

THE PSEUDONATURAL CREATURE

VERSION 3.0

A LOVECRAFTIAN TEMPLATE FOR D&D MONSTERS
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IF I SAY THAT MY SOMEWHAT EXTRAVAGANT IMAGINATION YIELDED SIMULTANEOUS PICTURES OF AN OCTOPUS, A DRAGON, AND A HUMAN CARICATURE, I SHALL NOT BE UNFAITHFUL TO THE SPIRIT OF THE THING. A PULPY, TENTACLED HEAD SURMOUNTED A GROTESQUE AND SCALY BODY WITH RUDIMENTARY WINGS; BUT IT WAS THE GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE WHOLE WHICH MADE IT MOST SHOCKINGLY FRIGHTFUL.
—H.P. Lovecraft, *The Call of Cthulhu*

SPAWN OF THE GREAT OLD ONES

Originally introduced as a portion of the Alienist prestige class, the pseudonatural creature recurred in several publications for 3rd Edition D&D, in both normal and “epic” forms. It represented entities that might at times appear like worldly creatures, but whose true form was unmistakably foreign to the nature of our reality. In the 5th Edition of D&D, the Far Realm, an unknowable space beyond even the Outer Planes, is woven into the lore of the warlock, as home to Great Old Ones, elder gods, and other sanity-blasting abominations whose existence mortals can barely comprehend. In the fictions of H.P. Lovecraft, which inspired the original pseudonatural template (as well as the 3rd Edition Alienist and the 5th Edition Great Old One patron option for warlocks), omnipotent anti-deities such as Cthulhu and Yog-Sothoth often spawned lesser beings, still terrible enough to destroy the minds of most mortals who crossed their path. The pseudonatural template presented in this document provides a means of representing such eldritch horrors, as well as a simple way to increase the menace or general creep factor of existing monsters. It does not merely adapt one particular previous version of this creature, but combines them and leverages new mechanics from the 5th Edition D&D rules to make them even more horrifying and memorable when encountered.

PSEUDONATURAL CREATURE

Pseudonatural creatures originate in the Far Realm or in other places beyond the planes as we know them. Eldritch abominations such as these are often the spawn or servitors of Great Old Ones, elder gods, or powerful aberrations. They can don at least one less alien form when needed; a glimpse of their true nature can shake a mortal’s grip on reality.

PSEUDONATURAL TEMPLATE

Any corporeal creature can become a pseudonatural creature. When it becomes a pseudonatural creature, it keeps its statistics, except as noted below.

Type. The creature’s type changes to Aberration.

Alignment. Chaotic evil and neutral evil creatures remain so.

Other alignments are changed as follows:

PSEUDONATURAL CREATURE ALIGNMENT

Base Creature’s Alignment	New Alignment
Lawful Good	Unaligned
Neutral Good	Neutral
Chaotic Good	Chaotic Neutral
Lawful Evil	Neutral Evil
Lawful Neutral	Lawful Evil
Chaotic Neutral	Chaotic Evil
Neutral	Chaotic Neutral
Unaligned	Chaotic Neutral

Hit Points. If the creature has less than 3 Hit Dice, raise its number of Hit Dice to 3 and adjust its hit points accordingly.

Ability Scores. If the creature’s Intelligence is below 3, increase it to 3. In addition, if the creature’s Wisdom is less than 20,

increase the creature’s Wisdom by 10, to a maximum of 20 or the base creature’s challenge rating, whichever is higher.

Challenge. Increase the creature’s challenge rating by 1 after applying this template. (If the base creature’s challenge rating is lower than 1/2, increase the challenge rating to 1/2; if it is 1/2, increase it to 1.)

Senses. The pseudonatural creature gains blindsight with a radius of 10 feet.

Damage Resistances. The pseudonatural creature gains resistance to acid and lightning.

Languages. The pseudonatural creature gains telepathy 30 ft.

New Trait: Telepathic Insight. If a creature within 30 ft. communicates telepathically with the pseudonatural creature, it must make a Charisma saving throw against a DC equal to the pseudonatural creature’s Wisdom score. If the creature fails the save, the pseudonatural creature magically learns one fact or secret about that creature.

New Spells: The pseudonatural creature knows the *reaver’s touch**, *true strike* and *vicious mockery* cantrips. If it can cast spells of 1st level or higher, it also gains the spells *bane* and *dissonant whispers*. (“*” indicates a new cantrip appearing at the end of this document).

New Action: Pseudonatural Form. As a bonus action, the creature assumes its true form, that of a grotesque, tentacled mass (or another appropriately horrifying form), but all its abilities remain unchanged despite its appearance. While it is in this form, all attack rolls against the pseudonatural creature made by creatures who can see it are at disadvantage. In addition, while the pseudonatural creature has advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks and disadvantage on all other Charisma checks while in this true form. It can use another bonus action to change back.

New Reaction: True Form. When the pseudonatural creature takes damage, it can assume its pseudonatural form as a reaction.



EXAMPLE: THE RAT-THING (PSEUDONATURAL RAT)

The rat-thing appears to be a regular rat to most who see it, but it is always the familiar of some loathesome, half-mad spellcaster, and its true form is far more disturbing. Those who glimpse it in unguarded moments are horrified, for the rat-thing has a face much like that of a human, and its tiny hands are human-like as well. Its face is bearded, sharp-toothed, and bears an evil expression. Its voice sounds like hateful tittering, but it can only communicate via telepathy, which those contacted experience as the same loathsome titter forming words in their own language. It is said evil wizards and warlocks create rat-things from the remains of sacrificed cultists. Such creatures almost never fight alone, engaging in hostile action only at the side of the corrupted spellcaster they serve.

PSEUDONATURAL RAT (RAT-THING)

Tiny aberration, chaotic neutral

Armor Class 10

Hit Points 4 (3d4-3)

Speed 20ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2 (-4)	11 (+0)	9 (-1)	3 (-4)	20 (+5)	4 (-3)

Damage Resistances acid, lightning

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 15

Languages telepathy 30 ft.

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The pseudonatural rat's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *reaver's touch**, *true strike*, *vicious mockery*

(* indicates a new cantrip appearing at the end of this document).

Telepathic Insight. If a creature within 30 ft. communicates telepathically with the pseudonatural rat, it must make a Charisma saving throw (DC 20). If the creature fails the save, the pseudonatural rat magically learns one fact or secret about that creature.

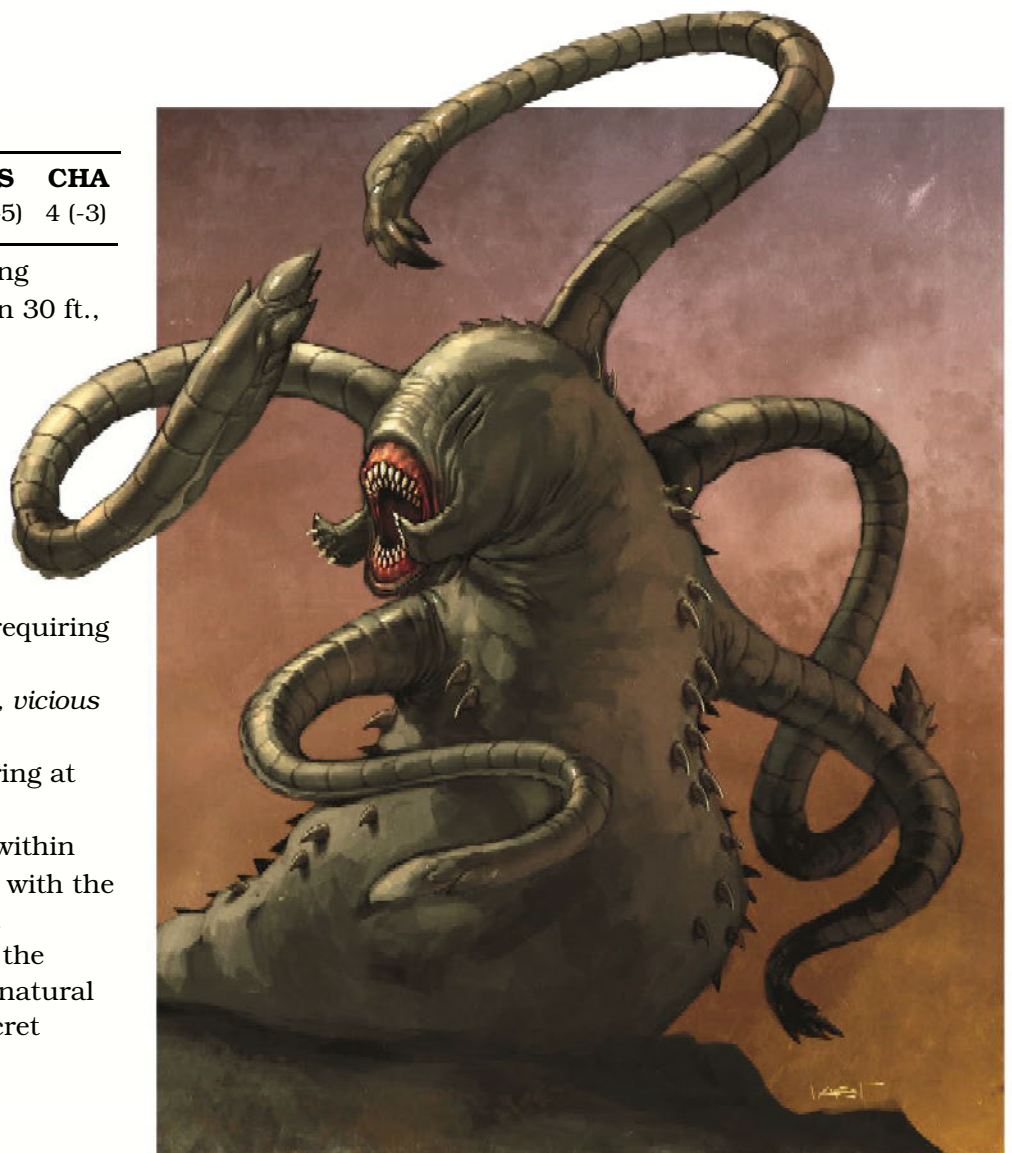
Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 piercing damage.

Pseudonatural Form. As a bonus action, the pseudonatural rat creature assumes its true form, that of a rat with a human-like face and tiny, humanoid hands. While it is in this form, all attack rolls against the pseudonatural rat made by creatures who can see it are at disadvantage. In addition, while it is in its true form, the pseudonatural rat has advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks and disadvantage on all other Charisma checks. It can use another bonus action to change back.

Reactions

True Form. When the pseudonatural rat takes damage, it can assume its pseudonatural form as a reaction.



EXAMPLE: THE BLACK DOG (PSEUDONATURAL HELL HOUND)

The black dog is massive dog the size of a calf with thick, shaggy, jet black fur and glowing red eyes. It has sharp, knife-like canines, and its mouth always seems to be grinning, as if the fell creature bears some hidden secret. Its saliva stinks of sulfur. It appears only at night, but even in the moonlight its fur does not shine or gleam, but remains dark as a shadow. It leave no footprints. It can only be tracked by the scorch marks it leaves on the ground every few paces, and by its tendency to stop and claw or gnaw upon large objects of wood or metal. It is always associated with fire, with the smell of smoke and flickering shadows in its presence, but does not appear in dog form with a visible aura of fire. It is as if, wherever it goes, there is always an unseen fire nearby. Thankfully, these creatures are rare, and seldom attack the living, but rather are omens of worse horrors to follow. They appear before great fires, deadly plagues, battles with high casualties, and the deaths of important personages. They also accompany the appearances of comets in the night sky. Sometimes, they are set to guard something, charged with this duty by unknown powers. In this case, they remain calm and aloof unless a creature threatens or approaches the object of their protection, which sends them into an aggressive frenzy.

In their true form, black dogs are far more frightening. Their bodies seem to explode, as they become unsteady orbs of crimson flame, surrounded by ember-like points of fiery light and bursts of red lightning. They shimmer with heat, making them hard to focus on, but anyone looking directly at the fiery orb sees visions in the flames, visions of various horrific ways they might die, combined with scenes of cataclysm and carnage consuming nearby settlements.

PSEUDONATURAL HELL HOUND (BLACK DOG)

Medium aberration, neutral evil

Armor Class 15

Hit Points 45 (7d8-14)

Speed 50ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	20 (+5)	6 (-2)

Skills Perception +9

Damage Resistances Acid, lightning

Damage Immunities Fire

Senses blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages telepathy 30 ft., understands Infernal but can't speak it

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Innate Spellcasting. The pseudonatural hell hound's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 15). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *reaver's touch**, *true strike*, *vicious mockery* (* indicates a new cantrip appearing at the end of this document).

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

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

Telepathic Insight. If a creature within 30 ft. communicates telepathically with the pseudonatural hell hound, it must make a Charisma saving throw (DC 20). If the creature fails the save, the pseudonatural hell hound magically learns one fact or secret about that creature.

Actions

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8+3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

Fire Breath (Recharge 5-6). The pseudonatural hell exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Pseudonatural Form. As a bonus action, the pseudonatural hell hound creature assumes its true form, that of a flaming sphere wreathed in embers and red lightning, shimmering with it and filled with horrific visions. While it is in this form, all attack rolls against the pseudonatural hell hound made by creatures who can see it are at disadvantage. In addition, while it is in its true form, the pseudonatural hell hound has advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks and disadvantage on all other Charisma checks. It can use another bonus action to change back.

Reactions

True Form. When the pseudonatural hell hound takes damage, it can assume its true form as a reaction.

NEW CANTRIP:

REAYER'S TOUCH*

Necromancy cantrip

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: Instantaneous

Your touch drains a target's life energy, allowing you to empower yourself via the ritual sacrifice of animals and other creatures, or by striking your opponents in combat. Make a melee spell attack against the target. You have advantage on the attack if your target is a beast. On a hit, the target takes 1d6 necrotic damage, and you gain temporary hit points equal to half the damage inflicted (rounded up). The spell's damage increases by 1d6 when you reach 5th level (2d6), 11th level (3d6), and 17th level (4d6).

OPTIONAL RULE: PSEUDONATURAL FAMILIARS

As an optional rule, DM's may allow Pact of the Chain warlocks whose patron is the Great Old One to acquire a familiar who is a pseudonatural version of one of the regular animals allowed by the *find familiar* spell (bat, cat, crab, frog (toad), hawk, lizard, octopus, owl, poisonous snake, fish (quipper), rat, raven, sea horse, spider, or weasel). Such a familiar is always an aberration rather than a celestial, fey, or fiend. You and your DM can decide what the creature's true (pseudonatural) form looks like.

If your DM uses the variant rule in the Monster Manual that allows imps, quasits, and pseudodragons to share their magic resistance with their companions, they may consider using the following variant rule for pseudonatural familiars:

While the pseudonatural familiar is in its pseudonatural form, if it is within 5 feet of its companion, all melee attacks against its companion made by creatures who can see it are at disadvantage, and its companion has advantage on Charisma (Intimidation) checks and disadvantage on all other Charisma checks.