

The Sin Eaters

or The Seven Deadlier Sins

or Man – the Sinner

or Adam's Folly



"He that is proud eats up himself. Pride is his own glass, his own trumpet, his own chronicle; and whatever praises itself but in the deed, devours the deed in the praise."

- *The History of Troilus and Cressida* (Agamemnon act II, iii), William Shakespeare

All art by Banksy

What is Sin Eaters?

Sin Eaters is a playtest document for Ron Edward's **Sorcerer**. Owning the supplements **Sorcerer & Sword** and **The Sorcerer's Soul** would help, but are not essential.

This is being released as a playtest document simply because I haven't gotten around to playing it. If you do, please share your experience through an Actual Play at any of the online rpg forums.

Where did the idea come from?

Sin Eaters are a historical phenomenon, where people would symbolically ingest the sins of others, particularly the dead and dying so they could venture forth to the afterlife with their souls unburdened.

The idea came to me while walking the dog and thinking of how domesticated chimpanzees often develop bad vices: junk food, watching television, smoking, and drinking. Thinking about how our own vices are poisonous to non-humans got me thinking about this twist on Sorcerer.

Premise

"Who is not ashamed of his sins, sins double."
-German proverb

For how long can you escape your sins?

What are Demons?

"On the following day everyone knew that a flesh-and-blood angel was held captive in Pelayo's house. Against the judgment of the wise neighbor woman, for whom angels was in those times were the fugitive survivors of a celestial conspiracy, they did not have the heart to club him to death."

-A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings, Gabriel Garcia Marquez

There are two demons in this game, "True Demons" (as per S&S p. 51) are described below under the heading "Other Demons" and are noted by their capitalization, while the "demon" that a Sorcerer summons and deals with is henceforth referred to as a *Sin Eater*.

The *Sin Eater* that your Sorcerers commands are the servitors of Creation, what some would describe as "angels". In this setting however, they are brought low through the calculated action of Sorcerers. What form these Sin Eaters take and what their role is before being enslaved by the Sorcerer is up to the GM and players, but some examples are provided.

"There also we saw the Nephilim; and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

-Numbers 13;33

The "angels" that become Sin Eaters could be beautiful yet naïve creatures, dragged forth from their heaven paradise, or they could be a secretive force among us throughout time, watching, observing, and intervening as the divine would have it, or elemental-like Djinn who form the basis of our reality and are constrained by arcane rules and controlled by complex yet obscure rituals, or finally they could be beautiful yet terrible winged and armored avengers of a jealous god's will. In any case, when first summoned by the Sorcerer, their fall from grace is all but assured. That first act of sin *committed by the Sorcerer*, an act of arrogance and Pride, is then heaped upon the victim of the terrible act, transforming this angelic creature from one of divine creation to a mutilated symbol of human folly.

What is a Sorcerer?

"When all other sins are old avarice is still young."

-French proverb

All Sorcerers are foremost driven by a desire for power beyond the temporal. This is the single most important consideration for any Sorcerer. Your Sorcerer must have some motivation, some desire, that requires them to take drastic and damning actions. The second thing is that the Sorcerer is one who has bound and enslaved the very power of Creation for their own ends. They have taken the divine and bent it to their own baseborn will. The Sorcerer either enslaves the demon ("angel") through force, possibly keeping the angel bound within an object or tied with duct tape and nylon rope and hidden away within a closet, or subverts the demon to their own end, filling the demon with human needs and human sin, soiling the pure and allowing the Sorcerer to escape the consequences of their action for a short time at least.

- 1) Choose Scores
- 2) Set Humanity
- 3) Choose Descriptors
Any of the Descriptors from *Sorcerer*
- 4) Choose Cover and Price
Remember that your Price is given to the Demon
- 5) Choose a Telltale
- 6) Fill out Character Sheet
- 7) Create the Sin Eater
- 8) Write Kicker

Descriptor:

Nephilim – This is the equivalent of the "Inhuman" descriptor from *Sorcerer & Sword*, allowing the player to "Humanity Trade" as described on page 44. Note that the Price "The Chill" cannot be traded on to the Sin Eater, as it is part of this character's nature.



The Rituals

The rituals that bind and control an angel, turning it into a Sin Eater, are all rituals in which a human Sorcerer uses human folly to ensnare an angel, sully the divine and subverting it to the ignoble and vile, either by displacing one's own sin and heaping it upon the Sin Eater or by encouraging or coercing the Sin Eater into carrying out the acts of its own. These sins are known as the Seven Deadly Sins, not only because they can endanger the human soul, but because they are deadly to the pure essence of the angelic. The seven deadly sins are Envy, Greed, Gluttony, Lust, Pride, Sloth, Wrath, and Pride. The latter Sin is the key, being the Sin leading the Sorcerer to audaciously and selfishly act to destroy something pure in pursuit of their own ends.

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

- Proverbs (ch. XVI, v. 18)

The Binding

"Was it to alter now with every mood to which he yielded? Was it to become a monstrous and loathsome thing, to be hidden away in a locked room, to be shut out from the sunlight that had so often touched to brighter gold the waving wonder of its hair? The pity of it! The pity of it!"

-The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde

The only way to Summon and then Transform or Create (Bind) a Sin Eater is through Pride. Before the game begins and the initial binding carried out, each Sorcerer must describe how they subverted an angel through Pride. Cunning and manipulative means will earn bonus dice in the summoning. Once the angel itself falls afoul of the sin of Pride, it becomes both fallen and earth-bound and dependent upon the Sorcerer. Initial Sin Eaters are weak and sickly things, with a Power no greater than the Humanity of the Sorcerer, but this Power and available demonic abilities increases as one warps and twists the once-noble form of the divine by heaping greater sin upon it. Much like Dorian Grey's Portrait, the Sin Eater of a demon becomes the unholy testament to the sins and crimes of a Sorcerer.

(Optionally, if players are exploring another of these Sins, an angel can be first tempted by some other means: convincing it to gorge out on potato chips, vodka, and reality TV shows in the case of Gluttony or convincing the angel to slay another Sorcerer who had horribly abused an angel (Wrath).

The Other Rituals

“For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”

-James, Ch. III, v7-8

Contact: Contacting an angel is defined by the exact nature of the Angelics in this setting. A contact ritual may take any form appropriate for that angel: reading Quranic verse at the edge of a Djinn-haunted city hidden in the desert sands or saying the Lord's Prayer backwards in an abandoned church.

“And the Devil did grin, for his darling sin is pride that apes humility.”

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Summon Angelic: An Angel can be summoned when some transgression of nature is carried out, and it wings its way forth to remedy the situation. Once the angel arrives amidst creation, it is ripe for perversion by an awaiting Sorcerer. Again, a Sin Eater is easily summoned by contacting it through a vice and urging it to join you in the act of indulgence. An all too eager and depraved Sin Eater will find such entreaties too powerful to resist.

Summon Sin Eater: Summoning an already sin-riddled demon is easy – use its current need (the Sin it is currently absorbing) to draw it forth. A gluttonous Sin Eater could possibly be contacted by greedily devouring a fried peanut butter and banana sandwich before a picture of Elvis and murmuring the demon's name with a mouth full of food.

“Strange sins, strange punishments.”

-Latin proverb

Punish: The act of Punishing a Sin Eater is obvious, deny the monstrosity the wretched acts it so fervently desires. Accompanying such refusal with puritanical moralizing or a monologue filled with disgust about the creatures fallen nature and current circumstances is even more effective. To Punish, select on the Demon's Sins, in particular, it's Current Need: the last Sin it absorbed.

Contain: The measure of containing is simply a more extreme version of punishment: confining the physical form of a demon in something anathema to its current need: in a lighter game, putting a chastity belt upon a lustful Sin Eater or chaining a slothful Sin Eater to an exercise machine would be good examples, in a darker game, well, this is no place for such a discussion...

A Special Case:

Banish: Sin Eaters are all Immanents and cannot be Banished normally, as they have a direct connection to the Sins of the World. The only way that one can Banish a Sin Eater is their own Sin Eater, and they must follow the steps listed under “The Narrative of Sins” below.

Modifiers to the Rituals:

For Contacting, Summing and Binding, you can use religious artifacts and paraphernalia and locations to get bonuses.

For Sin Eaters, having the various items or behaviors related to that sin integrated as part of the ritual will provide bonuses: bottles of booze and so forth.

The Narrative of Sin

*"What sick ridiculous puppets we are
and what gross little stage we dance on
What fun we have dancing and fucking
Not a care in the world
Not knowing that we are nothing
We are not what was intended."*

-John Doe in *Se7en*

What is Humanity?

Humanity is accountability for one's own actions.

"Old sins cast long shadows."

-Irish Proverb

In pursuit of power, the Sorcerer has befouled something innocent, and has heaped the sins of the flesh and mind upon it, bloating the Sin Eater with the fruits of the Sorcerer's own dark labors. The Sorcerer seeks to escape the cost of their own actions by displacing the Price on another, avoiding accountability for their own actions.

How Does Humanity Work?

Humanity Loss Checks are made whenever the Sorcerer commits one of the seven deadly sins: Envy, Gluttony, Greed, Lust, Pride, Sloth, or Wrath, Conceivably any act committed by the Sorcerer that hurts or injures (and thus empowers) the Sin Eater is itself an act of Pride, so keep this in mind.

"Years and sins are always more than owned."

-Italian proverb

When a Humanity Loss check is failed, the weight of the crime falls upon the shoulders of the Sorcerer, and that Sorcerer must take a Price suitable to the sin committed. However, because of the nature of the Sin Eaters, the Binding creates a powerful relationship between the Sorcerer and their Sin Eater, and instead, it is the Sin Eater themselves who experience the Price, and the Price is added on to the Demon's Sheet and the Sin that created it is noted alongside the price.

"Few love to hear the sins they love to act."

- Pericles Prince of Tyre, William Shakespeare

If the Humanity Check is a failure, then the Sorcerer has shifted the guilt and shame and other moral and spiritual consequences upon their Sin Eater. The Sorcerer loses a point of humanity, but the Sin Eater gains a point of Power and a new ability of the player's choice, as long as it can be justified through the use of the sin. Thus, as humanity is lost and sin heaped upon the Sin Eater, it becomes more monstrous and shameful, a mirror to the Sorcerer's soul.

*"Yet it was watching him, with its beautiful
marred face and its cruel smile... For every sin
that he committed a stain would fleck and wreck
its fairness."*

-The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde

Each time a Humanity Check is Failed, keep track of the Sin that resulted in the Loss of Humanity, the gain in Demon Power, and the Price, and ensure that they are listed in chronological order. This forms a "Narrative of Sin" which can guide play, particularly if Redemption is sought out.

In the Narrative of Sin, the Current Sin is the last Sin that this Demon absorbed, and is the Demon's Need as well as principle guiding indulgence for the moment. This will change as others Sins are heaped upon it.

So, during a Humanity Loss Check:

- 1) The Sorcerer loses a point of Humanity
- 2) The Demon adds the Sin onto the Narrative of Sins.
- 3) The Demon gains a point of Power
- 4) The Demon gains a new Ability (listed on the Narrative of Sins)
- 5) The Demon gains a new Price associated with that Sin
- 6) The Demon's old Need is set aside and this new, Current Sin becomes its Current Need.
- 7) The Demon goes immediately into Needing this new Sin.



Humanity Gains & Redemption

"We see a deadly sin on every street corner, in every home, and we tolerate it. We tolerate it because it's common, it's trivial. We tolerate it morning, noon, and night. Well, not anymore."

-John Doe in *Se7en*

Humanity Gain Checks are limited and follow the Narrative of Sin. The only way to make a Humanity Gain check is by successfully reversing your sins in a step by step process, following the reverse order of the Narrative of Sins (from Current and going backwards, concluding with the first Sin, Pride). The Sins must be absolved and owned in the order listed on the Narrative of Sins, going from most recent to oldest, with Pride being the final step.

Each of the Sins has its corresponding opposite virtue, as listed below:

The Seven Deadly Sins and their Corresponding Virtues	
Sin	Virtue
Envy	Charity
Gluttony	Moderation
Greed	Generosity
Lust	Chastity
Pride	Humility
Sloth	Zeal
Wrath	Meekness

When a Sorcerer commits a Virtue that corresponds with the Demon's Current Sin/Need, roll for a Humanity Gain (Humanity versus itself). If that roll is a failure, nothing happens and the Sorcerer must display that Virtue again at a later time. If that roll is a success, then the Sorcerer has stepped on towards the road to Redemption and the following immediately happen:

- 1) The Sorcerer gains a Humanity point back.
- 2) The Sorcerer adds the Price for that particular Sin onto their own character sheet and removes it from the Demon's list
- 3) The Demon loses that particular Sin from their Demon Sheet, along with the Price (which has been now given to the Sorcerer), the associated Ability acquired when that Demon added that Sin to the Demon Sheet, and the Demon loses a point of Power.
- 4) The Demon's Current Need is now whatever Sin is last on the Narrative of Sins list, and the Demon *immediately* goes into Need.

"And yet if it had been merely an illusion, how terrible it was to think that conscience could raise such fearful phantoms, and give them visible form, and make them move before one! What sort of life would his be if, day and night, shadows of his crime were to peer at him from silent corners, to mock him from secret places, to whisper in his ear as he sat at the feast, to wake him with icy fingers as he lay asleep."

-The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde

It should be noted that the Sin Eater Demon is defined by its Sins, and as each Sin is taken away, it loses its power and sense of self and it will desperately seek to reacquire those lost Sins (and more) by manipulating the Sorcerer.

"For never can true reconciliation grow, Where wounds of deadly hate have pierced so deep."

- Paradise Lost, John Milton

Over time, the angel will begin to re-emerge from within the hideous form of the Sin Eater, although it should be noted that the Angel will bear at least one scar from each sin it bore as a testament to the folly of all involved (these scars are merely cosmetic and personality quirks, nothing mechanical).

The first Sin, the Pride is the last to be resolved, and when this one is addressed through the virtue of Humility, it is carried out as a Banishment of this character's Sin Eater. No Humanity is awarded through this Ritual Act of Humility. If successful, the Demon is *Banished* and the Sorcerer has attained some form of Redemption while bearing the Burden of their Sins.

What Happens at Humanity Zero?

"He's experienced about as much pain and suffering as anyone I've encountered, give or take, and he still has Hell to look forward to."

-Dr. Beardsley in *Se7en*

Endgame: One sin too many has sealed the fate of the Sorcerer. The Sorcerer meets their end or no longer is human. Ultimately, the choice is up to the player and GM, but some possibilities are listed in the margin notes. The player in Endgame has to have a scene where their story concludes, and they can arrange the details with their fellow players and GM to come to a fulfilling conclusion to that Sorcerer's tragic life.

Some possible Endgames:

Swallowed by Sin: The Sin Eater grows too powerful and terrible, and in the final act of their relationship, consumes the Sorcerer.

Divine Retribution: The blight upon earth finally draws the attention of the divine or whatever calls the shots, and the atrocity (in this case the Sorcerer and its Sin Eater) are expunged from creation.

Pride Cometh Before the Fall: The Sorcerer has lost their humanity and tumbles (physically and or spiritually and or metaphorically) to hell, transforming themselves into a True Demon. The Sin Eater goes off to lurk about, fulfilling its own dark needs.

Sin Eater Demon Abilities

You want to keep the Sin Eater in play as the central relationship for the Sorcerer. As such, it is suggested that you make the Sorcerer dependent upon the Sin Eater. Get the Sin Eater outside of their familiar environment by guaranteeing that the Sin Eater confers their powers on to themselves, rather than the Sorcerer. Let this sinful travesty get out in public to stir things up: *"Don't mind him my dear, he's my mentally ill nephew..."*.

The True Nature of Angels

Unless desired otherwise, all Angels are Inconspicuous and eternal, being invulnerable to any mundane physical process. You could use the Angelic rules from Sorcerer's Soul to account for the normal power and actions of Angels before they become Bound as Demon Sin Eaters.

The Nature of Sin Eaters

"It was some foul parody, some infamous ignoble satire."

-The Picture of Dorian Gray, Oscar Wilde

Sin Eaters when first bound become Passers, taking whatever form the GM and players decide upon. The first Sin though marks them: if Pride they may have a haughty expression or a twisted sneer. Each additional sin heaped upon them has a dramatic and transformative effect, making them hideous mockeries of what they once were. They still remain eternal, and their bond with the Sorcerer means that the Sorcerers themselves do not age as well.

Other Demons

(see *Sorcerer & Sword* p.50-52)

"The Nephilim were on the earth in those days-and also afterward-when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown."

-Genesis 6:4

Immanents: If using an "Angels Hidden Amongst Us" concept, then Angels and True Demons (see below) are most likely Immanents. Angels may masquerade as humans among us, while Immanent True Demons lurk in dark corners of our world, whispering to junkies from the shadows, creeping through sewers while harboring ancient resentments, and devouring babies left unattended in their cribs. Note that all Sin Eaters are bound in the temporal and considered Immanents. Another possible set of Immanents are the *Nephilim*, offspring of human and angel in the ancient past.

Beast: An uncontrolled Sin Eater whose Sorcerer has entered Endgame could be a Beast: Spring Heeled Jack, the Jersey Devil, and possibly even some of the worst serial killers are Beasts, Sin Eaters run amok, untethered and fearless.

Pagan Thing: This would be any entity that resides outside the guiding paradigm that informs the setting. In the case of a setting occupied by Judaic-like Angels, the Pagan Thing would be those creatures inhabiting other mythologies or concepts, the Golden Calf or animistic spirits, things that presaged humans in the scale of creation.

"A god must not appear ungracious toward a sacrifice; however he derives no satisfaction from it. He doesn't know what he wants to eat. There must be something..."

-24 Hours, Neil Gaiman

Old Ones: Old Ones could be those Sin Eaters that have lived for centuries, even millenia. Adam's first Sin Eater, the Serpent in the Garden of Eden could make a plausible Old One, as was Jonah's Sin Eater, the Leviathan. These are massive Sin Eaters that have managed in part to transcend the physical and become creatures that exist in part as metaphor. Old Ones could be humans of early Biblical or other religious mythological origins, such as Lilith or Caine, bearing awesome powers.

True Demons: True Demons may exist in a traditional religious manner, being the opposite of Angels, or they could simply be the misshapen fiends that were once Sorcerers. In the latter case, the only True Demons are ourselves. Either way, True Demons cannot be bound, but they can be Pacted with (see *Sorcerer & Sword*).

Undead: Undead could exist in many senses. Those who have died as a result of sin and not received retribution may wander the earth as ghosts or revenants, unable to avenge themselves as a Sorcerer would have misplaced that particular sin upon another – their Sin Eater and thus the ghost is denied justice. A Sorcerer who has died could come back as a revenant in an effort to undo the evil they had committed. Liche-like Sorcerers are possible if the power of the Sin Eater allows their bodies to slowly age and die but keeps the Sorcerer's willful yet withered soul rattling around inside the corpse.

Inspiration

A Clock-work Orange (book or movie), *Se7en* (movie), *The Prophecy* (movie), *The Seventh Sign* (movie), *A Christmas Carol*, Gaiman's *24 Hours*, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" and "Blacaman the Good, Vendor of Miracles", and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

"Notice was given to an old sire before the door of the house, when some of the family came out and furnished him with a cricket [low stool], on which he sat down facing the door; then they gave him a goat which he put in his pocket, a crust of bread which he ate, and a bowl of ale which he drank off at a draught. After this he got up from the cricket and pronounced the case and rest of the soul departed, for which he would pawn his own soul."

-Bagford's letter on Leland's *Collectanea*, i. 76.