

## Bend Sinister

droe@cs.tcd.ie (David Roe)

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Here is ... the plot outline for an adventure planned for Gaelcon '94.  
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### PLOT OUTLINE

The kingdom of the Sun has a strict, class-based society. Status and position are very important. The Kingdom has been ruled by Ular IV for forty peaceful years, but is now facing a crisis of succession. The king has three children - the eldest his heir, has been carefully groomed to become King Elen III upon Ular's death. The second, his only daughter, as was the custom has been trained in priestly duties and was set to become head of the church on her thirtieth birthday. The youngest has been trained in the magical arts, and has been head of the collage of magic for the last three years. All these positions are normally held by the King's three eldest children. A week before the adventure begins, the King and all three children are wiped out in a freak sailing accident on a lake at the royal Summer retreat. Foul play is not suspected. Normally, in this case, the fourth in line to the throne (in this case, the king's eldest nephew) would be instated as heir and the queen would rule until her death. However, the queen is ill, and close to death. As soon as news of the tragedy reaches her, she summons the Lord Chamberlain to her bedside and tells him disturbing news. She says that some years before, after the birth of their first child, Ular had revealed to her that he had been unfaithful, and had fathered a son by another woman some years before. The queen was shocked, and refused to hear more, despite the king's willingness to confess. He managed to blurt out some details despite the queen's protestations. The matter never arose again between them. However, now it becomes important, since a bastard child would be next in line to the throne before the nephew. It is vital that this son, now probably in his early thirties be found or else war may ensue. The queen remembers few details about the nature of the affair since it was so long ago and so very repugnant to her that she pushed it from her memory.

Essentially, the players are possible claimants for the throne, their friends, family, enemies etc. - there is at least one possible candidate in each party. Royal couriers have been sent to all possible places where the child may be found to bring all candidates forward. They must be able to prove their lineage before the court in order to be able to claim the title. The first part of the adventure will involve their proving themselves and travelling to the capital, the second will involve them interacting with each other in the capital, and finally proving themselves.

### HISTORY

Many, many years ago, there was a small city state called Bonomia. It was ruled by a King, the descendant of long-lived men, who had the gift of

powerful magic. The kingdom lived at peace and all was well until the birth of the twin princes Dexter and Sinister. Both grew to be powerful mages in their own right. Sinister was the eldest by a few seconds and thus the heir to the throne. Dexter seemed happy with his lot, content to be a royal prince and devote his life to the study of magic. But Dexter dabbled in dark magics beyond even his ken, and became twisted by evil. The dark forces placed envy in his mind, and he grew jealous of his brother's elder position. He plotted to gain the throne for himself, and struck upon an evil plan. He wove a powerful spell of binding to a circle of arcane magic. Cunningly, he invited his brother to unknowingly stand in the circle and engaged him in seemingly idle talk. "Sinister," he said. "You are to be king in the fullness of time."

"Yes", his brother replied. "Though I hope that day may yet be far off."

"Indeed, our father must die before you succeed. It is always thus, that the good may come of the bad, and the bad come from good. I would only become king, if you should die."

"Brother" said Sinister, "Let us not dwell on such morbid thoughts."

"Would you not be happy to know that I would become king on your death?" answered the evil Dexter, drawing his brother into danger.

"Should the throne fall vacant, I would be happy to see you king. There, let that be an end of it." replied the hapless brother, little knowing that his words would spell his doom.

As soon as his brother had gone, Dexter wove further spells of binding and warping into the circle till he had constructed a powerful magic that bound his brother tighter than chains of steel. His brother's were twisted and turned in on themselves and finally he wrought the magic circle into a band of gold which he had created. Dexter kept the artefact hidden, biding his time until he could strike.

Many years passed uneventfully, until the death of their father. Weeping, Sinister called on his brother to tell him of the sad news. Seizing his chance Dexter feigned terrible grief, and fetched out the band of gold he had hidden.

"Sinister, through this sad event you have become king. Is the throne not now vacant?"

"Yes, my brother, the throne is vacant." Quick as a flash Dexter produced the band. "Now, let me crown you" he said. Never suspecting, Sinister allowed his brother to place the band upon his head, and instantly the spell took effect. The future king was bound by his own words and the band that now seized his temples in a vice-like grip. He was utterly under the power of his brother. By his own admission, the throne was now vacant, and he was forced to allow his brother to become king. The evil magic which Dexter had forged bound him to his brother's will. Unable to help himself, Sinister went to the officials of the court and informed them that he was abdicating in favour of his brother. Despite their amazed protests he insisted, and told them that he would leave the kingdom, never to return. Thus, Dexter became king in his brother's stead and reigned for many evil years.

All this occurred in time beyond memory, but the past lives in the present, and the kingdom of Bonomia is now known as the kingdom of the

sun, and king Ular, though a good king is a descendant of the evil usurper Dexter. But what of Sinister, what happened to him?

Sinister, travelled far, far away. Bound by the enchantment, he could not directly attack the rule of his brother, or even his descendants. Eventually, he gave in to despair, and followed his brother's path into dark magic. Using the forbidden ways, he bound his life to the darkest magic and achieved immortality at the expense of his soul. Beyond the world of men, he constructed a tower, a twisted replica of the royal palace and surrounded himself with a court of undead beasts and things that once were men, in an insane mockery of his lost kingdom. Such games palled after many years, as he endlessly plotted and schemed for some way to win back his throne. Finally he realised that there could only be one way. The rules of succession of the throne that were drawn up over the years were long, complex and covered almost any eventuality. Almost. A loophole exists that allows the ancient twin access to the throne. Buried deep within the laws of royal succession is a little -known clause - in the case where the lineage is to pass to a elder illegitimate child, with no surviving relatives, who is unwilling to accept the throne, the oldest surviving member of the royal family may assume the role of Royal judge. That is, if all of the immediate royal family should perish, leaving only an orphaned bastard with no siblings, Sinister himself (by far the oldest member of the royal family) may choose the successor. Interestingly, the Royal judge, may choose themselves to become king if they so desire.

Just such a case occurred when Ular took the throne. Unmarried, and something of a wild rake, the young king was a perfect target for his undead ancestor's scheme. Although still bound by his evil twin's enchantment, and therefore unable to act directly against Ular directly, Sinister threw countless opportunities for dalliance in the young kings path. Acting indirectly, from a vast distance and always through his evil agents and minions he contrived to allow Ular myriad's of conquests before he married. Now he simply waited until a chance accident might occur. A slim chance, but the only chance that the Liche could grasp. Unable to act in any way against the life of the royal person, or his heirs until the throne is vacant, Sinister had laid many plans. Through his agents Sinister had founded and nurtured societies of assassins, anarchists, and anti-royalist factions. With so many groups operating it was only a matter of time before something nasty befell the king.

#### RECENT EVENTS

The whole hideous chain of events fell slowly into action one year before the start of this tale, when the ruler of the neighbouring kingdom of Bufort discovered himself in financial difficulties. Bufort had long been poverty stricken due to a series of ill-judged wars and internal squabbles. Several loans had been obtained from the Palace of the Kingdom of the Sun, and these are now due. Unable to pay, King Buff III resorted to the age-old practice of eliminating one's creditors. Should the Royal family be wiped out, the debt will pass. Buff of course, found the assassins guild surprisingly willing to carry out the task of executing their own king. In order to ensure the job is successful he has also given funds and men to other anti-royalist groups within the kingdom. Buff has no idea of his part in the greater scheme of the long dead

prince, nor that he is an unwitting agent in a centuries-long plan to recapture the throne. The assassins devised a plan involving the royal yacht Ulasses. Having bribed the captain of the vessel, and planted their own men within the crew, they planned to attack the Royal family while they were afloat on their usual Summer boating trip on lake Elsa. To cover their involvement in the plot they instructed their agents to smash the ship on rocks once the royal party were dead. They would then claim that the ship had foundered and they had been lost at sea. The plan succeeded, but with some problems. Firstly, the Queen fell ill on the morning of the trip, and was unable to sail. Unwilling to call off the plan, they continued with the assassination as planned. Similarly unwilling to postpone their planned outing the royal family departed, wishing the queen a speedy recovery. Later that day, spies in the palace reported that the Queen's illness worse than first expected, indeed she was not expected to live more than a few days. Delighted with the news, the guild intercepted all attempts to bring news of the queen's condition to the yacht and bring the royal party back. Instead, the only news to arrive at the Ulasses was a message for the assassins that the attack should proceed as planned. That night, under cover of darkness and high seas the assassins moved, killing the remaining loyal royal guardsmen and crew. As if to coincide with the dreadful deeds, the storm rapidly became much worse, blowing a horrific gale that sprang up in a matter of minutes. In the confusion the plan was thwarted. The remaining guardsmen, arriving on deck found half the crew killed and the other half advancing on the royal cabins. A terrible fight to the death ensued aboard the now-foundering ship. Finally, without an adequate crew and tossed by the storm the ship foundered on reefs on the farthest shore of the lake.

Back at the palace all was in uproar, the queen apparently near death, the royal yacht not returned and a storm raging all night. In the morning, eagles were sent to scour the lake for any sign of the ship. Only reports of driftwood and a terrible wreck returned. News of the loss of the yacht delighted the guild and King Buff. Not realising that the plan has come unstuck they believe that the family are dead, and their own agents either lost themselves or surviving somewhere around the lake. The final stage of their plan is to send their best remaining agents to the area of the wreck, posing as a search party. These elite killers are instructed to kill their own agents should they live in order to cover any last trace of the deed, and to find the bodies of the royal family.

But what of King Ular and his family? The last moments of the Ulasses saw terrible fighting, the King, the princes and princess Adoline fought back-to-back with their remaining bodyguards against the desperate assassins. As the ship struck the rocks all was confusion and noise. All aboard were pitched into the water, loyal and traitors alike.

In the morning several bodies were washed ashore on the beach. By a fluke, the royal party and some loyal men were saved. Of the assassins only one survived, and he was quickly dispatched by the princes. Quickly realising that he had more powerful and determined enemies than he had ever suspected, the King made plans. Professional assassins always make sure of their quarry. Realising that their lives were in great danger should they be discovered in the open by their unknown enemies the king

decided to hide his small party and make their own way back to dry land and the palace.

Thus the adventure begins. Not realising the crisis that his supposed death is creating at home, the King and his party are making their way around the edge of the lake. Meanwhile, a party of assassins searches for survivors of the Ulasses. In the court - uproar as they prepare for a unknown child to step forward or be found who will become their new king. In his tower, Sinister gleefully prepares to have any bastard claimant killed before he can be adjudged the rightful heir.

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Static -- static@k2.cwru.edu