the king in recent weeks.

Deocar has done everything possible to make the patients sicker and to drive off anyone he couldn't kill or control. He set fire to the patient records room to stymie further attempts at treating the patients. Finally, each night he sneaks one of the patients out of the sanitarium to the forest clearing where they are driven insane by the power of the Dark Young. Deocar returns the patient to the sanitarium before dawn, one

victim closer to the number needed for the ritual.

At present, only a few staff members remain alive and functional. These include the head nurse, Nurse Nauls, as well as the governess, Dr. Von Shrugal. Although both women have succumbed (to some degree) to the madness now raging through Willowbrook, their steadfast dedication to their jobs and their patients has kept them going. The same cannot be said for the other residents of the sanitarium. At present, Dr. Von Shrugal and Nurse Nauls place blame for recent events on the wrong individuals—the good doctor blames the local groundskeeper, whereas Nauls blames Von Shrugal. Neither suspects the true source of the horrors of Willowbrook; Deocar has them both fooled into believing he's a harmless aide. They remain clueless as to his role in these horrors.

The proper time for the ritual approaches and the stars shall soon align. Two nights hence, on the night of the next waxing gibbous moon, Deocar will free the sacrificial victims from the sanitarium and take them to the forest clearing. Once there, the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath will feast on their flesh and devour their souls. With the ritual completed, the Dark Young can use the consumed souls to bring its master, Shub-Niggurath, the Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young, into this reality. Once this occurs, Deocar and all mortals in this world shall truly receive their just rewards.

Unless the adventurers foil the ritual first...

Madness and Horror

As mentioned, *The Bleak Harvest* features themes of horror, fear, and loss. Both Willowbrook Sanitarium and its surrounding grounds labor under a pernicious dark magic effect, both from the secret marks placed by Deocar, but also from

the presence of an alien monstrosity. Nothing at Willowbrook is quite as it seems, and even reality itself has become unanchored and mutable.

Thanks to these powerful arcane forces, from the first moment the characters arrive at Willowbrook to the dying gasps of the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath, they should experience an omnipresent feeling of uncertainty mingled with paranoia. As the adventure progresses and things become increasingly dire, these feelings should intensify until they crescendo at the final encounter.

Once the characters meet Dr. Von Shrugal, they learn about her lobotomy procedure. She offers to perform this procedure on any willing character to help protect them from losing their grip on reality and from surrendering to the madness that has claimed so many people already. By the time Von Shrugal makes her offer, at least one or two of the characters should give it serious consideration, especially given their experiences within the sanitarium. Everything leading up to this point serves to foreshadow the climactic battle against the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath. Any character with a poor Will save should feel worried about how they might fare in the coming battle.

To help put characters into the right frame of mind for Dr. Von Shrugal's offer, here are a few tricks the GM can use to create the proper atmosphere. Pick a couple of the more vulnerable (i.e., characters with low Will saves or lower Intelligence scores) as targets for these occurrences.

- Someone's shadow sneaks away from its owner from time to time. At times, that person's shadow goes completely absent for several moments. No one else notices this effect.

- A character hears an ongoing susurrus of voices, always right around the corner. The moment the character rounds the corner, the voices cease.
- A character's field of vision goes dark, after which they see sudden bright spots. Moments later, their vision returns to normal.
- Every time a character encounters an NPC, they get the impression they are being laughed at, mocked, or otherwise ridiculed. No one else notices this fact.
- A character experiences a strange, metallic taste in their mouth. Everything tastes bitter and coppery.
- Just before drinking a potion, a character spots tiny worms swimming in the fluid. When they look again, the worms are gone as if they'd never existed.
- A character experiences horrid hallucinations for brief moments before everything returns to normal. This might include maggots and flies covering food or living bodies, blood dribbling down a wall, cracks forming across the ceiling, and so forth.
- One character spies another party member stealing from them. The other party denies the theft, and no proof of a crime can be found.
- A character experiences unsettling tactile moments, such as running through cobwebs, the feel of hot breath on the nape of their neck, something hot and wet splashing on them from above, the floor melting to the consistency of hot tar, etc.
- From time to time, the GM can call upon a character to make a Willpower [Wisdom] saving throw. Regardless of the result, the GM offers a knowing nod and perhaps a grim smile—especially for a low roll.
- One of the characters blacks out for a few seconds, only to find themselves wandering from the party. This doesn't happen during dangerous situations, but should give cause for alarm nonetheless.
- Have characters make random DC 15 Willpower [DC 10 Wisdom] saving throws. If they fail, they experience a memory gap of a few seconds to up to a minute.
- A character suffers from brief but disturbing waking dreams. The character can witness momentary glimpses of some other place with a violet sky dominated by a red moon.
- Once or twice, the GM should start counting down out loud (albeit in a low tone) from 10 down to zero.
- To keep the players on edge, pull one or two of them off to the side during the game and give them a piece of irrelevant information about their surroundings, but caution them not to say anything to their fellow players.

If the GM wishes, they should feel free to use any madness or sanity rules available, such as those found in the *Pathfinder Horror Adventures* book or in the *5E DMG*. Otherwise, if you aren't interested in tracking sanity points or other numerical values, rely instead on powerful description and good role-playing techniques to make the characters uncomfortable, suspicious, and alarmed. The GM wants the characters doubting the strength of their sanity and thus their chances of surviving the adventure.

Dual-Stat Format

This adventure is presented with two stat blocks for monsters, NPCs, and traps. Black headings denote *Pathfinder* information, while red headings are for *Fifth Edition*. Text in red within a paragraph denotes 5E-specific information.

Example: Pathfinder

Example: 5E Fantasy

The Mark of Shub-Niggurath



In preparation for the summoning ritual, a Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath commanded Deocar Foedo to place eldritch marks of sinister power throughout the grounds of Willowbrook and inside the sanitarium. These serve to weaken the inhabitants and deter any potential resistance; they also subtly warp reality locally, making conditions more favorable to creatures from the Dark Tapestry (the plane from where the Dark Young originates). Deocar has placed individual marks on either side of the perimeter wall at 40-foot intervals. As a guideline, there's a 20% chance one of these marks is nearby when characters attempt a Perception [Investigation or Perception] check throughout the estate. These marks are relatively easy to locate if searched for, and thus the low Perception check DC.

Upon completion, each mark emits an *unhallow* effect (CL 12) as per the spell [the 5e version is simply referred to as *hallow*]. This mark differs from the standard *unhallow*; as one of Shub-Niggurath's chosen, Deocar can imbue each mark with *sands of time* plus one additional spell effect that uses the *unhallowed* target area as its own. Unless otherwise noted, each mark also has *dimensional anchor* tied to it. [See

the *extradimensional interference* effect described as part of the *hallow* spell. See Appendix B for *sands of time*. For purposes of this special mark, the *hallow* effect can include different spell effects than those listed in the *PHB*, including those *sands of time*.]

Marks found outside the main building have been carved deep into a tree, wall, or other object hosting it. Defacing a mark requires 1d6 minutes of removal work or a successful DC 20 Disable Device [DC 15 thieves' tools or DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana)] check—either method terminates the *unhallow* [*hallow*] and anchored effects in the immediate 40-foot-radius area around the mark. Marks found inside the sanitarium have been drawn hastily with blood, ink, or feces (33% chance of each) and can be defaced as a full round action. After being defaced, the mark magically reappears in the same manner and location 24 hours later and its effects resume.

When the characters first enter the area of effect of *unhallow* [*hallow*] (basically once past the estate's entryway), make a ranged touch attack [ranged attack] against each character to determine if the *sands of time* affects them.

AGING TRAP		CR 8
Type magic; Perception DC 20; Disable Device 20		
EFFECTS		
Trigger location; Reset automatic reset		
Effect spell effect (<i>sands of time</i> ; Atk +13 ranged touch; multiple targets; see spell description for effects). Note: This spell effect does not affect undead or objects.		

Any character struck by a successful spell attack suffers from *sands of time* for the next 2 hours. After this time if the character remains on the Willowbrook grounds or within the estate, make another ranged touch attack to see if the spell affects them again. Any creature missed by this attack is

immune to the *sands of time* effect for the next 24 hours.

AGING TRAP

Magic trap

This trap, anchored to a *hallow* spell effect, unleashes a spell that temporarily ages its victims.

The trap activates against a living creature that within the Willowbrook Estate grounds or inside the sanitarium main building; Deocar placed enough of these marks such that their effect covers the entire building and grounds. When a character enters the estate grounds, the spell attacks each creature with a +8 bonus. A creature struck suffers the effects of the *sands of time* spell (see Appendix B). This spell effect does not affect undead or objects, unlike the standard spell itself.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) skill check locates a secret mark. A character can deface and thereby deactivate one of the marks with 1d6 minutes (or a full round action inside the sanitarium) of effort and a DC 15 thieves' tools or Intelligence (Arcana) skill check. The mark returns intact 24 hours later unless removed by *dispel magic* (DC 14). Defacing or eliminating a secret mark ends both the *hallow* effect and the *sands of time* in a 60-foot-radius sphere area centered on the mark.

Any character struck by a successful spell attack suffers from *sands of time* for the next 2 hours. After this time if the character remains on the Willowbrook grounds or within the state, make another ranged spell attack to see if the spell affects them again. Any creature missed by this attack is immune to the *sands of time* effect for the next 24 hours.

Adventure Objectives

- The PCs are sent by the king on a secret mission to a sanitarium to check on the welfare of a cousin who has not been heard from in some time. None of the couriers sent to investigate have returned. Upon arrival, the PCs discover that the normally splendid estate and infirmary lies in shambles.
- They quickly realize that the administrator and what's left of the staff are in over their heads. The PCs must investigate to discover which

patient is the duke. In doing so, they uncover a plot to summon an elder god, Shub-Niggurath. In so doing, they also uncover a counter-movement that is inadvertently thwarting the invocation.

- While unearthing clues, the PCs combat a range of threats including ghost-like entities, a werewolf, an assassination attempt, and even the surrounding forest which has turned malevolent as the ritual draws near.
- Once able to identify those who can help them combat the evil cabal, the PCs must decide whether or not to trust their fate and undergo an unspeakable (and possibly irreversible) procedure to prepare themselves for the final coup: leading a group of psychopaths to battle against the cultist and his willing sacrifices.

Player Hooks

Since not every character responds to obligations of king and country. The GM may replace or combine the main story with one of the following scenarios, if they feel it will encourage players to travel to Willowbrook.

- *Easy Pickings:* This is the most exclusive resort in the kingdom, visited by only the famous and wealthy. If rumors are true that Willowbrook's security has been breached, there's no telling how much loot one could find there. Since the prospective marks are incapacitated in one form or another; a theft there could be like taking candy from a baby.
- *Sign of the Apocalypse:* All good aligned PCs in the area have a recurring dream that involves a willow tree, a gurgling brook, a throne, and a mountain of corpses,

with all agreeing it is a harbinger of doom. In meeting the king, the meaning of these dreams becomes clearer.

- *A Personal Errand:* Word reaches the PCs that an old member of their party has been involuntarily committed at Willowbrook, no doubt suffering from trauma acquired from a previous adventure, and requests a visit. (If you use this hook, consider replacing Cronkar Ustom in 2.g with this friend and adjust the encounter to reflect this past relationship.)
- *New Discoveries:* More than one talented practitioner of magic has been known to cross the line from genius to madness, requiring treatment at Willowbrook while continuing their studies. Lost or undiscovered books of knowledge and experimentation are rumored to be kept in the Estate Records room.

Chapter One: King's Calling

Read or paraphrase the following introduction:

It's a beautiful day when you're summoned by the king for a private meeting. "I require your assistance on a very discretionary matter. My dear cousin, Berard, has been convalescing at Willowbrook Sanitarium for the last year but has not been heard from in three months. Our attempts to learn his status by means of divination failed due to the protective wards cast over the facility to safeguard the identities of its inhabitants from prying eyes. Teleportation to anywhere within the compound has also failed, which left me no choice but to send a courier... followed later still by a knight and his entourage of guards. Neither party has returned. I must have the duke returned to

court immediately if he is in danger. Will you help me?"

The king has low confidence in a positive outcome by sending yet another search party. Believing this is likely a hopeless cause, he is unwilling to provide direct help to the party. However, the crown has set aside 15,000 gp to be awarded if the party retrieves the missing duke and returns him safely to the capital.

Once the PCs agree, the king gives each adventurer a lapel pin that allows them to see through the powerful illusions that mask the sanitarium. Also provided is a vellum parchment notarizing the party as Royal Officers. Under this authority, the PCs are to be given every courtesy and permission to investigate the facilities. If asked, the king confirms that the duke suffers from a delusion in which he believes himself to be other people at times. Even the court's most powerful mage and clerics failed to cure the affliction, suggesting the duke did not want to be cured. The healers prescribed a restful stint at Willowbrook to encourage the duke's wellness and cooperation.

Treasure. Willowbrook visitor's broach (targeted *true seeing*, as the spell, but only reveals illusions affecting the boundaries of Willowbrook Sanitarium). It is worth 850 gp to any thieves' guild.

PCs can learn more about the estate by succeeding at the following skill checks:

Knowledge (local), DC 15 [DC 10 Intelligence (Investigation)]: Willowbrook Estate is a sanitarium that occupies a 400-acre, privately secured forest. It is renowned as a beautiful, short-stay retreat for individuals from famous or politically connected families... or those wealthy enough to afford its opulent gardens and high-end treatments for mental wellness.



Knowledge (local) or Diplomacy, DC 24 [DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) or Charisma (Persuasion)]: Less well known is the fact that Willowbrook also serves as the permanent home for embarrassing cast-offs from those same families who wish their familial indiscretions to remain secret. The drug-addicted, the offspring of incest, and even those whose only transgression seems to be the living evidence of an unwanted pregnancy are kept hidden here from the inquiring eyes of court opponents and high society.

When the PCs are ready to travel, the King's meister, an elderly, battle-scarred gent with a patch over one eye, teleports them to an area just outside the boundary of Willowbrook Forest. A saddled horse for each PC and one extra for the duke arrive next to the group shortly after with enough provisions to last two weeks. Attached to

one of the horses is a note that reads simply, "They know the way home."

Chapter Two: Arrival

1. Entry to Willowbrook Estate (EL 8)

When the players arrive outside Willowbrook via teleport, read the following:

As the queasiness and vertigo of the teleport spell dissipates, you wonder if there's been a mishap. You now stand at the edge of steep cliff that drops off before you. Just when you think you may be stranded, the magic of the pin stuck to your breast begins working and the cliff-side visage shimmers and evaporates, leaving you with a sorrowful image indeed:

Instead of the beautifully maintained forest and perimeter wall that was boasted of, you see a completely overgrown tangle of brush and trees barely contained by a crumbling plaster wall. Before you lies a cobblestone road passing through an entryway. Arching over the road atop the 15-foot gate posts is a wrought iron sign with block letters that reads WILLOWBROOK. A light rain begins to dampen your gear, and the falling leaves fill you with the unmistakable scents of autumn.

Lying in the road are four corpses—the putrid remains of the royal detachments previously sent to investigate.

The cultist, Deocar Foedo, has placed hundreds of secret eldritch symbols throughout the compound and inside the sanitarium. These secret marks flood the entire area with a unique *unhallow* [hallow] effect that radiates strong evil and strong evocation if detected for. This *unhallow* effect is extraordinary in that it includes two spell effects within its area, including *dimensional anchor* [extradimensional interference effect described as part of the hallow spell] and *sands of time*.

In addition, to help deter and eliminate unwanted visitors, Deocar left additional secret marks hidden behind the ivy on either gatepost. Each mark blankets an area 40-feet in radius with both *unhallow* [hallow] and a nasty surprise in the form of the *fleshworm infestation* spell (CL 12), rather than *dimensional anchor* and *sands of time* anchored to the other marks throughout the estate.

As for the corpses lying in the road, a successful DC 10 Heal check [DC 5 Wisdom (Medicine) or DC 5 Wisdom (Perception)] identifies the cause of death in the form of numerous tiny exit wounds, suggestive of something burrowing out from the flesh.

While the characters search the bodies and investigate for clues, they each come under the effects of the *fleshworm infestation* within the *unhallowed* area. If a character enters this affected area and the spell attack hits, read or paraphrase the following to the victim:

A strange, prickling sensation runs along your arms, shoulders, chest, and the back of your neck. At first, it tickles, but the intensity increases until it burns. Swollen red blisters erupt from your arms. Before you can act, the burning intensifies until it feels like something chewing through muscle and tissue. Bulging, wriggling worm-like shapes shift underneath your skin until you literally watch your flesh crawl.

INFESTATION TRAP

CR 8

Type magic; Perception DC 20; Disable Device 20

EFFECTS

Trigger location; Reset automatic reset

Effect spell effect (*fleshworm infestation*; Atk +13 ranged touch; multiple targets; see spell description for effects)

INFESTATION TRAP

Magic trap

This trap, anchored to a *hallow* spell effect, unleashes a spell that causes dozens of ravenous, flesh-eating worms to erupt within its victims. The hungry worms burrow through flesh, consuming as they dig.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) skill check locates one of the secret marks hidden underneath the ivy vines on one of the entryway gateposts. A character can deface and thereby deactivate one of the marks with 1d6 minutes of effort and a DC 15 thieves' tools or Intelligence (Arcana) skill check. A mark so defaced returns intact 24 hours later unless removed by *dispel magic* (DC 14). Defacing or eliminating a secret mark ends both the *hallow* effect and the *fleshworm infestation*.

The trap activates when any living creature enters a 60-foot-radius around the entryway gatepost, triggering an attack by the *fleshworm infestation* spell (see Appendix B for details). The spell attacks each creature in the area of effect with a +8 bonus. A

creature struck suffers the effects of the spell (see Appendix B).

Treasure. Two of the bodies wear masterwork chainmail [treat this armor as normal chainmail armor of high quality] and possess a shield and +1 longsword, one wears a squire's livery, while the last possesses +1 studded leather, +1 short sword, 2 flasks of holy water, and a half-consumed *potion of healing*. Each body possesses an official writ from the king endorsing them as an officer of the court.

Knowledge (religion) [Intelligence (Religion)]

DC	Result
15 (10)	The mark is evil and the focus of an <i>unhallow</i> [hallow] spell.
19 (15)	The mark is one of chaos.



Knowledge (the planes) [Intelligence (Arcana)]

DC	Result
17 (13)	The mark is alien to the material plane.
21 (15)	The mark is associated with the Dark Tapestry.
29 (25)	The mark is associated with Shub-Niggurath.

Random Encounters

The arrival of a **unique Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath** [see **Appendix B**] has had an unnatural and disruptive effect on the surrounding woods, causing creatures to become feral, plants to animate, and the dead to rise. A few other inhabitants from the Dark Tapestry (an alien plane of existence) have appeared as well. Any time the PCs venture through the forest within the estate's boundaries, roll a d20 to see if a random encounter occurs and consult the table below.

d20	Result
1	1d2 spectres
2	2d4 dire wolves
3	1d4 rot grub, giant
4	2d4 centipede swarms
5	2d4 grave risen
6	1d4 mi-go
7-8	Mild earth tremors
9-10	Nearby plants and trees sway against the wind, followed by a musky, fetid odor
11-20	No encounter*

*At nighttime on a roll of 20, the characters encounter the gameskeeper, Gosse Guarin, in his hybrid werewolf.

The earth tremors last no more than a minute are too weak to cause structural damage. They are, however, unexpected for an area that has never before suffered such disturbances.

An examination of some of the surrounding plant life shows signs of corruption and mutation, including oddly-colored leaves, strange bulges, abnormal appendages, and

fruit that is exceptionally large but rotted to the core.

For 5E: See Appendix B for new monsters, including the giant rot grub, the grave risen, and the mi-go. For the centipede swarms, use the swarm of insects stat block in the *MM*.

Timeline of events

Regardless of the PCs actions during the course of this adventure, NPCs will continue to act in their own best interests at designated times unless interrupted. Refer to the time table below to determine which NPC is active at what time.

Day 1 (daytime)

Noon - PCs arrive at Willowbrook's entry gates.

3pm - Dr. Von Shrugal transfers one of the remaining patients to the laboratory and performs a lobotomy. (Roll randomly, leaving both the duke and Toussaine Wren exempt.)

Day 1 (nighttime)

11pm to 1am - Using stolen keys along with his *wand of stone shape* [see **Appendix B**], Deocar sneaks out of his room and leads a charmed victim to the grove for conversion, then sneaks the newly created lunatic back into their room.

Day 2 (daytime)

8am - Lunatic is "discovered" by Deocar while serving breakfast to the patients

3pm - Dr. Von Shrugal transfers one of the remaining patients to the laboratory and performs a lobotomy (Again, roll randomly, this time leaving only the duke exempt.)

Day 2 (nighttime)

11pm - Deocar uses his *wand of stone shape* on the front entrance and directs his

tributes—the newly created lunatics—to the grove. He makes every attempt to blend in with them as they exit.

Midnight - The Dark Young makes its presence known and the sacrifice ritual begins.

2. The Sanitarium

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters approach the main sanitarium building:

As the immense, three-story manor comes into view you see it is as dilapidated as the front gate—once-white rendering on the outer walls is now a dark mix of yellow and green mold, while moss gathers on the slate roofs. The marble adorning the front steps and entry is pitted and dull, and the glass behind every barred window has been broken out and fitted with misshapen pieces of wood which seem to have been hastily nailed over their enclosures. Thick roils of wood smoke drift down through still air from one of the eight chimneys and envelop the area like a veil.

Anyone making a DC 10 Perception [DC 5 Intelligence (Perception)] check can barely make out over the droning sound of the rain an occasional shriek, some maniacal laughter, or the “tink tink” of a piano being played one key at a time. Except for the double doors at the front entrance, every means of access to the building has been barricaded shut by Nurse Nauls, one of the few remaining staff members, so she can concentrate her attention on one exit. A DC 40 [DC 30] Strength check is needed to push through any barricaded entrance. The front doors are locked from the inside but can be opened with a successful DC 30 disable device check [DC 25 thieves’ tools check]. Any attempt to gain access to the estate taking longer than 10 rounds draws the attention of Nurse Nauls; her muffled voice can be heard directing the party to the

front entrance. There, she can communicate to the party by way of a modified *clairaudience/clairvoyance* sensor placed on the double doors.

After Nauls closely inspects the party’s writ and is satisfied it bears the king’s seal, read or paraphrase the following:

The double doors open just enough to frame the face of a haggard old crone who must be at least six feet tall. Her grey hair has been pulled back into a tight bun and she is dressed conservatively in a high-collared, black uniform. Trembling in her left hand is a lit candle. “Do exactly as I say,” she commands. “Stay close behind me, keep your eyes straight ahead, and make no sudden moves until we’ve crossed the lobby. Is that clear?” With that warning, she leads you inside.

Estate Features

The architects of Willowbrook designed the estate so it could house even the most accomplished practitioners of skill and magic should they ever become unstable and require hospitalization. To achieve this purpose, great care was given toward construction requirements so the staff would always feel safe and in control and the patients could be kept secure.

The sanitarium walls are 3-foot thick and comprised of stone blocks lathed with plaster. All doors, unless otherwise noted, are locked and made of one-inch thick solid iron.

Locked Iron Doors: hardness 10; hit points 30, Disable Device 30 [AC 19, 30 hit points; DC 25 thieves’ tools check to pick the lock].

Unless noted otherwise, all hallways are 10-foot wide and ceilings for both hallways and rooms are 10 feet in height. *Continual flames* [light spells] are affixed to sconces at 40-foot intervals in the Staff Hall and also in each of the patient rooms.

In addition to the material safeguards in place, Willowbrook has many magical elements which either protect the staff or secure privacy for the patients. The entire property (out to and including the perimeter wall) resists scrying as if under permanent *obscure object* [the entire property is warded against magical scrying] and permanent *major image* (as noted above, 1. Entryway to Willowbrook Estate), both cast at CL 20. Furthermore, a modified sustenance effect inside the main building means occupants can survive without food or water, albeit uncomfortably, should an emergency arise. This effect does not, however, allow someone to forgo a full period of rest, like a

ring of sustenance does [those within the sanitarium do not require food or water, but still requires 8 hours of sleep a day].

GM's Note: Although Willowbrook is a very large hospital comprising multiple floors and more than one hundred rooms, only the main floor and attic are used for this adventure. Feel free to populate other parts of the sanitarium as you wish. If the players insist on exploring the entire hospital, a cursory investigation of all rooms takes six hours to complete and nothing of interest is discovered.



Chapter Three: Into the Mouth of Madness

2.a. Lobby

As the PCs step inside, read the following:

In better times this massive room may have greeted guests with comfortable opulence. Now, as the nurse forces the doors open wide enough to permit passage into this squalid chamber, you struggle to control the overwhelming urge to vomit and flee. As daylight cuts into the room, dozens of shaved, emaciated invalids of every race shuffle away, their hands raised as if to repel the brightness. They slink back into darker portions of a cavernous hall redolent with the stench of rot, decay, and squalor.

Flecks of dried urine and dung rise in the air with every footfall as the old woman guides you past piles of broken furniture toward a central hallway opposite the entrance. From the corner of your eye you bear witness to a full spectrum of behavior: a dwarven woman sits quietly, humming a children's song; two humans viciously attack each other over a scrap of cloth; a halfling edges toward you, pleading for help, while another uses a table leg to repeatedly strike the head of an unconscious elf, her eyes fixated on the widening gash forming across the fey's skull. Some patients are clothed in sodden nursery gowns or stained bed sheets while others stand completely naked. All, however, are covered in their own fetid waste.

As soon as your group enters the hallway; a hairless wretch who very much resembles one of the patients, bars a heavy iron door behind you. Regaining some sense of comfort, you begin to process what just transpired when the crone speaks again; "My name is Velah Nauls and I am the Head Nurse of Willowbrook Sanitarium."

Nurse Nauls is a treasure trove of information. From her, the PCs can learn about the features of the estate, the remaining patients (including what Deocar has led her to believe about himself), and the suspicious habits of the Governess of Willowbrook, Dr. Von Shrugal.



Nurse Nauls (as she prefers to be called) is the quintessential “Old Battleaxe”—the crotchety professional who seems to have worked there since the estate was built. She is fiercely loyal to those under her care and normally a stickler for protocol. In this current situation, however, she is mainly concerned with protecting the few patients who are still cognizant with what limited resources she has at her disposal. Her assistant, Deocar, is less than helpful but she has managed to teach him a number of mundane tasks that she trusts him to complete, such as changing patient bedding, delivering meals, and watching the front door during the day. This allows her to prepare a few fresh meals, stoke fires, and wash clothes.

Her busy schedule has left Nauls oblivious to Deocar’s machinations. She mistakenly believes that Dr. Shrugal’s operations are the root cause of the “incurables”—those too insane or catatonic to save. She conveys these suspicions freely, hoping the PCs can stop Dr. Von Shrugal and help regain control of the sanitarium.

If asked about the duke, Nurse Nauls conveys the following:

“Duke Berard is a curious fellow. He loves pretending he is someone else. We gave him a battery of tests, but found nothing medically wrong with the poor creature. We attribute his behavior to acute escapism to avoid his duties to the crown. The thing is, Berard has become a master of mimicry. He maintains an entire gallery of personalities he can assume whenever he wants. After the records room caught fire and most of the records were destroyed, the duke was... misplaced during the second mass transfer of patients to more secure portions of the hospital. We don’t know his whereabouts or what identity he currently presents.”

It doesn’t take long in listening to Nurse Nauls that she, too, suffers from mental

instability and encroaching madness; a successful DC 15 Sense Motive [DC 10 Wisdom (Insight)] check identifies the signs of insanity revealed by her speech patterns, body language, and even within her eyes. In her case, however, her dedication to and obsession with her duties have kept her from fully surrendering to the insanity. She maintains her composure only so long as she can convince herself that her patients need her.

Velah Nauls, Head Nurse of Willowbrook	CR 3
Female human expert 6 N Medium humanoid (human) Init -1; Senses Perception +1	
DEFENSE	
AC 9, touch 9, flat-footed 9 (-1 Dex) hp 30 (6d8-6) Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +6	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft. Melee masterwork dagger +4 (1d4-1/19-20)	
STATISTICS	
Str 9, Dex 8, Con 9, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 14 Base Atk +4; CMB +3; CMD 12 Feats Deceitful, Persuasive, Skill Focus (Bluff, Sense Motive) Skills Bluff +16, Diplomacy +13, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (nobility) +9, Sense Motive +13 Languages Common Gear masterwork dagger, nursing uniform, sensible shoes	

Velah Nauls					CR 0
<i>Medium humanoid (human), neutral</i>					
Armor Class 9					
Hit Points 30 (6d8 - 6)					
Speed 30 ft.					
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	8 (-1)	9 (-1)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)
Skills Deception +4, Insight +3, Intimidate +6, Medicine +3, Persuasion +4,					
Senses passive Perception 11					
Languages Common, Elvish					
Challenge 0 (10 XP)					

Commanding Tone. Nurse Nauls doubles her proficiency bonus when making Charisma (Intimidate) skill checks.

ACTIONS

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

Equipment

Dagger, nursing uniform, sensible shoes

The bald man assisting the nurse is Deocar Foedo, a harmless patient who can follow simple commands but who only ever says the words “Thank you,” usually with much vigorous bobbing of his head. Deocar is, in



fact, a cultist of Shub-Niggurath and responsible for much of the misery at the sanitarium.

Deocar Foedo, Cultist of Shub-Niggurath CR 8

Male Human Adept 10
CE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +5; **Senses** Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex)
hp 55 (10d6+10)
Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +12

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.
Melee mwk silver dagger +4 (1d4–1/19–20)
mwk silver dagger +5 (1d4–1/19–20)

Adept Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +13)

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 16), *cure serious wounds*

2nd—*invisibility*, *mirror image*, *web* (DC 15)

1st—*command* (DC 14), *cure light wounds*, *obscuring mist*, *protection from law*

0th (at will)—*detect magic*, *light*, *read magic*

Spell-Like Ability (CL 12th) *unhallow* (must create secret mark of Shub-Niggurath)

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 12, **Con** 10, **Int** 9, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 15

Feats Combat Casting, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Bluff), Toughness
Skills Appraise +2, Bluff +17, Fly +1, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (planes) +9, Knowledge (religion) +5, Spellcraft +7

Languages Common, Aklo

SQ summon familiar (raven, speaks Aklo)

Combat Gear He keeps most of his possessions hidden in a hollow of the spooky tree (next to the bridge; see 5b, below).

Other Gear (on person) *wand of charm person* (11 charges), *wand of stone shape* (23 charges), masterwork silver dagger, silver unholy symbol, master set of keys for the Estate.

Deocar Foedo

Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 55 (10d8 + 10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +4

Skills Arcana +2, Deception +4, Religion +2

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Aklo

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Spellcasting. Deocar is a 10th-level divine caster in service to Shub-Niggurath. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following cleric spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *detect magic, guidance, light, resistance, thaumaturgy*

1st level (4 slots): *command, cure wounds, fog cloud, shield of faith*

2nd level (3 slots): *blindness, hold person, silence*

3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse, crown of madness, protection from energy*

4th level (3 slots): *black tentacles, divination, guardian of faith*

5th level (2 slots): *contagion, insect plague*

Spell-Like Ability (at will): unhallow (must create secret mark of Shub-Niggurath)

ACTIONS

Dagger. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

While inside the sanitarium, Deocar keeps the following items hidden on his person (or, if he fears being searched, tucked away in a cubbyhole somewhere inside the sanitarium): wand of charm person, wand of stone shape, silver dagger, silver unholy symbol, and a master set of keys for the estate.

When the time for the summoning ritual is at hand, Deocar goes to the spooky tree (see 5. Bridge, below) and retrieves the equipment he hides there, unless it has already been removed by the characters.

Background

Having answered a call from the Dark Tapestry compelling him to Willowbrook Estate, Deocar eagerly anticipates the ruin of the world. He assists in this prophecy by preparing tributes for a mass sacrifice.

To amass such a gathering of willing subjects, Deocar first casts charm person from his wand on an unsuspecting victim, then leads them to the grove later that evening to be “converted” by the Dark Young in preparation for the summoning ritual. So far, he has successfully acquired 24 converts, needing only one more before marching his flock to the grove for their “ultimate redemption” when they shall be sacrificed to the Dark Young to usher in its mother, the outer god Shub-Niggurath.

After winning the trust of the head nurse and stealing the master keys to the estate, the relative ease of accomplishing his goals further validates Deocar’s belief that he is fulfilling his true calling.

When not converting victims or helping the head nurse complete her tasks, much of Deocar’s work involves placing the secret marks around the hospital grounds, sacrificing small animals, burning strange herbs, and uttering guttural chants, all of which help power the apocalypse ritual taught to him by his dark master. The culmination of these acts will be the mass sacrifice on the waxing gibbous moon (the second night after the PCs arrive at Willowbrook).

Special. In the form of raised blisters and scabs, Deocar’s chest and stomach feature a map of the estate with the grove emphasized, as well as arcane dates written in Aklo that correspond with the upcoming waxing gibbous moon.

The Guests of Willowbrook Sanitarium

Willowbrook was built to house 110 patients, each with their own room. The patient population has dwindled considerably due to the random and deadly patient attacks perpetrated against the staff and other patients.

Unless otherwise noted, each patient has the following statistics:

Willowbrook Patient	CR 1/4
Init +1	
DEFENSE	
AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10	
HP 28	
Fort +2, Reflex +2, Will +1	
OFFENSE	
Melee unarmed strike -1 (1d3+1)	

Willowbrook Patient	CR 0
<i>Medium humanoid (human), any alignment</i>	
Armor Class 11	
Hit Points 11 (3d8)	
Speed 30 ft.	
STR 12 (+1); DEX 12 (+1); CON 10 (+0); INT 10 (+0); CHA 10 (+0)	
Senses passive Perception 10	
Languages Common	
ACTIONS	
<i>Improvised Weapon.</i> Melee Weapon Attack: +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d6 + 1) bludgeoning damage.	

Presently, Willowbrook's current patient population includes:

24 lunatics: These patients, thanks to *Deocar*, have fallen victim to the Dark Young's insanity ability and are soon to be sacrificed (treat as if irrevocably confused; they only respond to *Deocar*).

17 catatonics: Those lobotomized by Dr. Von Shrugul (these patients have no free will, are immune to all mind-affecting effects, and respond only to Dr. Von Shrugul).

Because of the recent reduction in staff, all lunatics and catatonics (collectively termed "Incurables") are now housed in the hospital's main lobby (**2.a**) so that Nauls and *Deocar*—the only staff remaining other than Dr. Von Shrugul—can supervise and tend to them more effectively.

The final 6 patients: All that remain of the

sanitarium's original guests who are still coherent enough to be interviewed by the PCs. Each patient has a **rumor** they will share freely with the party. Additionally, some of these patients know information that can prove helpful, referred to as **clues** in their NPC stat block. To learn these "clues," the PCs will need to learn a particular patient's mental trigger or soft spot. Once learned, the party can appease or satisfy that patient's psychosis for a short period, during which time the patient will give up the clue.

The six patients who still possess cognitive functions have been assigned to rooms in the Staff Hall, which runs through the center of the sanitarium, connecting the Main Lobby at one end and the Governess's chambers at the other. Next to each door is a clipboard with the few bits of patient information Nurse Nauls has gathered about the occupant; most patient information was destroyed after the records room fire.

With the exception of Toussaine Wren (see below), the following patients are non-combatants, but each encounter lists an encounter level (EL) value. The PCs receive experience points for the encounter if they obtain the individual patient's clue. Most of these are social, role-playing encounters rather than combat encounters. *[If the characters acquire an individual patient's clue, they receive experience points appropriate for defeating a CR 3 monster, i.e., 700 XP. In addition, award the characters 1,100 XP if they identify and corral Duke Berard.]*

The Duke: Berard suffers from a dissociative disorder resulting in a permanent break from reality. He now truly believes he is someone else. Thankfully, due to his heritage, he was originally housed in one of the more exclusive suites of the estate and therefore escaped *Deocar*'s attention. After the records room was torched and the patients were moved repeatedly to more

secure areas as the “wave of madness” swept the hospital, no one can now tell who Berard is or even if he still lives.

Development. If one of the patients has been taken by Dr. Von Shrugal for surgery, their room will be vacant. If Nurse Nauls is made aware of this, she hints that the PCs may catch the doctor in an act of malfeasance if they hurry to the laboratory.

GM’s Note: Roll 1d6 to determine which of the NPC patients is really Duke Berard. If this person is interviewed and presents their clue to the PCs, they do so elaborately (some habits die hard) by writing the information on parchment and producing a seal that matches the one on the writ given by the king. If Toussaine’s name comes up, reroll (the duke cannot be Toussaine).

After the duke has been assigned, roll 1d4 to determine which patient will be lobotomized by the doctor the day the PCs arrive at Willowbrook. Make sure not to include Toussaine Wren or the duke in this roll. It is quite possible the PCs will fail to protect or interrogate this patient if they delay reaching the hospital.

The PCs should want to meet these remaining patients in order to ascertain if the duke is among them. Each patient is locked inside a 20-foot-square room behind a solid iron door. Inside, instead of a window, a 3-foot x 4-foot scrying panel is set into the wall opposite the door. This panel is attuned to a permanent clairvoyance sensor placed on the wall’s exterior, allowing occupants to “view” what’s occurring outside. Unless otherwise noted, all patient rooms are furnished with a bed, nightstand, armoire, and washstand. The patients and their corresponding encounter entries are listed below.

2.b. Toussaine Wren, Willowbrook Estate Patient #8, Virtuoso (EL 10)

The melancholy sound of a flute fills the air as you approach this room. The notes of a faint melody flutter at the edges of your senses, teasing your return to a painful memory from your past that you have tried desperately to forget.

Toussaine pretends not to hear her visitors knock while she plays her pan flute. She feigns surprise when the door opens, but does nothing to cover her naked body. Only



after the party has had a good look at her does she excuse herself to put something on.

Toussaine Wren CR 10

Female elf bard 5/ assassin 6

NE Medium humanoid (elf)

Init +3; **Senses** low-light vision; Perception +15

DEFENSE

AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +3 Dex)

hp 66 (8d11–11)

Fort +3, **Ref** +11, **Will** +9; +3 vs. poison; +2 vs. enchantments; +4 vs. bardic performance, language-dependent, and sonic

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge; **Immune** sleep

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee pan flute (improvised) +9/+4 (1d3–1) or +1 dagger +10/+5 (1d4/19–20)

Ranged dagger +9 (1d4–1/19–20)

Special Attacks bardic performance 15 rounds/day (countersong, distraction, fascinate [Will DC 16], inspire competence +2, inspire courage +2), death attack Fort DC 18, sneak attack +3d6

Spells Known (CL 5th; concentration +8)

2nd (3/day)—*eagle's splendor*, *hold person* (DC 15), *silence* (DC 15)

1st (5/day)—*disguise self*, *expeditious retreat*, *sleep* (DC 15), *undetectable alignment*

0th (at will)—*detect magic*, *lullaby* (DC 14), *mage hand*, *open/close*, *prestidigitation*, *read magic*

TACTICS

Before Combat. Toussaine first excuses herself to “make herself decent.” Once behind a privacy screen she uses silent spell to cast disguise self on her mithral shirt and cloak to appear as a see-through shift (Perception DC 24 to notice something is amiss). She then flirts with her mark while preparing to assassinate them (roll randomly to determine who Toussaine will try to kill). If she cannot convince anyone to be alone with her, she focuses her death attack on the last PC as they leave her room.

During Combat She employs her catch off-guard feat to snap her pan flute and drive it through her victim's neck as a death attack. She then uses hold person, sleep, or her catch off-guard feat to make sneak attacks. She uses silence to prevent her foes from calling for aid, and Bluff and Diplomacy skills if anyone responds to the noise.

Morale If a victim does not succumb to her death attack, she tries to flee immediately. If escape is impossible, she pleads for her release, sensing danger inside the sanitarium and wanting to be free of it.

Development If Toussaine escapes the PCs, Deocar Foedo finds her by nightfall and converts her in the grove. If Deocar already has enough tributes, the assassin spends the rest of the adventure hiding in the surrounding woods (include Toussaine in the random encounter table with the PCs meeting her on a roll of 19). Desperate, she fights to the death if the PCs meet her again.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** 8, **Int** 14, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 16

Base Atk +7/+2; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 18

Feats Catch Off-Guard, Quick Draw, Silent Spell, Weapon Finesse, Spellsong

Skills Bluff +11, Disguise +14, Knowledge (Local) +12, Perception +15, Perform (act) +14, Perform (wind instruments) +14, Sense Motive +16, Sleight of Hand +17, Stealth +17

Languages Celestial, Common, Elven, Sylvan
SQ bardic knowledge +2, elven magic, lore master (1/day), Poison use, versatile performance (flute), weapon familiarity

Combat Gear Toussaine has collected a number of useful items from previous victims while at Willowbrook, including a potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of invisibility; Other Gear +1 mithral chain shirt, +1 dagger, cloak of resistance +1; Hidden in bureau (Perception DC 24 to locate) jeweled necklace (worth 300 gp), 4 flawless rubies (650 gp each), diary containing her background information.

Toussaine Wren

CR 8

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral evil

Armor Class 16 (*cloak of protection*)

Hit Points 66 (12d8 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 8 (-1); **DEX** 20 (+5); **CON** 12 (+1); **INT** 14 (+2); **CHA** 16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +8, Int +5

Skills Acrobatics +8, Deception +9, Insight +5, Perception +5, Perform +3, Persuasion +6, Stealth +11

Damage Resistances poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Thieves' Cant

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

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

Evasion. If Toussaine is subjected to an effect that allows her to make a Dexterity saving throw to take only half damage, she instead takes no damage if she succeeds on the saving throw, and only half damage if she fails.

Fey Ancestry. Toussaine has advantage on saves against being charmed, and magic can't put her to sleep.

Innate Spellcasting. Toussaine's high elf ancestry enables her to cast a cantrip at will. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 12). She can innately cast the following cantrip, with no need for material components:

At will: *minor illusion*

Sneak Attack (1/Turn). Toussaine deals an extra 20 (6d6) damage when she hits a target with a weapon attack and has advantage on the attack roll, or when the target is within 5 feet of an ally of hers that isn't incapacitated and she doesn't have disadvantage on the attack roll.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Toussaine makes two dagger attacks.

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d4 + 6) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 16 Constitution saving throw, taking 24 (7d6) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Improvised Weapon. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) piercing or bludgeoning damage.

EQUIPMENT

Toussaine has collected a number of useful items from previous victims while at Willowbrook, including a +1 dagger, cloak of protection, potion of greater healing and a potion of invisibility.

Hidden in bureau (DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) to locate): Jeweled necklace (worth 300 gp), 4 flawless rubies (650 gp each), and a diary containing her background information.

TACTICS

Toussaine first excuses herself to "make herself decent." Once behind a privacy screen, she throws

on some clothes and quietly grabs her poisoned blade. She then flirts with her mark while preparing to assassinate them (roll randomly to determine who Toussaine will try to kill). If she cannot convince anyone to be alone with her, she focuses her assassination attempt on the last PC as they leave her room. If she doesn't get the opportunity to grab her poisoned blade, she uses her pan flute as an improvised weapon.

Morale If a victim does not succumb to her assassination attempt, she tries to flee immediately. If escape is impossible, she pleads for her release, sensing danger inside the sanitarium and wanting to be free of it.

Development.

If Toussaine escapes the PCs, Deocar Foedo finds her by nightfall and converts her in the grove. If Deocar already has enough tributes, the assassin spends the rest of the adventure hiding in the surrounding woods (include Toussaine in the random encounter table with the PCs meeting her on a roll of 19). Desperate, she fights to the death if the PCs meet her again.

Background

Toussaine is a serial killer who dispatched over two-dozen victims before finally being arrested and brought to trial for only one murder, her most recent. Once there, she convinced the magistrate she was the victim of a sex trafficking ring and had merely tried to escape her captor when she unintentionally stabbed him. Declared innocent, she was sent to Willowbrook to "recover" from the shock of her ordeal.

During her year of convalescence, she has maintained a ruse that she suffers from nymphomania. By routinely parading naked and flirting with the staff, she has amassed three more victims who have fallen for her charms and wound up buried in the woods surrounding the estate. She has also pilfered a collection of useful items to enable her "bad habit" of disguising her gear as mundane items mixed in with personal

belongings. Since being moved to the secure wing, her murderous spree has been so far disrupted.

2.c. Queadon Moright, Willowbrook Estate Patient #22, Filcher (EL 3)

No one answers if this door is knocked upon. Any PC performing a Perception check (DC 20) [Wisdom (Perception) DC 15] hears whispers from inside the room but cannot make out what they're saying. As the party opens the door, read or paraphrase the following:

When the door opens, an eye-watering stench wafts into the hallway. A wooden plank, leaning against the door, clatters to the floor. Inside, the contents of this room are in complete disarray—the bed has been broken into pieces with just the headboard leaning against a feces-covered wall. The nightstand lies upside-down in the near-right corner, while bed linens drape over the top of the armoire now sitting in the room's center. On the other side of this, a frail human male sits with his knees folded close to his chest and his arms wrapped tightly around them. All around him lie feathers pulled from the mattress. He stares straight ahead with wide eyes, whispering over and over. His words hang in the air as if echoing back to him. "Insects want to do me. Spiders want to be me", he repeats with conviction. Crude images of an odd symbol cover the walls of the room, drawn repeatedly in what appears to be feces, blood, or a mixture of both.

PCs wishing to interact with Queadon must make a DC 15 Fortitude [DC 10 Constitution] save to avoid being sickened [poisoned] while they remain in his room.

Queadon is a thief who cannot stop stealing. Whenever he speaks, he does so in a whisper so as to lure his victim near. Anyone who

comes within arm's reach invites Queadon to steal something from them. An opposed Perception check against Queadon's Sleight of Hand skill check of +12 [Sleight of Hand +10] makes the PC aware of the attempt.

Queadon shares his rumor while bemoaning how upset he is at having been moved to a new room. Each time he's moved, he says, they make him leave his possessions behind. If Queadon succeeds in stealing from any party member he becomes calm and clear of mind. He then surrenders his clue.

Rumor: "You can see the same strange image... over and over again... if you know where to look." (If asked, Queadon replicates, with whatever materials are at hand, a crude drawing of the secret mark of Shub-Niggurath.)

Clue: Before they started locking him in his room, Queadon hid his stolen treasures in the attic. He cautions that the attic has become "*unquiet of late*."

2.d. Grand Duchess Malculmus, Willowbrook Estate Patient #43, Scholar (EL 3)

Before you have a chance to announce yourself, an impatient voice calls from within; "I know you're out there. Are you entering, or will eavesdropping suffice?" Inside, the room is meticulously clean. Spotless linens lie folded at the foot of a freshly made bed. A wardrobe, coat rack, writing desk, and chair comprise the rest of the room's furniture. A woman in her mid-thirties, a smug look plastered across her face, sits at a desk stacked high with books and loose-leaf papers.

Grand Duchess Malculmus (not her real name) is truly egotistical. She treats the PCs as one would treat small children. Quickly assessing that the group is there for inquiry, she gets right to the point, telling the PCs her

rumor and that she has more information she'll share if they best her in a game of wits.

If the PCs accept this challenge, the Grand Duchess reaches into the desk drawer and pulls out two sticks of dried salami tied end-to-end with a piece of twine. Tossing it to the PCs, Malculus loudly proclaims in a clear voice, "I'M A LASAGNA HOG!"

The phrase is a palindrome and has a different meaning when the letters are reversed. To satisfy the Malculus' challenge, the PCs must "go hang a salami" on the coat rack. The PCs can talk Malculus into giving three hints by engaging with witty banter followed by a successful DC 15 Intelligence or Charisma check. (Alternatively, use a 3 x 3 grid of the Pathfinder Cards: Social Combat Deck with Malculus letting hints slip each time the players successfully advance to the next row.)

For 5E: The characters can attempt to engage Malculus for her clue through one of several means. They can attempt to impress her with their education with a DC 10 Intelligence (History) or Intelligence (Religion) check. They can attempt to dazzle her with their charm by way of a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Finally, a character could attempt to entertain her with a DC 10 Charisma (Perform) check.

The duchess loves watching the PCs struggle and berates them for their incompetence before letting a hint slip out. Each time she does this it's with greater contempt for the PCs and their mental faculties.

Hint #1: *"Already tripped up by such an infantile game? Correlation isn't your strong suit, I see."*

Hint #2: *"Perhaps it's the common tongue that troubles you. I personally find word puzzles such a bore."*

Hint #3: *"I believe that it is you who should be in this sickbay while I walk free. You've probably never even heard of a palindrome!"*

Rumor: "Nurse Nauls has been heard wandering the wards at night. I wonder what she's up to?" (False, it is actually Deocar.)

Clue: The gamekeeper's cabin is much safer than the hospital, for there are no imbeciles there.

2.e. Archust Leafshine, Willowbrook Estate Patient #55, Druid (EL 3)

Heavily embroidered drapes hung inside the door prevent you from seeing further into the room. An imploring voice instructs you to close the door firmly behind you before entering past the curtains. Upon entering, you notice tattered cloths cover the scrying panel on the opposite wall. A sickly, wan light leaks into the room. Sketches of fauna and flora hang on the walls and ceiling, while expertly carved pieces of wood, each depicting a different animal, rest upon the desk and nightstand. A human male in his mid-thirties sits on the bed, legs outstretched, with a sketchbook on his lap and pencil in hand.

Achust was admitted to Willowbrook by his order to help overcome agoraphobia. Because Achust failed in his duties as a sworn protector of the natural world, his deity has forsaken him for his reluctance to interact with nature. Unfortunately, his affliction has only worsened since his arrival six months ago. The druid tells the party a rumor while begging them to bring him a plant, a toad, anything... just so it's a living thing so that he can be near nature without being in nature. Once this demand is satisfied, Achust presents his clue.

Rumor: *Do not go in the attic. I sense a presence there that is wholly unnatural. Of course, if you had any sense, you wouldn't be here in the first place, now would you?*

Clue: *Something otherworldly has disturbed the natural balance of this place, prompting the surrounding plants and animals to... change. They no longer belong here. The trees watch us with envious, hungry eyes!*

2.f. Ynil, Willowbrook Estate Patient #8, Priestess (EL 3)

When you place the iron key into the lock, a wild scream erupts from behind the door. A female voice calls out; "The floor is lava!" Inside, a disheveled middle-aged woman practically rides the armoire provided her. Hysterically, she shrieks at you; "Hop on the bed before your bones melt into liquid fire!"

Ynil (the only name she's ever given) suffers from paranoid delusions. While aware of herself and those around her, she randomly and suddenly becomes convinced that her surroundings have radically changed; one minute, Ynil (and present company) is falling upward through the Plane of Air. The next, they stand in minute, she's in a submersible, using the scrying panel in her room as a telescope. As long as her feet never touch the floor, however, she feels safe enough to converse with the party. Between gazing in slack-jawed wonder at the "Gates of Elysium" and waving flocks of imaginary stirges away from herself, Ynil tells the PCs her rumor. If anyone says a prayer for Ynil or offers any sort of divine comfort, she becomes very still and lucid, delivering her clue in a flat, monotone voice before exclaiming that sand is quickly filling the room.

Rumor: The patients in the main room are not all the same. Some act differently than the others. Especially the new ones... (The latter refers to the mi-go visiting the

sanitarium to satisfy their scientific curiosity.)

Clue: Talons sheathed beneath cold meat, a smile wide and sharp. Stepping out beneath the gleam of a cyclopean Night God. (This refers to the gamekeeper, Gosse, being a werewolf.)

2.g. Cronkar Ustom, Willowbrook Estate Patient #39, Private (EL 3)

If the PCs knock, a male voice calls from within the room in a clear, firm tone: "You may enter."

The conditions of this room are impeccable compared to other patients' dwellings—the floor is bare and spotless and the walls are clean. A desk sits at the room's precise center, facing the door. Behind the desk in the left corner sits a coat rack, from which hangs a meticulously groomed military uniform. Getting up from behind the desk, Private Ustom greets you warmly and welcomes you inside. Everything about this space give the impression of order and normalcy... until you see what's left of the bed and bureau in the near right corner, as both have been dismantled and repurposed into some a make-shift fort complete with flag fashioned from underwear.

Cronkar Ustom suffers from acute trauma from his time serving in the king's army. While expanding the realm along the coast, his squad fought daily against a band of harpies whose favorite tactic was to pick up a soldier and fling them off a cliff to watch their bodies skip and jangle on the rocky shore a thousand feet below. While visibly appraising the PCs gear, Private Ustom tells them a rumor and asks if the group can put in a good word with the governess so he can "return to the front."

Cronkar has no weapons or gear on his person or in the room. If anyone should “bring the war to him,” such as gifting him a canteen, bedroll, travel kit, etc. (even an illusion cast to resemble the sights and sounds of battle), Cronkar will give up his clue.

Rumor: The food being served is slowly poisoning everyone. Maggots, maggots in the porridge... (False, he just doesn't like the taste of Nurse Nauls' cooking.)

Clue: Do not open her bloody book. It is full of hissing secrets. The pages croon of lost truths. (This refers to Dr. Von Shrugul's chirurgical tome.)

Staff Quarters

2.h. Deocar Foedo

This sparse room contains a minimum of furniture and no personal effects. Both the nightstand and the bureau are bare and there is a moth-eaten blanket bundled on the filthy bed mattress. Wood planks have been hastily nailed onto the frame of the scrying portal opposite the door.

A Search check performed on the nightstand (DC 19) [**DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) or Wisdom (Perception)**] reveals a secret mark written with blood on the underside of the drawer. (The rest of Deocar's gear is either on his person or stuffed inside the spooky-looking tree by the footbridge.)

2.i. Nurse Nauls

The warm smell of juniper invites you into this comfortable abode that features a bed with crochet blanket, lace doilies upon the nightstand and bureau, and a rocking chair with sewing material set on its seat. Tapered candles sit in heavy brass holders on the washstand.

Besides a change of uniform in the bureau and a book on The Prophecies of Azathar in the nightstand drawer, there is nothing else of interest in this room.

2.j. Kitchen

A workbench, stove, and two floor-to-ceiling shelves full of tin plates and serving utensils make up this working kitchen. Heavy furniture and an iron icebox barricade the exit to the north.

Nauls prepares food here for the rest of Willowbrook's attendants, although more out of habit and need for routine than to provide actual nourishment (since the sanitarium's magic allows its occupants to exist without food or water). Close examination shows where scraps of wood have been separated from the barricade and used as fuel for the stove. There is nothing else of interest.

2.k. Pantry

Empty sacks, boxes, and barrels litter this fifteen-foot-square room, save for a barrel filled nearly to the top with turnips. Mice have obviously visited this place frequently.

Turnips are all that is left of what was an ample supply of foodstuff available for cooking during normal times. Meager scraps are all that remain.

2.l. Latrine

The indoor plumbing required for showers and toilets makes it apparent that Willowbrook spares no expense when it comes to the comfort of its staff. Sadly, this room has also been savaged by neglect, resulting in dark, rust-colored streaks running down the tiled walls and chunks of dirty porcelain lying about.

A full-length mirror, mounted against the wall, remains surprisingly intact and clean. Any character who passes in front of the mirror swears they spot a shadow or hint of movement within the mirror's reflection, yet no such thing is spied in the room itself. Any character taking a look at their own reflection realizes how pale and fatigued they appear.

2.m. Lockers

A row of wood lockers runs the length of this wall.

This is where the orderlies of Willowbrook kept their spare uniforms and some personal effects. All are empty now except the most southern closet, where a secured footlocker remains. A Disable Device check (DC 20) **[DC 15 thieves' tools check]** opens the lock to reveal a pair of cracked leather boots and a set of *manacles of cooperation* **[see Appendix B for this new magic item]**.

3. The Laboratory (EL 11)

This 40-foot by 50-foot chamber features an array of strange devices and macabre, scratch-built arcane instruments. Along each wall sits a long table covered with utensils necessary for experiments in alchemy and surgery: flasks, beakers, burners, and tubes; a vicious and blood-stained menagerie of blades and saws; and an impressive collection of vials containing liquids of virtually every hue. Between the corner and a heavy partition, fluorescent-green ichor leaks from the bottom of a cabinet marked "HAZARDOUS." Hand-drawn anatomy sketches are posted on the wall above a writing desk cluttered with notes, charts, and journals. In the room's center, framed by the glow of three magical lights hanging above it, sits a sturdy, blood-stained table with shackles bolted on top to secure a patient in place. Nauseating vapors of sulfur and iron linger in the air. A toddler

sits in a crib next to the table. The child's freshly shaved head displays an incision barely held together with crude staples, the length of which encompasses the entire skull just above its crossed and sunken eyes. She raises her head to stare at you dumbly as saliva drools endlessly down her front.

Dr. Von Shrugal has repurposed this room from an alchemical lab into her operating suite. She can be found here during daylight hours working on a patient or taking care of the child, Marissa, whom the doctor rescued from her cannibalistic mother—a victim of the madness sweeping the hospital and who now resides in the lobby. Any reagent or substance used for alchemical concoctions can be found here, as well several healer's kits and a set of masterwork thieves' tools (now used as surgical instruments). Dr. Von Shrugal's blood-splattered chirurgical tome rests on the operating table.

Treasure: Swirling inside a glass vial on a workbench is the suppressed energy of an asphyx (see this new monster in Appendix A) **[Appendix B for the 5E version]**. There are 10 healer's kits here as well. A 10-minute search of the room locates a few other alchemical supplies of value, including acid (3 vials), antitoxin (2 vials), and *potions of healing* (3).

Dr. Alaine Von Shrugal, Willowbrook Estate Governess

Dr. Alaine Von Shrugal	CR 11
Human Expert 6/ Alchemist 10 LG (currently LE) Medium humanoid (human) Init +1; Senses Perception +23	
DEFENSE	
AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15 (+5 armor, +1 Dex) hp 92 (16d8+10) Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +12; immune vs. poison	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft. Melee mwk dagger +7/+2 (1d4/19–20) Ranged bomb +8/+3 (5d6+5 fire + blind, DC 19) or dagger +7 (1d4/19–20)	

Special Attacks bomb 14/day (5d6+5 fire + blind, DC 19)

Alchemist Extracts Prepared (CL 10th)

2nd—detect thoughts (DC 17), invisibility, lesser restoration

1st—comprehend languages, cure light wounds, detect secret doors, disguise self, expeditious retreat

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 13, **Con** 8, **Int** 20, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 12

Base Atk +7/+2; **CMB** +7; **CMD** 18

Feats Alertness, Brew Potion, Deft Hands, Extra Discovery, Iron Will, Persuasive, Point-Blank Shot, Throw Anything, Toughness,

Skills Bluff +5, Climb +5, Craft (alchemy) +22, Diplomacy +18 (+22 to gather information), Disable Device +22, Disguise +10, Heal +23, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (local) +17, Knowledge (nature) +10, Perception +23, Sense Motive +23, Sleight of Hand +10, Spellcraft +11, Swim +4

Languages Common, Dwarven, Elven, Skald

SQ alchemy (alchemy crafting +5, identify potions), discoveries (blinding bomb, distill essence (see appendix), extend potion 4/day, precise bombs [4 squares], tanglefoot bomb), mutagen (+4/−2, +2 natural, 50 minutes), poison use, swift alchemy

Combat Gear *dust of appearance*, *elixir of truth*, *feather token (bird)*, *potion of invisibility*, *potion of jump*, *potion of see invisibility*, *potion of spider climb*, *wand of owl's wisdom* (8 charges), acid (3), smokesticks (2), sunrods (2), tanglefoot bag, tindertwigs (5); Other Gear *+1 chain shirt*, daggers (2), mwk dagger, *cloak of resistance +1*, *ring of swimming*, alchemy crafting kit, formula book (contains all prepared extracts as well as the following: 2nd—*see invisibility*; 1st—*bomber's eye*, *detect undead*, *jump*, *identify*, *negate aroma*, *shield*, *true strike*), chirurgery tome, healer's kit, mwk thieves' tools

TACTICS

Dr. Von Shrugal doesn't want a fight to break out—especially not in her laboratory surrounded by volatile chemicals and delicate instruments. If talking and parley can prevent a fight, she'll go that route. That being said, if attacked or if her patients are threatened, Dr. Shrugal responds by fleeing from the room as her first tactic. Once she has a little space between her and her pursuers, she uses the expeditious retreat extract on herself and then drinks her potion of invisibility. If cornered or if patients are threatened, Von Shrugal resorts to her alchemical bombs, careful to keep patients out of harm's way.

She becomes unhinged and furious if one of the patients suffers injury, intentionally or not, and she will unleash her arsenal of bombs with lethal accuracy.

Dr. Alainne Von Shrugal

Medium humanoid (human), lawful evil (normally lawful good)

Armor Class 12 (*cloak of protection*) (15 with *mage armor*)

Hit Points 62 (14d8)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 10 (+0); **DEX** 13 (+1); **CON** 10 (+0); **INT** 20 (+5); **CHA** 12 (+1)

Saving Throws Con +3, Int +8, Wis +5

Skills Arcana +8, History +8, Investigation +8, Nature +8, Medicine +8

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages Common, Dwarvish, Elvish, Orc

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Minor Alchemy. Alainne can perform a special alchemical procedure on one object composed of wood, stone, iron, copper, or silver. She can transform one material into another, at a rate of 1 cubic foot per 10 minutes. The material reverts to its original substance 1 hour later.

Transmuter's Stone. As a transmuter, Alainne possesses a transmuter's stone. This object grants her proficiency to Constitution saving throws.

Spellcasting. Alainne is a 14th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *light*, *friends*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (4 slots): *detect magic*, *charm person*, *mage armor*, *ray of sickness*

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

3rd level (3 slots): *dispel magic*, *lightning bolt*, *fly*

4th level (3 slots): *dimension door*, *fabricate*, *greater invisibility*

5th level (2 slots): *creation*, *modify memory*

6th level (1 slot): *mass suggestion*

7th level (1 slot): *finger of death*

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 3 (1d4 + 1) piercing damage.

Equipment

Cloak of protection, dust of disappearance, elixir of health, feather token (bird), potion of speed, potion of greater healing, daggers (2), alchemist's supplies, formula book, healer's kit, thieves' tools, vials of acid (3), tinderbox, surgical tome.

TACTICS

Dr. Von Shrugal doesn't want a fight to break out—especially not in her laboratory surrounded by volatile chemicals and delicate instruments. If talking and parley can prevent a fight, she'll go that route. That being said, if attacked, Dr. Shrugal responds with escape from the room as her first priority by means of *misty step*. Once she has a little space between her and her pursuers, she casts *mage armor* on herself and sprinkling herself with *dust of disappearance*. If cornered or if patients are threatened, Von Shrugal tries using *mass suggestion* in hopes of avoiding further violence. Failing that, she reluctantly resorts to *lightning bolt* and, if truly endangered, *finger of death*. She becomes unhinged and furious if a patient suffers harm, intentionally or not, and she will unleash her most powerful spells with intent to kill.

Development

Dr. Von Shrugal stays in her office or its adjoining laboratory at all times, leaving only to find and escort another patient back to operate on. When first encountered, Dr. Von Shrugal is operating on a patient and will try her best to continue uninterrupted.

If befriended, the governess can relate any information mentioned in Dr. Von Shrugal's Story, including her extreme suspicion that the gamekeeper, Gosse Guarin, is behind the conspiracy since this sickness began the day he stopped delivery of game to the hospital. She believes he has some deep, dark secret he's hiding, and it has infected her sanitarium.

Dr. Shrugal also strongly encourages the PCs undergo an operation to immunize themselves from the madness affecting the sanitarium. She will perform a lobotomy on any who ask. Without such protection, the adventurers are at increasing risk for permanent madness and worse—such a fate

seems inevitable to all who remain in Willowbrook.

If Von Shrugal overhears any character describe hallucinations, feelings of dread or paranoia, alien emotions, or similar symptoms, she will warn the party that they are already suffering the early onset of whatever curse has befallen Willowbrook. Although she does not understand what is happening or why (and, in fact, blames the wrong people), she has a strong sense that the characters may be the only ones able to stop something truly horrible from happening. She believes that if the characters are not protected from the encroaching madness that they, too, will fall under its power and lose their faculties.

Special Item: Chirurgical Tome

These loose pages seem to have been torn from a larger volume of work and are sewn together with sinew and ligament. The papers contain diagrams, tables, and instructions of how to perform a lobotomy. Anyone reading this tome develops an obsession with blood and vital organs and observing their operation. Whenever a living creature adjacent to the reader is subjected to a bleed effect, the reader becomes fascinated (DC 19 Will negates) **[DC 14 Wisdom]** for 1 round as they observe the flow of blood. This same effect occurs whenever an attacker confirms a critical hit against a living creature adjacent to the reader.

Dr. Von Shrugal's Story

"I am in over my head. When I was dispatched to Willowbrook by Royal Order seven years ago, I had no trouble fulfilling my duties to the crown. Running the day-to-day operations of the estate, I provided residents with the best care available to overcome addiction, treat mental afflictions, and correct physical ailments... all while protecting the identities of my charges from gossipers and political enemies alike.

That all changed six months ago, when my staff began reporting that patients seemed to be getting worse, not better. Close examination revealed that every few days, a new patient demonstrated abrupt signs of being incurably insane. None of our usual treatments seemed to work, and even the most powerful clerics and healers on my payroll were ineffectual. Then, even the staff began losing their minds.

Worse yet, they seemed to be working together to thwart any attempt at helping cure themselves: First, the Arrivals Room was disabled, which made it impossible to teleport anyone to or from the clinic. The master keys went missing. Then the records room caught on fire and everything that was left was sacked, mixing up the identities of everyone in my care. The gameskeeper stopped delivering fresh meat. One by one, my staff either succumbed to the madness engulfing this hospital or fell victim to the seemingly not-so-random acts of violence perpetrated by the ever-growing number of lunatics.

In desperation, I searched through every file I could find. I looted every available archive for information as to what might cause this epidemic. Instead of the cause, however, I found the solution. Or at least a passable solution. Rifling through what remained of the records room, I found a blood-spattered tome that detailed a series of grisly surgical procedures, one of which professed to rewire the brain...

At first, I balked. What this book suggested went against every moral principle I held dear. As the days turned to weeks and the situation became such that I could only rely on my head nurse as an ally—and a suspicious one at that—I began to operate in secret. I used the tome as a guide. Having no previous experience with medicine, my initial surgeries proved disastrous. Patients died on the operating table, sometimes several a day until I honed my skill. One

consequence of these deaths was discovering I could capture part of the patient's essence, what I call their asphyx, for restorative purposes. If not captured, an asphyx can turn and drain you of vitality. Twice I let one slip away from me, and now fear they are roaming the hospital, preying on the unsuspecting.

Eventually I performed what I thought was a passable operation, altering a portion of the patient's brain to the point of near-cataplexy while still keeping the subject alive. I released this subject into the general population and observed as, day after day, the patient remained immune to the chaotic, murderous traits that had befallen so many of his fellow invalids.

Knowing the implications of my actions, I now believe that the procedures are the only thing preventing the total psychotic conversion of everyone at Willowbrook. I hope to lobotomize the remaining unaffected and then rely on the estate's continuous sustenance effect to give us enough life-sustaining nourishment to wait until rescue. After that, I'm almost positive the king's meisters will be able to reverse the condition."

As a token of her cooperation, Dr. Von Shrugal takes the party out into lobby (where the incurables are), climbs atop a pile of debris, and shouts to get everyone's attention:

"THOSE OF YOU WHO KNOW MY VOICE AND CALL ME "FRIEND"— HEED THE CALL OF THESE CLOSE ALLIES WHO STAND WITH ME, FOR THEY ARE YOUR FRIENDS, TOO!!"

With that, all patients who have been lobotomized are now under the control of the PCs as well as the doctor.

The Lobotomy Procedure

Having PCs go under the knife of Dr. Von Shrugal represents a pivotal moment in the adventure and should be played with great panache for dramatic effect. GMs should acquaint themselves with the following rules to ensure this encounter runs as smoothly as possible.

When performing surgery, Dr. Shrugal makes three skill checks against the listed DC, one each against Craft (alchemy), Disable Device, and Heal [Intelligence (Arcana), thieves' tools, and Wisdom (Medicine)], the latter representing the doctor's skill at working with the body's intricate and delicate organic mechanisms. If all three skill checks succeed, the procedure is a complete success. Two successful checks produce a partial success, and one check represents a failed procedure. If all checks fail, the procedure goes horribly awry, resulting in dire complications. If the result of any skill check is a natural 1, the target must succeed at a Fortitude save with a DC equal to the procedure's DC [DC 20 Constitution save] or else the entire procedure results in malpractice regardless of the result of the other two skill checks. If two checks produce natural 1s, malpractice automatically occurs and the patient dies if it fails the Fortitude [Constitution] save. If all three checks produce natural 1s, the patient dies with no save allowed.

Preparation: In order for the surgery to be successful, Dr. Shrugal needs to work in a controlled environment without distractions. To achieve this, she insists that no more than two people be allowed in the operating room with her: the patient and one other to assist her in the procedure. If the doctor does not have at least one person available to assist with the procedure, including holding the book and its anatomical diagrams at the proper angle, Dr. Shrugal takes a -5 penalty [disadvantage] to all associated skill checks.

GM's Note: Have any player whose PC is not involved with the operation leave the room while the procedure takes place. This will emphasize the tense and mysterious elements of this encounter, leaving only the testimony of the sole witness (if any) to inform other players of what transpired.

Lobotomization

Dr. Shrugal can make a subject immune—or at least resistant—to mind-affecting spells, spell-like abilities, and effects.

DC 25 Craft (alchemy), Disable Device, and Heal [DC 20 Intelligence (Arcana), thieves' tools, and Wisdom (Medicine)]

Time Required: 1d2 hours

Materials: 6 applications of a healer's kit

Complete Success: The patient's emotional centers are completely severed and isolated. The patient gains immunity to all effects with the emotion or mind-affecting descriptor (including fear effects) [immunity to being charmed or frightened, immune to the symbol of insanity and crown of madness] or that provide morale bonuses [the character gains no benefit from bardic inspiration or beneficial enchantment spells that grant a bonus, such as bless]. The patient's diverted synapses result in a -2 initiative penalty. The patient loses all free will but knows who its friends are and will follow instructions to the best of their ability.

Partial Success: The patient's emotional centers are deadened but not completely severed. The patient suffers 4 points of Charisma and Intelligence drain [suffers disadvantage on Charisma and Intelligence ability and skill checks], but gains a +4 alchemical bonus to saving throws against effects with the emotion or mind-affecting descriptor (including fear effects) [gains advantage on saving throws to resist being charmed or frightened, as well as resting the effects of symbol of insanity].

In addition, the patient gains only half the normal benefit from morale bonuses (rounding down) [the patient gains only one-half (rounded down) benefit from any spell or effect that adds a bonus to d20 ability checks, attack rolls, or saving throws, such as bardic inspiration or bless]. The patient suffers a -4 penalty to initiative rolls [disadvantage on initiative rolls].

If the Charisma drain caused by a partially successful procedure is healed, all benefits of the lobotomy are lost [if the disadvantage to Charisma and Intelligence ability and skill checks is removed, the subject loses all benefits from the procedure].

Any character who undergoes the procedure with complete or partial success is immune to the Dark Young's insanity power [this is a variant of *symbol of insanity*].

Failure: The patient's mental pathways are scrambled. The patient gains a +4 alchemical bonus to saving throws against effects with the emotion descriptor (including fear effects) [the patient gains advantage on saving throws to resist being charmed or frightened], but takes a -4 penalty to saving throws against effects that cause confusion, insanity, or discord [disadvantage on saving throws to resist spells that inflict confusion, insanity, or discord, e.g., *confusion*, *crown of madness*, or *symbol of insanity*]. If the target fails a saving throw vs. one of these types of effects, there is a 50% chance he becomes confused instead of suffering the normal effect. In addition, any morale bonus the patient receives is 50% likely to function instead as a penalty, and any bonus or penalty to one of his mental ability scores is 50% likely to affect a different mental ability score (choose randomly). [Any magical effect that normally provides advantage on Intelligence- or Wisdom-based ability checks, skill checks, or saving throws has a 50% chance of instead imposing disadvantage on the creature with the failed lobotomy.]

Malpractice: The patient is affected as *feeblemind* with no immunity benefits and automatically contracts either cackle fever [disadvantage on Wisdom ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws] or mindfire [disadvantage on Intelligence ability checks, skill checks, and saving throws] (equal chance of either).

Reversal: Either *heal* or *regenerate* will undo the results of the operation, removing both the benefits and the negative aspects.

3.a. Governess's Quarters

Connected to the laboratory by a thick mahogany door, this 20-foot by 30-foot room has the same type of furniture as the patient rooms, albeit of superior quality. A four-poster bed covered with lush blankets sits against the wall. Next to it, three armoires stand side-by-side. A dinette set occupies the middle of the room, while a small bathroom extends off to the right. Windows set into the left and opposite wall have been boarded up. An open pocket door allows access to some sort of library.

This is Von Shrugel's private quarters and where she resides after sundown. Other than her personal effects, the only item of interest is a *threshold guardian* [see Appendix B for this new magic item] that hangs above the entryway, placed there by one of the governess's predecessors as a ward of last resort.

3.b. Records Room

The last room at this end of the asylum once housed all patient records. Scorched bookshelves stretch from floor to ceiling along the walls. A badly singed owlbear rug lies in front of the fireplace. Stacks of vellum piled waist-high are placed around the room, their contents revealing hundreds of patient names, bios, mental ailments, and treatment procedures attempted. Binders that



The Attic

previously secured these pages sit next to the fireplace and now serve as fuel to keep the area warm. A pocket door leads into Dr. Shrugul's quarters. A thin layer of ash coats the floor. Streaks of soot coat the walls.

In one corner of the room sits an old rocking chair, its surface charred and pitted. A pale porcelain doll of a young girl, her clothes blackened, sits in the chair and stares back at you with unblinking yellow eyes. You swear the rocking chair rocks back and forth, almost imperceptibly.

As noted by Dr. Shrugul, all surviving information for Willowbrook's patients has been ransacked and rearranged. Any hope of connecting a set of records to a specific patient is lost. Shrugul is loath to burn the remaining vellum, however, due to her loyalty to her charges and the crown.

If a character approaches the porcelain doll, she turns to face the individual and speaks in the boisterous voice of an energetic young girl eager to meet new friends. This is merely the effect of a permanent magic mouth placed on the doll, one that triggers whenever someone approaches next to her. The GM should have the doll say something that would seem reasonable in other situations, but now comes across as creepy and unnerving.

4. The Attic (EL 9)

A heavy silence permeates this stuffy loft whose dimensions match the sanitarium staff's hall and quarters two floors below. Thick wooden pillars spaced 30 feet apart support slanted ceilings that rise diagonally from the floor on either side to meet at the apex at 20 feet above. Barred windows, yet to be boarded up, are set into each end of the

attic and allow enough light for you to make out seven shapeless mounds standing motionless at random intervals along the room's length. These forms, draped by large, white sheets of fabric, vary in size and diameter.

The mounds range from 3 to 8 feet in diameter and height. Each mound includes dusty furniture, cracked mirrors, and filthy uniforms, all heaped into a pile.

This room harbors the two asphyx that escaped after Dr. Von Shrugul created them. Confused, they each choose one victim to concentrate their attacks on. (See Appendix A, New Monsters, for details on the asphyx) **[Appendix B for the 5E version].**

ASPHYX	CR 7
XP 3,200	
N Small outsider (incorporeal)	
Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft. all-around vision; Perception +10	
DEFENSE	
AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 deflection, +1 size)	
hp 73 (7d10+14)	
Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +7	
Defensive Abilities incorporeal, primal essence	
Immune outsider traits	
Weaknesses consumable	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft., fly 100 ft. (perfect)	
Melee 2 slams +9 (1d4+1/19–20 plus 1d4 Constitution damage)	
STATISTICS	
Str -, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 18	
Base Atk +8; CMB +9; CMD 19 (can't be tripped or grappled)	
Feats Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (slam)	
Skills Fly +10, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Perception +10, Sense Motive +6, Stealth +5	
Languages Common (cannot speak)	
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Constitution Damage (Su): A creature hit by the slam of an asphyx must succeed on a DC 18 Fortitude save	

or take 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Consumable (Ex): An asphyx reduced to zero hit points devolves into primal energy and is stunned for one round. During this time, any creature adjacent to the asphyx can inhale its inert energy, gaining benefits as per the spell lesser restoration. Alternatively, this energy can be captured and preserved indefinitely with a successful DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check.

Primal Essence (Ex): As primal life energy, an asphyx can be subdued but never destroyed. An asphyx reduced to zero hit points devolves into primal energy and is stunned for one round, then travels at maximum speed in a random direction for 24 hours. Having recovered some of its health, it resumes searching for a host.

Scaling the Encounter

EL 10: Add a third asphyx.

You can greater complicate matters by having a number of spaces of the attic floor be rotted and weak; if a creature steps on one of these spaces, it must succeed at a DC 18 Reflex saving throw or its movement ends in that space. The creature is entangled until the start of its next turn.

To further spice up things a bit, throw in some billowing clouds of dust stirred up in the fight. This gives creatures outside of melee range partial concealment.

Asphyx	CR 4
<i>Small undead, unaligned</i>	
Armor Class 11	
Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)	
Speed 30 ft., fly 100 ft. (hover)	
STR 1	DEX 12
CON 14	INT 12
WIS 11	CHA 18
(-5)	(+1)
(+2)	(+1)
(+0)	(+4)
Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons	
Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison	

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common (cannot speak)

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Sense Life. The asphyx can magically sense the presence of living creatures up to 60 feet away. It knows the general direction living creatures are in, but not their precise locations.

Incorporeal Movement. The asphyx can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It suffers 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Consumable. An asphyx reduced to zero hit points devolves into primal energy and is stunned for one round. During this time, any creature adjacent to the asphyx can inhale its inert energy, gaining benefits as per the spell *lesser restoration*. Alternatively, this energy can be captured and preserved indefinitely with a successful DC 15 alchemist supplies tool check.

Primal Essence. As primal life energy, an asphyxia can be subdued but never destroyed. An asphyx reduced to zero hit points dissipates and is stunned for one round. It then travels at maximum speed in a random direction for 24 hours. Having recovered some of its health, it resumes searching for a host.

ACTIONS

Touch of Death. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) necrotic damage. In addition, the creature must succeed at a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or suffer disadvantage on its Constitution saves until the end of its next turn.

Scaling the Encounter

CR 7: Add a third asphyx.

CR 8: In addition to third asphyx, include a poltergeist (variant specter, MM).

The GM can further complicate matters by having a number of spaces of the attic floor be rotted and weak; if a creature steps on one of these spaces, it must succeed at a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or its movement ends in that space. The creature is restrained until the start of its next turn.

To further spice up things a bit, throw in some billowing clouds of dust stirred up in the fight. All ranged attacks further than five feet suffer disadvantage.

Treasure. Hidden in mounds of salvage is Queadon's stash of stolen goods, which consists of:

- 18 rutilated quartz gems (5 gp each)
- A leather pouch with 543 sp, 235 gp, and 28 pp
- 750 gp pieces of jade
- +1 vampiric dagger with the word "drink" written in common along the blade (identify DC 20)
- +2 sling (faint evocation; identify with spellcraft DC 21)
- Potions of enlarge person, levitate, mage armor, protection from good (all CL 4)
- Scrolls of hypnotism, invisibility sphere, ray of enfeeblement (all CL 5)
- Wand of summon nature's ally II (17 charges)
- Kyton ring (identify DC 22)
- Gloves of feasting (identify DC 24)
- Mantle of the darkest night (identify DC 20)
- *Summoning journal.* This filthy booklet is nearly illegible due to the thousands of scribbles written over one another throughout its 20 pages. An hour of study allows a reader to decipher the following: a sketch matching the *secret mark* seen earlier, a hand-drawn map of the estate with a large "X" marking a spot at the rear of the property, and the words "waxing gibbous" and "Lord of the Wood." The number "25" also appears over and over throughout the manuscript. This tome was stolen from Deocar, though there are no distinguishing marks in the book connecting him to it. Deciphering the journal

requires several successful skill checks.

- Knowledge (nature) or Survival DC 15 **[Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) DC 10]**: The PCs locate the region marked with an “X.”
- Knowledge (religion) DC 15 **[Intelligence (Religion) DC 15]**: Among other things, the number “25” corresponds with the number of sacrifices needed to summon an evil deity.
- Knowledge (religion) DC 20 **[Intelligence (Religion) DC 15]**: “Waxing Gibbous” refers to what phase the moon must be in for a sacrificial ritual of that magnitude to succeed.
- Knowledge (nature) or Survival DC 20 **[Intelligence (Nature) or Wisdom (Survival) DC 15]**: The moon will reach waxing gibbous on the second night after the PCs arrival at Willowbrook.
- Knowledge (planes) DC 25 **[Intelligence (Arcana) DC 20]**: “Lord of the Wood” is an ancient title used to worship Shub-Niggurath, an outer god.

For 5E:

- 18 quartz gems (5 gp each)
- A leather pouch with 543 sp, 235 gp, and 28 pp
- 750 gp pieces of jade
- +1 vicious dagger with the word “drink” written in common along the blade
- +2 sling
- Potions of invisibility, heroism, resistance (psychic), and four potions of greater healing
- Spell scrolls: dispel magic, major image, ray of enfeeblement, and suggestion
- Wand of web
- Ring of resistance (necrotic)

- *loun stone of protection*
- *Cloak of the bat*
- *Summoning journal*. See above for details.

Sanitarium Encounter: The Three Mi-Gos (EL 9)



At some point while the characters explore the sanitarium and conduct their interviews, they observe a trio of older, wizened men that seem to watch them intently—almost as if studying the party's every movement. On occasion, the characters may notice these three men following the party and

whispering among themselves with buzzing voices like the droning of bees.

When confronted, the three men respond in unison. They explain they are fearful “of the damaged ones” and they only seek safety. All three seem strangely excited or perhaps agitated.

These men are, in fact, mi-go wearing fleshy disguises to make them appear like human patients of the facility. A successful Sense Motive check **[Wisdom (Insight)]** against either their Disguise or Bluff **[Deception]** skill checks can identify that they are not who—or even what—they appear to be. If exposed as to their true form, they first attempt to flee and hide. Failing that, they fight back.

These creatures have nothing to do with the wave of insanity striking Willowbrook, and they have no direct involvement in Deocar or his ritual to summon Shub-Niggurath. They are, however, highly interested to observe how humans react to madness and the impending presence of an outer god. The mi-go are here purely for scientific curiosity, although this curiosity suffers from an absolute lack of morality or compassion.

Mi-Go (3)	CR 6
XP 2,400	
NE Medium plant	
Init +5; Senses blindsight 30 ft., low-light vision; Perception +12	
DEFENSE	
AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14 (+5 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural)	
hp 66 (7d8+35)	
Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +4	
DR 5/slashing; Immune cold, plant traits; Resist electricity 10, fire 10	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (good)	
Melee 4 claws +10 (1d4+3 plus grab)	
Special Attacks evisceration, grab, sneak attack +2d6	
STATISTICS	
Str 16, Dex 20, Con 21, Int 25, Wis 14, Cha 15	

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +8 (+12 grapple); **CMD** 24 (32 vs. trip)

Feats Combat Reflexes, Deceitful, Dodge, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +18, Disable Device +12, Disguise +18, Fly +9, Heal +9, Knowledge (arcana, geography) +14, Perception +12, Spellcraft +14, Stealth +15; Racial Modifiers +4 Bluff, +4 Disguise

Languages Aklo, Common, Mi-Go

SQ deceptive, item creation, no breath, starflight

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Deceptive (Ex): A mi-go is a master of deception. It gains a +4 racial bonus on Bluff and Disguise checks. Bluff and Disguise are always class skills for a mi-go.

Evisceration (Ex): A mi-go’s claws are capable of swiftly and painfully performing surgical operations upon helpless creatures or those it has grappled. When a mi-go makes a successful grapple check, in addition to any other effects caused by a successful grapple, it deals sneak attack damage to the victim. A creature that takes this damage must succeed at a DC 18 Fortitude save or take 1d4 points of ability damage from the invasive surgery (the type of ability damage dealt is chosen by the mi-go at the time the evisceration occurs). The save DC is Dexterity-based.

TACTICS

The mi-go have no compunction whatsoever at using nearby patients to provide cover or to otherwise delay the PCs. The mi-go aren’t interested in a fight to the death, but death is preferable to capture at the hands of such primitive creatures as humans.

Scaling the Encounter

EL 8: Remove one mi-go from the group.

EL 10: Add another mi-go to the group.

Have this fourth creature currently under the effects of an invisibility spell, having it attempt to strike one of the party’s spellcasters by surprise.

Mi-Go	CR 3
<i>Medium plant, neutral evil</i>	
Armor Class 18 (natural armor)	
Hit Points 51 (6d8 + 24)	
Speed 20 ft., fly 50 ft.	
STR 14	DEX 20
CON 18	INT 20
WIS 14	CHA 14
(+2)	(+5)
(+4)	(+5)
(+2)	(+2)
Skills Deception +8, Perception +5, Persuasion +8, Stealth +8	

Damage Immunities cold

Damage Resistances electricity, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities exhaustion

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Aklo, Common, Mi-Go

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Deceptive. Mi-go have learned how to mimic the voices and sounds of other creatures perfectly. A mi-go gains advantage on any Charisma (Deception) skill check it makes when mimicking voices. In addition, if given at least one hour in which to prepare, a mi-go can create a surprisingly effective and believable disguise out of the skin of another (typically unwilling) creature. When attempting to pass itself off as another race, the mi-go receives advantage on Charisma (Deception) checks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mi-go makes two claw attacks.

Pincer Attack. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage, and the creature is grappled. Until this grapple ends, the victim is restrained (escape DC 15), and the mi-go cannot use its pincers on another creature.

Eviscerate. Each round the mi-go succeeds at grappling a creature, it automatically does an additional 7 (2d6) points of slashing damage. In addition, the victim must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or have its hit point maximum decrease by this same amount. This effect ends after the creature completes a long rest or receives the benefits of a *heal* spell.

TACTICS

The mi-go have no compunction whatsoever against using nearby patients to provide cover or to otherwise delay the PCs. The mi-go aren't interested in a fight to the death, but death is preferable to capture at the hands of such primitive creatures as humans.

Scaling the Encounter

CR 5: Remove one mi-go from the group.

CR 7: Add another mi-go to the group. Have this fourth creature currently under the effects of an invisibility spell, having it attempt to strike one of the party's

spellcasters by surprise. To give the mi-go some ranged punch, give one of them the equivalent of a wand of lightning bolts (although it appears as a piece of alien technology, rather than a traditional wand).

Treasure. Each of these creatures wears a fleshy, stitched disguise, stripped and surgically altered from an unfortunate patient to serve their need for infiltration. In addition, each mi-go carries the following items:

- 3d12 strange, oblong pieces of strange metal unlike anything terrestrial, but similar to adamantine and thus worth 200 gp per piece to a good blacksmith or dwarven metal-worker;
- A crystal vial filled with a swirling blue, sludge-like liquid. Although the contents smell like strong chemicals, each vial provides the benefit of a *potion of stoneskin* [**potion of invulnerability**]. As a downside, one hour after consuming the contents, the imbiber suffers nausea and becomes sickened [**poisoned**] for the next hour. A successful DC 20 Heal check [**DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine)**] can reduce this time to 10 minutes.
- A polished metallic cylinder, 6 inches tall and 1 inch in diameter, with a gemstone stud placed at one end. When the wielder presses the cylinder against a wall and depresses the stud, the device activates *passwall* as a spell-like effect (CL 9), except the opening only remains for 1 minute. The object must then recharge for 2 hours before it can function again. The cylinder radiates magic, but it exists because of mi-go technology, not arcane craftsmanship.
- One of the mi-go also carries a metal flask that contains syrupy green slime that smells like burnt wood.

The contents function like a *potion of invisibility*.

GM's Note: Although not detailed as part of this adventure, the presence of the mi-go can lead to future adventures. These creatures have established a colony not more than a mile from Willowbrook inside a (now) abandoned mine and as part of a ruined keep. The colony grows by the day, and the mi-go have been busy kidnapping specimens and studying the kingdom and its inhabitants for their own inscrutable purposes, although it may have something to do with an ancient relic buried deep inside the mine. The king may well ask the party to investigate this threat and deal with the alien invaders. To help spark such an adventure, the characters can find a couple clues on the creatures' bodies pointing to the nearby colony, including some trinkets known to come from a local shrine near where the colony stands, or bits and pieces of raw iron ore taken from the mine.

5. Bridge (EL 9)

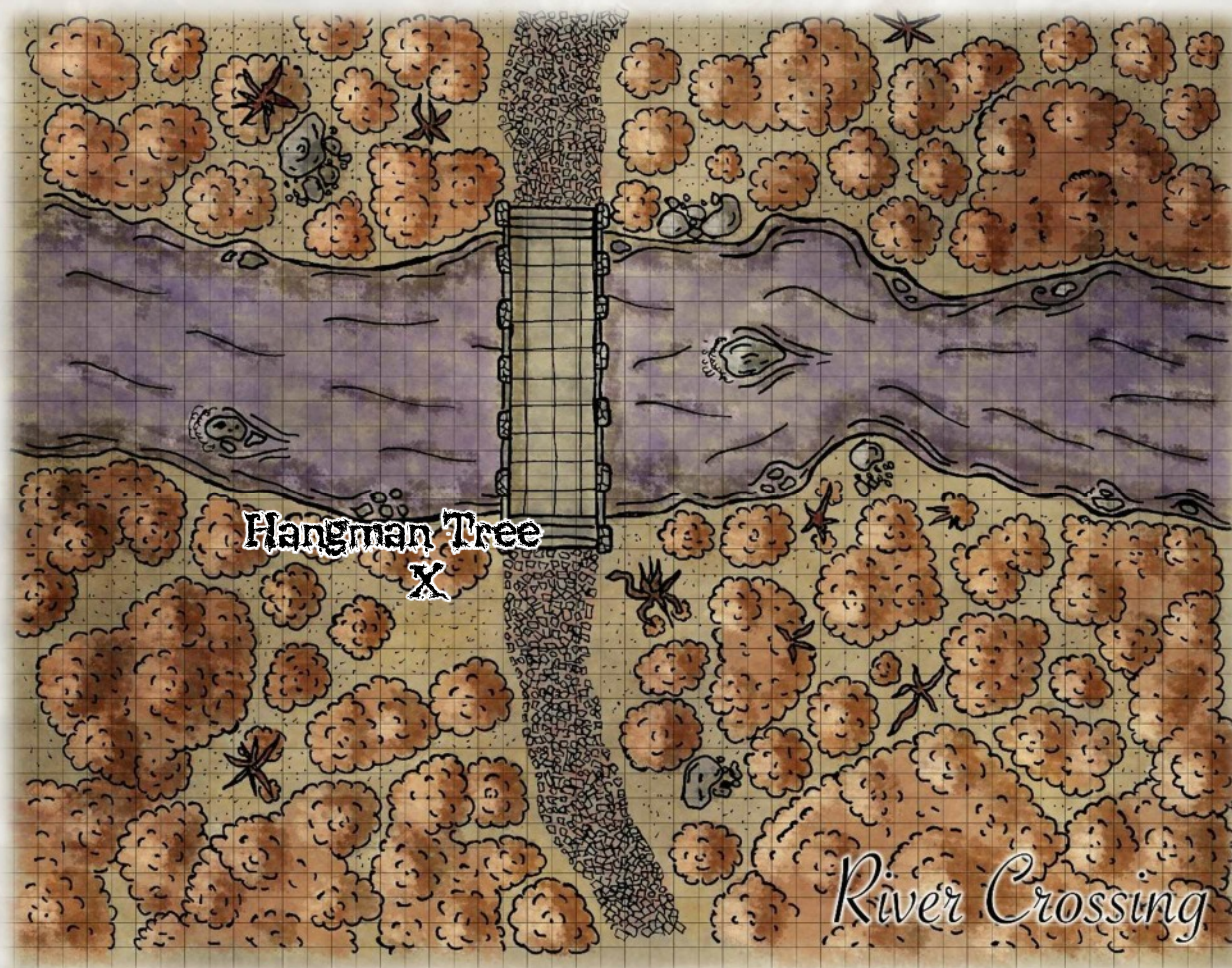
A bridge wide enough for a carriage spans the river that cuts through the property. Over 60 feet long, its three arches are set deep into the river bed. Although it looks in terrible disrepair you sense it is probably sturdy enough to cross. A copse of large trees stands close to either side of the bridge, their bare branches interlacing high above like so many bony fingers. Gnarly hollows in an enormous tree to the right seem to hint at facial features, including deep-set eyes and a mouth twisted into a repulsive rictus.

The scary-looking tree is just that. Deocar uses its unnerving appearance to keep prying hands away from the treasure he has buried near the tree's roots in a large lead coffer (DC 25 Perception check at base of tree to find) **[DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation)]** In it he keeps all his

possessions except his wand of stone shape, wand of charm person **[see Appendix B for both new magic items]**, and a set of keys to the estate.

The area's real threat arises from the bridge's left side, where a hangman tree and a scythe tree wait 20 feet off the trail for prey to approach. When anyone approaches within 50 feet, the hangman tree emits its hallucinatory spores, after which both trees wait to ambush whoever comes within 10 feet of the bridge. They use the river to their advantage, dragging grappled opponents into the water in an attempt to drown them. These creatures have been warped and twisted by the alien magic affecting the area. Once animated, they fight to the death.





HANGMAN TREE	CR 7
XP 3,200 NE Huge plant Init +3; Senses blindsight 60 ft.; Perception +11	
DEFENSE	
AC 20, touch 7, flat-footed 20 (–1 Dex, +13 natural, –2 size) hp 84 (8d8+48) Fort +12, Ref +3, Will +5 Immune plant traits; SR 18 Weaknesses vulnerable to electricity	
OFFENSE	
Speed 10 ft. Melee 3 vines +11 (1d6+7 plus grab and pull) Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft. Special Attacks constrict (1d6+7), hallucinatory spores, pull (vine, 5 feet), strangle, swallow whole (2d6+7 bludgeoning, AC 16, 8 hp), vines	
STATISTICS	

Str 25, Dex 8, Con 23, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 10 Base Atk +6; CMB +15 (+19 grapple); CMD 24 Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Perception) Skills Perception +11, Stealth –2 Languages Sylvan
SPECIAL ABILITIES
Hallucinatory Spores (Ex): Once per day as a standard action, a hangman tree can release a cloud of spores in a 50-foot-radius spread. Creatures in the area must make a DC 20 Will save or believe the hangman tree to be a perfectly ordinary tree—or at worst, a treant or some other friendly tree-like creature. An affected creature becomes passive for 2d6 minutes and refuses to attack the hangman tree during this time. An affected creature can attempt a new Will save each round that the tree attacks an ally—if a hallucinating creature is attacked by the tree, it gains a +4 bonus on its Will save to see through the

hallucination. This is a mind-affecting compulsion effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Vines (Ex): A hangman tree's vines are primary attacks that deal bludgeoning damage. When a hangman tree grapples a foe with its vines, the tree does not gain the grappled condition. A hangman tree that uses swallow whole transfers a pinned creature from a vine to inside its trunk.

SCYTHE TREE	CR 6
XP 2,400 CE Huge plant	
Init -1; Senses blindsight 30 ft., low-light vision; Perception +16	
DEFENSE	
AC 19, touch 7, flat-footed 19 (-1 Dex, +12 natural, -2 size) hp 67 (9d8+27) Fort +9, Ref +4, Will +4 Resistances DR 10/slashing; Immune plant traits Weaknesses vulnerability to fire	
OFFENSE	
Speed 20 ft. Melee 3 branches +10 (2d4+6/19–20) Space 15 ft.; Reach 15 ft.	
STATISTICS	
Str 23, Dex 8, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 12 Base Atk +6; CMB +16; CMD 25 (can't be tripped) Feats Cleave, Improved Critical (branches), Lightning Reflexes, Lunge, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Perception) Skills Perception +16, Stealth +3 (+15 in forests); Racial Modifiers +12 Stealth in forests Languages Sylvan, Treant	
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Branches (Ex) A scythe tree makes its primary attacks with its branches, which deal slashing damage and threaten a critical hit on a 19–20.	

Scaling the Encounter

EL 8: Change the hangman tree to a second scythe tree.

EL 10: Add a second hangman tree, or add two more scythe trees. As an alternative to these options, consider instead using a tick swarm scuttling around on the hangman tree.

Treasure

- *Necklace of fireballs* (type IV)
- *Potions of barkskin, cat's grace, fly, mage armor*
- *Scroll of lightning bolt* (2, CL 8th)
- *Wand of burning hands* (CL 5th, 16 charges)

HANGMAN TREE	CR 5
<i>Huge plant, neutral evil</i>	
Armor Class 18 (natural armor) Hit Points 102 (8d12 + 50) Speed 20 ft.	
STR 20 DEX 8 CON 20 INT 7 WIS 12 CHA 10 (+5) (-1) (+5) (-2) (+1) (+0)	
Skills Stealth +2 Damage Vulnerabilities electricity Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11 Languages Sylvan Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)	
Magic Resistance. The hangman tree has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.	
ACTIONS	
Multiaction. The hangman tree makes three vine attacks.	
Grasping Vines. <i>Melee Weapon Attack:</i> +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. <i>Hit:</i> 8 (1d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage, plus the creature is grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained and has disadvantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws. There is no practical limit to the number of creatures the hangman tree can grapple at the same time, and the hangman tree is never considered to have the grappled condition.	
Swallow Whole. The hangman tree can swallow any one creature it has grappled at the start of its turn. The target creature is blinded, restrained, and must succeed at a DC 13 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the hangman tree's turns or take 13 (2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage. Escape from inside the trunk has a DC of 15.	

Hallucinatory Spores. Once per day, the hangman tree can release a spore cloud in a 50-foot-radius area around it. Creatures caught in the cloud must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or believe this is nothing more than an ordinary tree, or perhaps a treant or similarly friendly plant creature. This effect lasts for 10 minutes. At the end of any turn where an affected creature is attacked or sees an ally attacked, it can attempt a new saving throw with advantage to negate the effect. Once this saving throw succeeds, a creature is immune to the spores for 24 hours.

Scythe Tree

CR 4

Huge plant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 84 (8d12 + 32)

Speed 20 ft.

STR 20 **DEX** 8 **CON** 18 **INT** 10 **WIS** 13 **CHA** 12
(+5) (-1) (+4) (+0) (+1) (+1)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +2

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The scythe tree makes two scything branches attacks.

Scything Branches. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Scaling the Encounter

CR 6: Change the hangman tree to a second scythe tree instead.

CR 8: Add a second scythe tree.

CR 9: Add a second hangman tree and a second scythe tree.

To increase the creepiness and complexity of this encounter without materially increasing the encounter's challenge rating, add two or three swarms of insects or a swarm of insects and a couple swarms of ravens. These vermin can hamper and

bedevil the party without inflicting substantial damage. Consider having the hangman tree disgorge the insects from its central maw, preferably right in a grappled character's face...

Treasure

- *Necklace of fireballs*
- *Periapt of wound closure*
- *Potions of resistance, invisibility, vitality, superior healing*
- *Scroll of lightning bolt* (x2)

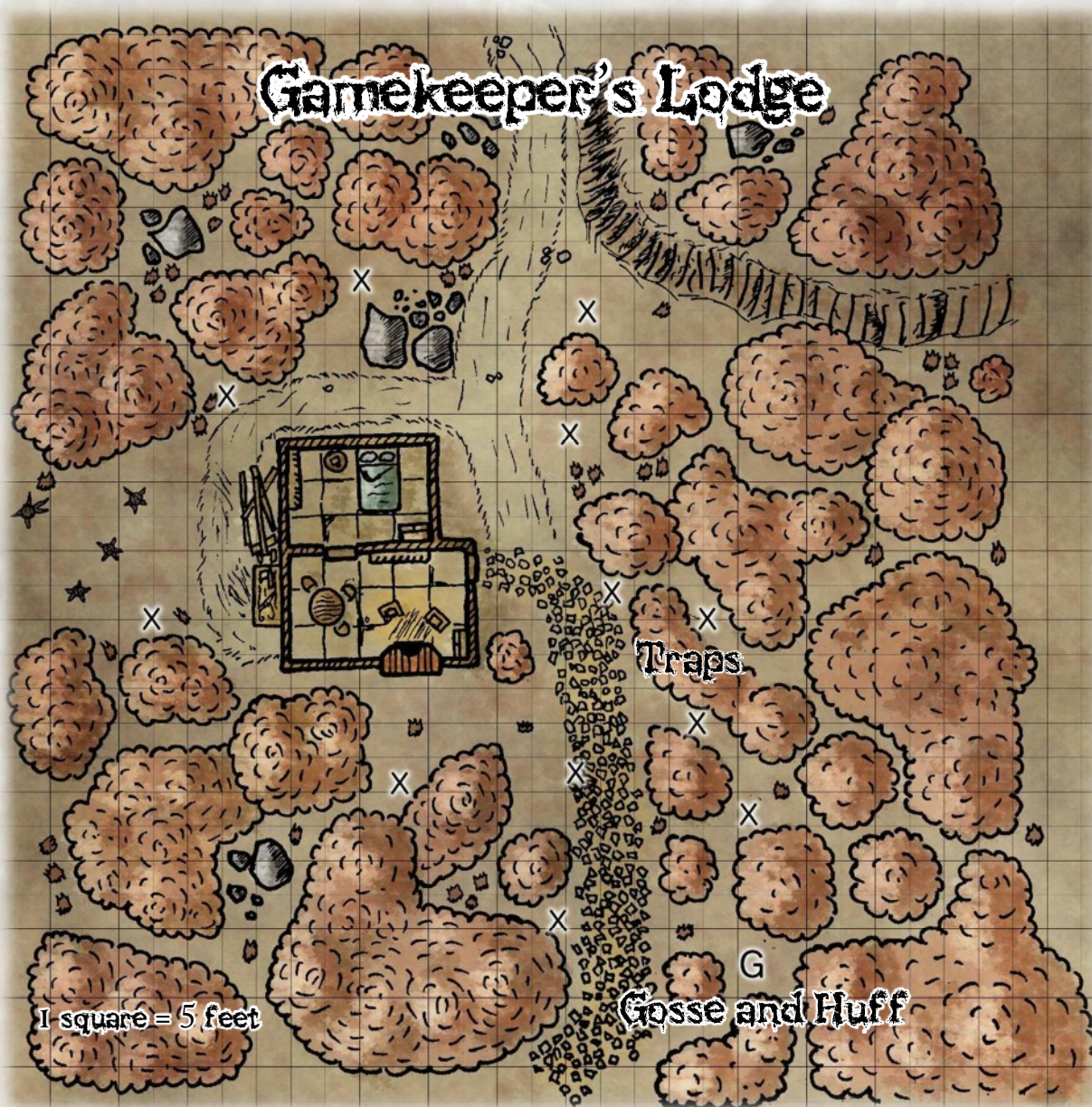
6. Gamekeeper's Cottage (EL 9)

Read the following if the PCs first visit the gamekeeper, Gosse, during the day:

For a few hundred yards past the footbridge, the well-used trail winds through dense woods. The shadows seem to sway unnaturally around you. You can just begin to make out a tendril of smoke rising from a cottage ahead when you hear an assertive voice call out from off to your right; "Ye seem to have your wits about you, so a warning I shall give: Step no further else be caught in my snares."

Gosse and Huff (his wolf companion) watch the southern approach to their cabin and can warn the PCs of any traps set in the trail. The gamekeeper is comforted by the sight of "rational beings" and invites the party in for tea and venison jerky. If the PCs request shelter overnight at his hut, he advises them against it, but he doesn't reveal his reasons. If the characters urge him to let them stay, he'll offer his hospitality, but he advises the characters to stay inside once the sun sets.

Unfortunately, the strange, alien magic that has befallen Willowbrook estate and its grounds has had an unexpected effect on Gosse as far as his affliction is concerned. He suffers from incomplete control over when he transforms, even without the presence of a full moon. Gosse doesn't fully grasp why



this is happening, and indeed his pride has prevented him from accepting the fact he's lost his control over his bloodthirsty werewolf nature. Part of him believes he can prevent the transformation tonight, simply because he wishes the party no harm. Unfortunately, such control is no longer his to command.

GM's Note: If the party explores this area at night, Gosse is nowhere around. Having transformed into his hybrid form, he stalks

the woods until an hour before dawn when he then returns to his cabin. If the PCs are still there at that time, Gosse attacks ferociously (refer to his battle tactics).

This 30-foot by 30-foot cottage looks exactly how one would expect a hunter's lodge to appear. Sturdy stone walls protect the one-room cabin that contains a rocking chair placed in front of a stone fireplace. A wood-burning stove sits along the opposite wall under a bedroom loft. Dried herbs hang

alongside dried meat of various animals whose skins can be seen around the cabin, expertly procured as either decoration or functional items.

Hanging from a leather cord next to the door is a *wolf caller's horn* [see Appendix B for this new magic item] Gosse took from the body of a hunter who discovered his secret and was not so understanding.

After the party has been served, Gosse can share the following information if asked. Despite his strong independent streak and general dislike for other people, Gosse strives to follow a code of honor, which means he speaks the truth in most cases.

- He has worked at Willowbrook for 25 years, exchanging his hunting and trapping expertise for secure lodging in one of the realm's most beautiful locations.
- Gosse stopped going anywhere near the sanitarium two months ago when he saw a patient thrown from the roof. He thought it best to wait until someone came and asked about the missed delivery, but no one ever did. The constant screams that emanated from the building over the next three weeks warned him something must be wrong so he's remained here, secure in his compound.
- He has seen hundreds, perhaps thousands of strange markings around the estate. If pressed, he can present a crude rendition of the secret mark and explain it is an ancient symbol.
- If asked about the waxing gibbous, he explains it is a moon phase that will be overhead on the second night after the PCs arrival at Willowbrook. In a moment of inspiration, Gosse then draws a waxing gibbous moon over top of

the secret mark, allowing those with Knowledge (planes) to make another check of DC 20 [DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana)] to realize it is the mark of Shub-Niggurath.

- He has a deep unease about the estate. Besides his wariness to approach the sanitarium, he senses the surrounding forest is moving on its own accord... resulting in his unnatural fear of the grove at the fringe of the property. Though he knows not why, he refuses to go near it and warns the PCs to do likewise.
- Keenly interested in his own survival, Gosse cannot be convinced to join the party or leave his cabin under any circumstances.
- As attuned to nature as he is, Gosse appreciates on an instinctual level that something unnatural has come to the estate. Whatever or whoever it is, its presence has warped plants and animals alike in the area.
- At times, Gosse swears he hears a deep-throated feminine voice singing to him in an unknown tongue. When he stops to listen, the singing ceases.
- On numerous occasions while out hunting on the grounds, he has noticed fleeting, furtive shadows at the edge of his peripheral vision. He never finds tracks or other evidence of a creature's presence, and the movement only occurs when he's not looking in that direction.
- If confronted with questions about his lycanthropy, Gosse remains honest. He explains what led to his affliction and what precautions he takes to protect himself and others. Before the full moon he cuts the throat of a hare and drags it in a



wide circle around his cottage. Then, when he transforms, he picks up the scent and runs in circles all night hunting a prey he'll never catch.

Development. If the PCs stay the night at Gosse's cabin, they are awakened in the middle of the night first by the pitiful moaning of Huff, Gosse's wolf companion. Moments later, Gosse's painful screams of transformation fill the cabin. The party will need to battle the werewolf for their survival.

Gosse Guarin, Willowbrook Gamekeeper

Gosse Guarin (Hybrid form)	CR 9
Male Half-Orc afflicted werewolf ranger 8 CN Medium humanoid (human, orc, shapechanger) Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; low-light vision; scent; Perception +12	
DEFENSE	
AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 22 (+7 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex, +4 natural)	

hp 99 (8d10+40)
Fort +10, **Ref** +10, **Will** +4
Defensive Abilities orc ferocity; DR 5/silver

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.
Melee keen falchion +12/+8 (2d4+4/15–20), bite +8 (1d6+1 plus trip and curse of lycanthropy)
Ranged mwk composite longbow +11/+6 (1d8+4/x3)
Special Attacks favored enemy (animals +2, humans +4)
Ranger Traps Known (4/day, DC 14 perception, disable device, saving throw) - snare, smoke, decoy

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 14, **Con** 17, **Int** 10, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 8
Base Atk +8; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 25
Feats Deadly Aim, Endurance, Improved Precise Shot, Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Toughness
Skills Climb +10, Disable Device +8, Heal +5, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (nature) +11, Perception +12, Ride +3, Stealth +10, Survival +12, Swim +5
Languages Common, Orc
SQ favored terrain (forest +4, mountain +2), change shape (human, hybrid, and wolf; polymorph), lycanthropic empathy (wolves and dire wolves), orc blood, swift tracker, track +4, weapon familiarity, wild empathy +7, woodland stride

Combat Gear +1 flaming arrows (4), +1 human-bane arrows (5), acid (2), alchemist's fire (2); **Other Gear** +1 breastplate, longspear, masterwork composite longbow with 30 arrows, keen falchion, cloak of resistance +1, ring of protection +1, mistletoe, 58 gp

Curse of Lycanthropy (Su)

An afflicted lycanthrope's bite attack in animal or hybrid form infects a humanoid target with the lycanthropy curse (Fortitude DC 15 negates). If the victim's size is not within one size category of the lycanthrope, this ability has no effect.

Lycanthropy

Type curse, injury; **Save** Fortitude DC 15 negates, Will DC 15 to avoid effects

Onset the next full moon; **Frequency** on the night of every full moon or whenever the target is injured.

Effect target transforms into a wolf under the GM's control until the next morning

Background

A natural loner, Gosse has always preferred to keep to himself—especially after a failed romance left him with the curse of lycanthropy. Normally, he's able to take adequate precautions when the moon is full to keep his affliction a secret. Unbeknownst to him, however, he's been shape-changing every night since the arrival of the Dark Young. He has started to suspect this loss of control, but has difficulty admitting it to himself. These nightly transformations have led to Gosse witnessing a few of the "conversions" that have taken place at the grove. Although he doesn't remember what occurs during this time, lingering suspicions have caused him to become paranoid enough to avoid the hospital, start setting traps around his cabin, and sleeping in his armor at night, giving him the fatigued condition (already computed into his stat block).

Tactics

Gosse is well aware of his traps and where they are located, even in hybrid form, and

uses them to maximum effect. If he feels outmatched in his cabin, he attempts to lead the PCs north through his trap field, then doubles back to gain the advantage if he hears any of his trap's bell-alarms trigger.

Development

If reduced to 30 hp, Gosse runs deep into the woods to lick his wounds. He returns to his cabin around noon the next day well aware that he no longer can trust himself. If the PCs are present, he apologizes profusely and asks only for his travel bag, swearing to leave Willowbrook forever. In no circumstances can he be convinced to stay.

Huff, animal companion (wolf)

N Large animal

Init +2; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Perception +8

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 16 (+1 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 36 (2d8+10)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 50 ft.

Melee bite +8 (1d8+6 plus trip)

STATISTICS

Str 21, **Dex** 13, **Con** 19, **Int** 2, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 6

Base Atk +2; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 19 (23 vs. trip)

Feats Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Perception +8, Stealth +6, Survival +1 (+5 scent tracking); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Survival when tracking by scent

GOSSE GUARIN

CR 3

Medium humanoid (half-orc, shapechanger), chaotic neutral

Armor Class 16 (breastplate) in humanoid form, 13 (natural armor) in wolf or hybrid form

Hit Points 58 (9d8 + 18)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 15 **DEX** 13 **CON** 14 **INT** 10 **WIS** 11 **CHA** 10
(+2) (+1) (+2) (+0) (+0) (+0)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +3

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks not made with silvered weapons

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Orc (can't speak in wolf form)
Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Shapechanger. Gosse can use his action to polymorph into a wolf-humanoid hybrid or into a wolf, or back into his true form, which is humanoid. His statistics, other than its AC, are the same in each form. Any equipment he is wearing, holding, or carrying isn't transformed. Gosse reverts to his true form if he dies.
Keen Hearing and Smell. The werewolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

ACTIONS

Multiattack (Humanoid or Hybrid Form Only). Gosse makes two attacks, one with his bite and one with his claws or longbow.

Bite (Wolf or Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is a humanoid, it must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with werewolf lycanthropy.

Claws (Hybrid Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 7 (2d4 + 2) slashing damage.

Longsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) slashing damage.

Longbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Equipment

Longsword, daggers (2), longbow, quiver with 20 arrows, breastplate, alchemist's fire (2 vials), mistletoe sprigs, 4 +1 arrows, oil of sharpness, 58 gp.

Tactics

If attacked while in humanoid form, Gosse favors survival over valor and flees. Huff will give its life to buy his master a chance to escape. If someone kills Huff, then Gosse will do everything in his power to follow the murderer and strike when they are most vulnerable.

If the characters encounter Gosse in werewolf form, he attacks without savage fury, without any regard for tactics. If this encounter takes place inside Gosse's cabin, Huff will do what he can to try and convince the characters to flee; the wolf knows it can't

stop the werewolf, and he doesn't want to attack his master.



HUFF, WOLF COMPANION						CR 1/4
Medium beast, unaligned						
Armor Class 17 (natural armor)						
Hit Points 40						
Speed 40 ft.						
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA	
12 (+1)	15 (+2)	12 (+1)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	6 (-2)	
Skills Perception +8, Stealth +8						
Senses passive Perception 13						
Languages —						
Challenge 1/4 (50 XP)						

Keen Hearing and Smell. The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

Pack Tactics. The wolf has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d4 + 6) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

CHAPTER FOUR: When the Stars Are Right

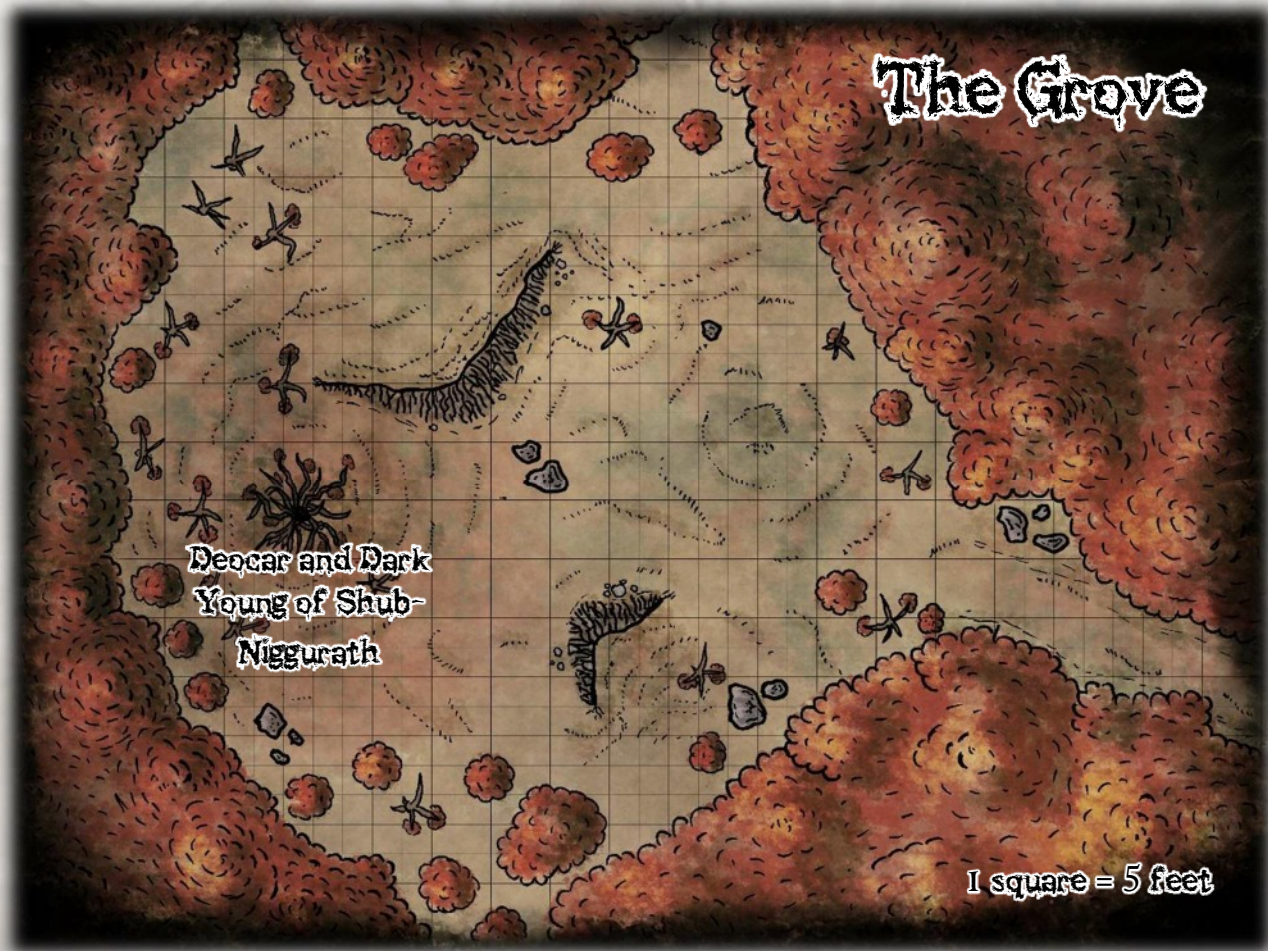
7. Ritual at the Grove (EL 14+)

A clearing roughly 100 feet in diameter opens before you. As you step into it, a wave of vertigo briefly possesses you, forcing your knees to buckle as your vision shimmers. Steadying yourself, you realize the strange marks you noticed previously around the estate have been carved into every tree around the perimeter of this place. An overpowering stench, a combination of decay, blood, and something obscene poisons the air. Expectation hangs thick as if the land itself holds its figurative breath for what is to come...

The Dark Young rests in *tree shape* form [motionless, appearing like the surrounding trees] at the grove's far western edge, awaiting the sacrifice ritual. Knowing it can use its mass insanity ability once per day, the creature waits for as many humanoids as possible to enter the area before using it to maximum effect. It then observes its victims for three rounds to see who is affected. During this time, it casts entangle behind its foes to prevent escape and hopefully drive them closer before finally revealing its true, mind-shattering form and engaging in battle.

The Enemies

The two primary enemies here include the Deocar Foedo and the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath. The lunatics they've assembled



are here to feed the Dark Young, although they may become combatants depending on the results of the confusion effect each one suffers from.

Deocar Foedo, Cultist of Shub-Niggurath (CR 8)

Male Human Adept 10
CE Medium humanoid (human)
Init +7; **Senses** Perception +3

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+4 *mage armor*, +3 Dex, +2 natural)
hp 55 (10d6+10)
Fort +5, **Ref** +6, **Will** +12

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)
Melee mwk silver dagger +4 (1d4–1/19–20)
Ranged mwk silver dagger +8 (1d4–1/19–20)

Adept Spells Prepared (CL 10th; concentration +13)

3rd—*bestow curse* (DC 16), *cure serious wounds*

2nd—*invisibility*, *mirror image*, *web* (DC 15)

1st—*command* (DC 14), *cure light wounds*, *obscuring mist*, *protection from law*

0th (at will)—*detect magic*, *light*, *read magic*

Spell-Like Ability (CL 12th) *unhallow* (must create secret mark of Shub-Niggurath)

TACTICS

Before Combat After first directing the lunatics to attack, if enemies present themselves, Deocar casts *invisibility* on himself then spends the next few rounds drinking his *potions* of *barkskin*, *fly*, and *mage armor* while assessing the battle. He then rises up out of reach from enemy melee weapons while casting *mirror image*.

During Combat Deocar hurls fireballs and lightning bolts from the air, then returns to the ground to dispense his touch spells and use his *wand of burning hands*. He zealously fights to the death.

Base Statistics

Without *barkskin*, *cat's grace*, *fly*, and *mage armor*, the adept's statistics are **Init** +5; **AC** 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; **Ref** +4; **Speed** 30 ft.; **Ranged** mwk silver dagger +7 (1d4–1/19–20); **Dex** 12; **CMD** 15; **Skills** Fly +1.

STATISTICS

Str 8, **Dex** 16, **Con** 10, **Int** 9, **Wis** 16, **Cha** 12
Base Atk +5; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 17

Feats Combat Casting, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Bluff), Toughness
Skills Appraise +2, Bluff +17, Fly +7, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (planes) +9, Knowledge (religion) +5, Spellcraft +7

Languages Common, Aklo

SQ summon familiar (raven, speaks Aklo)

Combat Gear (hidden in a hollow of the spooky tree next to the bridge) *necklace of fireballs* (type IV), *potion of barkskin*, *potion of cat's grace*, *potion of fly*, *potion of mage armor*, *scrolls of lightning bolt* (2, CL 8th), *wand of burning hands* (CL 5th, 16 charges);

Other Gear (on person) *wand of charm person* (11 charges), *wand of stone shape* (23 charges), cultists robes made from dirty bedsheets, *masterwork silver dagger*, silver unholy symbol, master set of keys for the Estate.



Unique Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath CR 13

XP 19,200

CE Huge aberration

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 30 ft.; Perception +21**Aura** frightful presence (30 ft., DC 24)**DEFENSE****AC** 27, touch 11, flat-footed 24 (+3 Dex, +16 natural, -2 size)**hp** 161 (14d8+98)**Fort** +11, **Ref** +9, **Will** +13**DR** 15/slashing; **Immune** acid, electricity, fire, poison**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft.**Melee** 4 tentacles +19 (1d8+10/19–20 plus grab)**Space** 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.**Special Attacks** constrict (1d8+10), sucking maws, trample (1d8+15, DC 27)**Spell-Like Abilities (CL 12th; concentration +17)**

Constant—freedom of movement

At will—air walk, tree shape

3/day—entangle (DC 16), command plants (DC 19)

1/day—insanity (DC 22), tree stride

STATISTICS**Str** 30, **Dex** 17, **Con** 24, **Int** 16, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 21**Base Atk** +10; **CMB** +22 (+26 grapple); **CMD** 35 (can't be tripped)**Feats** Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (tentacles), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Power Attack, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (tentacles)**Skills** Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (nature) +17, Knowledge (religion) +17, Perception +21, Sense Motive +18, Spellcraft +20, Stealth +12 (+20 in forests); Racial Modifiers +8 Stealth in forests
Languages Aklo**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Sucking Maws (Su):** A dark young of Shub-Niggurath that successfully pins a creature it is grappling automatically inflicts 1d4 points of Strength drain on that creature. A DC 24 Fortitude save reduces this effect to 1 point of Strength drain. A creature drained to 0 Strength does not die, but must make a DC 24 Will save at that point to resist being driven mad by the experience, as the foul green waste exuded from the same sucking mouths that drink life implant in the emptied shells strange visions and horrifying certainties. This madness manifests as schizophrenia, but with a save DC equal to the dark young's Strength drain save DC listed above (DC 24 for most dark young). One common result of this unfortunate

madness is a strange desire to return to the site of their original encounter in hopes of being consumed entirely by the creature that only drank a part of their body and mind—many of those who survive this horrific ordeal go on to found dark young cults of their own. The madness element of a dark young's sucking maws is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC for all of the saving throws involved with this special ability is Constitution-based.

Mass Insanity: This Dark Young's insanity spell-like ability is cast as a mass effect targeting one or more creatures, no two of which can be more than 30 feet apart.

Bestow Mark: The Dark Young can bestow a gift of magic upon an individual, granting them the ability to cast unhallow as an at-will spell-like ability (CL 12) by drawing the secret mark on an object or person.

Scaling the Encounter

Adding in a few of the complications described above can increase the encounter level. Be careful, however, as these complications can tip an already dangerous encounter into a potential TPK.

To give the characters a small break and reduce the EL, have one or two of the above complications occur but primarily affect the bad guys and the sacrificial patients. If necessary, double or even triple the hit points and increase the damage potential of these allies to buy the PCs a bit more time to defeat the Dark Young.

Deocar Foedo, Cultist of Shub-Niggurath CR 6*Medium humanoid (human), chaotic evil***Armor Class** 16 (breastplate)**Hit Points** 55 (10d8 + 10)**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-2)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	9 (-1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +4**Skills** Arcana +2, Deception +4, Religion +2**Senses** passive Perception 13**Languages** Common, Aklo**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

Spellcasting. Deocar is a 10th-level divine caster in service to Shub-Niggurath. His spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following cleric spells prepared: Cantrips (at will): *detect magic, guidance, light, resistance, thaumaturgy*
 1st level (4 slots): *command, cure wounds, fog cloud, shield of faith*
 2nd level (3 slots): *blindness, hold person, silence*
 3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse, crown of madness, protection from energy*
 4th level (3 slots): *black tentacles, divination, guardian of faith*
 5th level (2 slots): *contagion, insect plague*
Spell-Like Ability (at will): *hallow* (must create secret mark of Shub-Niggurath)

ACTIONS

Dagger. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.

EQUIPMENT

If Deocar had time and opportunity, he has recovered the following items from the base of the spooky tree (see **5. Bridge**, above): *necklace of fireballs; potions of barkskin, invisibility, fly, potion of cure wounds, superior; Scroll of lightning bolt (x2).*

TACTICS

Before Combat After first directing the lunatics to attack, if trouble begins Deocar casts *shield of faith* on himself and then consumes a *potion of invisibility* (assuming he was able to retrieve his hidden gear).

During Combat Deocar casts *contagion* and *insect plague* to hamper or harm enemies, and he casts *black tentacles* to hinder their movement. If necessary, he casts *lightning bolt* from his scroll. He zealously fights to the death.

Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath

Huge aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 133 (14d8 + 70)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	16 (+3)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)

Saving Throws Con +9, Int +7, Wis +8

Skills Arcana +11, Insight +8, Nature +7, Perception +8, Religion +7, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities acid, electricity, fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Aklo, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dark young's choice that is within 60 feet of it and aware of its presence must succeed at a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat this save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a successful save. If a creature ends the effect or otherwise succeeds at this save, it is immune to the dark young's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Magic Weapons. The dark young's weapon attacks are magical.

Tree Shape. As long as the dark young remains motionless, it can take the form of a normal tree. It cannot act while in this form. It can revert to its true appearance as a bonus action. A DC 17 Intelligence (Nature) check allows a character to see through this disguise.

Innate Spellcasting. The dark young's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). The dark young can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

1/day each: *blight, symbol of insanity*†, *tree stride*

3/day: *entangle, fly*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dark young makes four tentacle attacks.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage. In addition, the target creature is grappled (escape DC 17).

Sucking Maw. One creature grappled by the dark young at the start of its turn must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. The creature is permitted a new saving throw to attempt to remove the condition at the end of each of its turns. In addition, the creature must succeed at a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or suffer a bout of madness for the next 1 minute. If the creature fails this save, it suffers as if affected by the *confusion* spell.

Trampling Charge. If the dark young moves at least 20 feet straight towards a creature, that target must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 21 (3d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.

For 5E: See Appendix B for information regarding the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath. There are a few differences in its version of the symbol of insanity spell. With this spell, it can affect any targeted creature in sight, so long as chosen targets are no more than 30 feet apart from one another. The effects of the Dark Young's symbol of insanity are permanent until removed with *heal*, *greater restoration*, or *wish*.

Scaling the Encounter

Adding in a few of the complications described above can increase the encounter level. Be careful, however, as these complications can tip an already dangerous encounter into a potential TPK.

To give the characters a small break and reduce the EL, have one or two of the above complications occur but primarily affect the bad guys and the sacrificial patients. If necessary, double or even triple the hit points and increase the damage potential of these allies to buy the PCs a bit more time to defeat the Dark Young.

The Ritual

Deocar Foedo, guided by a Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath, has been striving to obtain 25 subjects to be consumed in a mass sacrifice during the waxing gibbous moon—which occurs on the second night after the PCs arrival at Willowbrook. The ritual takes place regardless of how many tributes have been collected, but for every victim fewer than the 25 the ritual requires, there is a cumulative 4% chance of failure for summoning The Black Goat of the Woods.

At midnight on the second evening, under a waxing gibbous moon, Deocar uses his wand of stone shape to both escape his room

and also create a hole in the lobby wall. This allows the lunatics to surrender to their desire to be consumed by the Dark Young at the grove. On their way to the ritual location, Deocar stops by the spooky tree to retrieve his gear.

Once the lunatics reach the grove, the Dark Young reverts to its natural state. Those assembled wail in rapture as Deocar chants the profane summoning invocation:

“Ever Their praises, and abundance to the Black Goat of the Woods. Iä! Shub-Niggurath! Iä! Shub-Niggurath! The Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young!”

Left undisturbed, the lunatics shuffle past the Dark Young, offering themselves for consumption one at a time. If the Dark Young devours all 25 victims, it then summons Shub-Niggurath to the clearing 10 rounds later unless the PCs destroy the Dark Young first. Should they fail, the adventure is essentially over for our heroes.

Development.

If Deocar dies before the ritual. On the eve of the waxing gibbous moon, the lunatics pine to be near the Dark Young, with or without Deocar present. If Deocar is incapacitated, the lunatics tear the boards off the lobby windows to escape to the grove, killing five of themselves in the process of squeezing their emaciated bodies through the bars of the estate. The Dark Young may need to go hunting for additional victims to meet its quota...

Stopping The Ritual

Should Deocar be interrupted, he immediately performs actions as stated in his Tactics block with the primary goal of eliminating the interruption as swiftly as possible.

Meanwhile, if the Dark Young hasn't done so within 24 hours, it uses its mass insanity

ability, making sure Deocar is unaffected, before concentrating its attacks on the party. Regardless of Deocar's actions or status, the Dark Young continues consuming sacrifices. If the Dark Young runs out of sacrificial victims in the clearing, it attempts to add the characters to the tally; failing that, it seeks out additional subjects to fill the quota—including Deocar, if need be.

If dawn's arrival is imminent, the Dark Young attempts the summoning regardless of how many victims it has consumed. Make a percentile roll. The chance for the ritual's success equals the number of victims consumed multiplied by 4%. If the roll fails, the ritual fails. If the roll succeeds, then Shub-Niggurath arrives in the clearing in 10 rounds. If the PCs can destroy the Dark Young before that time, the summoning fails. If, however, the roll succeeds and 10 rounds elapse, the adventure is essentially over for our heroes (although they can look forward to madness-filled lives and the chance to serve Shub-Niggurath).

If the summoning fails, regardless of reason, the Dark Young unleashes its rage against any living creature it can find. It will not stop slaughtering the people of Willowbrook (and beyond) until it is destroyed.

Combat within the Grove

Treating all "incurables" as one participant, roll initiative normally. On the incurables' turn, first resolve how the lunatics behave while under the confusion effects. If the percentile roll dictates the lunatics "act normally" or "attack nearest creature," they battle the catatonics this round if the PCs have brought them along (a roll of 1d2 determines which of the two groups "wins" the round and does unarmed strike damage; use statistics under The Patients entry for hit points and melee attack damage). Otherwise, they behave as listed under the spell effects, leaving themselves open to free attacks by their foes. All other participants

behave using the tactics mentioned in their stat blocks.

Possible Complications

Any combat involving a servant of the Outer Gods, opposing groups of asylum patients in a state of *confusion*, and a party of adventurers all but guarantees chaos. To help simulate the unpredictable, anarchy-laden nature of the fight, the GM should consider throwing in a few of the following elements and terrain effects. Some of these generally do not substantially alter the encounter's challenge level. Those that increase the encounter level are so indicated in the text.

- Duke Berard (the individual the characters were asked to rescue) breaks loose or squirms free of any restraint and ambles into the midst of the battle. The characters may want to save his hide to avoid having to give bad news to the king...
- A dozen trees along the edge of the clearing uproot and shamble forwards, towards the Dark Young, at a rate of 5 feet per round. They knock prone any Medium or smaller creature that gets in their way. These may provide cover under the right circumstances and positioning.
- A strange luminescent mist rises from the ground in 20-foot radius around the Dark Young. The mist provides total concealment to all creatures within its area, functioning as a *fog cloud* spell. (EL +1) **[CR +1/2]**
- Bolts of blood-red lightning light up the night sky. On the first three rounds, these discharges are loud and dazzling. Each round thereafter, there is a 1 in 10 chance that a random creature in the clearing is struck. The creature struck suffers 6d6 of electricity damage. A

successful DC 18 Reflex [DC 13 Dexterity] saving throw allows the creature to suffer half damage instead. (EL +1) [CR +1/2]

- Sections of the ground crack and geysers of dirt and rock spray into the area. At the start of each round, 1d4 spaces of random ground become difficult terrain. Creatures occupying those spaces when they erupt are knocked prone. (EL +1) [CR +1]
- Clouds of insects and swarms of bats flood the clearing, buzzing through the air and biting mercilessly. Randomly select 1d3 creatures. Those creatures suffer 1 hit point of damage from the vermin. In addition, their visibility is obscured such that all creatures more than 5 feet away from them are considered to have concealment [disadvantage on ranged attacks]. (EL +1) [CR +1/2]
- The screaming, wailing, and chanting, combined with the clash of thunder and the unearthly screech of the Dark Young drown out all other sounds in the clearing. Creatures that are not adjacent must make a DC 15 Perception [DC 10 Wisdom (Perception)] check to hear one another during the battle.
- Sinkholes abruptly open beneath one random creature at the end of each round. The creature must succeed at a DC 17 Reflex save [DC 12 Dexterity] or sink 10 feet into the ground. Climbing out of a sinkhole requires a move action and a successful DC 16 Climb [DC 11 Strength (Athletics)] check. (EL +1) [CR +1/2]

GM's Note: This is a potentially lethal battle and one likely to push the PCs to their limits. Despite the high EL, however, keep in mind that both Deocar and the Dark Young are primarily focused on completing

the ritual rather than eliminating enemies. It is probable that the PCs will start the combat with the element of surprise, and they may have one more round thereafter to act before Deocar and the Dark Young go on the offensive. Of course, once the adventurers demonstrate that they pose a threat to the ritual, then the bad guys fight back with every power at their disposal.

If some of the characters opted to undergo Dr. Von Shrugal's lobotomy, this helps shield those characters from the Dark Young's mass insanity power. Finally, if the PCs brought some of their new allies with them for backup, this helps divide the enemy's attacks, thus buying more time for the party to eliminate Deocar and the Dark Young.

The Aftermath

After the PCs kill the Dark Young, read or paraphrase the following.

As the aberration finishes twitching, it emits a painfully loud, high-pitched frequency that crackles throughout the drizzling sky. The static hiss grows in volume until it envelops you in a maddening cacophony. In one terrifying moment, you realize that repulsive tone no longer originates from the twisted, lifeless form before you. No. The death "KEEEEEEE!!!" the beast called out is now being answered by large, dark shapes shambling through the surrounding woods.

In horror, you see one, then two, then six, and finally more than a dozen of these horrors—even larger than the one you've just destroyed, sway and writhe at the edge of your vision. They wail in a chorus of madness as they shamle forward.

Ask the players to roll initiative. When it's the monsters turn, continue.

The forms continue writhing as their shapes fade and become translucent, finally

disappearing altogether, leaving you alone in the grove, which has fallen silent. Silent, but for the persistent ringing in your ears. A ringing which, you fear, may never leave you.

A week later, the shadowy shapes you witnessed at the grove still reappear at times in the corner of your eye, and the faint “keeeeeee” sound has lessened but is always in the background of all that you hear as you enter the castle gates to report to the king.

FUTURE ADVENTURES

Bleak Harvest offers a convenient way to introduce Lovecraftian themes, elements, and creatures into a campaign. If the adventurers stop the ritual and destroy the Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath, that could well be the end of the trouble.

The GM might consider, however, using this adventure as foreshadowing for future incursions of horrors from the Dark Tapestry. Here are a few possible adventure threads for such a development.

- The aforementioned mi-go colony established in an iron mine. Although these creatures aren't interested in summoning outer gods into this reality, their mere presence on this world serves to attract other creatures and magic from the Dark Tapestry.
- The characters rescued Duke Berard, but perhaps the duke now serves as host to some gestating eldritch monstrosity. The duke could go on to form a cult of his own, or he could share his infestation with his family members—including the king. Think of Berard as a plague carrier of sorts, a Typhoid Mary afflicted with the corrupting touch of the Dark Tapestry.
- The characters may have prevented this ritual from succeeding, but

perhaps Shub-Niggurath has other schemes in mind to usher her presence onto this world.

- Did Deocar Foedo come into contact with anyone else on his way to Willowbrook? Did his “gift” warp their mind and soul as well? Such an individual may go on to form their own cult somewhere else in the kingdom.
- What do the survivors of Willowbrook do now? Do they tell others what they've witnessed? Are they imprisoned to guarantee their silence? Are they, too, forever touched by alien madness, and are they willing to share?
- Did any other creature from the Dark Tapestry find its way into our world? As one possibility, the characters may have experienced mild earth tremors during their visit to Willowbrook, and they may have noticed the ravine to the east of the sanitarium. Perhaps something large and hungry now lurks beneath the grounds. For those familiar with Lovecraftian critters, a shoggoth would be a particularly good choice of monster for a future high-level challenge.
- How about the characters themselves? How has contact with the Dark Tapestry changed them? Do they suffer waking nightmares, hallucinations, or do they now possess the ability to truly see the creeping encroachment of the alien into this dimension? Will anyone believe them, or will they become the next occupants of Willowbrook Sanitarium?

APPENDIX A: NEW PATHFINDER CONTENT

An ephemeral wisp of bluish energy, this entity resembles a puff of luminescent smoke with the faintest hint of blood-red eyes.

ASPHYX	CR 7
XP 3,200	
N Small outsider (incorporeal)	
Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft. all-around vision; Perception +10	
DEFENSE	
AC 17, touch 17, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 deflection, +1 size)	
hp 73 (7d10+14)	
Fort +5, Ref +9, Will +7	
Defensive Abilities incorporeal, primal essence	
Immune outsider traits	
Weaknesses consumable	
OFFENSE	
Speed 30 ft., fly 100 ft. (perfect)	
Melee 2 slams +9 (1d4+1/19–20 plus 1d4 Constitution damage)	
STATISTICS	
Str –, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 18	
Base Atk +8; CMB +9; CMD 19 (can't be tripped or grappled)	
Feats Dodge, Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (slam)	
Skills Fly +10, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Perception +10, Sense Motive +6, Stealth +5	
Languages Common (cannot speak)	
SPECIAL ABILITIES	
Constitution Damage (Su): A creature hit by the slam of an asphyx must succeed on a DC 18 Fortitude save or take 1d4 points of Constitution damage. The save DC is Charisma-based.	
Consumable (Ex): An asphyx reduced to zero hit points devolves into primal energy and is stunned for one round. During this time, any creature adjacent to the asphyx can inhale its inert energy, gaining benefits as per the spell lesser restoration. Alternatively, this energy can be captured and preserved indefinitely with a successful DC 20 Craft (alchemy) check.	

Primal Essence (Ex): As primal life energy, an asphyx can be subdued but never destroyed. An asphyx reduced to zero hit points devolves into primal energy and is stunned for one round, then travels at maximum speed in a random direction for 24 hours. Having recovered some of its health, it resumes searching for a host.

ECOLOGY

For a brief moment, while the soul of the newly departed is measured for final judgement, it rests in stasis outside the corpse, waiting for the pull of its eventual resting place. If ever this ephemeral process is interrupted, it's possible for a portion of the soul to remain trapped in its primordial state, thereby creating an asphyx. Accidents that occur during the ritual of achieving lichdom, casting time stop at the moment of death, and influence from the outer worlds have all been known to cause the unintended creation of these entities.

Marooned between the living and the dead, yet not undead either, an asphyx wanders the landscape, attempting to attach itself to anyone who interacts with it. Too insignificant to fully resuscitate a corpse yet too substantial to occupy an individual already possessing a soul, these attempts result in the asphyx inadvertently siphoning life force from its unintended victim until the creature dies, wherein the asphyx moves on, forever searching for a home.

In certain circles of the alchemy community, tales are told of an elusive recipe that, when performed with perfect timing, allows for the creation, capture, and preservation of the subdued energy of an asphyx for the purpose of restoring vigor and vitality.

Distill Essence - Alchemist Discovery

Prerequisite: Alchemist 10

Benefit: An alchemist can separate an almost imperceivable fragment of the soul from an intelligent creature that dies in their presence and preserve it for restorative purposes. This special process must be performed as a standard action within one round of a creature's demise. If

successful, the alchemist is able to bottle and preserve a portion of the creature's life force. Once released and inhaled, this essence replenishes the inhaler's vitality, as per the spell *lesser restoration*. Interfering with an intelligent creature's natural death process is considered an evil act.

Create: Craft (alchemy) DC 20; Cost 100 gp of alchemical material (phosphorus, quicksilver)

Fail: The essence becomes an asphyx. Panicked and confused, it travels at top speed for 24 hours before calming down enough to search for a host.

Special: The essences of ten intelligent creatures captured in this manner can be stored together. If inhaled all at once, the condensed and powerful distillation revitalizes the inhaler as per the spell *restoration*.

Appendix B: New Fifth Edition Content

New Spells

The following new spells are added to spell lists:

Fleshworm Infestation (Cleric, Wizard, Warlock, 4th level)

Sands of Time (Cleric, Warlock, Wizard, 3rd level)

Fleshworm Infestation

4th-level conjuration

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute

With a touch, this spell allows you to infest a living creature's flesh with ravenous, burrowing worms. Make a melee spell attack against the target. On a hit, the target creature suffers 2d8 points of necrotic damage. Each round thereafter, the creature suffers another 1d8 points of necrotic damage, but it is allowed to attempt a Constitution saving throw at the end of each of its turns to terminate the effect. In addition, as long as the spell remains in effect, the target suffers from the poisoned condition. Magical healing, including potions of healing and spells such as *remove disease* and *heal*, does not affect the damage or poisoned condition inflicted by fleshworm infestation. Protection from evil negates this spell's effects for as long as the two durations overlap. *Dispel evil* immediately ends fleshworm infestation.

Sands of Time

3rd-level necromancy

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 hour, or instantaneous (see text)

A dark purple nimbus forms around your hand, enabling you to steal some of the vitality and life force from a living creature you touch. Make a melee spell attack against the target. On a hit, you temporarily age the target. The creature suffers disadvantage to all Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution ability checks. The target can make a Constitution saving throw at the end of each of their turns to end the effect. This spell doesn't affect creatures that do not age or are immortal.

If you cast this spell against an object, construct, or undead creature, it suffers 3d6 points of radiant damage + 1 point per caster level. This effect is instantaneous.

New Monsters

GM's Note. Several creatures in this adventure speak and understand a language called Aklo. This is the language spoken by creatures from the plane known as the Dark Tapestry. It is the language of alien, eldritch horrors and sanity-blasting monstrosities. For most sane individuals, even hearing a few words of Aklo causes mild headaches and a brief bout of nausea. Speaking this forbidden tongue leaves behind a coppery taste in one's mouth.

Asphyx CR 4

Small undead, unaligned

Armor Class 11

Hit Points 65 (10d8 + 20)

Speed 30 ft., fly 100 ft. (hover)

STR 1 **DEX** 12 **CON** 14 **INT** 12 **WIS** 11 **CHA** 18
(-5) (+1) (+2) (+1) (+0) (+4)

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities cold, necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Common (cannot speak)

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Sense Life. The asphyx can magically sense the presence of living creatures up to 60 feet away. It knows the general direction living creatures are in, but not their precise locations.

Incorporeal Movement. The asphyx can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It suffers 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Consumable. An asphyx reduced to zero hit points devolves into primal energy and is stunned for one round. During this time, any creature adjacent to the asphyx can inhale its inert energy, gaining benefits as per the spell *lesser restoration*. Alternatively, this energy can be captured and preserved indefinitely with a successful DC 15 alchemist supplies tool check.

Primal Essence. As primal life energy, an asphyxia can be subdued but never destroyed. An asphyx reduced to zero hit points dissipates and is stunned for one

round. It then travels at maximum speed in a random direction for 24 hours. Having recovered some of its health, it resumes searching for a host.

ACTIONS

Touch of Death. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 8 (2d6 + 1) necrotic damage. In addition, the creature must succeed at a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or suffer disadvantage on its Constitution saves until the end of its next turn.

An ephemeral wisp of bluish energy, this entity resembles a puff of luminescent smoke.

Dark Young of Shub-Niggurath CR 11

Huge aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19 (natural armor)

Hit Points 133 (14d8 + 70)

Speed 30 ft.

STR 20 **DEX** 16 **CON** 20 **INT** 16 **WIS** 18 **CHA** 20
(+5) (+3) (+5) (+3) (+4) (+5)

Saving Throws Con +9, Int +7, Wis +8

Skills Arcana +11, Insight +8, Nature +7, Perception +8, Religion +7, Stealth +7

Damage Resistances slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities acid, electricity, fire, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Aklo, telepathy 120 ft.

Challenge 11 (7,200 XP)

Frightful Presence. Each creature of the dark young's choice that is within 60 feet of it and aware of its presence must succeed at a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or become frightened for 1 minute. A creature can repeat this save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself with a successful save. If a creature ends the effect or otherwise succeeds at this save, it is immune to the dark young's Frightful Presence for the next 24 hours.

Magic Weapons. The dark young's weapon attacks are magical.

Tree Shape. As long as the dark young remains motionless, it can take the form of a normal tree. It cannot act while in this form. It can revert to its true

appearance as a bonus action. A DC 17 Intelligence (Nature) check allows a character to see through this disguise.

Innate Spellcasting. The dark young's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). The dark young can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

1/day each: *blight*, *symbol of insanity*[†], *tree stride*
3/day: *entangle*, *fly*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dark young makes four tentacle attacks.

Tentacle. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage. In addition, the target creature is grappled (escape DC 17).

Sucking Maw. One creature grappled by the dark young at the start of its turn must make a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. The creature is permitted a new saving throw to attempt to remove the condition at the end of each of its turns. In addition, the creature must succeed at a DC 20 Wisdom saving throw or suffer a bout of madness for the next 1 minute. If the creature fails this save, it suffers as if affected by the *confusion* spell.

Trampling Charge. If the dark young moves at least 20 feet straight towards a creature, that target must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 21 (3d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.

This massive creature resembles a gnarled, blackened tree. Instead of branches, it has an endless number of glistening tentacles, and instead of roots it has hooves. Dozens of drooling, fanged maws cover the length of its trunk, each one gibbering in a thin, piping voice.

Giant Rot Grub

CR 2

Small beast, unaligned

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 32 (4d8+12)

Speed 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	12 (+2)	16 (+3)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities poisoned

Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages —

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage plus 3 (1d6) poison damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 12). A grappled creature that breaks free automatically suffers 3 (1d6) points of piercing damage.

Gnaw. A giant rot grub's bite attack automatically hits each round it has a creature grappled.

A bloated, quivering maggot the size of a large dog pulses forward with an undulating motion. Its grasping circular mouth opens wide to expose rows of tiny razor teeth. In its wake, it leaves behind a glistening slime trail.

Grave-Risen

CR 3

Medium undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 34 (5d8+10)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	15 (+2)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+2)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +4

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison

Damage Immunities necrotic, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages the languages it knew in life

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Turning Defiance. The grave-risen has advantage on its saving throws against effects that turn undead.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The grave-risen makes two claw attacks.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d4 + 2) slashing damage, plus 7 (2d6) points of necrotic damage.

Animate the Dead (1/Day). The grave-risen casts this spell to animate any corpses nearby.

Create Grave-Risen. A humanoid killed by a grave-risen rises 24 hours later as another grave-risen under the control of its murderer.

The rotting corpse shambles forward, its reddish eyes filled with recognition of what it has become, and of greater concern, what it must now do. Thick clumps of grave dirt still cling to its flesh and the tattered remnants of its clothes.

HANGMAN TREE CR 5

Huge plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 102 (8d12 + 50)

Speed 20 ft.

STR 20 **DEX** 8 **CON** 20 **INT** 7 **WIS** 12 **CHA** 10
(+5) (-1) (+5) (-2) (+1) (+0)

Skills Stealth +2

Damage Vulnerabilities electricity

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11

Languages Sylvan

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

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

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The hangman tree makes three vine attacks.

Grasping Vines. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d6 + 5) bludgeoning damage, plus the creature is grappled (escape DC 15). Until the grapple ends, the target is restrained and has disadvantage on Strength checks and Strength saving throws. There is no practical limit to the number of creatures the hangman tree can grapple at the same time, and the hangman tree is never considered to have the grappled condition.

Swallow Whole. The hangman tree can swallow any one creature it has grappled at the start of its turn. The target creature is blinded, restrained, and must succeed at a DC 13 Constitution saving throw at the start of each of the hangman tree's turns or take 13

(2d8 + 5) bludgeoning damage. Escape from inside the trunk has a DC of 15.

Hallucinatory Spores. Once per day, the hangman tree can release a spore cloud in a 50-foot-radius area around it. Creatures caught in the cloud must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or believe this is nothing more than an ordinary tree, or perhaps a treant or similarly friendly plant creature. This effect lasts for 10 minutes. At the end of any turn where an affected creature is attacked or sees an ally attacked, it can attempt a new saving throw with advantage to negate the effect. Once this saving throw succeeds, a creature is immune to the spores for 24 hours.

The trunk of this warped tree is shot through with veins of red. Vine-covered tendrils, looped to form nooses, writhe incessantly from its branches.

Mi-Go CR 3

Medium plant, neutral evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 51 (6d8 + 24)

Speed 20 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR 14 **DEX** 20 **CON** 18 **INT** 20 **WIS** 14 **CHA** 14
(+2) (+5) (+4) (+5) (+2) (+2)

Skills Deception +8, Perception +5, Persuasion +8, Stealth +8

Damage Immunities cold

Damage Resistances electricity, fire; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities exhaustion

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages Aklo, Common, Mi-Go

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Deceptive. Mi-go have learned how to mimic the voices and sounds of other creatures perfectly. A mi-go gains advantage on any Charisma (Deception) skill check it makes when mimicking voices. In addition, if given at least one hour in which to prepare, a mi-go can create a surprisingly effective and believable disguise out of the skin of another (typically unwilling) creature. When attempting to pass itself off as another race, the mi-go receives advantage on Charisma (Deception) checks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The mi-go makes two claw attacks.

Pincer Attack. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d4 + 5) piercing damage, and the creature is grappled. Until this grapple ends, the victim is restrained (escape DC 15), and the mi-go cannot use its pincers on another creature.

Eviscerate. Each round the mi-go succeeds at grappling a creature, it automatically does an additional 7 (2d6) points of slashing damage. In addition, the victim must make a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or have its hit point maximum decrease by this same amount. This effect ends after the creature completes a long rest or receives the benefits of a *heal* spell.

TACTICS

The mi-go have no compunction whatsoever against using nearby patients to provide cover or to otherwise delay the PCs. The mi-go aren't interested in a fight to the death, but death is preferable to capture at the hands of such primitive creatures as humans.

This man-sized creature resembles a grotesque mingling of a flying crustacean with an ellipsoid head covered in antennae and fleshy nodules. Despite its size, it hovers gracefully on membranous wings, filling the air with a strange, almost calming buzzing noise. A series of insect-like legs descend from its thorax, each ending in a scythe-like pincher.

Scythe Tree

CR 4

Huge plant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)

Hit Points 84 (8d12 + 32)

Speed 20 ft.

STR 20 **DEX** 8 **CON** 18 **INT** 10 **WIS** 13 **CHA** 12
(+5) (-1) (+4) (+0) (+1) (+1)

Skills Perception +4, Stealth +2

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Sylvan

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The scythe tree makes two scything branches attacks.

Scything Branches. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d6 + 5) slashing damage.

This twisted, scarred tree is all but devoid of leaves. It pulls itself forward by a writhing knot of fire-blackened roots burrowing into the ground. Long, gnarled branches sway and claw at the air.

New Magic Items

MANACLES OF COOPERATION

Wondrous item, rare

These ugly, pitted iron manacles fit over the wrists of any humanoid of size Large or smaller. Once placed around the captive's wrists, that person falls under the effects of an ongoing enchantment that keeps them calm, quiet, and receptive to remaining a prisoner. The creature may attempt a DC 10 Wisdom saving throw the first time the manacles are placed on them, and once every 24 hours thereafter. If the creature succeeds, it no longer remains amenable to captivity and is immune to the effects of the manacles for the next 24 hours.

THRESHOLD GUARDIAN

Wondrous item, rare

This gnarled wreath includes a variety of materials woven together within its mesh of twigs and leaves, including garlic, wolfsbane, silver, and mandrake root. The wreath serves to prevent the entry of certain types of creatures through a doorway or similar portal.

The user of the *threshold guardian* must first perform a special 10-minute ritual to attune the wreath to ward against one type

of creature (e.g., fey, undead). The user then places the wreath above a doorway or similar opening. Thereafter, if that type of creature attempts to pass through the entrance, it must first succeed at a DC 14 Will saving throw or it cannot enter as long as the *guardian* remains active. If the creature succeeds at the saving throw, it can pass through the warded area. Once a creature has failed its save, it cannot attempt entry again until an hour has elapsed. If the wreath suffers more than 5 hit points of damage it is destroyed. The *threshold guardian* has no effect on ethereal or astral creatures.

The wreath's owner can decide whether the warding effect blocks the chosen type of creature in one direction or in both.

WAND OF CHARM PERSON

Wand, uncommon (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

This wand has 7 charges. While wielding it, you can use an action to expend 1 of its charges to cast the *charm person* spell. An amber ray streaks from the tip of the wand to a target you can see within 30 feet of you. The target must succeed at a DC 12 Wisdom saving throw or be charmed for 1 hour. This charm effect ends if you or your allies attack the affected creature.

The wand regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge in the wand, roll a d20. On a roll of 1, the wand crumbles to powder and becomes worthless.

WAND OF STONE SHAPE

Wand, rare (requires attunement by a spellcaster)

This wand has 7 charges. While wielding it, you can use an action to expend 1 of its charges to cast *stone shape*.

The wand regains 1d6 + 1 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge in the wand, roll a d20. On a roll of 1, the wand crumbles to dust and becomes worthless.

WOLF-CALLER'S HORN

Wondrous item, rare

This polished silver horn features the engraved image of a wolf. Once per day, the user can blow the horn to emit a deep-throated wolf howl. Up to four canine beasts of any kind within 200 feet respond by howling back. If more than four wolves are in the area of effect, the closest to the horn are affected first, in order of lowest hit dice first. Affected canines continue howling until the end of their next turn unless they succeed at a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw. While howling, all affected canines are considered incapacitated.

The horn affects dogs, all manner of wolves (such as dire wolves), and shape-changers able to assume a canine form, such as a werewolf or a druid, for example. A shape-changer not in canine form receives advantage on the saving throw to resist the *horn's* call.



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