

# The Forbidden House

A D&D 5E Module by Aidan Niles

## Overview

This module is designed to be played by anywhere from 3-5 players. The expected playtime of this module can be anywhere from 3-6 hours, and can be accomplished in one or two sessions. It can work as a stand-alone adventure, as a sub-adventure in a wider campaign, or as the start of a new campaign.

If this is a sub-adventure in a wider campaign or as the start of a new campaign, choose something from each player character's backstory that could advance or be relevant to the story. Perhaps it could involve a love interest, rival, or overarching foe. Or maybe one of the adventurers could have one of their major goals progressed through accomplishing this mission. If one of your players does not have a natural hook here, consider introducing a rival or ask them about their goals.

## What You Will Need

To run this module, you will need the following resources:

- Player Handbook
- Dungeon Master's Guide
- Monster Manual
- 3-5 players. Players can start anywhere from levels 4-6 in this adventure.

**This module has links to D&D Beyond Content. If you do not own the content, the links will offer you an option to purchase them.**

## Adventure Background

*Nestled in the quiet hills of the Blackwood Forest, the Solomon Mansion rests on a lone hilltop. Home to the eccentric collector Gerard Solomon, the estate was known to host all manner of extravagant galas and lavish balls. To secure an invitation to one of these events is no mean feat, and much of the goings on in the mansion are still shrouded in mystery.*

*And yet, the mansion has gone silent in recent days. Its usual guests have yet to receive another letter stamped with the Solomon family crest formally inviting them to another wondrous event. The regular orders for cheese, wine, steaks, and fruit have dried up. Even the regular servants that once traveled into town for supplies have ceased to make their scheduled trips.*

*This eerie silence surrounding the estate has raised many questions. Did Gerard's lavish lifestyle of exquisite feasting finally catch up to him? Did he decide to abandon it all in pursuit of his latest adventure around the world? Was he murdered by a greedy member of the Solomon family hoping to claim the treasures in his mansion for themselves.*

*Whatever the story may be, the only way to determine the truth would be to climb the mountain to reach the estate. Luckily, a carriage company has provided suitable transport up the mountain to the lodge. In fact, they are offering their services free of charge for those who would investigate the mansion and report back.*

# The Adventure

## The Arrival

*The rumbling quiet of the wheels against the rocky terrain echoes inside the carriage. Looking out the window, you can see the misty forests of the mountain as you wind up the narrow mountain path. Circling up the mountain, the rain gently taps against the rough in a rhythmic pattern. You eventually see the tall Solomon Mansion spanning before you. Made from the same dark wood as trees across the mountain, there is no light coming from the windows. Even the gate is open as the carriage takes you to the front steps of the residence. As you step outside the carriage, the driver bids you good day before spurring the horses back into motion. As you all are left alone, you have a moment to speak amongst yourselves.*

### DM Notes:

Description of the front courtyard.: *A tall gothic-style home, the house is shaped like a T. The main entryway branches off into two distinct wings heading to the east and the west. The front door is made with a gargoyle-shaped door knocker, and the steps leading up to it creak as you place any weight on them. The whole house smells of mildew.*

*The front courtyard is a small circle where carriages can pull in and out of. A small fountain in the center continues to run, spraying brackish water from a large lion's head down into the basin below. Beyond that, simple arrays of overgrown bushes dot the edge of the property, remaining verdant and green from the constant rain and mist.*

This is a great chance for the various characters in the party to get to know one another. It also provides you, the Dungeon Master, an opportunity to provide any information as to why specifically the party is here. Whether it's a hook in a player's backstory or a plot-based hook you want to introduce, feel free to add any details you wish. If the players are taking too long to come to decide or things become quiet, maybe emphasize strange noises from the house or have phantasmal voices speak. When your players are ready to head inside, they will enter the Foyer.

The Inability to Escape: Sometimes things don't go to plan. If the lure of treasure or the promise of mystery won't lure your party in, then perhaps in the inability of escape might drive them inside. When the party arrives at the Manor, Gerard's [Clairvoyance](#) would have already seen them arrive. To trap his new subjects, he would call upon his Eldritch masters. The resulting Manor would be engulfed in a spatial distortion, terrifying storm, or other obstacle that makes escape impossible. If the party directly enters, they may not be aware of the inability to escape until they try to exit. If they try to escape, they will immediately notice this obstacle.

*As you look back outside, you can see heavy rain beginning to pour. Thick droplets of slime fall from the sky, making wet splatters as they touch the ground. The sky itself is a sickly swirling grey. As you attempt to march from the courtyard, you feel your movements slow. Every inch you take slows you further until, eventually, you move at an infinitesimal crawl.*

This distortion will only fade when the party reaches Gerard, and they take his offer to leave. At this point, while they escape, Gerard will have already completed his ritual and unleashed eldritch horrors upon the world.

## The Foyer



*Diamond tile floors greet you as you enter the house through the richly appointed double doors. Before you stands a grand staircase and a chandelier. As you all step inside, the chandelier lights with spectral pale flames, casting a ghastly light onto the room. The staircase leading up splits in two directions. To the left is marked with a portrait of Gerard Solomon sitting and reading a thick tome made of leather. To the right is a picture of a goat standing atop a mountain.*

*Within the foyer itself is small host of chairs for guests to sit and old desks. In the dim and dark light, it is hard to make out what exactly is here. But with what limited sight you have, you can tell this place is long neglected as cobwebs and dust coat most things.*

### DM Notes:

The Foyer itself is a 20x20 space with a stairway that is 10 feet wide and about 20 feet long, leading up to the left and right wings. The players may feel free to look around and examine the foyer for possible clues. If they do, have them either make a dc 14 Perception or Investigation check. If they pass, they might find the following items.

- An old book containing hymns and prayers sitting on a small stand near a chair. The book itself seems to have dog-eared pages from prayers Mr. Solomon personally resonated with. Each page has been delicately cut in order to be read. Within its pages, you learn of an entity known as the Star Child. Believed to bring enlightenment and newfound rebirth of the world, it is said the Star Child whispers to the ambitious and the curious.
- An old handheld lamp inscribed with elaborate runic markings. The wick is long burnt out, and it doesn't appear to have any oil inside it. The marks on the lamp are that of the stars and the sun. Moreover, an inscription on the back reads, "The stars hold all manner of knowledge, but it is our job to call them down to earth."

There is a hidden secret in the Foyer, only known if the party relights the lantern and shines it over the prayerbook. When they do, the prayerbook text will transform to reveal a hidden passage on what is known as "The Ilithid." This passage details the following:

*"Those willing to surrender the trappings of flesh may ascend to a new form known simply as the Ilithid. A being of immense psionic and mystical potential, Ilithid's draw their power from the stars and the realms beyond them. It is said that to an Ilithid, the mind is the most valuable possession, for it is the seat of knowledge and the soul. By transcending the cage of flesh and reaching their minds out into the void, the Ilithid may call out to those who have given it enlightenment, inviting them to descend and bless the world with their presence.*

Further exploration of the Foyer might reveal details about the architecture, the materials used in the construction, and perhaps personal trinkets belonging to Mr. Solomon.

When the party is ready to proceed, they may proceed to either the left or the right wing.

## Left Wing



*Entering the Left Wing of the House up the stairs, you notice the portrait of Gerard Solomon. His eyes buried in a book, they flick up and almost seem to peer into your soul as you finish climbing the stairs and open the double doors before you. Stepping inside, you find yourselves in a large ornate dining room. The table is set with highly decorated and delicate porcelain plates, silver cutlery, flower arrangements, and crystal glasses. Folded napkins in the shape of swans rest in each place. In the center of the table is a large silver platter cover. Polished to a burnished sheen, it catches the light from the ceiling.*

### DM Notes:

The Left Wing is a room that is 10 feet wide by 120 feet long. At one end of the room is a large five-foot table upon which sits an old lighter and some lamp oil. This oil and lighter are crucial to making the handheld lamp (Lantern of Revealing) active. Finding the oil and lighter requires a dc 13 perception check. To successfully install and rekindle the lamp will require a sleight of hand check at dc 12. If the lamp is rekindled, the players will be aware of the trap and will have time to prepare their defenses.

In this room, there is also a lid covering an enormous platter. If the players attempt to remove the lid, it will refuse to open and will trigger an encounter with the guests. Moreover, if the players spend too long (DM discretion), in the room, it will wake up the guests.

*All the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. Soft jazz begins to play as spectral guests emerge from the ground to take their seats. As they turn to look at you, a chorus of voices speaks out. "Come eat with us." Spectral hands reach out to you all as you realize...this invitation is not a request...*

The Left Wing dining room plays host to the spectral remains of Solomon's guests. There can be anywhere from 3-10 guests (the lower end should be used for level 3's and the higher end for level 5's). Each guest uses the [Shadow](#) stat block. The shadows will emphasize the closest living creature and will do their best to swarm and drain their strength in order to kill them.

Players can defeat the encounter by either killing all the guests or by finding a way to placate them. Placating the shadows might require a persuasion check of 15 or higher or even a religion check of the same dc. Perhaps they attempt to reason with the shadows or maybe their knowledge of religion could find a way to rest their souls. In either case, the end goal is to survive.

Should the players defeat the shadows or free them, the lid will open to reveal the body of Gerard Solomon. Resting on his neck is a large key. This key opens the Secret Room, the location of which is hidden in the Right Wing.

*As the guests begin to fade away, you can see the lid open to reveal the preserved body of Gerard Solomons. Dressed in a simple suit, dress pants, and a sports jacket, you notice a strange-looking golden key in the shape of a circle around his neck. Engraved on the circle is a picture of a clawed hand reaching for the sun. Where this key goes is a mystery, but perhaps the answer lies elsewhere. (If the players have already found the map, say the following: With the map already in your possession and now the key, the end to your hunt is nigh.)*



## Right Wing

*The door to the Right Wing opens with a gentle hiss. Peering inside, you can see a vast library full of books and tomes scattered about the page. Water drips from the roof, having soaked some of the tomes beyond repair. Strewn around the room are the dead bodies of what appear to be bookkeepers. Feasting on their brains seem to be dog-like creatures, except where the body of a dog should be, there are only brains. The floor itself is covered in a thick mucosal lining, that causes you to stick to the ground as you walk.*

### DM Notes:

The library room is a 50x50 room full of books. The thick slime of the ground imposes difficult terrain on the party but not the enemy. In the center of the room are a pack of 4-7 [Intellect Devourers](#). These creatures can detect the sentience of the party but will try to pretend to be unaware to lure them closer and ambush them. The party can attempt to make an insight check as to the devourer's true intentions.

Once the party defeats the devourers, they can search the library for possible loot and clues. Have the party use their passive perception and passive investigation. If their passive scores are higher than 16 (or an active check of 16 or higher), they will notice the following:

*Laying on a table covered in thick slime lays a single tome. Flipped open to a random page, there seems to be a crumpled page on the map of the house plans. You can see on the map there seems to be a secret basement hidden beneath the foyer. Located by an old coat rack, a scribbled note on the map details that if you pull on the hooks in a specific sequence (1st, 2nd, 1st, 4th), the door will open. However, another note speaks of a key required to enter the Vault. Where this key might be is anyone's guess. (If the party has the Key, use the following: With both the key and now the location, you know the end to your hunt is nigh).*

# The Vault



*A pale light illuminates the metallic walk to the door of the Vault. Walls made of solid stone mixed with steel gird either side. As you step forward to the door, the key begins to feel colder in your hands. The light seems to grow paler, casting sinister shadows across the ground. An eldritch whispering fills your ears with incomprehensible utterings.*

Give the party a brief moment to decide their course of action and whether they would like to proceed. When they finally decide to enter, read the following

*As you slide the key home, the door opens with a hydraulic hiss. The inside reveals a placid-looking lake of clear mucus. When you step on it, you find your feet stick. In the center of the room is a tall tentacled and robed figure. Its eyes flick over to you as it smiles. "Welcome to my home. Perhaps some introductions are in order. My name is Gerard Solomon. And while I hope you enjoyed the festivities, I really do not wish to be disturbed any further."*

## DM Notes:

### Discourse or Dueling

The party has a choice here. They can either attempt to fight Gerard in order to stop his work. Or, they can leave and let Gerard complete his experiments. If the party leaves, while they might live, it would release terrifying Ilithid into the world as Gerard opens a portal to the Far Realm.

### The Fight

If the party chooses to fight, Gerard Solomon uses the [Mind Flayer Arcanist](#) stat block. In terms of Gerard's tactics, he would prioritize a spell to concentrate on, like [Blur](#), to avoid injury. If he opens the fight, he would likely use Mind Blast to immediately stun as many members of the party as possible. He would then prioritize extracting the brains of stunned targets first.

If Gerard's mind blast has not recharged, he will look to use spells like [Lightning Bolt](#) or [Ray of Enfeeblement](#) to weaken targets. If he is struck, he will rely on [Shield](#) in order to block and prevent major damage. Gerard also has the *Cunning Action* ability.

The arena you fight Gerard in is a large circular lake of slime with a 50-foot radius. There are various rocks scattered throughout the room that a DM can place that can act as cover. The slime itself makes the arena difficult terrain for you, but not for Gerard, whose eldritch physiology allows him to move without issue.

Moreover, Gerard is not alone. Accompanying him are anywhere from 1-4 Intellect Devourers or Shadows (Bring more for stronger parties or fewer for weaker parties). These minions' main goals are to drain the party's resources and to effectively screen for Gerard and force them to divert their resources.

### The Reward

If the party defeats Gerard, then inside the vault on his person, you will find a rare item and 2-3 uncommon items. Whatever loot you choose for them to receive, it should be well worth the struggle it took to get here.

## The Outro:

Below are the two outros if the party chooses to stay and fight or leave.

*Leave: As you exit the house as fast as you can, you can hear a rapid howling. Looking to the sky, you can see something terrible descending from the sky. A meteor of writhing flesh, gibbering maws, and wide eyes, it roars its triumph to the heavens. The land around it warps, as space begins to tear itself apart. As you descend down the mountain as fast as your legs will carry you, you know deep down that this fight....is far from over.*

*Defeating Gerard: Gerard lies dead at your feet. As he rattles out his last breath, you can feel the energy in the house shift. The spectral noises, and the feelings of unease, all vanish like mist before the summer sun. Even the slime on the floor vanishes to reveal simple stones. As you eventually head out of the mansion, you notice a carriage pulling up to the driveway. Pulled by two enormous black steeds, the carriage driver tips his hat to you all. "Get on in," he speaks with a small smile. "I'll take you all back to town."*