

The background of the entire cover is a dynamic, abstract pattern of dark brown and black ink splatters and swirls against a light beige or cream-colored background. The ink appears to be moving and spreading, creating a sense of fluid motion and organic, somewhat chaotic growth.

age



adventure game engine

AGE BESTIARY

ALIEN HORRORS

AGE BESTIARY: ALIEN HORRORS

Alien horrors are terrible creatures from beyond space and time. Their bodies and minds conform to strange laws foreign to normal mortals. Possessing potent sanity-bending abilities and physical might, they are a threat not only to the stalwart adventures who battle them, but to reality itself.

ALIEN HORRORS IN MYTH & FOLKLORE

Alien horrors usually only show up in myth and folklore through revisionist modern interpretations of ancient legends. Where a dragon in folklore is an ancient powerful lizardlike being, an alien horror version of the same creature might be a twisted tentacle devourer of mortal flesh hailing from another planet or dimension. Some of the more creative and odd depictions of demons and similar monsters share a lot in common with the alien horror, but it's rare for the extraterrestrial or extra-celestial origins to show up in the original myths and legends. That said, some Asian and Native American monsters are so strange they might well be considered such creatures. This is especially true of water-based creatures, like the frog-like titanic Aglebemu of the Wabanki tribal myths or the Japanese water spirit Umibōzu.

Some pulp horror writers such as HP Lovecraft and his contemporaries borrowed gods and monsters from existing myth to populate the famous Cthulhu mythos. From the Egyptian cat goddess Bast to the fearsome cannibal spirit Ithaqua, these creators turned and subverted existing myths into alien horrors by tying these beings into their unique cosmic horror mythos.

ALIEN HORRORS IN POP CULTURE

The bulk of the cultural origin of the Alien Horror comes from popular media of the 20th Century. As mentioned earlier, the works of HP Lovecraft and his contemporaries such as Robert Howard and Clark Ashton Smith often described terrible alien monsters and gods whose powers were beyond mortal ability to comprehend. These creations, often collectively referred to as the Cthulhu Mythos, captured something in the public imagination and the fascination with these beings exists to this day. From the pulp horror of the early 20th century to modern films such as *Hellboy* and *In the Mouth of Madness* the idea of alien horrors

from beyond the stars has shown surprising longevity and popularity in pop culture. Even more traditional monster and horror fare, such as the television shows *Supernatural*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Angel* have featured thinly veiled references to such creatures, often mixing them with lore taken from myth or created especially for the media. In most cases, the line between science fiction and fantasy horror is blurred when it comes to these monsters; they are extraterrestrial or extra-dimensional beings with origins from alien worlds or alternate realities, but their powers and appearance are so strange and terrible they often seem more like demons or twisted gods than invaders from another world.

"MADNESS RIDES THE STAR-WIND... CLAWS AND TEETH SHARPENED ON CENTURIES OF CORPSES... DRIPPING DEATH ASTRIDE A BACCHANALE OF BATS FROM NIGH-BLACK RUINS OF BURIED TEMPLES OF BELIAL..."

- H.P. LOVECRAFT, THE HOUND

GMs wanting inspiration for using alien horrors in their games can find a wealth of source material in books, movies, and television. Japanese animation and modern horror comics in particular seem to have a special love for tentacle demons and other such monsters. Even films such as the *Alien* series present threats that could easily fall into this category with minimal tweaking.

ALIEN HORRORS IN PLAY

Alien horrors are never to be taken lightly. Even minions of this type of monster possess frightening appetites and potent abilities. Worse, it's often impossible to reason with such creatures as they possess nothing like normal thought processes and psychology. Despite, or perhaps because of this, some fringe religious types and madmen worship these beings as "the true gods", calling them by titles such as "The Old Ones" or "Elder Gods" or "Harbingers of Chaos." While alien horrors care little for their mortal worshippers, some might channel a fraction of their power to mortal mages.

Monsters of this sort, especially those of godlike power, are often hindered in some way from direct interaction with reality, instead relying on servitors or cultists to interact with the world. Some might be imprisoned in lost cities or deep under the earth or in ocean trenches. Often these creatures have existed since long before humanity and in some settings ruled the world before any of the current races and species rose to prominence. If these powerful alien horrors were ever freed, they could destroy civilizations and cause the extinction of whole races. While that's frightening enough, often such widespread devastation



"WHEN THE STARS WERE RIGHT, THEY COULD PLUNGE FROM WORLD TO WORLD THROUGH THE SKY; BUT WHEN THE STARS WERE WRONG, THEY COULD NOT LIVE. BUT ALTHOUGH THEY NO LONGER LIVED, THEY WOULD NEVER REALLY DIE..."

- H.P. LOVECRAFT, THE CALL OF CTHULHU

and genocide aren't even the true goals of such monsters. Instead it's simply a side effect of what happens when they rise to reclaim the world they once ruled.

Of course, it's also possible that alien horrors could arrive in a setting during play. They might be a wholly new threat from beyond the stars or another dimension that have suddenly taken interest in the world. Such beings would find themselves at odds with nearly every power in existence and gods, spirits, demons, and mortals may find a common enemy in this terrible threat.

ALIEN HORROR THEMES

Alien horrors are not only about the fear of the unknown, but also the unknowable. In most cases, it is beyond the capacity of mortal minds to understand their true natures, goals, and desires. Opening oneself up to such experiences often causes death and madness, and often failing to stop an alien horror results in a fate worse than mere death. In other words, these monsters are meant to frighten and terrorize anyone facing them. This doesn't mean they can't be killed, stopped, or driven back, but doing so often comes at a great cost. It's a rare hero who can go toe-to-toe with such creatures and not suffer some ill effects. Worse, if a character manages to repeatedly best lesser alien horrors they might finally gain the attention of more powerful beings of this type, which could result in widespread ruin as godlike beings turn their eldritch wrath on the mortal world.

DIFFERENT BREEDS

The following are a collection of just some of the alien horrors that might appear in a game. GMs are encouraged to alter and embellish these basic types of monster to create threats that are unique and terrifying to their PCs.

ALIEN HYBRID

An unspeakable merging of humanity and alien parentage, the alien hybrid is humanoid and might even appear as a normal human, elf, dwarf, or other humanoid at a glance. However, upon close inspection, the creature is revealed to have various inhuman traits such as tentacles in place of fingers, extra eyes, or leathery slime-slick skin. Communities of such beings often interbreed for generations, occasionally kidnapping or seducing mortals to join them. Many worship their alien ancestors as gods and work to free them from whatever prisons where godlike monsters are often trapped so that they may destroy, rule, or devour the world. Due to this, they prefer to subdue their targets for proper sacrifice later.

As strange as these alien hybrids look, their thoughts and emotions are even more warped. Their alien nature infects their thought processes, making them incapable of human-like emotions and connections outside their own communities. Even if such a creature seems friendly or loyal, it will eventually hear the call of its dark heritage.



ALIEN HYBRID

THE PRODUCT OF UNHOLY UNIONS BETWEEN MORTAL
AND ALIEN MONSTERS, THESE BEINGS ARE EXAMPLES OF
A TERRIBLE NATURE THAT SUBVERTS AND DESTROYS ANY
NURTURING UPBRINGING.

| Abilities (Focuses) | | |
|--|--|--------------------------|
| 0 | Communication | |
| 3 | Constitution (Stamina) | |
| 0 | Cunning | |
| 2 | Dexterity (Brawling, Clubs & Staves, Light Blades) | |
| 2 | Magic | |
| 2 | Perception | |
| 3 | Strength (Might) | |
| 1 | Willpower (Courage) | |
| Combat Ratings | | |
| 15 Speed | | 30 Health |
| 12 Defense | | 1 Armor Rating (Natural) |
| Attacks | | |
| Weapon | Attack Roll | Damage |
| Club | +4 | 1d6+3 |
| Dagger | +4 | 1d6+4 |
| Unarmed | +4 | 1d3+3 |
| Powers | | |
| Favored Stunts: Disarm, Knock Prone, Skirmish | | |
| Natural Armor: Add 1 to Armor Rating to reflect tough hide and general durability. | | |
| Twisted Heritage: Any attempts to influence or mentally control the alien hybrid incur a -2 penalty unless performed by someone with Magic (Entropy) or Cunning (Eldritch Lore) Focuses. | | |
| Weapons Group: Brawling, Clubs and Staves, Heavy Blades, Spears | | |
| Equipment: Club or Dagger | | |
| Note: Statistics are for a typical alien hybrid. Their champions, leaders, and assassins will have higher abilities, several extra focuses, talents, and better equipment. | | |

HUNTER HORROR

THOUGH NOT ALWAYS CANINE IN APPEARANCE, THESE CREATURES HUNT, STALK, AND KILL FOR THEIR ALIEN MASTERS AND THOSE FEW DARK SORCERERS FOOLISH ENOUGH TO DEAL WITH THEM.

In addition to the statistics for various alien horrors, these characters can be customized to create different types. The simplest method is to add Epic, Heroic, or Elite modifications to create powerful monsters. These also might be applied to create a more powerful race of monsters that are similar but decidedly more dangerous than their lesser brethren. For example, applying Elite to the Hunter Horror statistics could represent an apex predator from an alien dimension summoned and controlled by an alien intelligence to stalk and devour its enemies.

Adding some talents or powers from character classes is another way to customize. As most alien horrors are at least somewhat intelligent, adding warrior, rogue, or mage abilities are easy to justify. In the case of magic, Entropy magic is favored, though other spells are possible.

Another option is to take an existing creature, monster, or character and turn them into an alien horror. The following template can be applied to accomplish this and will create anything from alien-spider things to twisted space dragons that spread terror and madness throughout the cosmos.

UNEARTHLY TERROR: Characters first facing a hunter horror must succeed in a TN 7 Willpower (Courage) Test or be struck with a pervasive sense of doom and dread that causes a –1 penalty to any tests against the hunter horror. For 3 SP, the monster may attempt to use this power again as part of an action.

+1 Magic, Constitution, and Strength; add two focuses; +5 Health;
+2 Armor Rating, add the **CREATURE OF MADNESS** power.

+2 Magic , Constitution, and Strength; +1 Dexterity; add three focuses; +15 Health; +3 Armor Rating; and add the **CREATURE OF MADNESS** power.

+3 Magic; +4 Constitution, and +3 Strength; +1 Cunning, Dexterity, Perception, and Willpower; add five focuses; +25 Health; +5 Armor Rating; and add the **BEING OF PURE MADNESS** power.

PRIMARY FOCUS LIST

Magic (Entropy), Strength (Intimidation), Willpower (Courage)

SECONDARY FOCUS LIST

Cunning (Eldritch Lore), Perception (Tracking)

CREATURE OF MADNESS

With a standard action, the Alien Horror can strike a target that can see or hear it with the power of its otherworldly impossibility. The target must make an opposed Willpower (Discipline) Check vs. the monster's Magic (Entropy). Failure means the target suffers a -2 penalty to all checks against the monster. For 3 SP, the monster can also inflict 2d6 penetrating damage (ignores armor bonus).

BEING OF PURE MADNESS

As **CREATURE OF MADNESS**, but the monster can attack everyone that can see or hear them (pick one when the power is used).

EXTRAS

The following section includes backgrounds for playing alien hybrid PCs and a specialization for such characters.

PLAYING AN ALIEN HYBRID

Some players might want to play characters with the blood of an alien horror in their veins. The problem here is that in many stories of such creatures, even having a distant relative who was tainted by such beings means that the character will one day go mad, turn on humanity, or mutate into some terrible creature. Such character backgrounds really aren't appropriate as PCs in most campaigns.

For GMs who want to have less doomed and definite relationships between alien hybrids and their extra-celestial ancestors, consider adapting a background from another *AGE Bestiary*, such as Beastmen or Giants. These characters would likely be hunted by

kin who seek to force them to join their communities and cults, but at least they'll have the free will to resist such persuasion.

NEW FOCUS

ELDRITCH LORE

If a GM is planning to use alien horrors in his game he may wish to include a new Focus, Eldritch Lore. This Cunning-based focus comes into effect whenever a character seeks knowledge or information about alien horrors, strange godlike monsters from beyond the stars, and artifacts and texts that deal with these creatures. At the GM's discretion, this focus might allow a character to know sigils and wards that could temporarily hinder or hold back such creatures, giving them temporarily penalties to actions or even preventing them from entering an area for a short time. These protections are less likely to work the more powerful the alien horror, and the cost for such rituals might be high. Many have been driven mad or turned suicidal in the face of what mortals must do to deal with such monsters.

NEW ARTIFACTS

FORBIDDEN TEXTS

The secrets to defeating, containing, and summoning alien horrors are known to humanity only through strange tomes filled with sanity warping knowledge. Reading these texts will allow a character to make test as if he has the Eldritch Lore and Entropy focuses. Some rare texts even allow a mage to use various levels of the Entropy Mage Talent and grant knowledge of various spells. This power comes with a cost. The first time the text is read and every time its knowledge is called on, the character must make a test using Willpower (Discipline) vs. TN 5 + 1 for each time the tome has been used. Failure infects the user with a kind of creeping madness that gives them a permanent and cumulative -1 penalty to resist, fight, or otherwise oppose alien horrors. This penalty also makes the character vulnerable to other effects and powers that cause madness, fear, or dread.

Removing the effects of this madness requires divine intervention, a powerful artifact, or a great quest. It's likely while a character attempts to remove this tainted influence that various alien horrors will pursue them; seeking to kill or enslave them before they manage to free themselves.

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