

Sinister Reflections

...a mirror to the soul...



sin•is•ter (sĭn'ĭ-stər) *adj.* **1.** Suggesting or threatening evil: *a sinister smile*. **2.** Presaging trouble; ominous: *sinister storm clouds*. **3.** Attended by or causing disaster or inauspicious circumstances. **4.** On the left side; left [Middle English *sinistre*, unfavorable, from Old French, from Latin *sinister*, on the left, unlucky]

-The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition

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A playtest document for Ron Edwards' Sorcerer. This material has not play tested. If you do playtest, please post an Actual Play at your favorite rpg webforum: rpg.net and indie-rpgs.com.

What are Sorcerers?

Sorcerers are those who have managed to split off and awaken their *Sinister* or *Reflection*, encountered through the contact and summon rituals, and the process of awakening and animating their own *Reflection* is known in occult terms as the *Alienation*. At the moment of *Alienation* the Sorcerer and his *Reflection* or *Sinister* become two distinct entities that almost resemble each other perfectly at that moment of *Alienation*.

They will look almost the same but anyone with Lore will be able to note seeing the two side by side that the *Sinister* has a similar but reversed look from the Sorcerer. If the Sorcerer is thin, the *Sinister* will be thicker. Over time, the Sorcerer will age but the *Sinister* will remain young. Scars, blemishes, and cosmetic changes in the appearance of the Sorcerer will not appear in the *Sinister*. Thus the telltales of all Sorcerers and *Sinisters* are normally only apparent when both are present. However, once *Alienated*, all photo-realistic representations of the Sorcerer will instead unfailingly document the *Sinister* rather than the Sorcerer. A painting, video, or photograph of a Sorcerer will instead capture the image of the *Sinister* along with all the demon's unique characteristics.

What is Lore?

Lore is an awareness of reflected worlds beneath the surface, of occult knowledge of the demon *Sinisters*, the rituals, and knowledge of the Otherworld known as the Hall of Mirrors. Lore *and* the need for Power is what defines a Sorcerer.

What are the Demons?

Demons are your mirror image, your own reflection and the demons are known as *Sinisters* or *Reflections* (or archaically: *Doppelgangers*). Everyone's mirror reflection is a potential demon, but only a few are able to waken that terrible potential and summon their own demon. Demons only normally exist in the presence of their Sorcerer when the Sorcerer is able to cast a reflection in some surface: a liquid, a mirror, glass, or some reflective metallic surface. In Sorcerer terms, the *Sinister* is not easily defined as its role changes: in reality when the Sorcerer stands before its *Reflection* the Demon functions as Inconspicuous (requiring a Lore roll to detect) *and* as a *Passer*. When the Sorcerer passes into the Other World known as the Hall of Mirrors, the Sorcerer's *Reflection* is absorbed and becomes a Parasite. (See the demon Doppelganger in the Sorcerer rulebook on page 61 for a similar example of a *Sinister*).

What is Humanity?

Humanity is *authenticity*:

Ownership of the consequences of your actions.

Being yourself.

Looking beyond the surface.

Assuming responsibility for your own life.

Humanity Loss checks are required, in addition to the rituals and the initial crossing over into the Otherworld, when any of these above examples of *authenticity* are compromised. These will have to be determined by each group, but being deceptive and telling lies, blaming others, and using your *Sinister* to attain your own ends instead of doing it yourself are all possible actions that might result in the potential for Humanity Loss.

The relationship between the Sorcerer and the Mystical Otherworld, The Hall of Mirrors and their demon Doppelganger, the *Sinister* is a transgressive one by nature. Anytime someone or something is crossed over between these two different worlds, there is the potential for a Humanity Loss check.

Humanity Gain rolls are made during human moments, authentic and genuine that fulfill the above criteria and do not rely upon the *Sinister* or the *Hall of Mirrors* in any way, shape or form. These checks should be rare and at profound moments of need or crisis, when no other recourse would serve but Sorcery.

At Humanity Zero: The Sorcerer has lost his soul and the *Alienation* becomes undone: The Sorcerer is swallowed alive by his or her *Sinister* which then replaces the Sorcerer in reality. This should be set up in a final scene for the Sorcerer as they meet their end. The triumphant *Sinister* or *Reflection* casts no reflection of its own as it lives out the life of its former master.



What are the Rituals?

The following are some possible examples of rituals, including one entirely new Sorcerer ritual “**Communion**”.

Contacting often uses drugs or other ritual formula whose actual effectiveness is not verified but is customary. The ritual is performed before the reflection of the Sorcerer, and if effective the Sorcerer will note that the *Reflection* has changed subtly. There will be a time lapse, and the *Reflection* will not inaudibly echo back statements a little slower than the Sorcerer has.

Summoning is the second part of the *Alienation*. Once the *Reflection* or *Sinister* has been contacted, it is necessary that the Sorcerer reach in and touch the image. The *Sinister* will in kind reach back out and touch the Sorcerer, the only time such a physical contact occurs until the Sorcerer reaches Humanity Zero, when the *Sinister* will reach out and grab the Sorcerer the next moment the Sorcerer casts an image. Once Summoned the Binding process concludes the *Alienation*.

Binding requires that the Sorcerer’s *Sinister* be used bound, usually by speaking and talking with the *Sinister* and finding out what its need is. The *Sinister*’s need is always focused on something important to the Sorcerer, although it is a variation or perversion of what the Sorcerer needs, functioning in such a manner as to create tension between the Sorcerer and its *Sinister*. For example, if the Sorcerer loves his beautiful wife, the *Sinister*’s need will be to slake its carnal lust. It may require that the Sorcerer conduct soul-draining intimate acts with the wife before a mirror, allowing the *Sinister* to ravish the Sorcerer’s wife through her image. Should the wife actually take a good look at her reflection, she would probably be profoundly disturbed by the reflected image and the appearance and behavior of the Sorcerer’s *Sinister*.

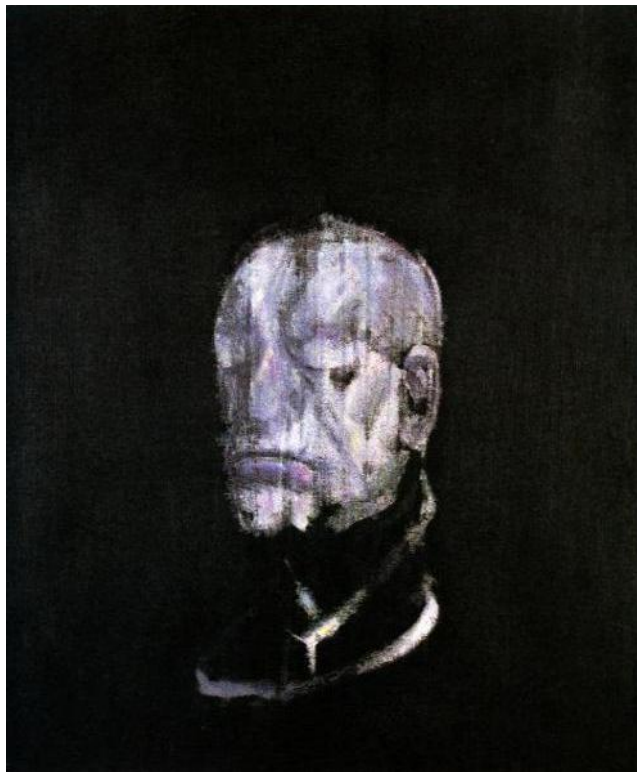
Punish Rituals are performed before the *Sinister* and they often require that the Sorcerer reach forth towards the surface and mutilate the *Sinister*.

Contain rituals require that the Sorcerer capture the *Sinister* in a mirror that is ritually removed from the Hall of Mirrors Otherworld. First, the Sorcerer must use a mirror that has never held another human reflection and the ritual is conducted using this mirror as the basis. Once the *Sinister* appears in the mirror the ritual then closes off the Otherworld. All the normal rules for Contain work as described in the Sorcerer rulebook, but note however that the Contain is automatically dispelled should the Containing Mirror be held up to another mirror creating the reflection of the *Sinister*, which then allows it to slip back into the Mirror Otherworld.

Banish rituals are very difficult, for one can hardly rid themselves of their reflection. Banish rituals require a confounding and joining of the Sorcerer and their *Reflection*. Secondly, the Sorcerer must have someone who is not a Sorcerer and who resembles or casts a similar reflection. The Banish requires that the Sorcerer banish their own *Reflection* and replacing it with another person's reflection. From then on, the Sorcerer will use their look-a-likes' mirror reflection. The Sorcerer's double will still have their reflection but the Sorcerer will have their double's reflection which will never change and always look the same at the moment of the Banish Ritual. Banishing another Sorcerer's Demon requires the presence of the Sorcerer or a photograph or video used displayed in a mirror and a double of that *Reflection's* binding Sorcerer.

There is a new ritual for this setting: **Communion**

Communion is, like all rituals, a Humanity-shocking event and requires a test of the Sorcerer's Humanity against the Power of the *Sinister*. Communion allows the Sorcerer and the *Sinister* to momentarily transcend the *Alienation* and join together and exchange qualities. If a Sorcerer has lost her left hand, she could reach forth towards her *Sinister's* right hand and as the two contacted, the Sorcerer can "exchange" matter with the *Reflection*. If successful, upon breaking contact, the Sorcerer will have a new hand and the *Sinister* will now be missing its hand. Anything can be exchanged like this: body parts, the aging process, and even things within such as cancer or disease, upon contact. Whether successful or not, the *Communion* requires a Humanity loss check upon completion. It is possible to use this to transfer Prices acquired *after* the *Alienation*, even social and psychological ones, from the Sorcerer to the *Sinister*.



The Mystic Otherworld: The Hall of Mirrors

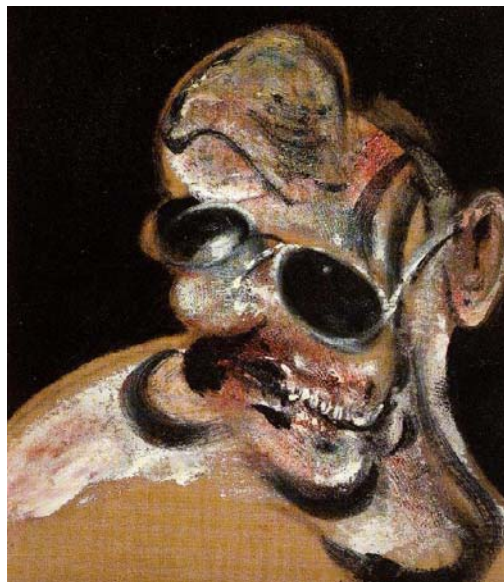
(*Sorcerer & Sword* pages 32-33)

All crafted mirrors permanently serve as portals to a mystical otherworld while all reflective surfaces temporarily serve as another means of traveling to this Otherworld. The mystical otherworld is akin to a Mirror Maze at a carnival funhouse, and as one gazes into the mirror they see superimposed as a ghostly image over that mirror the place where that mirror hangs.

Two options exist when a Sorcerer crosses over:

- A Sorcerer must make a Contact roll to enter and as they enter their physical body merges with that of their *Sinister* and thus the Sinister becomes a spiritual Parasite demon that can communicate with the Sorcerer.
- A Sorcerer must make a Summon ritual to enter and as they enter the Hall of Mirrors, their *Sinister* crosses over into the physical world and their roles are reversed. The *Sinister* then can conduct their affairs in the physical world as they see fit, and will return to the *Hall of Mirrors* when the Sorcerer crosses back over into the real, physical existence. The *Sinister* in this option enjoys the experience and their need may be to experience the verisimilitude of the “real” world.

Once in the Hall of Mirrors a Sorcerer can travel through space easily and step out of any mirror in existence. A Lore roll is required (Lore vs Lore -1), and if the Demon so desires, it can use its own Lore to boost the Sorcerer’s roll as per Currency (and only if the Demon so desires). In the first minute the Sorcerer can make a test to find the way through the maze to the Mirror they desire. No time passes in the actual Otherworld, but it does pass in Reality. If that roll is unsuccessful, the Sorcerer may try again but an hour will have passed in the world, and the time increases from each unsuccessful task to a day, a week, a fortnight, a month, a year, a decade, and then a century. There is no food or water to sustain the Sorcerer in the Hall of Mirrors, and unless they are a liche (see below) they cannot remain within for long. If the Sorcerer cannot find the exit they want, they can plunge through any mirror they see fit to emerge.



Demon Abilities

Because of the nature of Sorcery and Demons, there are a number of changes in the Demon Abilities. For a demon to use its ability on its user, it must be present in a reflection off some surface at the location of its Sorcerer (and the Target if any). Those Demon Abilities not listed are not available normally.

Armor: If conferred upon the user, the Demon takes the damage instead of the User

Big: As per “Armor”, with the Demon sustaining the damage in its appearance

Cloak: All Demons have *Cloak* as long as they are in a Reflection

Command: May command animals if they are casting a reflection

Confuse: Usable because the target’s eye casts a reflection of the Sorcerer

Cover: One of the Demon’s mandatory (not free!) Abilities is a Cover: [its Sorcerous Master]

Daze: See *Confuse*

Hint: Only if Target is looking in a reflective surface

Hold: Sorcerer may use if making eye contact with the Target and only works as long as Sorcerer maintains eye contact (a sort of mesmerism)

Hop: Demon temporarily replaces another’s reflection (not good against other demons, only mundane reflections).

Mark: Only appears on the target’s mundane reflection.

Perception: Mirror Scrying allows a Sorcerer to look into any location with a mirror, but can only use the sense of vision.

Protection: *Psychic Defense* only (Communion ritual is necessary to negate poison, disease, or the effects of ageing)

Psychic Attack: Possible only in the *Hall of Mirrors* (can be used on targets outside the *Hall of Mirrors*, i.e. a person standing before a Mirror).

Shadow: Only if a reflective surface is in the area

Spawn: The Demon may “Spawn” smaller copies of self in other mirrors (ritually prepared mirrors as per the Contain ritual) or multiple images in the same mirror

Taint: Target must be before their own mundane reflection

Transport: If the Demon has one of the *Travel* abilities, the Demon may also use *Transport* to bring the Sorcerer along through the *Hall of Mirrors*. In this case, the Demon and Sorcerer are both physically present and separate entities in the *Hall of Mirrors*.

Travel: Allows the Demon to travel between different surfaces into the *Hall of Mirrors*. Each medium allows the Demon to use that particular form as a portal to the *Hall of Mirrors*: sculpture, natural reflections (still water), metallic reflective surfaces, glass windows, photographs, TV/Video/Computer Monitors.

Vitality: As per *Armor* and *Big*, but note, it does not allow for resistance to Aging as the Communion ritual is necessary for that effect)

Other Demons

(*Sorcerer & Sword*: 50-52)

The only **Immanent** Demons are those that have destroyed their Sorcerer (See “At Humanity 0” above). These are cold, cruel, shallow and superficial creatures who only masquerade as humans and are incredibly dangerous to all around them.

Beasts are the mirror images of animals that have awakened and become lost in the Hall of Mirrors, including animals long dead or from our future. Their origin is a mystery, but it is known that they can be Pacted with, if one knows their Needs.

Pagan Things are few and far between, and they are little more than statues or carved representations of dead spirits and entities that still lurk, their original being having long departed and leaving only their representation or *Reflection* behind. Not human, they can only be Pacted with and appear at rare or unusual times, such as times sacred to them in the ancient past.

Old Ones are those legendary entities that haunt the Hall of Mirrors and may be the only inhabitants. They come across as nothing more but whispers to us, such as “Bloody Mary”. It is said that even the Sorcerers themselves know little about the Old Ones and many scoff at the concept itself, while others fear to even speak of them.

Self-animated Liches are those Sorcerers who have defied death (*Sorcerer & Sword* pages 58-62), and they have shed their mortal bodies and possessed their own *Reflection*. They leave behind a token in the real world that if found is the means to destroy them, but until their token is destroyed they are effectively immortal and brood from behind the very mirrors hang in every home and building.

Ghosts are the *Reflections* of dead people that have slipped out from the mirrors. None are entirely certain, but when some people die their own reflection, once mundane, takes on a life of its own and becomes similar to a demonic *Reflection*, except that rather than be confined to mirrors the image slips out into the real world. Some believe that the act of dying before one’s own reflection is in itself a form of Sorcerous Ritual, a form of *Alienation* and the *Reflection* lingers behind, a shallow and superficial image of the deceased that can be banished by a simple ritual if its Need is met. Some claim that a person who stares into the eyes of their murder has a good chance of leaving behind a *Ghost Reflection* which continues to haunt the murderer, whose own eyes become the Token allowing the Ghost to persist (see Tokens, *Sorcerer & Sword* page 58-60).

Inspirations: *Donnie Darko* (Donnie punishing Fred the Bunny in the mirror), *Poltergeist*, *Evil Dead 3: Army of Darkness* (Ash & Evil Ash), *Candyman*, *Manual of the Planes* (Mirror Dimensions), *Picture of Dorian Gray*, Jacques Lacan’s mirror stage, *The Shining* (Kubrick’s ending photograph), *Snow White*, *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* (“All the mirrors of the world”), Star Trek episode 39 “Mirror, Mirror”, *Something Wicked this Way Comes*, *Narcissus*, *Time Bandits*.