

The Baleful Sorcerer of Tsathag'kha



An old school, magic-using character class by Venger As'Nas Satanis

Kort'thalis Publishing

The Baleful Sorcerer of Tsathag'kha is an old school character class created for use with every variation on the original fantasy, paper & pencil, tabletop roleplaying game. The rights to reproduce this work are reserved for the copyright holder.

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<http://vengersatanis.blogspot.com/>

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Introduction

Abnon-Tha, however, was no common hedge-wizard, but an adept of long standing in the most awful and profound arcana of the black arts. He knew the spells that kill more quickly and surely than knife or poison, at a distance; and he knew also the darker spells by which the dead can be reanimated, even after years or ages of decay.

The Charnel God by Clark Ashton Smith

I'm somewhat familiar with 20th century sword and sorcery pulp, but there are many holes in my learning. Alas, there are many stories I've never read and many I've consumed only once and many years ago. I have but scratched the proverbial surface.

Last night, I began a weird tale that gripped me like few others have ever dared, keeping me in its rapacious grasp until the very end. This short story was, "*The Charnel God*" by Clark Ashton Smith; one of the best dark fantasy stories I've read.

That weird tale compelled me to re-think the traditional RPG magic-user character class. I posted my initial idea on my old school gaming blog. A lot of experienced and thoughtful gamers furnished me with wondrous additions and alternatives. This is the product of that collective brainstorming.

There are distant realms where only the baleful sorcerer practices his obscene art, and traditional wizards are noticeably absent. This alternative character class can be used instead of, or in addition to, what is presented in RPG abc or xyz, and GMs should feel free to base similar magic-using classes upon what is presented here.

I'm offering this PDF freely to those who want it. If the baleful sorcerer enriches your game, then I am glad to be of service. Please post feedback as I never tire of hearing the outlandish adventures rooted in actual play. Those who appreciate this humble gift might also be interested in Liberation of the Demon Slayer... a Lovecraftian, science-fantasy dungeon crawl module that includes bits of campaign setting and rule options. LotDS is available at DriveThruRPG, RPGNow, and Amazon.com. At the moment, I'm collating details for my second campaign-length module: *The Islands of Purple-Haunted Putrescence*. Check my old school gaming blog for details: <http://vengersatanis.blogspot.com/>

By His loathsome tentacles,

Venger As'Nas Satanis
Grogard de Noir

The Baleful Sorcerer of Tsathag'kha

Relative to an ordinary man, the baleful sorcerer of Tsathag'kha is extremely powerful... but his power comes at a terrible price! Taught his wicked ways by those who worship the hideous toad god Tsathag'kha, this sorcerer is familiar with the living dead, poison, certain edged weapons, and a concise selection of conjurations.

His spells total nine. They are listed from easiest to hardest in difficulty and potency. At first level, the sorcerer knows spell #1. At second level, he understands #2, and so on... each advancement bringing a new fragment of arcane lore. For example, at 1st level a baleful sorcerer would only be able to cast *Discern Magic*. Upon reaching 3rd level, he would have access to *Discern Magic*, *Sacrosanct*, and *Deception*.

Due to the particular nature of certain campaigns, the GM might want to swap the advancement of one spell for another. For instance, the party's survival could depend upon offensive magic. If a baleful sorcerer is the sole magic-user, and of 4th level, the GM can choose to grant *Ichorous Inferno* to the character upon reaching 5th level, leaving *Infernal Trafficking* or *Communion with Tsathag'kha* to 7th.

The baleful sorcerer may attempt a higher level spell than he is currently capable of casting, but there is great risk involved. Upon each and every pursuit, the sorcerer himself must roll a saving throw. Failure means the caster takes the constitution drain himself, no matter who was selected for that fate, and is also whisked away by the batrachian servants of Tsathag'kha, whereupon the sorcerer is imperiled for a time (1d4 hours) as his infernal attendants acquire all that the sorcerer knows. If he reveals nothing worthwhile, a blood-writ pact must be signed, obligating him to perform ghastly duties in the not too distant future.

Hit Die: D6

Proficiencies: No armor may be worn. Sorcerers may use daggers, short swords, sickles, and scimitars without penalty. A baleful sorcerer may use poison as a thief of same level.

Progression: Attack, saving throws, and all other progressions improve as the standard magic-user or wizard class.

Special Abilities: The baleful sorcerer has the power to rebuke, destroy, or command undead as a cleric of same level.

Drawbacks and Other Considerations: The sorcerer can never acquire a familiar, multi-class, or be of lawful/good alignment. Upon death, the baleful sorcerer's soul is promised to Tsathag'kha. Furthermore, there's a 7% chance per level that the inert husk of a sorcerer-corpse assumes the semblance of life shortly after interment (1d4 days), rising of its own accord as a Lich.

Because a sorcerer is granted his dominion by the hideous grace of the toad god himself, spell books are unnecessary. He doesn't forget his spells, and is able to cast and keep casting until physically spent. This mitigates the drawback of spell limitation.

Points of constitution drain can either occur per spell level (1 point for a level one spell, 2 points for a level two spell, etc.) or as noted in each spell's description, depending on the GM's wishes. The constitution drain affects a character's stamina, modifying his hit points. However, this drain does not necessarily affect the sorcerer himself. Either willing or unwilling victims may share the fatigue instead of, or in addition to, the baleful sorcerer, as long as, the victim is either physically touched at the time of casting or the victim's blood was drawn in preparation, but not more than an hour old.

Constitution recharges at a rate of 2 points per hour of uninterrupted rest and meditation; after six hours of such quietude, an individual's vitality is fully restored. However, those who fall to a constitution score of 3 or less must roll a successful saving throw to avoid being instantly killed by systemic shock from the sorcery.



SPELL LIST

1. **Discern Magic** - essentially detect magic, read magic, identify, and use magical device all rolled up into a single spell. Constitution drain: 1 point.

2. **Sacrosanct** - the culmination of mage armor, shield, and protection from arrows, spells, good, evil, etc. Sacrosanct gives the sorcerer a bonus to his armor class equal to his level; at 7th level it also provides 3 points of damage resistance. Constitution drain: 1d3 points.

3. **Deception** - for creating illusions and disguising the sorcerer or an intended subject. The observer must have familiar knowledge of a person, object, place, culture, and so forth in order to have a chance (as per saving throw) of seeing through the deception. Constitution drain: 1d4 points.

4. **Compel** - command; forcing weak-willed individuals to do the sorcerer's bidding. Victim gets a saving throw to resist initially and then once per day to break free of the sorcerer's will, as well as, each instance of being compelled to do something the victim would ordinarily find atrocious or repugnant. Constitution drain: 1d6 points.

5. **Infernal Trafficking** - communicating with, summoning, and binding all manner of Devils, Demons, and Outsiders. Alternatively, the sorcerer may learn **Communion with Tsathag'kha** instead, which puts him into direct psychic contact with the hideous toad god, as well as, allowing the sorcerer to summon a spawn of Tsathag'kha. Constitution drain: 1d8 points.

6. **Blackish Purple Tentacles of Abnon-Tha** - horrid tendrils rise out of the ground and flail around, squeezing the life out of the sorcerer's foes. Each tentacle does 2d8 of constricting damage per round to those grasped (save each round to avoid). Up to thirteen man-sized individuals within a 30' radius are affected. Constitution drain: 2d4 points.

7. **Ichorous Inferno** - streams of liquid green fire spraying out in various directions, incinerating those in the sorcerer's way. Save to avoid being roasted alive for 5d6 damage in a cone up to 50' from the sorcerer; 7d6 at tenth level. Constitution drain: 1d4 and 1d6 points.

8. **Necromancy** - causing the dead to rise and do as the sorcerer instructs for one night per level of sorcerer. Constitution drain: 2d8 points.

9. **Extinguish Life** - the act of murder via sorcery. Save versus death! A successful saving throw means victim only takes 2d6 damage (unless a natural 20 is rolled whereupon no damage is taken). Intended victim must be within 100' of the sorcerer when the spell is cast. Constitution drain: 3d4 points.