

Legacy Asylum

On a hill overlooking that great unwashed city called Legacy—that crumbled-down, tumbled-down metropolis—a single light flickers, behind a smeary, barred window. Beyond those panes of gloomy glass, in a room almost empty except for a bed and a dirty mattress, a Madman sits with his back against the wall.

The walls here are green with mould and rot and damp that rises and lingers. It is a clinging, festering, fetid filth that cannot be bleached away. It is a dank and stinking foulness that constitutes more of the building than the stone and metal.

This is Legacy Asylum: a forgotten building forever in darkness, shadowed by the unmovable Crags. The air is thin here. It is hard to breathe for more reasons than the stench. This is a place where the world has worn thin, like a threadbare blanket that is no longer any use in staving off the cold.

Inside those buckled, twisted halls—amongst those darkened, blood-stained walls—the Madman crouches, with his knees tucked up against his chin, and dreams of worlds that *could* have been.

The sky above the asylum ripples and blazes emerald green. Wind lashes the tiled roof and snakes down between the gaping holes to whoop and scream between the corridors. Somewhere a maddening droplet of water looms and swells. It drops and another follows: then another.

There is only one place in all the asylum that these noises do not reach. Beyond a heavy dark wood door, the sounds outside all fall away and are replaced by the gentle crackle of a record player. The vinyl spins without cessation, the needle hard as diamond.

The door opens and the Doctor—behind his heavy dark wood desk—looks up. His hands lie flat upon the desk, his knuckles swollen and sore with arthritis. The man is a giant, broad-shouldered, barrel chested. He wears a black vest, clasped tight with bronze buttons. His hair is dark, shot through with streaks of grey.

“What now?” he asks the nurse as she shuffles through the door. Her face is obscured by a medical mask, her hair is covered by a white hood, her body is smothered by layers of drooping cloth.

“The Madman is hungry,” she says.

The Doctor balls one of his hands into a fist and strikes his desk. The sound reverberates around the office, loud yet stifled by the rows of books upon his shelves. “Then feed him,” the Doctor says through clenched teeth.

“Of course,” the nurse bows—not with her head but her entire body. She opens the door just slightly so as to squeeze herself through and the noises from beyond come slithering in.

The nurse collects a wooden bowl from an unwashed stack and makes her way downstairs. The basement is sealed behind a metal door that she unlatches. She travels down a few more steps but can go no further, for the basement was long since overrun.

A pulsing grey wetness clings to the bottom of the stairs, the walls, the ceiling. It glistens in the eerie light. Throughout the mass protrude thick stalks that shed luminescent scales into the air. They drift about like dust particles, illumined on a sunny day.

Unsheathing a blade from the belt around her waist, the nurse cuts into the grey flesh of the deep-dweller. She sinks her hands into its moistness and pulls free a tangle of writhing, clotted veins. She deposits this slop into the wooden bowl. For dinner it will have to suffice.

The Madman stands at rest against the wall. A metal helmet covers his head. It has been bolted to his skull with screws. The flesh of his face has taken on a peculiar stretched appearance as it attempts to adjust around the metal fixtures.

He is used to it now. Occasionally the screws itch and the skin bleeds. But there are no mirrors in this place and the only time he ever sees his reflection is when he passes a puddle of piss in the corridor.

In any case, the Madman does not know how he is supposed to look. If he had a life before the asylum, he does not remember it. It seems as though he has spent all eternity here, within these walls. He is like a animal raised in captivity—the wildness has been tortured out of him.

Or so you would think.

He wriggles and writhes in the straight-jacket. He gnashes his teeth. Now and then he wails into the darkness, utterly alone. The door opens and the nurse comes in. She is holding a bowl and even in this dim-darkness the Madman can see that the contents of the bowl are twitching, ever so slightly.

“Eat,” the nurse tells him and drags a spoonful of the horrid grey stuff towards his mouth. The Madman does not resist. He bites down on the spoon and suctions off its contents with a noisy slurp. His teeth crunch the mass and he feels it wriggling down his throat.

“Again,” the nurse lifts another spoonful to his lips. Then another. Oily grey smears have stuck to his chin and are clinging to the sides of his mouth. He grins—or something like it—and the nurse sees the pieces of the food still twitching between his teeth.

The vomit is sudden and projectile. Somehow the nurse steps away in time to avoid most of it. The Madman erupts like a geyser, snickering amidst the coughs and wheezes. The grey undigested slop still writhes about in its pool of acid and bile.

“After that showing, you’ll not eat again for some time,” says the nurse. Although, even to her, the words seem pointless. It is unlikely the Madman understands anything at all. As she hurries towards the door she can already feel the air around her change. A strange wind whips up within the cell, emanating from the Madman himself.

She places her hand on the door handle. Behind her, something howls. She does not want to turn around—she does not want to see what he has conjured—but she cannot help it. Her glance is brief: she sees spiked metal poles, dry tangled weeds. Desert dust stings her eyes.

Quickly she slips through and seals the door behind her. It is quieter beyond the chamber—the noises are those of the wind and the dripping pipes. But there is another noise now: the crackling of ethereal energy and as she heads towards her quarters she knows that she must be watchful.

Although the walls make an honourable attempt at containing the psychic energies of the Madman their efforts are inadequate. The noxious flesh of the deep-dweller has already taken hold: the sky above the asylum ripples and swells with eldritch green energies. Each line in the sky is a gateway, a tear in reality created by the Madman's mind; a tree appears from one of the cracks and drops onto the asylum's already buckled roof. Dirt from the roots slides down the tiles and gathers in the sagging gutters.

Away from the noise, the Doctor stands and studies the books upon his shelf. Contained within are stories of monsters and men, gods and legends, lists upon lists of gateways, doors, worlds, occult rituals and everything in-between. He is tired of waiting, yet he must continue to do so.

Eventually: the right door will open and he will be able to go home.