



Fig. 1: At the treeline where the county road runs out. House-style plate.

CRYPTID № 10

THE GOATMAN

Suburban Maryland's own monster: three origin stories that cannot all be true, a real 1971 folklore study that put it in the newspaper, and a stretch of woods that keeps handing it back. Real folklore, a full 5E stat block, and a system-neutral card.

*"Nobody agrees where it came from.
Everybody agrees where it walks."*

THE LEGEND

Most monsters belong to a wilderness, but the Goatman belongs to a county. It walks the pocket of woods where Prince George's County, Maryland was turning from farmland into subdivisions. Those are the dark seams left between Bowie and Beltsville and Upper Marlboro, and its whole history runs the back roads there, Fletchertown Road worst of all. It is a suburban monster, born in the years the woods were shrinking and the teenagers had cars, and it has never really left that map.

Its origin will not hold still, and that is the first thing to know about it. One version says two long-settled local families invented it, a thing that came out of the trees to carry off children who wandered too far down the

wrong road after dark. Another is pure atomic-age dread, a Beltsville laboratory where a Dr. Stephen Fletcher crossed a man with a goat and fled into the woods as the thing he made. A third needs no lab and no nursery at all, just a hermit, an old man alone in the trees, watching the headlights come.

It became a public monster on a date you can look up. In 1971 a University of Maryland student named George Lizama gathered eight versions of the story for a folklore class, feeding them into the university's Folklore Archive, and that October a reporter named Karen Hosler pulled them back out for the Prince George's County News. The campfire story became a newspaper story, the newspaper story became a hunt, and carloads of teenagers began driving out to Fletchertown Road specifically to be scared, which is its own kind of proof of life.

The evidence, such as it is, is the kind that travels well and checks out badly. The story everyone repeats is the ring of dogs found dead and headless near the same stretch of road, and the nights when something big came out of the trees at a parked car with an axe and left a dent in the roof and a scream in four teenagers. Chase any single account to the ground and it thins out into a friend of a friend. Stand back and look at all of them at once and there is a shape there anyway, always at the treeline, always with the axe, always just after the headlights die.

So the Goatman is a monster assembled out of a real place and a real fear, the fear of the dark edge of a neighborhood that used to be a farm. Nobody can say whether it started as a warning, an experiment, or a lonely old man, and every teller is sure it is one of those and wrong about which. That disagreement is not a hole in the legend. It is the engine. A monster no one can source is a monster no one can close the file on, and Prince George's County has been trying, and failing, to close this one for fifty years.

For D&D 5E**STAT BLOCK**

The Goatman

*Medium monstrosity, chaotic evil***Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)**Hit Points** 82 (11d8 + 33)**Speed** 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18	14	16	8	13	8
(+4)	(+2)	(+3)	(-1)	(+1)	(-1)

Skills Athletics +7, Perception +4, Stealth +5**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP) **PB** +3

Sure-Footed. The Goatman ignores difficult terrain, has advantage on saving throws against being knocked prone, and can climb sheer surfaces without an ability check. Broken ground, a wooded slope, or the side of a stopped car is no obstacle to it.

Roadside Ambusher. The Goatman has advantage on attack rolls against any creature that is surprised or that has not yet taken a turn in combat, and its first hit against such a creature deals an extra 7 (2d6) damage. It hunts the moment the headlights die, before anyone has decided the shape in the trees is real.

Dread of It. The first time a creature sees the Goatman in a given encounter, that creature must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of it until

**For Every Other
Game****CREATURE
CARD**

The Goatman

No stat lines. Just what it is and how to point it at your players, whatever system you run. A horned, hooved, axe-carrying thing that hunts the dark edge of a settled place, whose origin nobody can pin down and everybody swears they know. Where the Snallygaster is a monster that grew, the Goatman is a monster that will not be sourced, and that is its whole power.

HOW IT BEHAVES AT THE TABLE

- **It owns the treeline, not the open.** It ambushes from cover at the worst moment, hits hard, and pulls back into the dark. It does not stand and trade blows if it can help it.
- **It hunts the stopped and the alone.** A parked car, a broken-down wagon, a lone traveler off the road. The threat lands hardest when the party is not braced for a fight.
- **Its story is a weapon.** Nobody in town agrees where it came from, so nobody can tell the party how to be safe from it. Let three locals give three different, confident, contradictory origins.

the end of its next turn. It is the wrongness of the thing, a man's build under a goat's head, that does the work before the axe ever swings.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The Goatman makes two attacks: one with its axe and one with its horns.

Rusted Axe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Horns. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) piercing damage. If the Goatman moved at least 20 feet straight toward the target before the hit, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) piercing damage and must succeed on a DC 15 Strength save or be knocked prone.

Terrifying Bleat (Recharge 5-6).

The Goatman looses a scream that is almost, but not quite, a human voice. Each creature within 30 feet that can hear it must succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw or be frightened for 1 minute. A frightened creature can repeat the save at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Running it. The Goatman is a road-and-treeline predator, and the block is built to be run in the dark, at an ambush, against a party that is not ready. Lead with Roadside Ambusher and Dread of It on turn one, before initiative even feels fair, then let it fight and flee rather than fight to the death, back to the woods to become a rumor again. It is beatable, and

WAYS TO USE IT

- **The drive that goes wrong.** The party is on an isolated road at night when the lights die and something comes out of the trees. Classic, and it works because it is how the real story is always told.
- **The experiment that walked off.** Lean on the lab-origin version: a research station, a thing that got out, and a director who would very much like it found quietly before anyone else hears the name.
- **The legend the town keeps.** A place that half-believes and half-profits, warning teenagers off the road it also sells postcards of. Someone benefits from the Goatman staying unproven.
- **Cut it loose from Maryland.** Any settled place with a wild edge will do: a mill town against the forest, a frontier fort, a station at the end of the line. Keep the horns, the axe, the road, and the three stories nobody can reconcile.

DIFFICULTY DIAL

- As written it is a mid-tier ambusher that a prepared party handles and an unprepared one remembers. Make it *scarier* by running the whole first encounter as a hit-and-vanish with no clean look, so the fight only truly begins the second time.

that is fine, a party that corners it on open ground should win, but the memorable version is the one that hits the stopped car, dents the roof, and is gone before anyone gets a clean look. Do not resolve which origin is true. If a player asks whether it is the experiment or the old man or the made-up thing, the honest and better answer is that the county has never agreed either.

- Make it *deadlier* by giving it the road itself: a second Goatman, or a stretch of woods where every retreat path is cut off, so the party cannot simply outdrive the story.

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