

for EABA™

Code:Black™

it is better to be the lesser of two evils...



 **BTRC**

greg porter

Code:Black™ v1.0

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ISBN 0-943891-53-1

BTRC#6110

Published by: BTRC
P.O. Box 1121
Collinsville VA 24078 USA
btrc@btrc.net
www.btrc.net

Cover art: Greg Porter
Alt. cover: Ricky Hunter
Interior art: Christopher Herndon
Graphics: Greg Porter

Playtesters: Niles Calder, Cathy DeMott, Helen Forbes, Paul Haycroft, Billy Lund , Jasper Merendino, Alexander Osias,
Colin West

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INTRODUCTION

"There is no explanation for evil. It must be looked upon as a necessary part of the order of the universe. To ignore it is childish; to bewail it senseless."

- William Somerset Maugham

▼ **BRIEFING** - It happened a *long* time ago. We've used x-ray satellites and SETI dishes and seances, but we'll probably never know *exactly* when it happened. The final war between Good and Evil was drawing to a close. Evil, most of it anyway, had been eradicated, made as though it never was. *Only the strongest evils remained.* These could not be eradicated, but they *could* be contained, imprisoned, isolated, shielded, kept from infecting and contaminating a universe of Good.

A non-descript world was chosen to be Evil's final tomb. The forces of Good locked the door and threw away the key.

Without Evil to oppose it, Good spread across the universe like wildfire, and when the final stars had felt its unstoppable power and the last traces of Evil were eradicated, every thinking being in the universe vanished in an evanescent moment of absolute righteousness.

For Good cannot exist without Evil, and Evil had been banished.

But the universe cannot tolerate an existence without either. With Good gone, or vanished to some other type of existence, only the shielded, locked-away Evil remained, and that could not be tolerated either. *Nature abhors a vacuum.* The balance must somehow be maintained. The bonds on Evil's prison weakened, and the least of the great Evils escaped. It was still Evil, no doubt about it, but not entirely so. It had within it faint sparks of Good. Not much, but enough to be released.

And that was enough. The balance had been restored. The universe once again had sentient life, and death. Good, of a sort, and Evil, of a certainty.

In time, the least of the ancient Evils, the new Good, forgot or chose to ignore the ancient, more powerful Evils that lurked behind eternally sealed doors just out of sight and mind. These Evils were banished, not so much from existence, but from thought and remembrance, save for lurking nightmares and comfortably vague myths of things far worse than that which now walked and breathed and spread itself across existence.

But the ancient Evils did not forget, nor repent, nor cease trying to break free from their prison. Far too evil to escape through the limited avenues available, they sent lesser evils and fragments of themselves into the world, hoping to open a larger gateway or subvert the new Good to do its bidding. How long this process continued, we are not exactly sure.

All we really know is that *humanity* was the least of all Evils, the first to escape imprisonment, and for what it is worth, the new Good. We spread across the globe, largely ignoring the signs of greater Evil in our midst, with only a handful of us fighting to contain the greater Evils.

Is it because we are Good? Or because we simply want to be the greatest power in the outside universe, and this can only be the case if all other Evil stays contained in its prison.

That's why you have been contacted. You have seen what lies beneath the surface, or fought it without knowing exactly why, or developed abilities that frighten yet intrigue you. We are the Brotherhood of Gilgamesh. We fight to contain the greater Evils. Our methods are harsh. *We are, after all, somewhat evil.* But a universe filled with what little Good we possess is far better than the other alternatives...

▼ **WHAT IT'S ABOUT - Code:Black** is a modern-day horror supplement for **EABA**. There is something called the Drake Equation, which uses a number of factors to figure the probable number of advanced civilizations within a certain volume of space, such as the Milky Way galaxy. Any way you figure it, the result is a large number. This led to the paradox posed by physicist Enrico Fermi, which is "if there are so many advanced civilizations out there, then why haven't we detected any of them?". In the **Code:Black** universe, the answer is simple: *We're it*. We here on Earth are the *only* sentient beings remaining, not just in the Milky Way, but in the entire universe. Similarly, everything in the universe that is Good or Evil is likewise on Earth.

Adventurers are part of a shadowy organization known as the Brotherhood of Gilgamesh, or usually just "the Brotherhood". Their members rank from the half-crazy homeless man who gibbers of the things that other people blot from their conscious minds, to world leaders who inherit terrible truths upon assuming the mantle of state.

The Brotherhood imperfectly crosses the lines of race, nationality and religion. Imperfectly, for Man is still partly Evil. Selfish, covetous, violent. But, with some small amount of Good. *Perhaps enough*.

The greater Evils locked beyond sight and ken constantly attempt to break free from their eldritch prison. Lesser evils are constantly on the loose, and places of terror and woe erupt on the surface of the Earth like evil abscesses. But the vast majority of mankind has blinded itself to its past, its true nature, and even to the presence of Evil in its midst. From the earliest visions of a divine, evil-free Creation, to a rational, scientific worldview that denies the very existence of evil, men are Blind, choosing to remain ignorant of the truth of their distant past, refusing to see the inhuman entities that walk their streets, to see no contradiction in the appearance of ancient temples where there were none before, to attribute to mere insanity the most inhuman of crimes, simply *refusing to see* that horrors that literally walk in their midst.

You are different. You have the Sight. Maybe it is a gift that runs in your family. Maybe you were confronted by something so literally inhuman that it shattered your protective Blindness beyond repair. You know that there are things out there that only you can see, and those things now know you see them as they truly are. With no one to tell, no way to prove your Sight was true, you were on the verge of madness and despair. Then, in your final search for answers, you stumbled across the clues that only one with Sight could follow, and following them, you found the Brotherhood.

Slowly, to help preserve your fragile sanity, the Brotherhood introduced you to the Truth, the nature of the universe and Man's place in it. *You barely got through it*. It was the first of many tests you had to pass. Those who could not accept the Truth either withdrew back into protective ignorance, or lost all trace of sanity. The Brotherhood returned the former to their past lives, and "took care of" the latter. You had to "take care of" one of these mind-wrecked unfortunates yourself, another of your tests. The preservation of what little Good men possess requires a little of the same inflexibility that Good originally used against all the original Evils.

This and countless other major and minor tests you faced. Some were overt and straight-forward. At other times you only guessed you were being tested, and you are sure that you were tested in ways you never even noticed. Most tests you passed, some you failed. *None critically*. The failures simply steered your path within the Brotherhood, pointing to the best part you were suited to play, the appropriate cog in a noisome but necessary machine.

In time you learned that even the Brotherhood had its own evils. The Evil nature of Men could not be totally overwhelmed by their limited Good. The branches of the Brotherhood in distant lands do not always work well together. There is competition, disagreement as to methods, jurisdiction, immediate and even ultimate goals. It might even be that the greater Evils have managed to infiltrate or influence the Brotherhood, but it is just as likely Man's own faults are to blame.

By chance or by design, the Brotherhood is now the only life you know, the only refuge for someone who can See, the only shield protecting the Blind, and the only way to preserve the fabric of the cosmos against the eternal dark.

It's a living...

More - Code:Black is set in the world of today. Everything you are familiar with exists, plus a *lot* of things exist that you probably would be best off not knowing about. *Trust us on that one.*

One thing **Code:Black** has going for it is that just about every monster, alien menace, horror, mad scientist or cheesy spawn of Satan movie can somehow be tied into the game background. To that end, when the rules specify a plot of some kind and there is a possible movie tie-in due to possible similarity in plot elements, there will be a footnote on that page listing the movie name and the date in case you want to rent it as an idea source.

This game will have some overlap with a few existing horror rpg's. *It's inevitable.* But while we are diluting the horror rpg pool a little, **Code:Black** is a unique spin on things, yet has enough elements of the normal sorts of horror rpg that you can crib off of someone else's source material if you are running short on ideas. And, we fully expect that if you don't play **Code:Black**, you're going to be mining it for ideas for use in some *other* horror rpg. *And that's fine.*

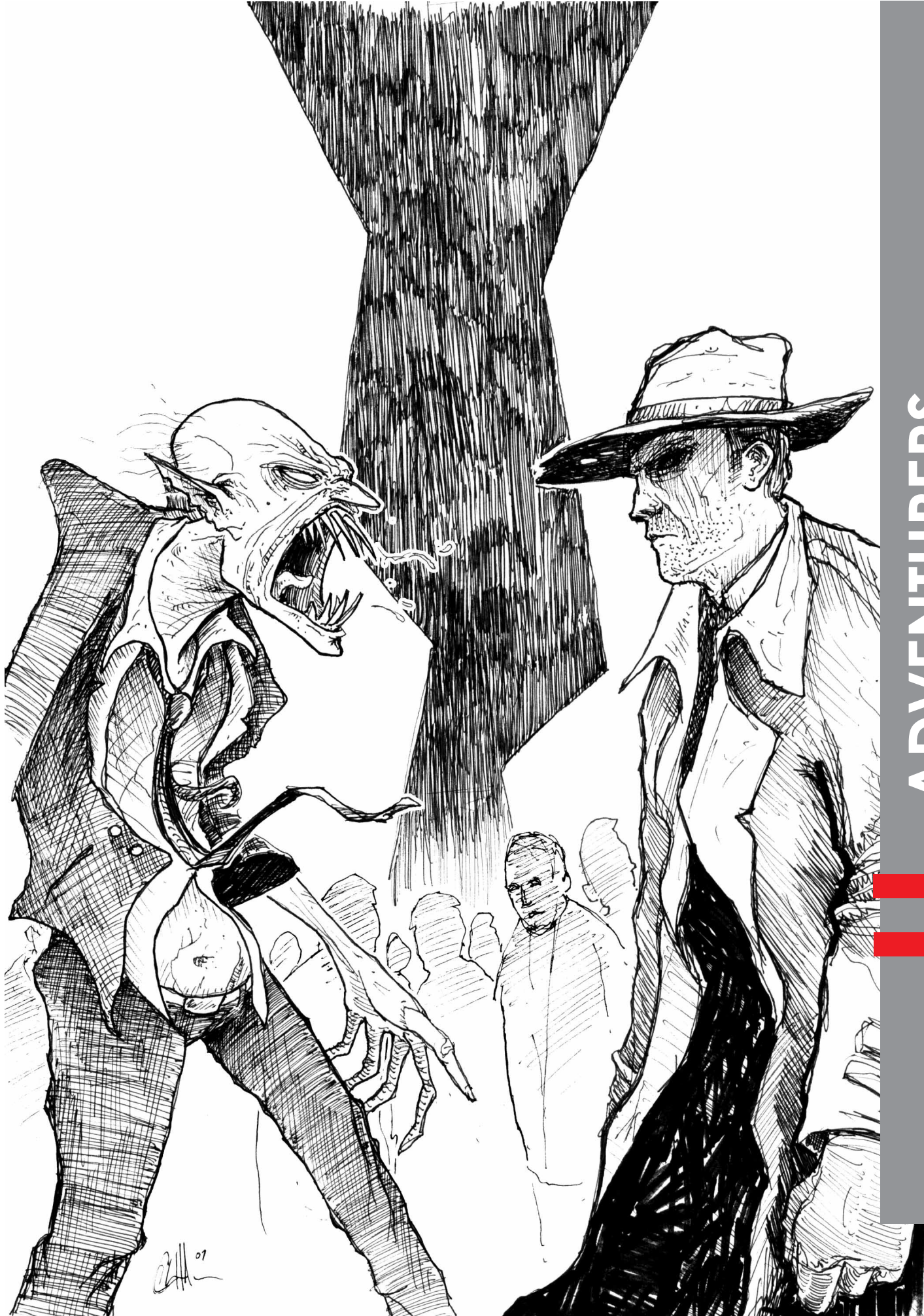
The agents and aspects of greater Evil are continually trying to break out into our world from their supposedly eternal imprisonment. This means the struggle by humanity to keep it contained will never end. There will *always* be cults and dark forces manipulating the poor and desperate in the cities, but the Blind see it as "urban decay" or "gang warfare". There will always be new temples to horrible ancient gods appearing in deserted places. While most of humanity will think of these as newly discovered archaeological curiosities, the Brotherhood of Gilgamesh knows better. They know that places like this were not there before, but that Evil has erupted into existence in that place, and only to Blind eyes does it appear that it has always been there. The Brotherhood also recognizes the difference between a simple serial killer and ritual sacrifices to create a path for even greater Evil to manifest.

Humanity is the new Good, but it is a tarnished Good at best. The Brotherhood of Gilgamesh strives hard to not become the very Evil they seek to keep contained, but they consider "excess in the name of virtue" not as a vice, but as an unpleasant and occasional necessity.

It takes a great deal of effort for a greater Evil to even partially manifest on this plane of existence, and this can happen only with if preparations are accomplished on *this* side of the barrier. If it were easy, they would be busting out all over the place all the time. Destroying the physical manifestation of a greater Evil can banish it for a time, but does not prevent it from coming back eventually, though this time may be measured in centuries. Undoing the preparations made to ease the way for the Greater Evil can keep it from returning, but this is not always possible. If the sacrifice was properly made at the right alignment of the stars, it cannot be undone. On the other hand, if the portal for Greater Evil is a material structure, it can be dismantled or destroyed or physically barred. Last, a powerful adept at the mystic arts can make a bond to put upon the place where a Greater Evil could manifest, and this seals that breach in Evil's prison.

Everyone in **Code:Black** is to some extent an anti-hero. By taking part in the fight against greater Evil, you have to understand and accept that you are to some extent, also evil. Maybe evil with a lower-case "e", but evil none the less. You *will* do bad things for good reasons. You will fight Evil by learning powers that can corrupt your very soul, and struggle against the terrible temptations and longings these powers stir in your ancient heritage. You *will* make mistakes that hurt innocent people, and deal with it by excessive drink and other self-destructive behaviours.

But, you know in your heart that there was once true Good in the universe, and that some unremembered part of you once fought *against* it. Now, while you fill the place of Good in the cosmic balance, in your heart, you are not sure if *you* are good, or are still simply the least of all evils...



ADVENTURERS

"Only reason can convince us of those three fundamental truths without a recognition of which there can be no effective liberty; that what we believe is not necessarily true; that what we like is not necessarily good; and that all questions are open."

- Arthur Clive

▼ **VIGNETTE** - *The bloodsucker eyed me coolly.* If it were a dark alley, one of us would be leaving a few pints short. Nothing fatal of course. The Brotherhood truce with the so-called Neomen was still holding. Locally, anyway. *For now.* But, "accidents" happen. Never quite enough to break the fragile truce, though. Too many interests were served by keeping the uneasy peace for something like an occasional maiming or two to get in the way.

In the meantime, it was night, and public, and we both were acting civilized enough that the Blind ignored the tense body language, he in a casual pose, but with his weight perfectly balanced for a move in any direction, me back slightly on one heel, one arm ready to block or deflect just long enough for the hand in my jacket to draw and fire. The Blind saw him as young, fit, dressed with the trappings of wealth. *Attractive bait.* Those with the Sight saw the elongated skull, grey skin, stooped shoulders, human features stretched over a body mutated by Evil.

"So", the neoman says, "why do you think we coexist? If we are so much more evil than you, then why are we outside the Prison? If we are such an anathema to Good, why do we walk the earth in such numbers?"

"Target practice." I replied.

"Clever monkey," he said. "You couldn't take me on your best day." He was half right. Vamps are fairly hard to take down in the best of cases, and I could tell by the contours of his jacket that he was wearing body armor as well. Of course, I was using armor-piercing +P+ handloads, which made things about even...if he was otherwise unarmed.

I refused to give him the ephemeral satisfaction of conceding his point and he continued.

"We are stronger and faster, and walk among you like wolves, culling out the weak and unfit. You should *thank* us for making you better as a species." He eyed me with that smug room-temperature smirk they have, like he was sizing up a steak and finding it wanting. *But it was my turn to make a cut.*

"You can philosophize all you want, but the only purpose your kind serves is balance, and there are plenty of other Evils out there I'd rather meet on the street. You might live for centuries, but you have done nothing to advance any aspect of society as a whole. No philosophers, no great scientists, nothing more than a few overly-long-lived serial killers with occasional cameos in Bartlett's Book of Quotations. You and the other Neomen are just a parasitic leftover of the Eeon War. You're like tapeworms, mosquitoes and smallpox all rolled into one bad fashion plate package. What really pisses you off is that you know the Blind wouldn't even notice if you were gone, and that the greater Evils find you barely worth the trouble of using as their pawns." That hit at least one of his sore spots. He edged fractionally closer and hissed, giving me a little of that face thing they do to frighten the Blind out of their wits before sucking them dry. The fear washed over me like a wave, and like a wave, it washed back out to wherever it came from. I'd seen scarier things than him on daytime talk television.

"I know where you live, *human*, and you live at my forbearance." *I wasn't impressed.* The last blood-sucker who got his oversized incisors bent out of shape after losing an argument to *this* prospective meal knew my address too. I used what was left of him as filler in the cat litter box.

I said "You can spend all night on the street, but I know where you spend your days." He made a facial gesture that passed for disgust and backed up into the nighttime pedestrian traffic. Someone bumped into him. He turned to her and hissed. For a moment, I thought she Saw him and was going to make a scene, but she simply shied away and scurried off, giving him only a furtive backwards glance, refusing to recognize the reality of what he was, seeing only another rude pedestrian on the street. A few steps more, and the vampire was lost in the crowd. In a way, they *truly* were wolves among sheep, though I would never give them that much credit to their faces. *Me?* I guess you can just call me a sheepdog...

▼ **BEFORE YOU START** - You have read the briefing in the first chapter, and the vignette at the start of this one, so you have an idea of the gameworld you are getting into. **Chapter 3** will deal with many specific aspects of the world of **Code: Black**, and **Chapter 5** will go into some extra depth on the Brotherhood, but if you are comfortable with the amount of info you have, just polish off the next page of background and then continue right into adventurer creation.

Mindset - At some point in their life, each and every adventurer in **Code:Black** will have had to face the realization that everything they believed true and unchangeable about the world, about life, good, evil, faith, heaven and hell was just plain wrong. People who at their core lack the moral fiber and intellectual flexibility to accept something this devastating to their worldview stay Blind, or go insane. Adventurers are the ones who looked into this abyss and survived what they saw with sanity intact (more or less). You can have an adventurer who is deeply *spiritual*, but it is hard to have one who is deeply *religious*, at least in terms of believing that any *one* faith is the source of ultimate Truth. Remember that being able to accept that other conceptual frameworks have validity is something Evil *cannot* do.

The Brotherhood is an organization of ancient peerage and lofty goals, made of women and men who are all too frail and mortal, yet find the strength to live and die in a struggle they know will never end, hoping at best for a reward beyond life that is unknown and unknowable. In this, they are the same as anyone else wholly devoted to traditional faiths. And while there are those in the Brotherhood who have attempted to subvert the organization to serve some personal ambition or goal, the Brotherhood has survived for millennia all that misguided humans and supernatural evils have thrown at it.

Think about the type of people it takes to live like this, carrying a secret few can comprehend, let alone believe, often living double lives by serving both the Brotherhood and some other master. Will your adventurer be an ascetic warrior or modern-day paladin? An ordinary Joe who simply has to do 'what's right' regardless of the personal cost? A priest who lost his faith, but found something to take its place? Someone out for revenge against an Evil that took something precious from them? A cynic who has seen so much they find it hard to care anymore? A mercenary who is in it for the money? An adrenaline junkie who lives for the challenge and violence? Or someone else entirely? 🐜

The world of **Code:Black** is not one for merely average adventurers. You cannot look into this particular Abyss without being changed, and even if they retained their sanity, adventurers will be *changed* by the revelation of the Truth. Each adventurer will compensate in a different way, but each will have their own personal demons to fight as well as the more literal ones they now know truly exist.

Careers - Adventurers are going to start out as low-level field operatives, the people who are out there kicking Evil ass, possibly doing investigation or research as well, but field operatives of all sorts will be at least passably competent in combat in case a situation goes south on them. There are the old academics or emotionally fragile experts of various sorts in the Brotherhood as well, but these are the kind of people that the adventurers have to guard and/or keep out of trouble, not the kind of people that are adventurers themselves.

If you have an idea for an adventurer already, you can go ahead and continue with this chapter. If you want to read more about the Brotherhood, skip to the **Brotherhood** chapter first, and if your adventurer is likely to have sorcerous potential (a very double-edged sword), then you will want to at least glance over the **Sorcery** chapter as well.

Adventurers will have enough points to be a cut above the average person. The Brotherhood values its people enough to provide the best training it can, and demands a high level of commitment from its members. There is also the weeding out effect. The various Evils are generally tough and vicious, and anyone who can't take care of themselves in a serious fight isn't around any more to pull down the curve.

Brotherhood field operatives live a double life. Very few people in the Brotherhood do Brotherhood work eight hours a day. While they can be (and often are) called to anyplace their expertise is needed, operatives usually work within a particular geographical area, and within that area they are "ordinary people", living side-by-side with the Blind, working normal jobs and so on. That "normal job" may be for a front run by the Brotherhood as a cover for its operations, but that front company is *still* a genuine business. All but a handful of the people in that company work at the jobs the company provides, and the secret Brotherhood employees have to be competent at their cover roles in addition to being competent at *other* things...

The other possible role for an adventurer is that of a non-Brotherhood freelancer. There are people who developed the Sight and stayed sane without Brotherhood assistance, or who learned Sorcery on their own or through some odd and ancient family history. These individuals often do the same work as the Brotherhood, but perhaps for different reasons. The Brotherhood will work with these individuals if necessary, but tends to look down on them and owes them no loyalty.

The world - Code:Black is set in the modern world, which for all intents and purposes mirrors the reality you see around you. This is how the Blind perceive reality. Adventurers know this is not the *true* state of things, which they refer to as the Truth, with a conversational emphasis that gives it a capital T.

What enables adventurers to know the Truth is the Sight, which is something most of us are born with, but gradually lose as we shield ourselves from the terrifying nature of reality by becoming Blind. The ancient soul whose first breath as a newborn tastes of mortality and death screams in terror at the revelation. That newborn has the Sight. The babe who cries at the sight of one stranger but not another Sees things the rest of us are Blind to. The child who has an imaginary friend Sees, while adults merely play along. But eventually, most of us become Blind. Things we *knew* were real as children fade and become merely "childish memories".

The world is Blind. *It can no longer see Evil.* It can no longer recognize magic. Unconsciously, as individuals and organizations, it works to suppress and persecute anything that would try to wake its collective mind from slumber and force it to See the things it does not wish to believe in. It institutionalizes as insane anyone who speaks of the things they See. It will persecute any sect or religion whose beliefs are too close to the Truth.

So, the Brotherhood operates in the shadows. Few of the Blind can accept what they can never see, so the Brotherhood must fight Evil within the constraints of law and perception created by the Blind. A vampire will be seen by the Blind as just another person, and people would probably come to the vampire's aid (or at least call the police) should a Brotherhood member attack it in public. And the vampire knows this, and smiles as it passes the Brotherhood agent on the street.

This is the world the adventurers live in.

▼ **ADVENTURERS** - Adventurers can be just about anyone, from any race or religion or profession. What you all share is that you have somehow acquired the Sight, the ability to see through the Blindness that afflicts the overwhelming majority of humanity. You managed to keep your sanity, in spite of the psyche-demolishing nature of the Truth, and you have found yourself working for The Brotherhood in some capacity.

The gamemaster needs to give the players some sort of reference framework to build the adventurers around. This covers a number of things vital to how things will play, the most important of which are the time period and the starting location. A campaign that takes place in modern-day USA will require different adventurers and mindsets than one taking place in WWII Poland or 14th century China. We'll discuss **Code:Black** as though it takes place in the modern world, but you can put your own spin on things. Once you have the general setting firmly in mind, then you can get into the numbers of adventurer-building.

▼ **ATTRIBUTES** - Adventurers start with 80A and 60S, to which they can add up to 35A or S from Traits. However, *mandatory* points in Personality do *not* count towards this limit. These points are sufficient that starting adventurers should be able to mop the floor with any two average people, and only be *somewhat* outclassed by the average Evil minion.

To make things easy, you have six Attributes, so if you want to dive in, just choose from one of the following sets and set aside the requisite number of points. All of these Attribute sets will require some Traits to make up the point difference between the starting amount of 80A and the cost listed.

	Attribute level			
Strength	10	7	7	6
Agility	9	8	10	7
Awareness	7	8	9	10
Will	9	9	7	10
Health	8	9	7	7
Fate	4	6	8	10
Cost	90A	87A	91A	99A

You can rearrange the numbers for particular Attributes. The way they are listed just gives you adventurers specialized for certain types of action. For instance, the first set is obviously for someone interested in having a solid base for any sort of fighting, while the last is solid for an individual with a lot of sorcerous potential and academic skills.

All Attributes work in the normal way except Fate. Fate represents your share of the supernatural force that permeates this particular corner of the universe. Fate is what gives you the Sight. A Fate of 1d+2 is the minimum for having reliable Sight. A Fate of 1d+1 is borderline Sight, and the Blind have a Fate of 0d+1 or 0d+2. The higher your Fate, the more Sight you have, the greater your ability to see, analyze and sanely deal with the supernatural. Having a high Fate simply for the Sight is never a bad thing, and you can have Fortes or Weaknesses on Fate for purposes of Sight, Sorcery or modifying die rolls. If your Fate is higher than that of what you are viewing, you can sense if it is irredeemably Evil, otherwise you can simply sense that it is powerful.

Fate also represents a potential to use sorcery. The more attuned you are to the Truth, the more you can manipulate reality by thought and will alone. However, in a world where Good is relative and Evil abounds, having access to this power *automatically* generates the temptation to use it for personal ends. That is, the more powerful you are in unconventional ways, the more likely you are to abandon Good and use that power for purely Evil ends. Simply having the potential *does not* make you Evil, but if you use a sorcerous power at high levels, it slowly corrupts you. However, as long as you are not *fully* Evil, this corruption *can* be reversed. This is a burden that all sorcery-trained members of the Brotherhood must carry, and not all of them do so successfully. Sometimes, the temptations of power are too great, and a member will snap, or worse, keep their aberrations secret, often using Brotherhood resources to cover for their crimes.

Fate is also used in the conventional way, as a source of player-controlled "luck" that can add or subtract 1d in crucial situations. This can only be used for "good" purposes. In **Code:Black**, you can do this up to twice, *if* attacking/defending against Evil. Luck is the channelling of the spark of Good within you, which means Evil creatures have *no* ability to use Fate for modifying die rolls. One Forte worth noting on Fate is called a "Guardian angel". This is a +1d on Fate rolls solely for the purpose of seeing if you can continue to use Fate to save your hide. In the **Code:Black** universe, this Forte manifests as an actual voice in your head, whispering things like "duck!" just when you need it most. For those who investigate such things, it is seen as evidence that there is an "other side" for those aligned with Good, for most often, the guardian angel seems to have a voice or manner reminiscent of someone the adventurer knew, who perished before the start of play, presumably in the service of Good.

▼ **SKILLS** - The standard **EABA** skill list can be used for most purposes. In addition to any "adventurer" sort of skills they might have, adventurers also need to spend points on some sort of professional skill they can make a living at. This can overlap with their Brotherhood job (like a police officer or an archaeology professor or a private detective), or be a useful "cover" skill (like a delivery truck driver), but the skill is seldom *completely* separate from the adventurer's Brotherhood work (few Brotherhood members are assembly line workers). Adventurers have to meet the following minimum skill rolls:

Skill type	Minimum skill roll
Professional skill(cover)	4d+0
Professional skill(other)	3d+0
Combat skill #1	3d+0
Combat skill #2	3d+0
Combat skill #3	2d+0
a AWR-based skill	3d+0
a AGL-based skill	3d+0
a HLT-based skill	2d+0

Details - A "cover" skill we described before the table. The other professional skill is something that is going to be useful to the Brotherhood. It doesn't have to be a skill that is going to be used legally, it just has to be useful, and cannot be a combat skill. Security systems or a useful Area Knowledge would be examples. The combat skills need to be three separate skill classifications, and would usually be skill with projectile weapons, a type of melee weapon and an unarmed combat form. The AWR, AGL and HLT-based skill requirements are ways to mandate a little variety in the adventurers. This could be things like knowing a second language, an esoteric hobby, or running, swimming, carousing or some other fitness or social activity.

These levels are the *minimum* acceptable skill rolls for starting field operatives. All adventurers based on the previous Attribute templates can get these skill rolls with their starting 60S, leaving room for points from Traits to improve one or more skills, get a few additional skills or acquire Traits that cost A or S gained elsewhere.

Adventurers in **Code:Black** can have very professional levels of skill. Starting with Attributes in the 3d+0 range and skills of +2d, with the possibility of Fortes and Larger than Life, starting adventurers can have their best skill roll be 5d to 6d, keeping either "best three" or "best four". Remember that a 4d+0 skill roll is a "professional" level of skill, and turning that into a 5d+0 roll or more is usually several years worth of study and practice, though prodigies with high levels of natural talent can manage it quicker.

These skill levels place that particular ability at a veteran level, and if it is something that would be publicly known, you are internationally ranked. You might not be famous with only a 5d skill roll, but you are certainly listed in the roster of some organization or other, have professional colleagues who know of you and could recommend you, and so on. Adventurers with skills of 6d or more, or who have "Larger than Life" on a skill or set of skills will be better known, and have more rarefied references and colleagues. It's just something to keep in mind when working up your adventurer's background.

As a note to the gamemaster, these high levels of skill mean that starting adventurers are more than a match for most normal foes, though only some will be in the league where they can reliably take on two at once. They will reach that level though, and then some. Unless they have a trick up their sleeve, you can gloss over most martial encounters if a combat-oriented adventurer gets into an altercation with a normal person, much as most of your *players* would not stand much of a chance in a match against a professional pit fighter.

The skills available in a **Code:Black** campaign mirror the normal **EABA** skill list. Sorcery is the Will-based skill used for generating powers and power effects, and does not need to be specialized for particular "spells". If you want to be better and more flexible at it, you buy a higher level of Sorcery skill. While "enchanted" items exist in a **Code:Black** campaign, such items are usually just solidified manifestations of Evil that have oozed through from the Prison, and are not something that adventurers can create, and also not something adventurers want to possess, as they are ultimately corrupting and will inevitably turn their user towards the darkest of actions and desires.

▼ **TRAITS** - This is a list of the standard **EABA** Traits, and any special implementation they might have in the **Code:Black** universe. If a Trait is not mentioned, assume there is no change from the normal rules.

● **Age** - There are no limits on age in **Code:Black**. You could be anywhere from a teenager to an old geezer (but unless the gamemaster says otherwise, even young adventurers need to have the required minimum skill levels). The benefits and limits of Age are standard. But, having Sight has a strong effect on your personality, and whether you got the Sight young and have had it all your life, or are a retiree who recently got the mental shock of their life, your Age means you will have a certain number of *required* Personality levels. The sum of the points you gain from Age count towards your 35A/S limit, but points gained from Age-mandated Personality do not. This means an old adventurer can have points well past the normal limit, giving them a lot of potential (especially if they are a sorcerer), but at the cost of having a very strong and distinctive personality. It is worth noting that insanity is defined as having eight or more levels in a *particular* Personality, and if a person is pushed over this brink by Evil actions, they become irredeemably Evil.

◆ **Blessing/Curse** - Humans have no Blessings or Curses aside from the minor Curses that can result from things like severe allergies. However, there exist half-breeds and other sentient beings in the **Code:Black** universe, and some of them are (with gamemaster permission) possible as adventurers. Blessings and Curses for these beings would be part of their nature, but also cost points to acquire. The exact Blessings or Curses will depend on the being, and will be described later. The benefits gained from a Blessing can only be negated by special modifiers on magic (the use of "**true names**").

■ **Enemies** - Evil hates you. You get no points for that. *Evil hates everyone*. Fortunately, Evil is seldom looking for you *personally*. Rather, it just wants to remove all humanity as an impediment to its spread across the universe. However, on rare occasion, an adventurer will manage to piss Evil off and for a while at least, get some personal attention from Evil and its minions. *And a good time was had by all*.

In **Code:Black**, Enemies are likely to be the mundane kind, though the gamemaster will have free rein to somehow connect them to larger Evil plots in the future. There is no evil counterpart to the Brotherhood. If there were, the war against Evil would have spilled into public view millennia ago.

There are Evil groups and individuals, and groups that if given time, can be of use to Evil, but they are small, usually local, and usually do not play well with others. The biggest Enemy an adventurer can have is to have somehow gotten in the bad graces of one of the handful of the world's Evil governments. *Have you ever heard in the news about some country that has had a repressive regime for decades, where foreign journalists and UN personnel are simply not allowed, and where people regularly disappear and are never seen again?* There is a good chance that Evil has a solid foothold in the loftiest halls of power there. If your adventurer has something in their past that could arouse the ire of such a government, they would have no qualms about spying on you, harassing you, and maybe even abducting you back to that country to do things to you best left unsaid and undescribed. Only the fact that you are a citizen or resident of a far more powerful nation prevents them from already having done so. You are a pain, but not worth an international incident that could disrupt Evil's plans. In **Code:Black** this is a 10 point Enemy.

■ **Friends** - *The Brotherhood is not your friend.* People in the Brotherhood may be Friends, but the institution itself is not. Humans, even those in the Brotherhood, can slip into Evil and have to be 'excised' from the organization. The fight is too important to let friendship get in the way. But, the Brotherhood is loyal to you as long as you are loyal to the Brotherhood. Sometimes it may be powerless to help you out, but it does *not* forget its own.

Other than that, adventurers can have the normal variety of friends, associates, and people who owe you favors or will do you favors in return for the same. The Brotherhood recognizes that these ties of loyalty are useful, but also a source of schism and danger in the event that someone goes rogue and starts pulling other Brotherhood members with them. As best they can (which is pretty good), the Brotherhood keeps a psych profile on its members, along with a number of other potentially irksome passive surveillance activities (like your spending habits). If there appears to be a problem with one of your Friends, whether or not you are asked to keep an eye on them depends on your profile. If they think your personal ties are stronger than your duty, someone else in the Brotherhood will do the investigating (and possible enforcement action).

◆ **Gifted** - All adventurers have the Sight, which is a Gift that allows them to use their Fate to see the Truth of the world around them. This costs no points and does not apply towards any limits on Traits. If you think you can or want to make an adventurer who is Blind to the true nature of the world, then you get an extra 10A for the adventurer but this does count towards your 35A/S limit. Gaining the Sight at a later time is possible, but the adventurer will need to have 10A in experience (and be willing to risk insanity) in order to gain the Sight in some gamemaster-moderated revelatory event.

As with Blessing/Curse, certain non-humans may have inherent Gifts, which will come out of their points as any other Gift would. Adventurers can with gamemaster permission buy Gifted in a way that gives them a better understanding of super, arcane, or Evil "science", principles that blur the line between futuristic physics and sorcery.

◆ **Larger than Life** - Adventurers who pay the 5A surcharge for Unusual Background may buy the limited form of this Trait (it only applies to one Attribute and skills). This *still* requires gamemaster permission. To the Blind, use of a Larger than Life roll for an Attribute or skill simply seems like uncanny luck or amazing skill. To those with any degree of the Sight, it is clear that something else is going on. Exactly how this manifests depends on the Attribute or skill affected. Glowing eyes, moving in a blur or unnatural rippling of muscles could all be signs that the very essence of the person is somehow twisting the laws of reality in their favor. Using a Larger than Life roll for an Attribute or skill *can* twist a person towards Evil, but only if the Trait is used frequently for purposes related to an existing personality Trait.

EXAMPLE: *If a person uses their Larger than Life intellect as a way to gain wealth to satisfy the needs of a Greedy personality, then this will slowly twist them towards Evil.*

● **Looks** - Looks in **Code:Black** is going to be measured in a human-centric sense. If you're *not* human, odds are you are butt-ugly to human senses, sight, smell or otherwise. However, this only applies to those who have the Sight. The Blind populace does not know there are non-humans in their midst. For instance, Ghuls are often seen by the Blind as homeless people or shabby transients of some unknown ethnicity. Vampires and devils on the other hand, can be quite charismatic to the Blind, though physically repulsive to the Sighted.

● **Motivation** - Everyone has a motivation. After you got the Sight, what compelled you to fight Evil or persuaded the Brotherhood to take you in? How did you conquer the insanity that happens to many of the newly Sighted, and how did acquiring this gift change the way you view the world or your place in it? Is there something you need to accomplish because it is what you *should* do, or something you need to avenge because it is what you *must* do? A good Motivation is worth 5A or 5S and does not have any real down side to it.

◆ **Mythic Archetype** - The 'ensemble cast' you get with this Trait is easily possible in the **Code:Black** universe. You can draw off any number of movies or even television shows to find good examples of each one.

● **Personality** - Simply having the Sight and being a member of the Brotherhood is stressful. You know terrible secrets that other people literally *cannot* understand (no matter how simply and patiently you explain it to them), you have to do unpleasant things as a matter of course, and you will make mistakes that you can only hope to atone for, but probably never will.

You compensate for this, or try to, by some excess of personality. Maybe you wall it all up and present a stoneface to the outside world. Maybe you bust loose and live life with more gusto than you should. Maybe something that you saw or something that you did left a scar on your soul, or a lurking irrational fear you have not yet conquered.

Your Age will determine the *minimum* level of some Personality you have to have:

Age	Personality levels
Young adult	2
Adult	3
Physical prime	4
Mature	5
Middle aged	6
Elderly	7

Half of these levels (round up) have to be in one Personality. This means that older adventurers will be obviously and significantly biased in one way or another. You do get points for these minimum levels of Personality (5S for each level), but these points do not count towards your maximum 35A/S amount from Traits in this gameworld. That is, you get points for the appropriate level of Age, which count against your allowed 35A or S in Traits, and then you get points for the required Personality levels, which do *not* count against this limit.

If you want to start an adventurer with Sorcery skill (the ability to manifest powers), then for each spell known, you add +1 to the total number of required Personality traits (these levels do count towards an adventurer's point limit). In addition, the dominant Personality trait (the one with the most levels) the adventurer has must be a negative one (dabbling in powers turns one towards Evil). Gluttony, greed, envy, sadism, lust, dishonesty, larceny, that sort of thing.

EXAMPLE: An adventurer starting play at an Age of Physical Prime and knowing two sorceries must have a total of six levels in Personality (four for Age, two for the sorceries). Whichever aspect of their Personality is the strongest must be a negative one.

Anyone who ever has eight or more levels in a *particular* Personality Trait is "insane". They may be able to function in normal society, depending on their particular insanity, but on that one issue they are stark raving mad, fanatical beyond any hope of reason. Someone who goes insane as the result of their own evil (or succumbing to Evil temptations) becomes Evil. Any Good they had is extinguished, and they no longer suffer Fear from Evil minions or worry about Evil effects from sorcery. Adventurers suffering this fate are permanently lost and become foes controlled by the gamemaster...

Whenever an adventurer does something that twists them towards Evil, it generally adds to the levels in the most extreme of any "negative" Personality the adventurer has.

EXAMPLE: If an adventurer has three levels of "honesty" and two levels of "elitism", then anything twisting the adventurer towards Evil would add to their perception that they are somehow "better" than everyone else, and being better qualified and being worth more as a person justifies their actions (or so they will convince themselves).

■ **Secret** - There are a number of Secrets an adventurer might have. If they are not completely human, this will be known to the Brotherhood and is not really a Secret, though it might be a Secret to your family or friends or lovers ("Oh, stop being such a devil..."). Being a member of the **Tangent** would be a Secret if you are also a member of the Brotherhood, and possibly the other way around.

■ **Status** - Operates as normal in the gameworld. Bear in mind that there is a normal world of Status, and also Status among the various non-human factions that the Blind will be completely unaware of. Adventurers in the Brotherhood are either "in" or "out". Those who are "in" work directly for some larger entity, usually a government. This gives them all the perks and benefits of both their "normal job" and the Brotherhood's government resources, but it also keeps them on a shorter leash as far as their personal conduct goes. Such individuals would have both Brotherhood rank and some form of authority-based Status among the Blind.

Those who are "out" are still full members of the Brotherhood, but their ability to wield influence outside of direct Brotherhood channels is limited. They simply have Status in the Brotherhood.

EXAMPLE: A Brotherhood FBI agent would have no problem carrying a pistol on board an airliner, but would get in serious trouble for failing a drug test. A Brotherhood fetishist might have trouble getting their body piercings through an airport metal detector, but doesn't give a rat's ass about drug tests. The FBI agent would have law enforcement status and Brotherhood status, while the Brotherhood agent would only have the latter.

The Brotherhood promotes its own based on need and talent and proven ability. Whether you are "in" or "out" doesn't matter, though it can influence who is chosen to deal with whom when it comes to various factions and organizations within the largely Blind world.

Status is going to take the forms it would in any other modern campaign: Fame, rank or secular influence. In addition, rank within the Brotherhood is in terms of various levels of Initiation. This is a limited Status (5A or 5S per level) that applies to glomming resources the Brotherhood has to offer, being able to command tasks from lesser Initiates, and has an effect on personal income. The three circles of Initiation are White, Grey and Black, and each circle has six ranks, with the fourth rank in each equal to the first rank in the next. You can transfer across the colors from White to Grey to Black (sometimes at a one grade demotion), but it is effectively a change of profession. Grey and Black are more research, organizational and executive oriented.

EXAMPLE: A 5th rank White would have the same authority as a 2nd rank Grey.

Each rank corresponds to a Limited level of Status, so from bottom to top is eight levels of Limited Status (first rank of White is at zero Status).

White(6 ranks): Whites are the front lines of Brotherhood operations. The lowest rank (White₁) would be the equal of a private, a White₃ would be comparable to a lieutenant, while the highest (White₆) would be equivalent to a colonel. The responsibility a White will have is on a par with a military officer of equivalent rank.

Grey(6 ranks): Grey Initiates are "middle management", often moving up to organizing broad operations after a number of years as a White. Greys are often front men for Brotherhood businesses, mid-level researchers, non-combat sorcerors or White personnel who can no longer handle field missions because of age or disability. A Grey₁ or Grey₂ (or the equivalent White₄ or White₅ rank) will typically be the person running a Brotherhood front operation.

Black(6 ranks): Blacks are the shadowy higher-ups who know things lesser men were not meant to know (and that includes you). Black Initiates do the most esoteric of research, formulate overall policy and deal with the "big picture". Blacks may be promoted from the ranks of the Greys, but often as not their status comes through association with some other form of power. Presidents, Popes and such can be Blacks without ever having been a White or Grey. It is worth noting that you cannot have a Black level of authority while remaining a White (White₆ is only equal to Grey₃). It is also worth noting that Blacks can acquire their rank without having direct field experience, so they can become disconnected from the constraints of operational reality (e.g. no battle plan survives contact with the enemy). The Brotherhood is well aware of this potential problem and works very hard to make sure no "us/them" mentality creeps into the upper echelons, but they have the potential to fail in this responsibility, which gives the gamemaster a whole world of trouble to make up for the adventurers.

Adventurers cannot begin play with more Brotherhood status than White₂ (one level of Status) This allows the gamemaster to have a non-player extra managing the adventurer's actions to begin with, giving orders and passing down information that comes from higher up. At least until such time as the evil gamemaster knocks them off so that one of the adventurers can take on the increased responsibility...

Promotion within the Brotherhood is a matter of both adventurer performance *and* gamemaster permission. An adventurer must have a record of competence and leadership to be considered for a higher slot, plus such a slot must be available, and the adventurer must have accumulated the experience to pay the point cost associated with the promotion (the points are the easiest part). Usually, a promotion is from within the lower ranks of the group where the vacancy occurred, but if there is no one qualified, someone from outside may be appointed on an interim basis until someone within the group can be trained to take the position. In some cases, an adventurer without sufficient points may be promoted because there is a pressing need and no other candidates are available, but in this case, all future experience gains for the adventurer must go towards paying for the promotion.

As a matter of leadership qualifications, someone up for promotion often has to find a qualified subordinate to take over their previous responsibilities. If you haven't been working to improve the skills of any subordinates so that they could handle your responsibilities in an emergency, then you're not much of a leader and probably won't get promoted.

Freelancers who operate with the same aims as the Brotherhood, but without their official sanction and authority are considered to have one negative level of Limited Status (worth 5S). They are looked down on, and have no ability to directly access Brotherhood resources of knowledge, so spending these points on a Friend in the Brotherhood might be useful...

Outside of, but still important to a Brotherhood adventurer is the possibility of Status within a major religion. For instance, the *Ordo Dei* group within the Catholic Church holds ancient information that they share with the Brotherhood only if absolutely necessary. Most of the time, the information is instead in the mind of a Brotherhood member who is also in the *Ordo Dei*. This split loyalty has its problems, but it is better than not sharing the information at all. Membership in a secret order outside of (but known to) the Brotherhood would be one or more levels of very limited Status (2A or 2S per level), and for such an organization within an old or established religion, there would be six levels of very limited Status from bottom to top, with the highest status comparable to a Black Initiate of the Brotherhood (within that organization).

◆ **Toughness** -If you are using the "Hit Brackets" advanced rule (**EABA**, page 2.19), then adventurers can have one level in the Trait, and adventurers with a half-breed Unusual Background can have two levels.

EXAMPLE: An adventurer has werewolf blood in their family tree somewhere and buys a level of Toughness. Half the average of their (Strength + Health) is 4, so they would normally be at a -1d penalty for each 4 hits taken. The level of Toughness changes this to a -1d penalty for each 5 hits taken.

◆ **Unusual Background** - In the universe of **Code:Black**, anyone who is not at least partially human can be usually be considered Evil, since humans represent the only Good in the universe (which shows that the universe is pretty hard up!). Most adventurers will be 100% human, but you can have a less than intact heritage and still be a part of the Brotherhood. But don't go less than 50% human or you are asking for trouble. Adventurers with a mixed heritage *must* pay for Unusual Background as well any costs associated with a non-human heritage. This gives them the ability to purchase one of the "packages" of benefits and liabilities associated with a particular mixed parentage. In general, each of those abilities reflects somehow on a mixed parentage.☛ For instance, Ghuls can (and do) eat just about anything. The "immunity to poison" Blessing reflects a Ghul somewhere in your family tree. An Unusual Background might also manifest in an adventurer's Personality or Motivation, like wondering about the father you never knew and your mother refused to talk about. You might want to skip ahead to [page 3.10](#) for more information on each of the non-human sentient species that co-inhabit the world with humanity for better or worse.

Each of the "choose one" items is generally worth 10A or S, and with gamemaster permission you can pay to get more than one or to buy a particular Blessing at a higher level.

EXAMPLE: A half-were who wanted both the Blessing of reduced damage effect *and* extra Toughness would pay 5A instead of gaining 5A.

But taking more than one "choose one" item involves a further dilution of your human heritage, which can be hazardous. The packages that follow are for a small fraction of mixed heritage, while having all the benefits listed would place you at 50% human or less.

Half-ghul

Choose one:

- Blessing: -1d effect from toxins or diseases
- Blessing: 25% increased lifespan
- Curse: +1d (or +3) difficulty in social interactions because of body odor

Cost: lose 10A

Half-were

Weakness on Will: Aggressive

Forté on Health: Endurance

Curse: Allergic to silver, +1d damage from silver weapons (or double damage from silver attacks of less than 1d+0)

Choose one:

- Blessing: -1d damage from normal weapons
- Toughness: +1 Increased hit brackets
- 1d+0 Awareness roll to see in the dark
- 1d+0 Awareness roll to track by scent

Cost: gain 5A

Half-devil

Weakness on Will: Subject to temptations

Choose one:

- Larger than Life: On Awareness & skills
- Gifted: Ability to read emotional states using Fate as an Awareness roll

Cost: zero A

Half-vampire

Curse: Allergic to sunlight (must keep skin covered or sunblock on to avoid 1d+0 sunburn in a matter of minutes)

Choose one:

- Toughness: +1 Increased hit brackets
- 1d+0 Awareness roll to see in the dark
- Larger than Life: On Agility & skills

Cost: zero A

A person of mixed heritage is still seen as human by the Blind populace. Those with the Sight see the adventurer as having mixed blood, but particularly stressful events may shock the Blind into temporary awareness of the adventurer's true nature, and those already on or past the edge of madness may also see the adventurer as they truly are.

Being a half-breed does not make a person Evil. The part of you that is human gives you a spark of Good, and where you end up is a result of your own choices. There are half-breeds that follow the path and aims of Evil, but adventurers are hopefully not among their number.

■ **Wealth** - It is a modern world, and Wealth as a Trait applies normally. There is also a world hidden to the Blind, and while it can also operate on dollars and euros and yen, it also has currency of arcane knowledge, things that scurry from the light and things that cause the light to seek other places to be. But for adventurers, we will deal with the more mundane currencies. Limited wealth can represent normal currency, or it can represent influence that is used to get otherwise inaccessible Brotherhood resources. Normally, the Brotherhood does its best to supply people with the tools they need, even if they cannot be gotten through normal channels, so limited Wealth in Brotherhood resources is only available with gamemaster permission and a good explanation by the player as to why they have it.

EXAMPLE: An FBI agent doesn't need the Brotherhood to issue them a pistol and body armor. Anything out of the ordinary that is required would come out of FBI stocks, through Brotherhood contacts higher up in the organization.

Personal gear - If your campaign is set in the modern world and a major nation, then use the standard **EABA** guidelines for starting cash and assets and income. Add +1d to the roll for income purposes only, for each level of Status within the Brotherhood (outsiders with negative Status lose 1d for income purposes). Brotherhood adventurers have a minimum income of 30,000 Credits a year (pre-tax), with cost of living adjustments in areas with higher housing costs. The Brotherhood covers all health care costs for "job-related" injuries, and a modest, Brotherhood-funded life insurance policy is also standard. A possible adventurer background is being the beneficiary of such a policy. Your brother or sister or father or mother died in Brotherhood service and left you a good sized chunk of money. You were curious about they *really* did for a living, and the rest is history.

Limited Wealth that applies only to Brotherhood assets represents the Brotherhood bending a few rules here or there to get you legal right to own something you would ordinarily have difficulty acquiring (legal, but difficult to own because of rarity or paperwork). So, this limited Wealth might be put towards campaign contributions, legal expenses or greased palms to let you have a concealed carry permit in a part of the country where this is next to impossible (and where other local Brotherhood operatives do not have such permits). *But it won't get you a Stinger missile.*

All adventurers should have purchased the following assets or have income sufficient for monthly payments on:

- 1) At least 1000Cr worth of clothing
- 2) A reliable means of personal transport useful in the starting campaign area
- 3) A place to live, appropriate to family status and income (you have to live appropriate to your income).
- 4) Furnishings for same
- 5) A primary weapon
- 6) A backup weapon
- 7) Body armor (even if you don't wear it)

Brotherhood adventurers have the same basic needs as everyone else. So, while **EABA** does allow adventurers to have quite a bit of cash and assets to begin with, a lot of people will have most of that invested in a house, car, hobbies, retirement plan, college fund for the kids, and so on, leaving them with only a few thousand in the bank and a modest amount left over each month after paying the bills. A Brotherhood adventurer will never want for the basics of survival, but the Brotherhood does not force you to spend your income wisely or think towards your financial future. The Brotherhood does have an entire branch devoted to scrutinizing the financial transactions of its members (mostly automated, with human oversight if something suspicious is noted). It makes no value judgements if you spend all your treasure on beer and strippers, but is simply looking for signs that someone has succumbed to Evil through analysis of their financial transactions.

The Brotherhood has enough quirky individuals in it that trying to enforce a standard of dress or equipment is pointless. Starting adventurers can have whatever weapons or body armor they think they're going to want or need (within reason). Players need to remember that overt violence is not always the best solution in a world where the Blind (and especially the Blind police) may see things *far* differently than you do. A policeman who pulls you over for a traffic stop and sees that you have a concealed carry permit might decide to look in your trunk. If the trunk is empty, no harm, no foul. If you have a submachinegun and rocket launcher stowed in the back, no amount of sweet-talking is going to get you out of immediate trouble...

Standard equipment - There are only a few items of "standard equipment" for Brotherhood operatives, and these are off-the-shelf items for the most part. Adventurers do not have to buy these, but replacements because of loss usually come out of your Brotherhood paycheck.

Cell phone: This is a moderately high-end model, with capability to operate in most of the world's cell phone networks. It also has a digital camera, voice recorder, email, web browser, GPS and walkie-talkie functions. The GPS is integrated with built-in software so that the phone can be tracked, and that the user of the phone can track the location (or past location) of other team members (this only works outdoors). The walkie-talkie function allows quick communication between members of a team, and can also be used in areas without a cell phone network as a standard walkie-talkie with a range of several kilometers. Agents of White₃ or higher usually have a phone modified with encryption hardware for voice and data. The normal phone is worth about 300Cr, and the encrypted one about 500Cr.

Scanner: This is a normal radio scanner, modified (illegally) to pick up various police and military bands that are normally not available on civilian units. They also have decryption hardware and software that will work on most police and military transmissions. These are home or vehicle-mounted units, and cost about 1,000Cr.

Evidence destruction kit: This looks like a can of windshield de-icer or fix-a-flat. It is actually a spray used to degrade and contaminate a crime scene, messing things up enough that it would be next to impossible to prove in court that a particular person was at a crime scene. The vapors dissolve fingerprint oils, random human and animal DNA is spread around, along with hair fragments, pollen and dust from a hundred areas of the country, etc. One can is good enough to "sanitize" one vehicle (inside and out) or one room, and it is used if an operative is involved in some sort of action that would tend to draw a lot of unwanted attention from Blind authorities. This item is worth about 50Cr per can, and is replaced at no cost if used as part of normal Brotherhood activity.

Finishing touches - Life as a Brotherhood agent is inherently dangerous, but that doesn't mean you cannot try to have a normal life. Adventurers can be married or have children at the start of play, with either happy or less than happy circumstances (mommy got killed by a vampire, or daddy went insane after something followed mommy home from a mission). These can be bought as Friends or aspects of Personality or even part of an Unusual Background. The gamemaster will of course find ways to work such background detail into play eventually, but that's part of the fun of things.

The following background questions are good for just about any character in any rpg campaign. They can help the player in questionable die rolling circumstances (hey, this is my hometown!), provide the gamemaster with adventure tie-ins and generally add depth to the adventurer.

Where am I from? - Where were your formative years spent? Not just in terms of geography, but in terms of circumstance. You might have picked up Japanese because your father was stationed at Okinawa. Or, you might have learned sorcery as an orphan hustling on the streets of Rio, growing up far too fast and seeing things other people refused to see.

How did I get here? - What got you from there to here? Particularly, what were the circumstances that led you to join the Brotherhood (or Tangent, or stay independent)? Was it something that members of your family seem to fall into? Were you shocked into Sight and found the Brotherhood on your own, or were you involved in some public event that led you to think there was more to reality than you imagined?

What are my goals? - Is the Brotherhood just a paycheck that the Sight qualifies you for? Is there some past wrong you want to see righted, some crime outside the mundane law you want to see justice done for? Is Good your holy Cause? Or is doing the right thing, simply the right thing to do?

How did I acquire (special trait)? - There is a good chance that a **Code:Black** adventurer will have an unusual trait, like not being entirely human, knowing sorcery, etc. This aspect of an adventurer's history can be a small story all by itself, and at least an outline of it should be available to the gamemaster. Details can be filled in later as the player gets a better handle on who and what the adventurer is.

▼ **SAMPLE ADVENTURERS** - Here are four sample adventurers, built according to the standard guidelines, so you can grab one and just jump into the game, or have a standby ready if someone wants to join your campaign on short notice. There's a not-very-social team leader/veteran, two action-oriented types, one with a little sorcery, one without, and a competent but quirky research/analyst adventurer.



Simon White

"and I should care because...?"

- Strength: 2d+0
- Agility: 2d+0
- Awareness: 2d+1
- Will: 2d+2
- Health: 2d+0
- Fate: 2d+2

Notable skills:

- Firearms: +2d
- Martial arts: +0d
- Short blade: +0d
- Land vehicles: +1d
- Leadership: +2d
- Carousing: +1d
- Diplomacy: +2d
- Law: +1d
- Search & rescue: +2d

Notable Traits:

- Arrogance(4 levels)
- Trustworthy(3 levels)
- Mature age
- Status(White₂)

Despite his denials, it is an open secret that he is former Airborne. A better kept secret is that a long time ago, when a *thing-that-should-not-be* slithered up to his unit, he broke and ran. *They died. He lived.* He left the military soon after, transferring to the Brotherhood through a special arrangement with the government. Despite his checkered past he still considers himself above most of the civilian "punks" under his local search & rescue command, an attitude which has probably cost him promotion a number of times.



"would you like to get the f*ck out of my face, or do you want to defuse this?"

Strength: 2d+2
 Agility: 3d+0
 Awareness: 3d+0
 Will: 3d+0
 Health: 3d+0
 Fate: 3d+0

Notable skills:

Security systems: +2d
 Firearms: +2d
 Heavy weapons: +1d
 Brawling: +0d
 Air vehicles: +1d
 Land vehicles: +0d
 Water vehicles: +0d
 Demolitions: +2d
 Sorcery(1): +2d
 Carousing: +0d
 Climbing: +0d

Notable Traits:

Minor Enemy(someone in IRA)
 Daredevil(4 levels)
 Cynical(4 levels)

Physical Prime age
 Adrenaline junkie(2 levels)

Liam used to make bombs for the IRA. Then he stumbled into a Brotherhood mission. It was a trial of fire which he came out the other side of with Sight and a whole different perspective on life. His former companions cannot understand his new view of the universe and a few feel betrayed that he left them.

Abigale "Abby" MacCallum

"my lab has everything I need; the latest tech, my computer and my bed. Now leave me alone..."

Strength: 2d+1
 Agility: 3d+0
 Awareness: 3d+1
 Will: 2d+1
 Health: 1d+2
 Fate: 3d+0

Notable skills:

Forensics: +2d
 Programming: +1d
 Sorcery(analysis of): +1d
 Sorcery(1): +0d
 Firearms: +1d
 Brawling: +1d
 Security systems: +1d
 Running: +0d
 Art: +0d
 First aid: +1d

Notable Traits:

Perky goth(3 levels)
 Lusty(2 levels)



Artistic bent(1 level)

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Abigale is full of contradictions. She likes the solitude of labwork, but she also likes to party and socialize. She is definitely an urban creature, and is completely lost anywhere outside a city or when she can't get high-speed internet access on her phone. Her normal style of dress makes her stand out in conservative environments, and she has gotten into trouble at airports more than once for her selection of piercings. She's pretty strong for her size, but lacks stamina and has a few other health problems.

Max Arkwright

"I wish these damn things didn't leave such a mess when you shoot them..."



Strength: 2d+2
 Agility: 3d+1
 Awareness: 2d+1
 Will: 2d+1
 Health: 3d+1
 Fate: 1d+2

Notable skills:

Armorer: +1d
 Martial arts: +0d
 Throwing: +0d
 Firearms: +1d
 Heavy weapons: +1d
 Running: +0d
 Swimming: +0d
 Land vehicles: +1d
 Mechanic: +1d

Notable Traits:

Neat freak(3 levels)
 Thoughtful(2 levels)
 Physical Prime age

Max is part quartermaster and part gun bunny. In his worldview everything has its place, and Evil's place is in a body bag. If anything gets out of its proper place, Max gets a little upset. He uses order in his own life and surroundings to compensate for the things he can't understand and is still not quite sure he wants to understand. He's on a one-way trip to an obsessive-compulsive disorder but he's enjoying the ride.



GOOD & EVIL

All around us, chaos rings,

buildings crumbling down.

Silhouettes in the fiery rain,

timbers crash to the ground.

Bring my spear, invested with my youth,

Bring the children near,

they must now be told the truth.

Old and young and those of foreign tongue,

are you ready to fight?

- from **A Call to Arms**, by Mike and the Mechanics

▼ **INTRODUCTION** - The world of **Code:Black** is so close, yet so far from the world you see. Most people choose to remain unaware of the Evil that surrounds them, or delude themselves into believing that Evil things are the work of men, or that strange events have a natural explanation. This chapter goes into detail on the topics that are unique to the **Code:Black** universe.

▼ **WHY HERE? WHY US?** - It is not a coincidence that humans, the least of all evils, happen to be a perfect genetic match for everything else that lives on Earth. This is *our* home planet as well as the interface between this universe and the Prison. *Did this fact make any difference in why we ended up escaping the Prison?* No, it was just a fortuitous coincidence. However, life as we know it occurred across the universe on planets much like ours, so it should be no surprise that there are many Evils that can use or adapt to our ecosystem. It may also be that the transition from the Prison to this reality automatically alters a being so that it can exist in this reality. *We don't know.* The Brotherhood *does* know that many of our most ancient legends have bits of truth in them. Atlantis did exist, though not by that name, and was wiped out before humanity was dumped in the Prison with all the other Evils. Other *places* on Earth were banished to the Prison or some other space outside this reality, and these reappear with little warning, and act as foci for all manner of Evil activity. As part of *our* ancient past, there may be prophecies about such places and their possible contents.

▼ **WHAT IS GOOD/EVIL?** - **Code:Black** will use the terms Good and Evil, and good and evil. The capitalization is important. These are four *separate* concepts. Good and Evil are fundamental parts of the universe. They are both required for the universe as we know it to exist, and if one or the other were totally lacking, it would be created or some other means found to fill the void. Since both Good and Evil require free will and sentience, these too are required. At some point in the past, several to several hundred thousand years ago (we don't know), the supposedly final battle between Good and Evil raged across the universe. Good won, and banished Evil to another dimension by means unknown. This having never happened before, Good was unprepared for the consequences. Everything Good and sentient in the universe vanished to parts unknown, leaving a universe devoid of Good or Evil or thought. *The universe itself is not sentient. It didn't care that these things were lacking.* But, their lack was an irresistible vacuum that drew in the necessary elements through the weakest barrier to where they could be found. The place to which Evil had been banished opened just a crack, just enough to let the least of the Evils out. This was humanity, which also had a little bit of Good in it, and so the balance was restored.

What is *true* Good is largely unfathomable to humanity, save for the knowledge that we each have a little of it if we choose to nurture it. We know it when we see it, but we see it only rarely. The true nature of Good vanished in the distant past, and humanity would probably be blasted into ashes by its brilliance. After all, even though we have Good in us, we apparently didn't have *enough* Good to keep from getting banished with the Evils. Good represents order and stability and harmony, though all of these words are inadequate, and simply show our inability to even express the concept.

On the other hand, Evil is more understandable to us. Evil is chaos and change and discord, and while these words also lack the depth needed to adequately describe Evil, they are a lot closer. Those who have the Sight know Evil when they see it (if their Fate is higher than that of what they are viewing). It has an aura that transcends the five senses and cannot actually be described by human language. Between two people who have experienced it, the word "Evil" is enough, and to those who have not experienced it, no amount of description can convey the soul-sickening sensation (some say exhilaration) of being in its presence.

Good and Evil share one characteristic: In their purest form, they each seek to fill every corner of the universe with themselves, to the exclusion of everything else. Good already did this once, to its misfortune. Evil, if released, would do the same, even knowing that it would ultimately bring about the end of all life as we know it. Good and Evil are largely absent from human motivations, which are merely good and evil in lower case. We each have Good and Evil in us, but we have to work very hard at being good in order to find the least bit of Good within ourselves. Unfortunately, we only have to work moderately hard at being evil in order to access the Evil deep within us all.

Altruism and love, selfishness and hate, these are merely good and evil. However, when we are influenced by forces from the Prison, what is merely evil in us can be twisted to Evil. Sadly, there is no counter-balancing good to bring out the superior aspects of Good in us, and this is part of why the Brotherhood strives so hard to keep Evil in its Prison. There is so little Good in humanity that we mostly have to rely on the merely good to get us by, and hope that it is enough.

So, when we talk about Evil, we are referring to influence that comes directly from things that have escaped from the Prison and seek to spread and subvert mankind, and when we talk about Good, we mean that hidden spark that brings out the best in us, but which we so seldom experience directly. In game terms, using Fate to adjust die rolls when confronted by Evil can represent accessing that tiny spark of Good. But in each of us is also the seed of Evil, for we too are things that once escaped from the Prison, and the use of sorcery lets that Evil out and helps it take root.

In game terms, Fate represents both potentials. If you use Sorcery, you are letting Evil from the Prison flow through you, magnifying your own inherent Evil. When you use Fate to modify die rolls, you channel that spark of Good within you. Using Fate is as close to Good magic as adventurers are likely to ever find. And it can seem like magic. A player about to be shot by an Evil human could raise their hand and by channelling Good (using Fate twice, [page 2.5](#)), seem to stop a 2d+0 pistol bullet in mid-air! But, Fate runs dry a lot faster than the clip of a weapon... To reflect the use of Good as a much needed edge, adventurers who slay an Evil can reset their Fate track, just like it was a new adventure. Adventurers who force Evil to retreat from an encounter or selflessly put themselves at risk to help another can reset one block on their Fate track.

In the pre-history of the game, Good and Evil were like matter and anti-matter. They did not exist in the same place at the same time. Intelligence arose with a tendency towards Good or Evil, seldom having the capacity for both. Many Evil races wiped themselves out long before they developed the capacity to move between the stars. Many Good races stagnated in a state of perpetual harmony, and were easy prey for the first interstellar Evil that encountered them.

Eventually, most of what was left was the purely Good and Evil races with the capability to project their will and ethos across interstellar and eventually intergalactic distances. Both sides knew that the other would never accommodate their existence. *There could be no peace.* Good could not become Evil, Evil could not become Good. With no conversion or redemption possible for the Enemy, there was no quarter asked or given. Good showed Evil the mercy of a quick death when possible, Evil did whatever was most expedient at the time. Technologies and sorceries and invocations beyond human imagining sterilized worlds and imploded suns. Billions were sacrificed, trillions were slain.

Eventually, the tide of this war washed upon humanity's shores. Living in a backwater of a nondescript galaxy, humans were then, as now, mostly Evil with a little Good, technologically advanced enough to be masters of our own solar system, and making our first tentative steps to the stars, squabbling and warring among ourselves all the while. Evil reached here first, and as is typical in such encounters, we were given the choice of joining...or dying. Our leaders chose to join Evil, though the decision was not unanimous, nor without misgivings. Humans became foot soldiers, shock troops, unskilled and technically ignorant of the vastly more advanced sciences used in the war, but still able to push buttons and pull triggers and toss victims on sacrificial conveyor belts.

It was merely coincidence that when all was lost and Evil was beaten, those Evils incapable of being utterly destroyed were imprisoned in a place whose only door was Earth. Whatever was left of humanity, cringing in the ruins, was sucked into that final prison along with the souls and psyches of every other Evil that made its final stand here. Technology and invocation would in time wipe the planet clean of all traces Evil had ever walked here, but that process was incomplete when Good, much to its surprise, vanished from this existence to a place still unknown. And that is where the new history of humanity begins...

▼ **BLINDNESS & SIGHT** - The "Blindness" is what the Brotherhood calls the state most of humanity is in. It is an unconscious self-delusion that does not let the average person perceive anything outside how they *think* the world is. This self-delusion is both individual and collective. Alone, a Blind person will see what they can rationalize seeing. In groups or when trying to convey what they have seen to someone else, the Blindness is sometimes but not always a collective phenomenon.

EXAMPLE: A normal person might perceive a Ghul feasting on a corpse in an alley, but would only see a homeless person picking through some garbage. If they witnessed a werewolf slashing open some hapless victim, it would be an attack by a man with a knife. Two people witnessing the same event might have the same description of the victim, but different descriptions of the attacker, each person putting their own individual spin on the collective delusion. The Brotherhood looks for such discrepancies in police witness reports as a way of monitoring Evil activity.

When events or circumstance force someone to confront something they cannot accept, they rationalize it, perhaps to extremes, or simply dismiss it entirely as "just one of those things". For instance, the following is an *actual* headline:

A traffic stop in Portland turned into a foot chase and police say they are still looking for a suspect who jumped off a bridge to the ground 80 feet below.

Police say a man who was pulled over for having his lights out bolted from his car and jumped over the Ross Island Bridge railing, falling about 80 feet into a thicket of blackberry bushes.

When officers went down the embankment, expecting the man to be dead, they looked through the bushes and saw the man move, but could not get to him before he ran up the embankment and fled.

The police rationalized that the "man" landed safely in some thick blackberry bushes. They may have been deluded by the Blindness, but it *didn't* make them stupid. *None of them took an 80 foot jump to follow the suspect...*

To the Blind, just another news oddity. To those with the Sight, something *else* is obviously going on.

While the Blindness doesn't let people see the supernatural or unnatural, it doesn't stop them from seeing what your adventurers do. So, if you pulled out a gun and shot a Ghul, the Blind witnesses would see you shoot that 'poor innocent homeless person'. Likewise if you ripped loose with a sorcery and blasted the Ghul to bits, people would 'see' you use a weapon to do so, rationalizing the events as best they can.

People can gain Sight in a number of ways. It might be something that runs in the family. It is not contagious, but it is possible events can transfer Sight from one person to another.[❖] An event might jolt a person loose from a self-imposed Blindness and restore their Sight, but this might also give them insanity.[❖] Most will write off visions of the true world as hallucinations or panic, and suffer only mild nightmares as a result. Others will retain their Sight, but not be able to cope with it. The Brotherhood does its best to find such individuals while their minds are still intact. Those of use are guided towards the Brotherhood. Those that are not, are guided back towards blissful Blindness if at all possible.

Even those who do not have the Sight can be jolted into momentary awareness of the Truth of a horrific situation. This awareness may cause them to act irrationally as far as the rest of the world is concerned. Even the person who was granted the momentary Sight will later be at a loss as to why they did what they did. We read these as tragic events where a person who seems to be absolutely normal does something completely off-kilter.

EXAMPLE: After pursuing a fugitive into the basement of a deserted building, police detective Lt. Brent is heard to fire twice, then seven more times. When he emerges ashen-faced from the basement, he takes a gas can from the trunk of his car, goes back inside and sets the scene ablaze. Though kicked off the force under a great deal of suspicion and (Brotherhood-deflected) calls for murder or manslaughter charges to be brought against him, the only thing he was ever heard to utter in his defense was "It had to be done." Lt. Brent has no conscious memory of what he saw down there, and cannot articulate why he burned that building to the ground. And he doesn't even think about it anymore, because even years later, what he almost but not quite remembers *still* terrifies him.

[❖] *The Eye* (2002), Raintree Pictures
[❖] *Stir of Echoes* (1999), Artisan Entertainment

When Evil walks openly among the Blind, they are terrified inside, but do not consciously feel it. *But it affects them.* Hostility to all forms of the unknown (like strangers or new ideas), displaced aggression (spousal abuse), behavioral excesses (public intoxication, sexual aggression) and misplaced hopes (increases in church attendance) can all be signs of an openly Evil presence in an area. Evil does not tend to act so openly most of the time, but in areas with small and easily cowed populations, Evil entities or humans highly tainted by Evil may feel confident enough to act in the open, or may do so simply to deliberately draw Brotherhood attention as part of some larger plan.

▼ **Note** - An open Evil in a small town is a very Stephen King sort of horror, where ordinary people without the Sight have to deal with something Evil that is beyond their ken. A person who gained the Sight by surviving such an experience could be a good background for an adventurer.

The Blind see what they expect to see, and this is conditioned by the time and culture in which they are raised. A modern person will not see a Ghul, they will see a homeless person or an immigrant from some country they don't like or don't care about. Feelings are harder to lie about, and the Blind may feel something about a person that they can't coherently express and which has little or nothing to do with the appearance they see. A parent warning a child to "stay away from that man, he's just not right", or a sense of unease when shaking the hand of a politician or lawyer, not seeing that this person is actually a devil.

▼ **Note** - A long-term side effect of low-level Evil is that the Blind tend to leave the area if possible. This can lead to isolated settlements that the rest of the world virtually ignores because the whole area is something they do not want to exist. ❄️

Blindness transfers to technology in subtle ways. Something genuinely Evil or not completely of this world does not show up accurately on film or video, but is close enough to the truth to be disturbing. A Blind person that watches such a video recording sees (or does not see) much as they would if they were viewing events first-hand, with the exception that remote viewing is *never* confrontational and generates no Fear response. Technological devices are *never* Blind. An alarm set to trip based on the physical nature of an Evil creature (like a room-temperature vampire) will do so. However, if the output from the device is interpreted by the Blind, they will see it as they expect to see it.

Remember that deep down, *the Blind do not want to See.* So, a security guard will accidentally overwrite camera footage, a person assigned to transport a video record might lose it, and so on. If someone has viewed or heard a recording of something Evil, they will unconsciously act to see that the record is lost or misfiled, or overwritten or somehow mishandled in a way that they never have to worry about seeing or hearing that record ever again. This is not done with forethought or malice, and if their actions cause genuine harm (like losing video evidence that would get a murderer convicted), then the person is genuinely remorseful for their "incompetence". But it would *not* stop them from doing it again if that video record crossed their path a second time...

In game terms, if your Fate is less than 1d+0, you are Blind to the truth of the world around you. Anything that would overwhelm this self-delusion will likely cause panic, psychological quirks or even insanity. Most people have a Fate of 0d+2 and are considered Blind to the truth of things. Those with a Fate of 1d+0 or 1d+1 are borderline sensitives. They get glimpses of the truth, but it is still filtered heavily by their subconscious. They do not have reliable Sight or the ability to use sorcery, but they do have a better than normal intuition when things "aren't right". Those with a Fate of 1d+1 can under some circumstances, see Ghuls as they truly are, and still keep their perspective on reality intact afterwards. Those with a Fate of 1d+2 or more have true Sight, and can to some degree see the world as it really is. Only those with Fates of 3d+1 or more can see things with their total, terrible clarity and hope to keep their sanity intact. Everyone else runs the risk of psychological aberration if they attempt to interact with things beyond their comprehension.

In general, you can only perceive the Truth of a supernatural entity or force to the extent of your Fate. A person with a Fate of 3d+1 perceives a werewolf in its true form, while a person with a Fate of 1d+0 sees it only as something that is not quite right for a human and tainted in some way that makes your skin crawl but which you cannot quite describe to anyone else more articulately than "there's something just not right about him..."

The notes on Sight also apply to Evil creatures, except that Evil is never Blind. Even low-Fate Evils can recognize something is unusual about most other Evils.

Most animals have a Fate of 0d+1 or 0d+2, but also have a Forte of "enhanced Sight" for +1d on their roll to spot things the Blind would miss. So, most animals have borderline or full Sight, and respond to the presence of things that could cause Fear. Having no Good or Evil themselves, they do not hate or fear Evil except to the extent that they sense Evil is more of a threat to them than Good would be. Dogs will growl, cats will hiss, rats will scurry away, etc. People, even if they are Blind, will sometimes recognize or trust the instincts of their companion animals, and this can save their lives. *Sometimes they don't* ("Whatcha spotted there, ol' Buck? Let's go see what yer growlin' at...").

Insanity is only possible for those who are Blind. Among those who know the Truth, there are only shades of socially unacceptable behavior ranging from quirky to irredeemably Evil. If you know the Truth, you know that there *are* alien UFOs in secret government hangars. You know there *are* soul-sucking vampire leeches out there. The world at large may consider these beliefs insanity. You might wish it were a delusion as well, but you know that it is not. This knowledge of Evil may cause you to drink too much, but *that* can be tolerated. But going out and slaying innocent children to "save them" is not acceptable. If a Blind person did that, they would be merely insane. If a Sighted person did that, they would be Evil.

Whenever you are confronted with Evil beyond your ability to truly perceive it, you suffer some degree of mental shock. And by confront, we don't mean bumping into a devil in a business suit on the street. We mean being confronted with a behavior or action that is a manifestation of a greater Evil, like turning the corner and seeing a Globboth slurping on the liver of a homeless person, or having a werewolf burst through your bedroom window as you are nodding off to sleep. Simply seeing a thing in a picture or on a television screen, or talking to he, she or it on the phone or even seeing it across the street is *not* considered a confrontation. Being *confronted* with Evil is a personal, *unavoidable* interaction, where you *have* to do something because of the presence of whatever is causing the fear.

EXAMPLE: A vampire is getting hassled in a bar. He turns to one of his tormentors, gets up real close and just for a moment, that person sees the true, distorted, not-quite-human face of the vampire. Terrified, this tormentor backs off, trips, scrambles to their feet and runs out of the bar. But, if asked later, they would not be able to say why they were so suddenly terrified.

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In **Code:Black**, things like this cause Fear. Fear is your mind's reaction to things that are beyond its ability and desire to comprehend. Fear (as a game mechanic) is felt in a number of ways. Some ways are common to a particular manifestation of Evil. Obviously, an overwhelming and uncontrollable sense of dread is fear. So is a smell, like a stench from something long dead that was unwholesome even in life, a smell so awful that you simply cannot approach it without gagging or retching. Similarly, a keening or screeching that makes you think your ears are bleeding from the pain, sound no amount of earplugs can keep out. Fear can be a visual hallucination, whether that of something horrible, or simple as a forced perspective change, making the fearsome creature appear larger than it should be the closer you get, until it is everything and you are nothing. Fear can also be more benign, like a genuine but exaggerated sense of self-preservation or duty to something other than taking out that Evil. All of these are ways in which Fear can manifest.

Anything that is a manifestation of Evil will have a Fear rating. If your Fate is equal or more than this amount, you can see the thing as it really is, *and* your mind can process the experience without undue harm. If it is higher than your Fate, you have to make a Will task against *double* the Fear rating. The most aberrant of merely evil human behaviours would have a Fear rating of 4 or 5, making it possible to panic the Blind simply by the sight of certain non-Evil things. If you succeed at the Will roll against the Fear rating, you still do not see the thing as it *truly* is, but you can wrap your head around it enough to not be anything more than unnerved.

Evil does not suffer Fear from other Evils, but it can be conventionally intimidated or made to fear for its life by a more powerful Evil.

If someone who is affected by Fear fails their Will task, they get 1S towards a Personality for each point the roll is failed by. If this is an adventurer, the gamemaster gets temporary control as the adventurer panics and attempts to get out of the situation by whatever means is at hand. Remember that one level in a Personality Trait is 5S, so a minor failure to Fear simply just gets you a head start towards a problem rather than a full-blown psychosis. The Blind can suffer whatever level of temporary or permanent effect the gamemaster desires.

If the gamemaster can't come up with a Personality Trait off the top of their head, roll 1d and use the following:

- 1) Phobia:** You develop an irrational fear of something in the environment where you confronted the fearful thing, or a fear of things that share a characteristic with it. For instance, confronting something in a ventilation duct might give you claustrophobia (fear of enclosed spaces), or being attacked by something vaguely spiderlike might give you arachnophobia (fear of spiders).
- 2) Compulsion:** Once you get out of the situation or it is otherwise resolved, you feel a compulsion to make sure that something you did related to that situation is the same. If you checked your gun before going into the situation, and the gun served you well, you may find yourself constantly checking to make sure your gun is loaded and ready, even at inappropriate times. If you were wearing new socks that day, you might start to only wear new socks.
- 3) Addiction:** Somewhat like a compulsion, but more often associated with substance abuse. Any sort of chemical prop that you use to cope becomes even more important to you, to the point where you become irritable, irrational or even violent if you can't get it. Maybe the horror of what you saw is so terrible that you just *have* to have a drink to blur the memory, not only of what you saw, but to drown out the screams of your friends whom you abandoned in your panic... Addiction is also a special case for those who voluntarily serve an Evil. In this case, it is the automatic effect. The cultist or victim becomes psychologically dependent on the approval of the Evil, eventually becoming willing to do absolutely anything the minion requests. The person might seem absolutely normal in every regard except for this, and can live and work in the normal world without drawing notice to themselves. But if ordered to by the minion they are in thrall to, such a person would murder their own families without a second thought.

4) Aberration: This is some negative twist of psyche that is probably related in a sympathetic sense to the nature of what caused you to panic. Sadism, aggression, a loss of empathy, less concern for the consequences of your actions, and so on. Any personality the adventurer already has along these lines is likely to be increased.

5) Overcompensation: You deal with the fear you experienced and your panicked reaction by overdoing some normal aspect of your daily life. You might become a workaholic, abandoning social life to lose yourself in work. Or you might start playing a lot harder, taking up extreme sports or running yourself ragged with physical training. You might not become an alcoholic, but instead of casual drinking, you can't help but get completely wasted. These extremes will eventually start to take their toll on you.

6) Personality: Choose a Personality Trait or Traits at random, and assign no more than 2 points of any fear-caused problem to each. What you are simply becomes more intense, whether they are positive traits or negative ones.

Remember that these quirks of personality do not appear full blown out of nowhere unless you *really* blow the Will roll. Failing a Will roll by 5 or more gains you a full level of a Personality in one shot, and the gamemaster can turn this into a blind panic or psychotic episode.

Failing by smaller amounts is slower, little things that tend to build up over time to really mess with the adventurer's head. Fear-based personality adjustments *can* be bought off with normal game experience. Triumphs against Evil give you some fortitude to win back against these particular personal demons. The demons that gnaw at you from within because of your own personal failings are the ones that are hard to get rid of.

Fear is a case where being Blind is a blessing. No matter how terrible something is, unless it is trying to force its true nature on you somehow, you see it as something other than it truly is, and suffer nothing worse than revulsion or nausea. A Blind person can have a polite conversation with a devil and never suspect a thing. However, if it attempts to exert its will over you, either through direct communication with you, through touching you, or using a power on you, this protective veil is broken, if only for an instant, and you have to make a normal Fear check. You may blot out the truth of what you saw afterward (traumatic amnesia), but the lingering Truth that you refuse to confront may eventually drive you mad...

If you fail a Will roll when dealing with a Fear rating, you panic. The gamemaster normally gets control of your adventurer until you are no longer confronted with what caused your fear, at which point you can make an Average(7) Will roll to "come to your senses", and maybe even steel yourself to return to the fray. If you fail this second Will roll, you are no longer part of the encounter as you cannot bear to confront it again that soon. If the situation is such that you cannot flee and *have* to fight, you do so in a less intelligent manner than normal. All your skill rolls are reduced by 2d while you are under the influence of something fearful. You claw instead of punching, fire blindly instead of aiming, use powers at full effect rather than in moderation, and so on. The Fear rating of things that adventurers are likely to encounter are below:

Creature	Fear rating:
Ghul	3
Devil, evil human	4
Vampire, atavistic Devil	5
Werewolf, Legion	6
Globboth	7
Powerful minion or demigod	9
Avatar	11
Old God	13+

Modifiers	Amount
Multiples of any	+1
Excessively violent action	+1
Adventurer knows what to expect	-1

EXAMPLE: An adventurer is tailing a vampire, who ducks into a narrow gap between buildings. Expecting trouble, the adventurer puts a hand on their weapon and follows. Coming out the other side with weapon drawn, the adventurer still has to overcome their fear as the vampire attacks. The Fear rating is 5, but the adventurer is expecting it, so it is only a 4. If the adventurer's Fate is 4 or more, they automatically overcome the extradimensional nature of the horror. If not, then they have to make a Will roll against a difficulty of 8 (double the adjusted Fear rating) in order to keep their cool.

▼ **Note** - A strong suggestion is for adventurers to use their Fate to boost their Fate by +3 or Will roll by +1d if they confront something they cannot automatically deal with. Adventurers can have a Forte on Will that applies only to give them mental strength against any sort of fear (mundane or otherwise).

Temporary Sight - When confronted by some thing that causes a Fear reaction, the Blind may temporarily gain Sight. This is regardless of whether or not they make their Will roll, and happens more often than not if the Will roll is made. The person gains a true glimpse of the world, and the vision remains. This is exceptionally dangerous to the person. Without proper training and knowledge of the Truth, they will suffer Fear from seeing anything not of this reality (even if it is not confronting them). Their low Fate means that any later confrontation with a Fear-causing entity will force a Will roll, and this will eventually cause enough personality effects to drive the person mad. The only cure is isolation from Fear-inducing phenomenon, and sometimes mood-altering drugs to dull the fear reaction, often in combination with psychotherapy to cure any mental disorders brought about by the fear. This can, over some months, restore the person to blissful Blindness, but a lingering side effect is that their Fate is usually permanently increased by 1. They are still Blind, but are now a little more sensitive to Evil phenomenon and creatures. If the person's Fate was 1d+1 to begin with, such a fear-inducing event may give them Sight (the 10A cost of raising Fate from 4 to 5 is paid for out of accumulated experience and taken out of any future gains until it is paid off. Remember that it costs 10A instead of 2A because an Attribute increase done after adventurer creation costs five times as much). This particular method of gaining Sight and joining the Brotherhood is a typical option for new adventurers. You were already sensitive, and then something happened that gave you Sight, and now you are learning to deal with it. Such an adventurer would have no Status in the Brotherhood and would have a Fate of 5, with no sorcerous abilities.

EXAMPLE - A policeman is attacked and manages to fight off and kill something that by everything he holds sacred, should not even exist. Through various connections, the Brotherhood eventually contacts him, and helps him get past the nightmares that he cannot describe. The Brotherhood smooths over any notes that might have crept into his personnel file over the matter, and sees that he is transferred to a precinct where the Captain just happens to be a Brotherhood operative. After a few months unpaid leave to take some "advanced continuing education courses", the newly-minted Brotherhood field agent returns to the police force, ready to "serve and protect" in a whole new way.

The Sight can be enhanced or suppressed by artificial means. It is far easier to suppress it, since that is the direction most minds already want to go. Modern pharmaceuticals can be made into custom cocktails to help inhibit a particular person's Sight with minimal side effects. Most prescription anti-psychotic drugs will have this effect, lowering Fate (for Sight purposes) by 1 or 2 points while the person is under their influence. In borderline cases of the Sight, this is enough to dull the psychic senses back to a level where a person can safely deny the Truth and actually believe in the shared illusion that the Blind call reality. However, this will not work for one whose Fate is 1d+2 or more. If a truly Sighted person cannot hold onto their sanity, the usual option is both drugs and a psychiatric facility, preferably one vetted by the Brotherhood so that none of the doctors, staff or other residents are other than they appear to be (it wouldn't do your marginal sanity any good if your psychiatrist was a devil...).

Many of the drugs that have hallucinogenic, mood alteration or inhibition lowering effects will increase Fate by 1 or 2 points. This can make a Blind person marginally Sighted, and how this affects them really depends on how strong their grip on sanity is, and how much of the Truth they see while Sighted. Of course, these drugs also do have other effects. A hallucinogen might let you see glimpses of the Truth, but it will also show you things that aren't there at all, and you have no way to know which is which. More than anything else, this temporary granting of Sight is what worries the government, and this is why governments crack down so hard on certain drugs, while contradictorily allowing or encouraging substances like alcohol, caffeine or nicotine, which have no effect on Fate.

Both the boosting and lowering of Fate through drugs is a temporary measure. The effects wear off when the drugs do. The tabloid reporter who sees things when they are high needs to stay high to get the stories. The traumatized cop who has become habituated to Sight-deadening tranquilizers starts having breakthrough glimpses of the Truth unless he ups the dosage.

Last, there are meditative techniques that can be used to dull the Sight or "open the third eye". One proficient at achieving either state can raise or lower their Fate by 1d while in that state (count it as an Advanced Skill from **EABA**). These altered mental states are fragile and easily disrupted, but they are a means for a person to get a temporary boost (or respite) on their psychic senses.

Blindness and belief - The vast majority of the world is Blind. This is not a *physical* blindness, but a collective, self-induced *psychic* blindness. It is not that our distant ancestors were foolish and ignorant to believe in magic and mythical monsters. Magic and Monsters existed then, and still do. But now, we simply choose not to see them. We have for so long denied the existence of Evil in ourselves that we have lost the ability to see it around us as well. When once all men were powerful sorcerors, we have now mostly bred ourselves into helpless Blindness. But even though we are Blind, we are not completely ignorant of the world's darker truths. Subconsciously, we seek to penetrate the veil over our conscious mind, to try to know that which is unknowable. For some, this manifests as religious faith, the belief in supernatural powers beyond sight, whose existence can only be accepted on faith. Others believe in UFO's and extra-terrestrial intelligences. Some delve into sub-cultures glorifying vampires and other dark creatures of legend, and others harbor irrational fascination with urban legends and reports of odd phenomenon. And none of these people realize that they are acting out beliefs based on things they have *actually* seen, but which their conscious minds could not accept. Others go too far in the other direction, assuming there is no such thing as Good or Evil, and that everything in the universe can be explained by science. By only accepting what they can Blindly measure, they deny the Truths that surround them and discount as pseudo-science those things they cannot explain.

In addition to not seeing Evil for what it is in the world around us, the Blindness causes us to accept beliefs that we really *should* ask serious questions about. For instance, interpretations of the Bible give a date for the creation of Man that is a scant several thousand years ago, despite the plentiful archaeological evidence of far older human existence. On the other hand, the Hindu Puranas say that we are in a cosmic cycle that has been going on for about the last four million years, yet no one asks what happened to the evidence of these previous ages when giants walked the Earth and men lived for thousands of years. Simply asking these questions might force us to face things we would rather be Blind to, so the questions remain unasked, and we might even become hostile to those who dare to ask them, or cringe behind a shield of "faith" or "science" that lets us ignore obvious and verifiable facts.

▼ **MINIONS OF EVIL** - Man is not alone in this world. There are many Evils that try to ooze through the cracks in the Prison, some for themselves, others at the behest of greater powers. But there are also other beings that have been on this earth nearly as long as man.

People - First and foremost. Humans were foot soldiers in the war of Good vs. Evil, after all. We each have a little Evil in us, and it is so easy to encourage it. We can be motivated by fear, greed, lust, ambition, pride and a host of other emotions and drives. We can do things knowing they are wrong, but convince ourselves we are doing them for a higher cause. If nothing else, it is so easy to look the other way and let someone else do the dirty work, piously claiming innocence, when in reality you know the Evil you are complicit to by your silence and inaction.



Corrupted Human

Strength: 2d+1
 Agility: 2d+2
 Awareness: 2d+1
 Will: 2d+2
 Health: 2d+2
 Fate: 1d+2

Possible skills:

Sorceries(2): +1d
 Weapon: +1d

Possible abilities:

+1 Hit bracket

In **Code:Black**, humans are the most common foot soldiers for Evil, the weakest, but in some ways the most difficult to deal with. The Blind see humans as humans after all, which means they can be the 'victims' of Brotherhood violence, resulting in arrests or lawsuits involving Brotherhood operatives. In the worst case, they are bodies to be disposed of, reasons for covers stories and alibis, and sources of angry relatives or persistently investigating Blind authorities. In the best case, they are thugs who are willingly complicit in Evil activities for money or power, or who are pawns of other Evils. The bodyguards for the Evil sorcerer might have morally questionable backgrounds, but they probably do not know the depths of depravity their employer has sunk to. 🗡️ They just collect a paycheck, and crack heads and look the other way on occasion. *Are they bad?* Certainly. *Are they Evil?* Probably not.

🗡️ *End of Days*(1999), Universal Pictures

Evil humans are another matter. Beyond any redemption, the Brotherhood sees their removal as the only option. This usually requires authorization by higher-ups, if only because proper cover stories have to be ready to protect Brotherhood members assigned to the task. Extenuating circumstances like self-defense are of course acceptable, but it can get sticky if an Evil human attacker was not already known to the Brotherhood (there's no way to tell if a human corpse was Evil or not). Genuinely Evil humans are sometimes difficult for the Blind justice system to deal with. If they know the right Sorcery, no prison can hold them. Some Evil humans have let themselves be caught and imprisoned by Blind authorities rather than get caught by the Brotherhood, simply because it is hard for the Brotherhood to get at someone in a maximum security facility. On the other hand, once protected by security systems, walls and armed guards, the prisoner has as much time as they need to develop the powers they need to escape and get revenge...

Unless a human has completely succumbed to Evil, they are theoretically redeemable. Some Brotherhood members are in fact converts, people who simply chose not to look too closely at the blood on their paychecks, but after Brotherhood action, discovered the horror they were a part of and joined the Brotherhood as a form of self-imposed atonement. Because killing a person extinguishes any spark of Good that person had, the Brotherhood has a strict 'no kill' policy on non-Evil humans. This is *preferably* a 'no permanent maiming or disability' policy, but a team leader can authorize any force needed to accomplish a mission (and will personally take the blame if things go south). Beatings, the occasional broken bones, some mace to the face, this is all par for the course. If there are dedicated humans you *have* to get through to reach an objective, you *have* to use enough force to get through them. If you are attacked, an appropriate level of self-defense is *always* acceptable. The key term is 'appropriate level'. If someone you outweigh by 25 kilos takes a swing at you, drawing a gun and emptying the clip into to them is *not* an appropriate level of response. Any incident with even a hint of unprovoked or excessive force on humans, especially innocents, will result in a full and thorough Brotherhood investigation. Excessive use of force or harm to innocents can result in temporary or permanent reassignment to non-confrontational Brotherhood jobs, loss of rank or denial of promotion, or even being turned over to the Blind justice system for ordinary prosecution for the crimes.

In the absolute worst cases, the Brotherhood will execute its own if they become Evil or make threats against Brotherhood operational security. The Blind might not believe the nature of the Brotherhood, but if they really try and have the assistance of an insider, they can follow paper trails and connect the dots on the mundane and off-illegal activities of the Brotherhood. The unspoken threat of ultimate sanction plus the knowledge that the government won't protect them is usually enough for any conventionally prosecuted Brotherhood member to maintain their silence on the nature of their employer. For their part, the Brotherhood does not abandon its incarcerated members, regardless of how or why they are in jail. If it is justified incarceration, it is seen as a form of penance. The felon's family members are not left to want, visitations are allowed when at all possible, education opportunities are varied, and so on. It's still no fun by any means, but they don't just throw you in a hole and forget about you.

In the event of *justified* injury or death of humans dealing with Evil, there are a number of pre-packaged cover stories available, which when used in combination with Brotherhood personnel in government positions, usually deflect any problems. Because Brotherhood personnel can have recurring problems of this kind, cover stories usually keep the Brotherhood member as far from the scene of the violence as possible. Killing someone in self-defense is a plausible story *once*, but having to act in self-defense six times in six months is going to look suspicious. So, there are stories involving animal attacks, muggings, firearms accidents, auto thefts, drive-by shootings, and so on, something for every sort of injury or property damage adventurers might need to avoid having too much scrutiny of.

The normal Fear reaction to Evil humans is terror and panic, based on a self-preservation instinct to get away from something that is seen as exceptionally dangerous.

▼ **Note** - The stats shown for various Evils are for the average "man on the street" specimens. Individuals can easily be more powerful than this (say up to +1d in one or more stats and skills), with exceptional individuals being better in most or all categories and having varying levels of gifts or powers. The skills and abilities are just guidelines of things that are fairly likely or representative. Evils, especially the longer-lived ones, will have skill sets that far exceed those of the adventurers.

Ghuls - Ghuls are almost as old as mankind. It is rumored that men and ghuls escaped the Prison together, and coexisted peacefully for a time. However, while humanity strove in some way to be worthy of the label Good, ghuls simply remained a very lesser Evil and gradually became genuinely neutral, lacking any spark of Good, but also have no Evil save what they chose to encourage. Others say that ghuls are a manifestation of human Evil, doppelgangers living in the shadow of humanity's accomplishments, existing so long that they have become independent living entities.

Ghul

Strength: 2d+1
Agility: 2d+1
Awareness: 2d+1
Will: 2d+0
Health: 2d+1
Fate: 1d+2

Likely skills:

Area knowledge: +0d
Scrounging: +1d
Brawling: +1d



In any case, ghuls *do* live in the shadow of humanity, shunning the light and direct interaction with human civilization. They are carrion eaters who subsist entirely on the leavings of urban populations, and generally do not molest or interact much with the Blind, who perceive them only as vagrants or ethnic outsiders of some kind, whatever ethnicity the Blind collectively think the Ghuls *should* be. Oddly enough, in time, these "ethnic enclaves" tend to draw actual members of that ethnicity, who were seeking places they thought would be more familiar and accommodating. As a result, the oldest of these enclaves tend to have a mixed population of Ghul and human, some hybrids, and a secret subculture that outsiders are completely unaware of and which is hidden even from many who have spent their whole lives there. *Who knows what secrets lurk in the heart of Chinatown or Little Odessa?*

▼ **Note** - Ghuls and other non-humans that exist and mingle with human society are a tiny minority of the overall population, maybe one per thousand humans. But in a city of a million, this is still enough for enclaves of several hundred ghul and a few hundred devils. In general, they reproduce in barely sufficient numbers to offset their losses, and in the past few centuries they have not kept up with the growth rate of the human population.

Ghuls are not Good, but neither are they truly Evil. They are merely selfish. They interact with Good and Evil as it suits them, whichever gives them advantage at a given place and time. *This is their nature.* Their Fear rating is low, less than that caused by the most violent of human atrocities. Ghuls look more or less human, but certain human concepts and feelings simply do not exist for them. They have no word for loyalty to anything outside one's immediate family, and the concept of "trust" is alien to them. They can exploit it in dealing with humans, but do not actually understand it. They have no word for "friend", but many words for "acquaintance". Their outlook on life is a sort of fatalistic selfishness, a desire to get ahead that is balanced by a realistic assessment and recognition of their potential to do so. Once a ghul has reached a point in life that they think is as high as they can go, they usually stop striving to reach higher, seeing it as a waste of time. They put any effort saved towards keeping subordinate ghul from taking their place. However, ghuls that have not reached their perceived potential will strive aggressively to dethrone those in higher positions.

Ghuls believe what they can verify. Everything else is suspect.

Ghul lifespans are somewhat longer than humans. They are more resistant to disease, and have an inborn Weakness on Fate in regard to the use of Sorcery. They are *not* clean beings. Their resistance to disease and the nature of their diet simply means that hygiene is not a major concern. Within these limits, ghul can be quite civilized. They accumulate wealth, just like humans. More and more are becoming educated through use of the Internet, which doesn't care if you are human or not (the old method was becoming a night janitor at a school or university). There are even ghul districts in cities, which the Blind see as ethnic enclaves for some group that no one much cares for, and therefore tends not to visit. Some subsidized apartment complexes are almost entirely ghul occupied, and the Blind simply have a bias because of the smell and because "those kind of people" live there. Ghuls will be more highly represented in human jobs that most humans have no attraction to, jobs associated with garbage, waste or death, things that can repel many humans, but which have no physical or emotional effect on ghuls.

The Brotherhood has no official position on ghuls. When they commit mundane crimes, by and large they are left to the Blind justice system. Ghuls are an information resource at best, and selfish servants of Evil at worst. They may never be Good, but they are never truly Evil either.

Ghul abilities

Blessing: -2d effect from toxins or diseases

Blessing: 50% increased lifespan

Toughness: +1 hit bracket

Ghul liabilities

Curse: +1d (or +3) difficulty in social interactions because of body odor

Weakness: -1d on Fate for use of Sorcery

The Fear reaction to ghuls is normally one of disgust, an amplified reaction to a ghul's smell and not-quite human appearance. Retching, gagging and a desire to get some fresh air are common.

Vampires - Vampires are unaligned lesser Evils. Not associated with any of the Old Gods except as a matter of mutual convenience, they are parasites on humanity. No one is exactly sure how or when the first vampires manifested into this world, but it seems clear that it was a long time ago and that the particular crack in the Prison they used has been thoroughly spackled over. The best guess of the Brotherhood is that the first vampires were spiritual abominations pulled through cracks in the Prison during the Eeon War against the sorceror-kings some several thousand years ago, and then cursed permanently into human form by mortal adepts in order to make them vulnerable. As with most things of this age, the full knowledge of what happened is lost even to the Brotherhood, and if any of the original vampires remain from that ancient time, they haven't written any histories about it.

Vampires refer to themselves as the Neomen ("new men"), though the oldest ones use archaic terms that translate more accurately as "true men". They see themselves as the top of the food chain, and have a deep resentment that their "cattle" would dare to contest that claim. However, the exact attitudes of a vampire depend on who they were in life, and the nature of the spirit that transformed them into unlife. Some are less Evil than others. They tend to be politically conservative and supportive of "rule by strength".



Vampire

Strength: 3d+1
 Agility: 3d+1
 Awareness: 2d+1
 Will: 2d+2
 Health: 3d+1
 Fate: 2d+0

Likely skills:

Area knowledge: +0d
 Brawling: +1d
 Melee weapon: +1d
 Running: +0d

A vampire's true physical appearance is close to the traditional depiction of a nosferatu. Greyish skin, elongated skull, long clawed fingers, the distortion of a human skin stretched out over a mutated skeleton. The Fear reaction people have to a vampire is based on the recognition of its non-human nature and temporary shattering of their Blindness. Some form of psychological trauma appropriate to the situation is normal. Rather than flee in terror, some people just break down and giggle incoherently. To contrast this, a vampire's appearance to the Blind is that of someone attractive and fit, whose apparently physical age matches that of the vampire while they were still human.

With their means of entry from the Prison now sealed, vampires only spread through the creation of new vampires by the ones already here. This though the physical death of a human victim and the corpse's reanimation with the lingering soul of some vampire that is lesser than the one that created it. That is, the Fate of a new vampire has to be at least 1d less than that of the vampire pulling it through into this world. The process temporarily weakens the vampire, and is not done casually. First, because it does weaken the vampire for several days, and second, because it increases the number of vampires in an area, which draws more attention to an Evil that is for now, just barely off the Brotherhood's "shoot on sight" list.

Vampires subsist on blood and submission. The best submission is voluntary, but that from conquest is just as good. The blood can be from anything, but without emotional content, it is "empty calories" and the vampire will eventually suffer from the psychic equivalent of malnutrition.

Vampires have certain advantages and liabilities. Vampires are preternaturally fast and strong, and can take quite a bit of punishment before expiring (and undergoing a very rapid form of decomposition appropriate to the age of their body). On the other hand, most vampires *do* take damage from the light of the actual sun. This is a metaphysical thing, and is not a mere matter of the spectrum of light used or wearing lots of SPF100 sunblock. Vampires *must* avoid the light of the sun, or they will burn to ash in a matter of minutes. They have no revulsion of garlic or fear of "holy symbols", but do have trouble approaching that which has a strong spark of genuine Good, something that is possible even in the Blind (but very rare). Vampires are not technically alive by most measurements. Their body temperature is room temperature, and while they can breathe, have a heartbeat and blood pressure, these are *voluntary* functions. An advantage of their body temperature is that with a little preparation they are invisible to thermal imagers (their body is the same temperature as their surroundings). On the other hand, it is a liability in cold climates, as the vampire can freeze solid with no body heat to keep them warm (vampires can consume excessive amounts of alcohol to act as anti-freeze, but this also makes them slightly flammable!). Freezing a vampire solid does not kill them, it simply puts them in a state of suspended animation. It will destroy the usefulness of any blood they have consumed, so a freshly thawed vampire is a very hungry vampire...

The records of the Brotherhood show that either very old or very powerful vampires (usually but not always the same thing) are capable of moving about in daylight, though they are noticeably weakened by it. No such vampires are known to exist at the moment, but they could just be lying low or choosing not to reveal that ability. It is not known if this is a characteristic that comes from raw power, or if it was an ability that only the oldest vampires have, the ones closest to the source of their original power.

A vampire has as one of its Gifted abilities, a sorcery-like effect. When it has physically and psychically drained a victim, the vampire can store this energy (up to their Health) as a sort of battery. This can be used to regenerate a lethal Hit to a non-lethal one, or a non-lethal one to no damage at all. Each use takes one turn per Hit converted.

EXAMPLE: By using 4 points from this reserve, a vampire could in 4 seconds, turn 2 lethal Hits into no damage at all.

Vampires can be sorcerors, but it seems most of a vampire's psychic energy is devoted to their physical advantages, and even the most powerful vampires are only mediocre sorcerors. Most do not even bother trying to learn the arcane arts. On the other hand, through their long experience in this world, vampires can become quite proficient in the use of technology and technological weapons. A vampire has no problem at all with carrying a pistol and wearing a bulletproof vest.

Vampires can physically do anything a human can, but there are very few vampire/human hybrids out there. It is *possible*, but the confluence of conditions required is extremely rare.

Vampires have no redeeming qualities in the eyes of the Brotherhood, and simply being a vampire is should be sufficient reason to get shot by any member of the Brotherhood that spots you. Vampires continue to exist, however. First, they are good at hiding, through long experience at being hunted. Second, they are excellent at manipulating the Blind. A member of the Brotherhood might recognize a vampire on the street, but to the Blind, the vampire is just another person, and if a member of the Brotherhood were to kill the vampire in plain sight, it would appear as cold-blooded murder, and the Blind justice system would treat it as such (and the Brotherhood would be hard-pressed to get a member off the hook for such a "crime").

So, vampires continue to survive by hiding, by hiding in plain sight,[✦] and accumulating "favors" by coming up with information the Brotherhood thinks is valuable enough to bargain for. There is no love lost between the two, and what truces exist are fragile ones at best. The normal relationship is that any vampires who kill or breed, get killed,[✦] otherwise the Brotherhood leaves them alone (and puts them on the "we'll get to you eventually" list).

[✦] From *Dusk 'til Dawn* (1996), Miramax Films
[✦] *Nochnoy Dozor* (2004), Fox Searchlight Pictures

Vampires who take up employment with some other Evil lose the protection of this truce, and the Brotherhood usually notifies whichever vampire claims to lead in an area if one of its "subjects" has lost its protection. A war between the Brotherhood and vampires would be bloody on both sides, so some formal effort is made to keep the peace. Neither side likes the arrangement, but it works most of the time.

Vampire abilities

Blessing: -1d damage from physical attacks

Blessing: Does not age or need to breathe

Toughness: +2 increased hit brackets

Larger than Life: On Agility & skills

Strength: +3 more than normal

Agility: +3 more than normal

Health: +3 more than normal

Gifted: Able to see in the dark

Gifted: Regeneration from blood feeding

Vampire liabilities

Curse: 1d lethal damage from exposure to sunlight (per time level)

Curse: 1d lethal damage from exposure to Good (per time level)

Curse: All Attributes reduced by 1d during the day.

Weakness: -2d on Fate for sorcery

▼ **Note** - Vampires have been done to death (or undeath) in books, movies, pop culture and rpgs. We're not going to condense thousands of pages and hours of vampire-related material into our own particular books that simply re-hash their nature, society, powers and whatnot. Vampires are *not* the focus of a **Code:Black** campaign. When compared to the greater Evils out there, **Code:Black** vampires are small fry, enforcers and thugs with pretensions of grandeur. Players just need to remember that an average vampire is more than a match for a skilled human in melee, can survive having a 9mm clip emptied into it at point blank range, and if they put their minds to it, can outshoot the best human marksmen or trounce the best human fencer. They are tough hombres in any sort of fight, and since they are irredeemably Evil, there is never any moral fallout for killing one. This makes them good foes, and their general smarts and toughness also gives players reason to try and deal with any vampire problems through negotiation rather than starting a war between vampires and the Brotherhood. The adventurers may deal with a lot of vampires, but in the end they are simply servants of a greater master.

Werewolves - Werewolves are for all practical purposes a form of contagious possession by Evil, linked to the phase of the moon. Other cracks in the Prison also widen slightly based on astronomical phenomenon, and the reasons for this are also unknown. In any case, regardless of who or what they might be the rest of the time, for a few days each month, the victim is possessed, transformed by Evil into a bestial killing machine that is in complete thrall to rage, hunger and the need to hunt and kill. Werewolves are the only known case where a person can be Evil part of the time and then revert to a non-Evil state.

Werewolves can transmit their "malady" by critically injuring a victim, and of course, having that victim survive somehow. Werewolves never *try* to create new werewolves, the process is entirely accidental. A survivor of a critical wound from a werewolf will heal from their wounds far faster and cleaner than would be expected, and over the next few months will slowly transform more and more at each full moon. At first, it may simply be an increased irritability and level of hunger, but it will inevitably become a physical transformation and complete subsuming of the sentient and rational to the bestial and instinctual.

Werewolf

Strength: 4d+0
Agility: 2d+1
Awareness: 2d+1
Will: 3d+2
Health: 4d+0
Fate: 2d+1

Likely skills:

Brawling: +1d
Running: +0d
Tracking: +1d



Werewolves are at heart human, but the nature of what they become each month can swing them over to Evil as a full-time vocation. Others can struggle with this monthly loss of their humanity, locking themselves up, or living in remote areas where they do not have to interact with people. Werewolves in human form can have children. These hybrids are not subject to the vagaries of the moon. They heal faster than normal people, but have a somewhat increased level of aggression and temper, and are allergic to (but not seriously damaged by) silver. They may also be a little more hirsute than normal and the Blind may feel slightly uncomfortable around them.

Weres cannot heal with the extreme speed of a fully-fed vampire, but are tougher in the long run. They are harder to hurt, and take more damage without feeling it. And if they survive a near-fatal encounter, they will heal up that damage much faster than a normal person would. Even in non-Evil form, weres are physically superior to most humans. Weres do not dominate the fields of professional athletics simply because many of the major events "just happen" to be scheduled near the full moon.

And the term "werewolf" is a misnomer. There is certainly a "were-" part, but the form to which the person changes to is not a wolf. That is just a crude approximation, what a person with marginal Sight might glimpse and be able to communicate to others. A "werewolf" has four legs, a head and fur, but that is as far as the similarity goes. It can also walk on two legs and use its front legs as clawing weapons. It has cunning, but no intelligence. It can remember and cleverly avoid things that it knows can hurt it, but it cannot speak or use tools.

The Brotherhood does not actively hunt weres unless it is clear that the person has succumbed to or embraced Evil. Otherwise, they seek to capture and contain the were. There is no known "cure" for being a were, but a person who wants to be helped can be given assistance in coping and isolating themselves during their monthly "monstral cycle". Some werewolves even work for the Brotherhood in research or other areas that do not require them to travel or otherwise be away from their monthly sanctuary (adventurers *cannot* be full weres).

Were abilities

Blessing: -2d from physical attacks
Toughness: +2 increased hit brackets
Forte on Health: Endurance
Forte on Awareness: Keen senses
Strength, Health, Will: +5 more than normal

Were liabilities

Curse: 1d lethal damage from silver weapons
Weakness on Awareness: Animal instincts
Weakness on Will: Aggressive
Weakness on Agility: No tool use

A were's Fear reaction is an unnaturally strong version of the reaction you would get if confronted with a powerful wild animal, like opening the door and seeing an enraged grizzly bear. Add the fact that a werewolf is not any creature of *this* world for icing on the cake. There are rare were-like creatures that retain their human intellect in animal form, but they have mostly been hunted to extinction. ❖

Globboths - Sentient blobs that subsist on fresh meat for physical sustenance, and the psychic emanations of the dying for spiritual sustenance. As Evil creatures, they have no problem creating situations that combine the two. Brotherhood field operatives refer to them as 'globs', and they are frightening even to experienced operatives.

Globboths ooze through cracks in the Prison, able to metaphysically shift forms much as they can change their physical structure. Globboths are extremely formidable in a physical sense, and are the nastiest things a Brotherhood operative ever hopes to never deal with (fat chance of that). Fortunately, what they gain in toughness, they lack in intellect. They can be cunning and can follow detailed instructions, but have no creativity and little ability to deal with the unexpected. As a result, a physically superior globboth will often end up under the control of a human or lesser minion of Evil, giving Evil both strength on the ground and a mind capable of using that strength to best effect. Globboths are one of the most powerful minions of the group of Old Gods known as the Horrors. They are probably the most physically formidable, though other minions of the Horrors may be more clever or arcanelly skilled.

Globboths in their natural state are jellyfish-like blobs having numerous toothed pseudopods, and would be perceived by the Blind as something they would normally avoid, like a heap of rotting garbage, a large animal carcass or something else of similar size and repulsive nature. However, a globboth can manipulate itself into a humanoid shape, which the Blind would see as a large and unpleasant person of some kind. In this way, the Globboth can move about more freely to do its master's bidding. Note though, that while globboths are sentient, they are generally not experienced. A humanoid globboth will still not know how to drive a car, probably cannot read or write, and may not even be able to tell different denominations of money apart.

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Globboth

Strength: 4d+1
 Agility: 2d+0
 Awareness: 2d+1
 Will: 2d+0
 Health: 3d+1
 Fate: 2d+2

Likely skills:

Brawling: +1d
 Throwing: +1d
 Sorcery(1): +1d

Globboths are extremely hard to kill with puncturing attacks (including gunfire), but are affected normally by cutting, explosions, fire and cold. Projectile weapons firing incendiary rounds reduce a globboth's Blessing to -3d instead of -4d. No Brotherhood member in his right mind would take on a globboth without backup, and only in rare cases would more than one be encountered. In addition to superhuman strength, globboths tend to accumulate (or seek out) nasty sharp things to incorporate into their bodies. Not only does this give them an edge in melee combat (count punch damage as lethal), they can hurl these jagged bits with enough force to penetrate body armor and shatter bones and skulls (Strength minus 1d lethal damage, Accuracy of 0). The only dubious advantage a victim of such an attack has is that the globboth usually aims to maim, so they can come back and savor your death later.

Globboth abilities

Blessing: -4d damage from all but cutting, fire and chemical attacks.
 Toughness: +3 hit brackets
 Strength: +6 more than normal
 Agility: -1 less than normal
 Health: +3 more than normal

Globboth liabilities

Weakness: on Health for movement
 Weakness: on Awareness for thinking
 Size: -2 difficulty to hit

Globboths inspire Fear from their size and hideous appearance, but mostly from the waves of inhuman cruelty that wash over their prospective victims, often forcing the conscious mind into a catatonic shutdown. Others simply scream in terror until their vocal cords rupture, or claw at their eyes to avoid seeing the horror.

Devils - Not as common as ghuls, devils still exist in enough numbers that they are endemic. As far as Evil goes, they qualify, but devils can range from an atavistic, primal Evil to a more enlightened and refined sort of Evil. The latter manifests as a sort of educated, ambitious selfishness and a complete lack of ethics. Many devils that interact with people tend to do so as lawyers and politicians, though some so-called investigative journalists and a lot of paparazzi, bureaucrats, private detectives, talent agents and record company executives are also somewhat tolerable devils. The more enlightened devils are a tolerable Evil mainly because they are so selfish. They don't want to see any *larger* Evils get loose, simply because it would make things more difficult for *them*, and they enjoy their cozy lives in the outside universe. Devils are pathologically deceitful. They can tell the truth if they want to, but it is in their nature to attempt to confuse the issue, hide information or mix truth and lies so that it is difficult to separate one from the other.

The fact that devils have integrated themselves so well into human society makes them hard to get rid of, and while the Blind may have a certain inherent uneasiness around them, they are "seen" as human. Devils can marry and procreate, both within their own kind, and less often with humans.



Devil

Strength: 2d+2
 Agility: 2d+2
 Awareness: 2d+1
 Will: 2d+0
 Health: 3d+1
 Fate: 2d+0

Likely skills:

Profession: +2d
 Sorcery(1): +1d

Devils are not all that fearsome, no more than the worst humans. Perhaps they are closer to us than we would like to admit. The nature of their Fear is partially their appearance, and partially the recognition that there is no Good in them. People are afraid that they *could* become like Devils. A devil's true form is often close to the stereotyped devil, reddish skin, horns of some type, possibly cloven feet, etc. Atavistic devils are simply more exaggerated versions of normal devils.

To the Blind, devils are often seen as perfectly respectable looking members of the profession they are part of, and generally exude an aura of disdain for the concerns of others.

Devils vary in the sorts of unusual abilities they can have, and these vary with a devil's "species" in the same way that humans have different color eyes, skin or hair. Some are strong, some have exceptionally keen senses, others have some refined paranormal sense, like an ability to read auras. A human-devil hybrid is not necessarily Evil, but will tend that way. They may have a lesser version of the parent devil's abilities, but they generally suffer +2 difficulty on all temptation effects related to their Personality.

The atavistic devils are more like what people think of when you use the term. Ruled by emotion and primal drives, they may be intelligent and cunning, but cannot operate within human society for more than the briefest of periods without something going awry. These sort are fair game for the Brotherhood to take down, and this is a fairly common occurrence. Unless of course the devil has money and can get a lawyer devil to entrench him in the human legal system before Brotherhood operatives put a few dozen bullets into him (a lifetime in a human jail beats the same amount of time spent in the Prison). New devils are always appearing whenever temporary cracks in the Prison occur, and have to be banished. On occasion, one takes the place of human soul and is born into human form. Less physically powerful, these are often devils who were banished once before, and have some experience with the world of men. They hide their true nature for as long as possible, but tend towards atavism as they get older, often with significant sorcerous power. They are often tasked with a particular job by some greater Evil, usually but not always involving helping that Evil to manifest in this world or otherwise increase its power.

Devil abilities

Toughness: +1 hit brackets
 Strength: +1 more than normal
 Agility: +1 more than normal
 Larger than Life: On Awareness & skills
 Gifted: Ability to read emotional states
 using Fate as an Awareness roll
 Gifted: Various useful abilities

Devil liabilities

Weakness: Subject to temptations
 Weakness: Pathological liar

Legions - Legions are related to demons, but have no true physical form. Rather, they become one with a human host. The combination is stronger, smarter and tougher than a human should be (+1d on Strength, Awareness and Health), but is not as formidable as a vampire or werewolf. However, the nature and vileness of the possession give legions a similar level of Fear as vampires or weres. The victim is possessed in the classic sense, often with no control over their actions, or sometimes able to act normally, but suffers from "blackouts" during which they are unaware of what is happening.

Legions can be banished by the death of their host, if the legion itself can be killed somehow (it has 3 Hits), or it can be banished with the proper rituals.☛ These rituals are a use of sorcery, and thus not without risk, and of course convincing either the legion or a currently uncontrolled host to submit to the process is problematic. A legion can also be persuaded to leave its host voluntarily, but this is uncommon. In all cases it cannot re-enter this world for a great while, and since legions are Evil, why should they do something nice like let the host live?

Legions can only possess someone whose soul and ties to this world have been weakened by fear, doubt or psychological trauma, and have to be summoned by someone who knows the true name of the legion. That means someone from *this* side is *always* involved. Quite often, the host of a legion is an innocent, at least to begin with. For the Brotherhood, simply killing the host is not an option. At least not the *first* option. If for no other reason, legions are usually summoned for a purpose other than casual mayhem. Finding out *why* a particular person is possessed and the ultimate goal of the summoner is often more important than banishing the legion, another of those painful moral choices Brotherhood agents are called on to make.

Legion abilities

Blessing: -4d damage from all attacks
Gifted: Able to possess weakened souls

Legions have no physical form, so their Fear reaction is based on a hyperaccentuated perception of their host's characteristics. A host with blood on them might appear to be drenched in gore, one with body odor or bad breath might look covered with maggots or reeking of the grave, bad teeth become jagged fangs, and so on. The response is as much from surprise as anything else, and is often just a mad scrambling to put some distance between you and the legion. In addition to normal legions, there is also another, legion-like Evil. Related, but different in the way they operate.

☛ *The Exorcist*(1973), Warner Bros. Pictures

The Brotherhood calls them *fasci*, derived from the Latin root referring to a bundle. Fasci are a hive intelligence that typically possesses a large number of similar, primitive lifeforms, typically insects. In urban areas, roaches, in rural areas, wasps, bees, grasshoppers, ants or locusts. Fasci typically take on humanoid form and act with human or near-human intelligence. Fasci cannot or do not use tools, but can conceal themselves *somewhat* by wearing clothing. They are *not* physically strong. Fasci are not so much insects working together as insects working in formation. While the insects are clinging to each other, the total strength of a fasci is barely sufficient to support the weight of clothing on its structure and its manual dexterity is on par with a person wearing mittens. Instead of using brute force, a fasci typically swarms a victim, smothering it, or even sending insects down a victim's throat to suffocate it from within. If a fasci is made of stinging or biting insects, these attacks can be used as well. For instance, parts of the southern United States have had to deal with fasci made of fire ants. A fasci replenishes the energy it needs to stay in this world by siphoning off part of the dying life force and fear of its victims, so if simply trying to feed, it will prolong the process as long as possible.

▼ **Note** - For simplicity, assume fasci which make a successful Brawling attack envelop their target and do 1 non-lethal Hit if there is an opening by which it can get under clothing or into the mouth or nose. Armor does not protect against this. Once a target is enveloped, the only way to get free of the fasci is to kill it or make it disengage by confronting it with force it is vulnerable to.



Fasci have whatever mobility the component insects do, so if the insects can fly, so can the fasci. A fasci has to remain in "one piece" to function, but can eventually ooze itself through any hole a single insect can fit through.

Fascii

Strength: 0d+1
Agility: 1d+0
Awareness: 2d+0
Will: 2d+0
Health: 2d+1
Fate: 2d+0

Likely skills:

Brawling(envelop): +1d

Fasci are nearly invulnerable to physical attack (-4d effect from bullets, blades, arrows and most other point, edge or crush types of attack). The loss of a few dozen component insects is negligible, and attacks or attempts to grab or hold it will pass through the fasci with no more resistance than passing through a cloud of bugs. However, fasci take normal damage from fire, cold, explosions, pesticides, and lack of air. In fact, anything that *can* damage a fasci is counted as lethal damage. Since fasci only have intelligence if its components are clustered, anything that separates it into two or more pieces causes it to rapidly lose attributes until the pieces can rejoin. Each splitting drops all its Attributes by 3 and halves the Hits of that piece, and any piece of less than one-quarter human size immediately dissolves into a cloud of its component insects and that aspect of the fasci is effectively banished. This is why explosions are so devastating to a fasci, as it tends to blow it completely apart beyond hope of reorganization. A fasci normally only has 9 Hits, so something like a stun grenade going off next to one can obliterate it. Most fasci have no real experience with explosive weapons, but they do know fire and generally fear/avoid it at an instinctive level.

Fasci abilities

Blessing: -4d damage from physical attacks

Curse: All damage done is lethal

Gifted: Able to possess groups of insects

Fasci occasionally slip through cracks in the Prison on their own, but are mostly summoned beings. The ritual sorcery to summon one is not terribly hard to find if you know what you are looking for. In addition, fasci are not truly unique entities, so banishing one back to the Prison is a lot more temporary than for other Evils (years instead of decades). There are almost always enough available "components" of a fasci for at least one of the dozens or hundreds of ritual sorcery "names" to latch onto something. Quite often, the ritual description is found by someone who lucked upon a long-forgotten page in an antique book or library collection. It eventually finds its way into the hands of someone who knows what it is, and then sells it to the highest bidder. A sorcerer can command a summoned fasci to some degree, and if the fasci is not controlled, the first thing it usually does is kill the one who summoned it. After that, it will usually just find a place to hide, where it can prey on victims with little chance of damage or retribution. Run-down urban areas with lots of homeless or otherwise easily "disappeared" people are typical.

The Old Gods - All of these creatures, even globboths, are fairly small fry in terms of Evil. What lurks inside the Prison and seeks eternally to escape is the greater Evils. The greater Evils consider themselves gods, and before they were originally banished and imprisoned, they probably were. Alien in ways that even the Sighted cannot begin to fathom, these entities seek only to escape from the Prison and to spread across the universe. However, their metaphysical bulk has no hope of getting through the miniscule cracks in the Prison, so they can only manifest in this universe as tiny fragments of their true power. However, this is still enough to be *extremely* dangerous, and any amount they can wedge through gives them leverage to widen that crack into reality.

Each particular Old God has its own *modus operandi* and subset of minions to do its bidding. For instance, the particular alien "pantheon" known to the Brotherhood as the Horrors are a collection of beings whose reasoning is unfathomable and whose form is difficult for even the Sighted to comprehend. Their only common characteristic is the need to feed on the suffering and mental anguish of the living (or dying). Globboths are one of their many types of minions.

On the other hand, the Shivas are an Evil that is far more understandable. It is thought that humans were once minions of the Shivas, and we share many characteristics. Shivas have a self-image that is largely human, and are motivated by the same things that humans are, just to a godlike degree of excess. Shivas want to spread their Evil as much as any other entity, but they also crave and need the worship of lesser beings, whom they see and use as pawns. They take out their animosities among themselves by proxy, turning groups of their minions and worshippers against other rather than fighting directly. The Shivas are historically known as the great pantheons of ancient times, and the same entity will have gone by different names in different cultures and times. Having used up almost all of their avenues for entrance to this world, only the least of their minions and a handful of human worshippers remain (some sorcerous, but mostly Blind). As far as Evil goes, the Shivas are not seen as a major threat, but this could be self-delusion on the part of the Brotherhood because of our ancient ties to the Shivas and a great similarity in the way humans and the Shivas think. Satan should be considered one of the lesser Shivas, probably the most successful of them in terms of infiltrating his agents into this reality.

The Old Gods are the really hardcore Evils that Good, even at its greatest could not destroy, but could only imprison. They are entities who at one point held sway over galaxies, bearing names like "Devourer of Suns" or "The Consuming Abyss". Reduced to but the merest fraction of their original horrific glory, they are still sanity-stripping and soul-scorching to behold. None of them have ever manifested outside the Prison save as pale avatars (for which you should be eternally grateful).

▼ **Note** - As a matter of gameworld flavor, the Old Gods seem to be fond of long, flowery, hard to pronounce names with lots of capitalization. Some of these names might be how they are referred to by their followers, and some by their detractors. Uiohk the All-Seeing Yet Unseen, or D'ijbnfc, Slayer of Truth, Whirlwind of Chaos. Just pound on your keyboard randomly, throw in the occasional extra vowel, apostrophe or glottal stop, and you'll come up with an endless supply of names for your extra-dimensional Evil beings.

Not *all* the Old Gods are quite this powerful. Some are merely demigods, whose true form and manifestation would be a pale flicker even before an avatar of an Old God. While lacking in power, they do not lack in pride, ambition or overly-long names, and in some ways they are even more dangerous than the Old Gods, for there is a slim chance one of them could, through long planning, a lot of help from this side and a bit of luck, manage to actually escape the Prison and start wreaking havoc and mass insanity. These demigods can be physically banished if overwhelming force is brought to bear, but they are the sort of beings that can single-handedly hold entire nations in thrall with their psychic power, or at the very least, hold all the reins of power, allowing mortals and lesser Evils to actually do the street-level dirty work. In a game-world sense, look at history. Whenever you find a charismatic and superstitious leader taking a nation down a path of atrocity and excess, irrational wars, purges, unexplainable ethnic hatreds and the like, there is a possibility that the supreme leader is a nearly unassailable demigod. This is not *always* the case. Humans are pretty good at this sort of thing on our own, but in the secret histories of the Brotherhood, some of the key villains certainly *are* in this league.

EXAMPLE: Was Hitler a normal man who survived a bombing attempt on his life because the blast was partially deflected by a heavy conference table, or because he was not of this world and had a godlike ability to absorb damage without being harmed? Was the extermination of the Jews some combination of creating an enemy for political purposes and simple psychosis, or because only they had the ancient bloodline necessary to use a set of artifacts that could negate his godlike powers and defenses? Did Hitler kill himself in a Berlin bunker in 1945, or was he taken out by a Brotherhood commando team? In **Code:Black**, either way works. You just pick and choose which historical events have been written by the Blind, and what really happened as recorded by the Sighted.

None of the demigods are loose on Earth at the moment (as far as the Brotherhood knows), but they have been free in the past, sometimes for centuries. Their only virtue (if you want to call it that) is that they have no real desire to help any of the greater Old Gods escape, since the Old Gods would totally eclipse the power of the demigods, making them servants at best, and banished again at worst.

Avatars - The Old Gods cannot escape the Prison at the moment, though it is of course their ultimate goal. But rarely, by various creative and diabolical means, they sometimes manage to convey some fraction of their essence and personality into this world. Like squeezing gelatin through a screen door, what manages to leak into this reality is far from a cohesive whole and does not last very long, but the Old Gods do it anyway. It may be a deep longing for a fleeting taste of their lost freedom, or perhaps it is the only way to accomplish some part of a plan they deem vital. Like the Old Gods themselves, Avatars are too hideous for virtually any mortal to behold in their true form. Even members of the Brotherhood often hide their minds behind the Blindness rather than recognize the true form of an Avatar, but members of the Brotherhood can at least know there is true Evil behind what the Blindness lets them see, and make intelligent decisions on how to deal with the situation.

EABA

The world may go decades without seeing an Avatar, or see one or two a year before another long hiatus. To the Blind, an Avatar is literally a force of nature, something so vast and powerful that only the most powerful of natural forces or horrific of human actions could possibly be accepted as a subconscious explanation. A tidal wave, an earthquake, a massive toxic chemical leak, or a devastating terrorist attack. All of these might be real...or they might be how the Blind explain away the effects of the mercifully few minutes of an Avatar existing in this reality, and why they have nightmares for years afterward.

Avatars cannot manifest in this reality without significant assistance from outside the Prison, and this can require years of preparation. Perhaps fortunately, the buildup of power necessary for an Avatar to manifest has numerous side effects in this reality, side effects that all Brotherhood members know to look for. So the Brotherhood often has a warning of several hours even in the event that they did not uncover the plot to manifest the Avatar. Unless a Brotherhood team has access to some *really* powerful mojo specifically for dealing with a specific Avatar, standard orders are to flee or hide in the event of an Avatar manifestation. If you can't do anything to stop it, you can at least survive to help pick up the pieces.

In all the records of the Brotherhood, there are no instances of an Avatar ever being defeated by a mortal, and only a few where the actions of the Brotherhood hastened its dissolution or seemed to banish it. And this is why the Brotherhood truly fears the Old Gods. *For if they cannot defeat a pale, fragile shadow of an Old God, what hope do they have if one actually makes it through to this side?* Maintaining the integrity of the Prison is more important than *anything* else. No person, no group, not even a race or nation is equal in value to the safety of mankind as a whole. No sacrifice is too great to keep the Prison intact, and anyone who cannot accept this terrible fact will never advance to the highest ranks of the Brotherhood.

Random Evil Entities - Since there is nearly an infinite selection of Evil things out there, here's a nifty set of tables to randomly generate something that has oozed through into this plane of existence. You can roll all the dice randomly, or simply assign some features and have other characteristics be random.

Type(roll 1d)	Str	Agl	Awr	Will	Hit	Fate
1-2 Smart	6	7	9	9	8	9
3-4 Average	8	8	8	8	8	8
5-6 Tough	10	9	6	9	9	7

Power(roll 1d)

1 Very weak	-2	-1	-2	-2	-2	-3
2 Weak	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1
3-4 Average	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0
5 Powerful	+2	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1
6 V. powerful	+3	+2	+2	+2	+2	+3

Number of abilities (roll 1d)

1 None
2 1 ability
3 2 abilities
4 4 abilities
5 6 abilities, roll 1 extra liability
6 Roll again, add +3 to number of abilities, roll 1 extra liability

Type of abilities(1st, 4th, 7th ability)

1 Sorcery at +1d skill & 2 spells (or +2 spells)
2 Blessing to stop 2d of normal damage
3 Blessing to stop 2d of magical damage
4 Blessing to stop 2d of toxin damage
5 Blessing to stop 2d of environ. damage
6 1d+0 normal armor

Type of abilities(2nd, 5th, 8th ability)

1 +3 Strength
2 +3 Agility
3 +3 Health
4 A specialized Awareness (night vision, etc.)
5 +1 Hit bracket
6 Special movement ((flight, clinging, etc.) at running speed or +3 HLT for running)

Type of abilities(3rd, 6th, 9th ability)

1 Domination (Fate vs. Will to mind control)
2 Regeneration of 1 Hit per 2 time levels (i.e. at time level of 2, 4, 6, 8, etc.)
3 Fear rating of +2
4 Extra set of limbs (+1 combat action per turn at no penalty)
5 Appendages that do +0d lethal damage
6 Locally alters levels of an emotion by +2

Liability(1st,3rd liability)

- 1 None
- 2 Abilities/Attributes reduced 1d in sunlight
- 3 Pure silver weapons do +1d damage
- 4 A specific sorcery does +1d damage
- 5 Iron weapons do +1d damage
- 6 Geographical limit (it cannot leave an area, like a temple, swamp, etc.)

Liability(2nd,4th liability)

- 1 Has a vulnerable spot (+6 to target) that bypasses its normal protections
- 2 The presence of Good does 1d damage
- 3 Has an irrational fear (3 levels) of something fairly mundane (cats, its own reflection, the color orange, etc.)
- 4 Has an emotional soft spot that allows it to be easily manipulated
- 5 Acts in a very predictable fashion
- 6 Roll again & increase by +1d (or +1 level)

Fear rating

- 1 Fear rating of 4
- 2 Fear rating of 5
- 3 Fear rating of 6
- 4 Fear rating of 7
- 5 Fear rating of 8
- 6 Roll again & increase by +1d

General form

- 1 Humanoid, can be mistaken for human
- 2 Humanoid, not mistakeable for human
- 3 Bestial, similarities to real creature
- 4 Bestial, but not of this world
- 5 Insectoid
- 6 Amorphous, blob-like

You can of course design something as huge and horrific as you want. Or small and innocuous, we suppose.

Type: The general type of the minion. Smart minions have +1d in all Awareness and Will skills that are appropriate, and use their unskilled default for Agility and other skills. It is unlikely a minion will be a nuclear physicist, but it could speak or read many languages, including ancient tongues long extinct. Average minions have +0d in all appropriate skills, and Strong minions have +1d in all appropriate Agility and Health skills, and use unskilled default for Awareness and other skills. Evil creatures generally use their unskilled default rolls for use of technology, technologically advanced weapons or any sort of social interaction involving advanced technology (they don't know the right words to use).

[☛] *The Item*(1999), Artisan Entertainment
[☛] *Tremors*(1990), Universal Pictures

Power: The general power level of the minion. Adjust each Attribute by the listed amount.

Number of abilities: How many special abilities the minion has. When you roll for special abilities, if the same ability comes up more than once, you simply add 1d or +3 to the level of the effect or ability.

Type of ability: Fairly self-explanatory. A "special movement power" gives the minion some unusual but physically possible movement ability, with a starting movement level based on its Health dice, as for normal movement. Special movements can be extremely good climbing ability, faster than normal running, flight, an ability to squeeze through small openings, and such.

Liability: Many minions have some sort of liability or weakness. If you roll a '6', you roll again on the first table and increase the effect of the liability by 1d, but a roll of '1' is still no liability.

Fear rating: How otherworldly the minion is. If you roll a '6', roll again and add 1d to the result, but only do this once (if you roll two '6's', re-roll until the second roll is *not* a '6').

General form: The general body shape of the minion. The size will be appropriate for the Strength of the minion. Strengths of 5 or less are child-like in size and weight. Strengths of 6-8 are about normal human size and weight, Strengths 9-11 are perhaps double to triple human weight and up to a meter taller/longer, and Strengths of 12 or more are probably about quadruple human weight and up to two meters taller/longer.

▼ **Note** - The mere existence of a minion of some kind can be the background for an adventure. Usually this is because the minion has gone on a rampage and left a slew of bodies in its wake,[☛] but could also be something that is just as Evil, but a bit more subtle.

In addition to Evil creatures, there exist things that are merely cryptozoological. That is, mythical to the point that people are Blind to their existence. These things may not be truly Evil, but their nature is inimical to mankind. Usually this is because people are part of its diet (deliberately or by accident).[☛] There are isolated communities of people who manage co-existence with such creatures, and often have marginal Sight or a Forte on Fate regarding their *particular* creature.

EXAMPLE: You're stumped for ideas, and decide to use these tables to work up some sort of horror to be a background minion, a "god" for a human cult that is kidnapping and sacrificing children. You decide that it will be "smart" and "powerful", with four abilities and one liability. Since it is smart, it gets an automatic +1d in Sorcery, which is a Will-based skill. So, we have a minion that starts with Strength 8, Agility 8, Awareness 10, Will 10, Health 9, Fate 12. Rolling abilities, you get a result of 4, for four abilities. These results are of 1,2,4, 2, which gives it Sorcery skill at +1d (for a total skill of +2d) and 2 spells, +3 Agility, an extra set of limbs (allowing it to make two melee or weapon attacks at no penalty each turn), and the inherent ability to ignore the first 2d of damage from any mundane attack.

For its liability, you roll a 3, giving it vulnerability to silver. This offsets the protection against normal weapons, so silver weapons do normal damage instead of -2d damage. The Fear rating roll is a 5, for a Fear rating of 8, pretty mind-bending. The general form roll is 4, so it has a general beast-like form, but not one easily described as close to any *particular* earthly creature. With a Strength of 8, it is the size of an average human, but with a bestial appearance, it is probably longer than it is tall. With the rolled ability of +3 Agility, its final Agility roll is 3d+2.

Minion

Strength: 8
 Agility: 11
 Awareness: 10
 Will: 10
 Health: 9
 Fate: 12

Sorcery(2): +2d
 Blessing: Extra set of limbs
 Blessing: -2d damage from physical attacks
 Curse: Vulnerable to silver weapons



Important notes for this minion are that it has a Sorcery skill roll of 5d+1 and a base effect on powers of 4d+0, making it fairly formidable in a magical sense. It only fights with a 2d+2 Brawling roll and has no special claws or talons, so its punch only does 1d+2 non-lethal damage. It ignores the first 2d of all mundane damage, unless done by silver weapons, which it takes normal damage from. The minion lurks in the shadows, using its human cultists like puppets, impressing them with its power, and twisting their psyches into absolute loyalty through prolonged exposure to its otherworldly nature (its Fear rating).

▼ **EVIL AND REALITY** - There are things in the Prison that cannot adequately be described in terms that make sense in this reality. But, when Evil comes into this universe, it is constrained by the natural laws of this universe. So, while Evil might seemingly appear out of nowhere, like at a cursed burial ground, or during an arcane ceremony, once it is here, it has to get from point A to point B like anyone else. And while anything that exists in this reality has to obey the fundamental laws of nature as we understand them, things with Evil in them can bend those rules. Such is the nature of sorcery, for instance. A few of the rules you need to know are below.

If it's alive, you can kill it: That makes perfect sense, but only if you have a narrow definition of "alive". For instance, vampires have no vital signs, yet they are animate and think and feel. Vampires can be killed. More accurately, it would be "if it thinks, it can be banished".[✦] Anything in this reality that is sentient can only affect this reality if it also has a physical form. If that physical form is disrupted sufficiently, the sentience is displaced from this reality to somewhere else. In the case of humans, what we think of as the soul probably goes back to the Prison, or hopefully to someplace better. In the case of Evil beings, whatever force animates them is sent back to the Prison or possibly to some indeterminate state that is not quite in this reality but not quite anywhere else. This latter case allows the possibility of possession or curses. For instance, a Legion can possess a victim, which is an interaction with the physical world, but until they do so, they cannot interact with the physical world in any other way. A vampire, when killed, becomes something of a spiritual non-entity, Evil and having existence, yet lacking in identity and form. Only when bound to a material form by a more powerful vampire does it gain an Evil sentience based on that of the transformed human corpse it animates. Similarly, the shattered fragments of some of the ancient sorcerer-kings can come to rest in people, objects or places, but cannot interact with the rest of the world until they do. Sufficient damage to whatever physical form contains these Evil essences will disrupt them.

[✦] *Supernatural*(2005), TV series

The Blind do not see Evil: Or at least, they do not see it as it is. We have already gone over that. The corollary is that those with the Sight *do* see Evil. If a being (human or otherwise) is irredeemably Evil, those with the Sight can tell just by looking at them most of the time. A person who has simply done bad things looks different than a person who has reveled in them, has no remorse and never will. In game terms, if the gamemaster says something is Evil, you never have to feel guilty about whacking it, because once completely corrupted by Evil, there is no return. Only eternity in the Prison awaits those who have completely fallen. Items that are tainted might not be seen as Evil (or Good), but touch or close proximity is often enough to discern this.

Fate counters Fate: That which has a soul, or conscious life (no one is really sure) is affected by Evil only in proportion to the strength of the creature or effect. However, inanimate objects are either more affected or are unprotected. Again, the difference is subtle and no one is really sure.

In game terms, inherent Evil attacks (hands, claws, etc.) are increased in effect by the being's Fate against *inanimate* objects, with a maximum effect based on double the Strength behind the attack. The extradimensional nature of Evil warps reality. Brotherhood researchers speak in terms of 'disruption of the quantum foam', 'strong force decohesion' and other technobabble that few people understand and even fewer believe, and even the believers can't explain why a living person is less affected than a side of beef.

The net effect is that powerful Evil is extremely impressive and quite hazardous to scenery and gadgets, but adventurers are *not* more affected. A vampire could crush a pistol in one hand like it was an egg, but could *not* do the same feat against an adventurer's skull. A creature that is Evil can add its Fate to its Strength for purposes of damaging inanimate objects. It does *not* increase Strength for lifting or carrying purposes, though.

EXAMPLE: Being pursued by an angry werewolf (not that there is any other kind), an adventurer slams a steel door in its face and throws home the bolt. The were has a Fate of 2d+1 and a lethal attack with its claws of 2d+2. The claws are quite dangerous to an adventurer, but they are 5d+0 dangerous to the supposedly strong steel door. The adventurer jumps back as Evil claws rip furrows through the metal that they thought would protect them. Seeing that the door is going to be no more than a short delay to the snarling horror on the other side, the adventurer wisely starts running again.

If you want to get technical (and we know you do), Evil attacks of this sort are counted as armor-piercing against any mundane body armor. Rather than being completely useless, the close proximity to a person seems to provide some protection to the armor. Similarly, held or worn items are treated as having 1d+0 less Armor against Evil attacks. A magical item, cursed or champion's weapon or something "blessed" by being enchanted with its own level of Fate is not subject to the extra effect of Evil attacks. A normal human or half-breed who has embraced Evil also gets this benefit of extra damage against inanimate objects.

Evil is forever: At the peak of Good's power, it might have been possible to absolutely obliterate some Evils, but there is no longer any means for mere mortals to accomplish this. Even artifacts like a Singularity Rod simply eradicate matter but not soul or spirit. That means that neither Evil as a whole nor even individual Evils can be permanently banished.

However, between the Brotherhood and the inherent nature of the Prison, any given avenue from the Prison to this reality can only be used by a particular Evil once. And, the more powerful the Evil, the fewer potential cracks there are in the Prison for it to wriggle through. So, once a particular Evil is banished, it cannot come back to this reality by that means ever again. *Or so it seems.* It might be that some of avenues sealed millennia ago are now open again, and the Brotherhood simply lacks the records to tell one way or the other. There is also the complication that the Prison and this reality are not linearly connected in time. It is possible that "finished" events from the past can ripple forward into the future,[❖] and *maybe* even possible that adventurers from the past can ripple into the here and now...[❖]

[❖] *Ghost Ship*(2002), Warner Bros. Pictures
[❖] *Warlock*(1989), New World Pictures

Alien Evil - When Good triumphed over Evil, it was far from a local affair. Evil from across the universe was imprisoned, in some cases, entire alien civilizations, often technologically advanced ones. And so, while humans may understand Evil to some extent, we have far less understanding of truly alien beings who are also Evil. The motivations of an alien Evil can seem or be completely illogical to us, but they *will* follow some unfathomable alien logic. More importantly, during the final imprisonment, there were no doubt attempts by various factions to free some of the other Evils, or more likely to simply escape the final dragnet. There are bits of advanced alien wreckage of incalculable age on Earth. Some of it may be wreckage of Good craft that were shot down in the last battles, but much more is likely to be of an alien and Evil origin. Only now has humanity finally developed enough scientific knowledge to poke and prod at the wreckage thus far discovered. Most of it is in the hands of various governments, Brotherhood protests notwithstanding, and researchers seek to uncover the secrets within. Perhaps this dangerous prodding is motivated by a desire to learn, but it could also be the result of Evil influence. Any leftover tech from the last battles will be an inherent place where the cracks in the Prison are wider, where Evil has an increased potential to get free, and a place where temptations to Evil within each of us are strongest. Fortunately, we have so far avoided any major catastrophes, simply because of the high physical security and rigorous background checks on any access to the most cherished of government secrets. Brotherhood records mention a post-event investigation of a crashed saucer in Antarctica. The two Blind scientific teams that found it were completely wiped out, though the second team managed to destroy the saucer and the Evil it contained at the cost of their own lives. ❖ Another alien focus for Evil was responsible for a mass outbreak of a kind of vampirism in London in the 1980's, but it was only recorded by the world at large as a conventional contagion. ❖

Alien artifacts were found on the Moon during the 1970's, and the danger and unusual (and unpublicized) phenomenon surrounding at least two of the landings put a halt to human exploration of other planets, at least until such time as humanity is confident it can deal with the threat. NASA has downplayed and altered photographs of the "face on Mars" for much the same reason. There are things out there that are foci for Evils we are not yet prepared to confront.

Sorcery & Science - Those with Sight understand the nature of the universe far more than the Blind. This extends to *all* realms of knowledge, not just the supernatural. Many of the mysteries of the universe are closed to the scientific community because they are Blind to the reality that would allow them to understand it. To compound the problem, the mindset of those best able to take advantage of arcane scientific knowledge makes them least able to handle it. Trained to observation, logic and reason, the existence of a hidden world right before their eyes is not something they can readily accept. Laws of nature where up is sometimes down, angles can be visible but unmeasurable or objects can be larger on the inside than the outside can unhinge a mind not flexible enough to accept a worldview completely at odds with everything else they have ever known.

There are three levels of technology in **Code: Black**. The first is the normal technology of the early 21st century, possibly with a few suppressed or secret gadgets that are maybe several years to a few decades more advanced than the public believes possible.

Third is technological elements that pre-date the imprisonment of Evil. The mechanism of the Prison itself would be an example, something that is either magic, technology, a combination of the two, or simply a technology so advanced it simply seems like magic. This is "off-the-scale" stuff in the realm of time travel, dimension hopping and the creation of pocket universes. Humans will never understand this technology any more than cats will ever understand the Internet. The absolute simplest examples of this technology would be like cats trying to understand doorknobs. The Brotherhood, some governments, and some Evil entities have items at this level of technology. None of them have any more than the slightest idea of what the devices were originally for, the operating principles, or how to use them properly. Even something as simple as repeating the exact steps of something that *did* work...does not. Making these ancient devices work as best you can figure them out is an art more than a science, a matter of intuition and intent more than following an instruction manual. All who possess these artifacts have lost numerous researchers over the centuries trying to figure out what little they do know. Because of the uncertainty and danger, no one, good or evil, considers use of these artifacts in anything except the most dire or exceptional of circumstances.

❖ *The Thing*(1982), Universal Studios
❖ *Lifeforce*(1985), MGM Studios

In between these two ranges is "super-science". This is things that a Gifted person can understand, some technology or principle that is one leap ahead of current scientific thought, but still *several* leaps behind the really advanced stuff.

For this reason among others, technology based on arcane "super-science" is extremely uncommon. In **EABA** terms, it would require being Gifted with the ability to understand technology at a level beyond the rest of the world. And only someone with that Trait is capable of making such devices, and their principles can only be understood by others with that Trait. So, imagine what it would take for *one person* to make something like a desktop computer *by themselves* in say 1950CE and you get the idea.

The Brotherhood does have such devices at its disposal. Not a lot of them, but enough to be plot gimmicks on occasion. Some might be bulky items, like "evil detectors" at sensitive facilities, while others might be quirky invisibility fields, transphasic portals, quantum cryptohack modules, mismo beams or other cool-sounding technobabble. Crashed alien spaceships from the last battles of Good and Evil, or the abandoned "prison transports" might also be decipherable in part by Gifted individuals.

But, the main problem with arcane science is when someone or something Evil starts using it. In particular, there are any number of arcane devices that conventional science has no means to deal with, devices that if activated could wipe virtually all life off the planet, thus allowing Evil an unfettered opportunity to escape the Prison. So yes, **Code: Black** has Evil geniuses working on horrific devices that only they can understand, sometimes even inside volcanic lairs, or on uncharted islands visible only to those with the Sight. But more likely, they are in some suburban industrial park that gave them a hefty tax break for bringing a few hundred high-tech jobs to the area. This of course leads to Evil housing subdivisions, Evil elementary schools and Evil moms taking their Evil kids to Evil soccer practice in the Evil minivan. *Not really.* These Evil world-wrecking projects take years if not decades to complete, and realistically, only a handful of people working on the project will actually know what is truly going on. The rest will be Blind as everyone else, and combined with tight security clearances, few are likely to even suspect until it is almost too late.

Almost too late. Anything capable of global disruption will, in its final stages, tend to draw notice. Abnormally large electricity consumption, strange shipments arriving in the dead of night, unshielded waves of Fear radiating outward, nightmares, apparitions, all the normal portents of impending doom that even the Blind will be able to notice (but not understand). This in turn draws the notice of the Brotherhood, and the adventurers. This sort of thing has become much more possible in the past century, with half a dozen close calls in that period, compared with half a dozen close calls for all the previous centuries of human history. Most of the time, the Brotherhood spots the early warning signs and details a mission to nip the problem in the bud. A more likely problem is the lesser variety of Evil genius. The depraved serial killer with an invisibility cloak, the cult leader who brainwashes his followers through a "meditation device", or the small town misanthrope who terrorizes his neighbors into submission with some gizmo that lets him attract or control something like rats, bats, snakes or in rare cases, things like weres or vampires. This is more of a problem, since the problem is often not detected until it is fully grown. You can't get at the cult leader without going through his army of innocent, brain-washed slaves. The serial killer already has long experience at evading the authorities, and the rural misanthrope has everyone in the area too terrified to even whisper his name to outsiders. The Brotherhood has to deal with these situations as well, and they happen at least a few times a year in an area the size of the United States (say one incident per year per 100 million people in a high-tech region).

A subset of super-science is people, who well-meaning or not, begin tampering with things they do not completely understand. The usual culprits in this are small despotic governments and private corporations in developed countries who are trying to get lucrative military contracts. Science is not inherently Evil, but people can be. Unwittingly messing with DNA from a were, vampire, devil or other similar creature can result in the creation of hybrid monstrosities with both animal strengths and Evil nature. A genius may be able to do the preliminary work on such technologies, but be Blind to the possible risks and side effects. So, everyone is unpleasantly surprised when the experiment goes horribly wrong, Evil things escape and go on a rampage.♣ On a similar vein, if you take an Evil mind and interface it with a computer, you end up with an Evil AI, which will quietly bide its time and make plans that will eventually cause someone a lot of grief.

♣ *Resident Evil(2002), Screen Gems*

Technology or other inanimate objects are neither Good or Evil, though they can gain the taint of either based on the actions of their user. Arcane science is not *inherently* Evil. *But it can be very close to it.* Its use might require a certain mind-set that only an Evil person is likely to have, or the device might require some form of supplies that only an Evil person would use, or the device is attuned in such a way that only those who are fully Evil can utilize it. For instance, no Brotherhood agent would design or build an arcane IQ booster that requires regular refills of cerebrospinal fluid from day-old infants. The IQ booster is not inherently Evil, but refilling it certainly is, and using one that has already been filled is morally ambiguous at best (*destroy the device and let a sacrifice already made go to waste? Or use it and profit from the fruits of someone else's Evil?*). When confronted with this, the Blind tend to view such devices or research morally tainted, will not use them, and may in fact discriminate against or persecute those who do.

Most Evils that can escape the Prison are minor ones, but are still formidable. One advantage that humans have is technology. While what we know is woefully primitive, we are familiar with it. Evils from the Prison may be highly talented with magic, but the technology they are used to is unavailable, and is likely so far ahead of ours that they will not be able to understand it at first, no more than the average person would be able to throw a spear.

▼ **VULNERABILITIES** - Most Evils have an increased ability to resist many common forms of disruption. A somewhat extradimensional nature, not being alive to begin with, a body structure that minimizes damage effects, armor or whatever. However, most Evils also have a vulnerability of some kind, something to which their protection does not apply, leaving them a little vulnerable. Evils with some experience in the modern world can reduce this vulnerability a bit. Vampires can wear body armor, for instance.

The Brotherhood has pretty good records of particular tactics or types of attacks that work particularly well against a specific Evil, but for any of the Evils that are smart, they work hard to minimize these vulnerabilities, they change tactics and make themselves "moving targets" in terms of trying to pin down what makes them tick.

For any Evil that is summoned, was drawn into this world or has spent long enough in one place, that place or summoning location is sometimes a source of power, and a source of some inherent vulnerability. When the Brotherhood puts an Elder Seal upon such a rift, it closes off any source of energy that Evil might have used, in addition to keeping it from reappearing through that rift at a later time. Similarly, any place where a sufficient amount of Evil was banished resonates with that energy, which imbues the very fabric of reality around that spot. Tools and weapons made from the unmodified "stuff" at such a spot tend to retain that resonance, and can offset some or all of an Evil's inherent protections, *if that Evil was originally banished to the Prison from that spot.*

The Brotherhood knows of three such locations on the globe, and has ancient weapons from at least five others, from locations that are still unknown or which perhaps simply vanished with time. The known locations are perceived by the mundane world as Neolithic stone quarries, one in a remote part of Nova Scotia, one in Tibet and one in the Rift Valley in Africa. The Brotherhood thinks that these three sites were originally the site of whatever Good devices and/or rituals that were used to banish many Evils into the Prison. In the ancient days of the sorcerer-kings, these spots resonated with enough power that even primitive weapons made from the wood and stone of these places could pierce even the strongest of Evils, giving the precursors of the Brotherhood weapons equal or superior to the technology used against Evil today.

But, over the millennia, the energies have faded. Sites that once covered hectares now may only be a few meters across. Residual energies sufficient to make an Avatar flinch are now a mere annoyance, a minor threat at best. The three locations known to the Brotherhood account for about one-third of the known Evils. Most of some classes of Evil entity are in this group, while some classes only have a few named individuals affected, and Evils which exist in this world by breeding or recycling of spiritual energy (vampires, ghuls and devils) are not affected at all by such weapons.

Weapons made from such sites are called "bane weapons" by the Brotherhood. The mere existence of bane weapons is a Grey-level piece of intelligence. To make a bane weapon, it must be entirely made from unmodified material found or extracted from that site. By "unmodified", we mean that it has not changed form in any way.

A stone could be chipped or flaked into a blade, but it could not be crushed and smelted for any metal content it has. Plant fibers or wood can be cut, carved, dried or treated with preservatives, but could not be chipped up and incorporated into something else. This pretty much means that only the most primitive of weapons can be made. In a mundane sense, edged or piercing weapons typically have their damage, Armor and Hits reduced by $0d+1$ (stone blades break!). However, these weapons also do *at least* $+1d$ damage to one or more Evils. A site retaining more energy than most could be worth up to an extra $+1d$ damage, and if the person wielding the weapon is also the one who constructed it (at the site), it could gain up to another $+1d$ of damage. This extra damage only affects the extradimensional nature of that Evil, and does not put any extra stress on the weapon itself.

EXAMPLE: So, it is conceivable that a person could wield a stone dagger that does $+3d$ damage against legions (or maybe just a particular legion). If the wielder of the dagger were to stab a victim possessed by the legion, the victim would take normal stab damage, but the extra $+3d$ would apply against the legion's ability to negate damage, making it possible to actually wound both legion and host. For instance, a stab for a normal damage of $1d+1$ would do $1d+1$ to the victim and $4d+1$ to the legion. The legion ignores $4d$ of mundane damage, so it takes 1 Hit from the attack.

Evils tend to avoid areas where their particular bane weapon comes from, and can also sense the nearby presence of a bane weapon that can affect them, though not its exact location unless it is in line of sight.

▼ **THE PRISON** - The Prison is the name humans have given to the unknown extradimensional void that Evil was banished to at the end of the war between Good and Evil. We do not know the exact nature of the Prison, nor is it even likely we are capable of understanding it. From both a scientific and metaphysical standpoint it is so far beyond us that we would probably have to physically evolve more sophisticated brains first.

What we can do is observe and take notes, and through that make our best guesses about why things happen and when. Even after thousands of years, it is still an inexact science. But there *are* things that humanity knows or has figured out about the Prison.

The extra-dimensional void that is the Prison for all the universe's Evil opens onto the surface of the Earth, as though the Earth's physical boundaries match the extradimensional contours of the Prison, oddly matching the *current* placement of Earth's contours rather than where and how the Earth looked some thousands or millions of years ago. Through these cracks, Evil oozes and bubbles. Exactly how this manifests on Earth depends on the place and the time. The cracks are widest where there is a lot of existing Evil, and often corresponds highly to the presence of people, who each have their own lesser Evil within them that they constantly struggle with. Where people are more disciplined (or regimented), Evil has a harder time making headway, while in areas where our baser desires can run free, Evil finds a wider opening into this world.

EXAMPLE: There may be tiny cracks that could appear at the military and scientific outposts in Antarctica, but the people there are strong enough or disciplined enough that any tiny Evil which emerges finds no place to take root and nothing it can influence. On the other hand, a poverty-stricken and crime-wracked inner city area is fertile ground for all manner of Evil to sprout.

Rural cracks in the Prison occur mainly when some confluence of astronomical factors or unusual events opens an old wound, like the site of an ancient ceremonial massacre or long-forgotten temple to an Old God. This tends to let something associated with a *particular* Evil back into the world, and it is often tied to that region. It requires proximity to the breach in order to exist, though as it becomes more powerful it can range further from this link to the Prison and the Evil within it.

When the Brotherhood cannot intervene soon enough, such eruptions of rural Evil appear in the Blind media as outbreaks of a deadly disease with no known origin or treatment, mass deaths caused by some phenomenon like volcanic gases seeping from the ground, or communities turning on each other in an orgy of ethnic or tribal or racial violence. Often, even if the Brotherhood wipes out the central Evil, the damage has been done. Populations may have had their psyches permanently warped by irrational hatreds, and lacking the ability to provide treatment for such large numbers of people, the best that can be done is to leave the communities isolated and slowly let normal relations with the outside world show their descendants that these attitudes are not the best way to act.

Sadly, some parts of the world are prone to recurring eruptions of Evil in their hinterlands, and it has become less and less possible to use force and mass relocation to simply get people out of the way of an Evil they simply cannot cope with.

In areas where there is a high concentration of people, and especially where there is a higher than normal number of Evil creatures, it tends to be in form of new Evil minions, and numerous small Evil "hot spots", places that tend to attract Evil. These could be criminal headquarters, crack houses, individual sacrificial altars, places suitable for shrines to a particular Old God, and so on. There will be an increase in human-caused atrocities and crimes, some increase in cult memberships and activities, local concentrations of lesser Evils, and all of this leads to ceremonies or events whose purpose is to widen the cracks to allow yet more Evil into this world. Often, by the time the Brotherhood can put an end to things, they have to deal with numerous powerful minions and rarely a demigod of some type, and those are never any fun to deal with.

In rural areas, Evil tends to mushroom into a manifestation of former glory, but sans any actual Evil minions, at least at first. Ruined temples appear in the jungle or on the seabed. Tombs apparently millennia old are discovered in places thought thoroughly explored, and so on. These places have their own Evil aura that will draw the attention of any Evil minion allied to the source of the power, or any human who shares a strong enough personality trait that matches the nature of that Evil entity. In addition, Evil can manifest in these places in the form of tangible items, material goods that provide both an advantage to the user and a binding tie to the power that created it. A sacrificial knife that grants the wielder insight, but which twists their psyche towards carnage. A book in some strange tongue whose very runes slowly foment insanity in the reader while simultaneously teaching arcane sorceries, or a hyperdimensional artifact that is a gateway for some subset of Evil minions, which draws people into it through simple curiosity. 🦹 By the time the Brotherhood can get a team together to investigate and eliminate the growing threat, the local population may have already come under the thrall of Evil minions, or human agents of Evil may have set up formidable conventional protections on the site. This could range from armed guerrillas or mercenaries to a Geographic Discovery film crew doing an entirely legitimate but extended investigation of "this marvellous new archaeological find".

Again, the ultimate goal is usually for some powerful Evil or a number of powerful minions to manifest, either to form a central power base or as part of some larger scheme.

There have been times when a combination of factors has allowed Evil to gain a strong foothold in this world for years at a time. The Blind see this in the seemingly endless strife and civil war in some parts of the world, ethnic cleansing, tribal massacres, despotic warlords in remote jungles or mountainous regions, corruption in high places and a complete disregard for the future, and so on. These places are run by humans under the thrall of Evil or in complete cooperation with it, or by entities masquerading as human to the largely Blind populace they rule and exploit and terrorize. The Brotherhood has a lot of connections and power, but it does not have sufficient strength to invade a country, which makes undoing a successful Evil foothold a monumental task that could be the focus of an entire **Code: Black** campaign.

When Evil gets a solid grip on the conventional tools of power, the first thing it does it wipe out any Brotherhood presence in the region, along with any other form of dissent. It seizes any artifacts of an Evil nature and searches eagerly for more, whether within its own territory, on the open market, or what it can steal from collectors or museums.

Evil cannot reliably communicate from this reality into the Prison and vice versa. Since entire entities can get out, humans do not fully understand why communication is so difficult. Some think that the nature of time and space in the Prison itself is barely compatible with ours, like trying to have a conversation with someone whose time zone and location changes every other word or sentence. In a related concept, Evil minions in thrall to the same greater Evil may have gotten their marching orders at widely different points in time as they see each other.

EXAMPLE: An Evil minion may have escaped from the Prison with orders from its master that are years more advanced than another minion, but arrives in this reality years before that other minion. So, you could have two Evil minions working for the same master on the same plan, but with orders that seem to conflict with each other.

Plus, the problems of communication to and from the Prison mean that these misunderstandings are not easy to rectify. *It's not easy being Evil.*

Humans and Evil minions in this reality can only breach the borders of the Prison for communication by means of powerful sorceries, and these can often only be cast at particular times and places. *An Evil minion's great plan might be nothing more than an attempt to phone home for new orders!*

Naturally, this problem in communication makes it difficult to coordinate events between the Prison and this reality. However, this is not as big a problem as it might sound. After all, Evil in the Prison has nothing *but* time on its hands, so it can afford to sit around and wait at some pre-determined meta-physical location and wait for its minions on this side of the Prison to do their part.

▼ **Note** - It is said that human souls escape their eternal prison through the process of conception and birth, though no one is exactly sure when in this interval it happens. If, when the body dies, the soul's balance is Good, it is presumably "banished" to someplace other than the eternal prison. If the balance is Evil, it is banished back to whence it came, never to return via that method. The Blind, somewhat accurately, refer to these places as Heaven and Hell. Those in the Brotherhood refer to one as "the other side", and the other as "the Prison". No one (no human, at least) has ever come back from either, though apparently some communication is possible between this world and the next. Evil communicates with its minions and vice versa, but useful information from the "other side" of Good is far more rare. But, since Good and Evil exist in the universe again, it is possible for both Good and Evil to have a "place" outside normal reality yet more accessible than the Prison, a place neither can return from, but which can be communicated with. Presumably whatever is Good is trying to prevent Evil from communicating with this reality, and vice versa. It could be that over human history, humans who have achieved some Good have transcended to another plane, and fight battles against Evil there after leaving their mortal body behind.

Temptation - Striving to maintain a semblance of Good while surrounded by Evil is not easy. When adventurers are drawn towards Evil by their own actions, whether this is use of sorcerous powers or simply questionable moral choices, they have to make an Easy(5) Will task, adjusted by any levels of Personality that would apply (+2 difficulty per level). If the roll is failed, the temptation is succumbed to. It might be an immediate compulsion to do something inappropriate, or it might simply be the seed of a long-term plot or problem.

EXAMPLE: An adventurer who fails a temptation dealing with lust might make an inappropriate pass at a friend's wife. An adventurer failing temptation dealing with greed might be ripe for an attempt to bribe them, while someone who fails a temptation dealing with anger might viciously attack the next person who crosses them. They might feel terrible about it afterwards, but it won't stop it from happening again if they succumb to temptation again.

Temptations are not always major affairs. A person who has the Personality of being too honest has to roll against temptation to lie convincingly. A person who is chivalrous will hold the door for a lady, even the lady doesn't actually appreciate the deference. Failing a temptation does not make the particular Personality Trait any worse, but it may reduce any experience gains for the adventure by 1 point.

An adventurer whose psyche has degenerated to the point where they simply cannot succeed in resisting a temptation becomes compulsively ruled by it. An alcoholic, a compulsive gambler, a sex addict, morbidly obese glutton and the like would be such people. Adventurers may still be playable, but anything dealing with that aspect of their life is under the control of the gamemaster. Adventurers of normal weight who become gluttonous will over several months take on Traits related to increased body weight. An adventurer who is a kleptomaniac will steal from friends, their place of work and anywhere else. They will eventually alienate non-player friends, lose their job and eventually get arrested.

It is possible that in this interval the player can get enough experience or help to get the problem under control and get their life back, but once the compulsion reaches its natural end state, the adventurer is no longer playable. The glutton is too fat to do anything but waddle around. The kleptomaniac is in jail, the alcoholic is constantly drunk, the sex addict has caught some nasty disease or chose the wrong partner and gotten stabbed, shot or mutilated for their trouble, etc. Adventurers whose overuse of sorcerous powers were their downfall might shift over to the side of Evil, and other adventurers might be forced to take them out of the picture. And, ending up with eight or more levels in a single Personality Trait because of Evil-related actions means the person becomes Evil, irredeemably so. If it was an adventurer, they switch allegiance to the other side. The Brotherhood doesn't have many agents turn traitor. They keep a close watch out for tendencies that would lead to this.

Reducing levels in any Personality Trait requires that time between adventures be devoted to it, as per the normal experience rules. *You cannot buy down Personality Traits with experience gained through adventuring unless the experience involved some sort of significant triumph over that negative aspect of your psyche.*

The greatest temptation of sorcery is the potential mastery of death. *Evil is eternal. So is Good.* However, humans lack sufficient Good to do more than somewhat extend their natural lifespan through asceticism and contemplation. However, with proper training, we have enough Evil in us to live for centuries. No one could possibly remain in the Brotherhood after embracing Evil to that extent, but there are those in this world who have passed from mortality to something...else by sorcerous means, means that require actions more horrific than the Blind can truly comprehend. The carnage wrought by Jack the Ripper is what the Blind saw of his crimes. What *actually* transpired was somehow far worse, and helped transform the Ripper from mortal sorcerer to something between Man and Evil, between alive and dead. It took five decades for the Brotherhood to track *her* down (the Blind at that time could not conceive that a woman could do such crimes, so the Ripper was assumed to be a man). Even now, her ashes are kept under lock and key, just to be sure. And since her heart was not in her body after the final confrontation, the case file has never been officially closed...

Any competent sorcerer with a few decades of experience can probably figure how to transcend life and still remain in this reality, but few humans are emotionally capable of doing what needs to be done. After all, we oozed through the cracks in the Prison because there was some Good in all of us, Good that must be completely and irrevocably banished in order for the transformation to take place. Even after the transformation from life to something else is complete, there are still rituals that must be performed every so often to prevent a catastrophic return of life to a body that can no longer support it. This could range from a few times a year to once a decade or so, depending on the skill of the sorcerer at the time of the initial transformation.

There are a handful of people in the world who have managed this feat, and the Brotherhood is pretty sure they know who all of them are. However, they have all insulated themselves from direct action by staying in countries where the Brotherhood holds no sway, or in remote regions where these sorcerors have surrounded themselves with militias and cultists who worship them like they were minor gods.

EXAMPLE: The Brotherhood is pretty sure that much of the strife in Haiti over the past century (maybe longer) is the result of *one* rogue sorcerer, who keeps the country unstable and divided enough that it is impossible to get a formal Brotherhood presence there, but close enough to stability to give hope that he can be uprooted by normal means. He has a small army of neomen (and half-neomen) enforcers, some devilish diplomatic assistance (including contacts in the adjacent Dominican Republic), a globboth or two and no small number of ghul who are in it for their own benefit and don't care about the larger picture. He has played all sides against each other for decades and shows no signs of stopping, causing grief to an entire nation just to maintain his own existence and cover for the atrocities he requires to maintain his pseudo-immortal state.

Selling your soul - Evil wants to get a foothold in this world, but is limited in the amount of power it can manifest through the cracks in the Prison. One way it seeks to augment its power on this side is by collecting it from unwitting victims, getting them to trade off part of their eternal essence for temporary gain. An Old God or other powerful entity will grant the power to collect or transfer this sort of energy to a human, or more rarely a devil, someone with connections, money or both. To be honest, dealing with ordinary humans is lower than most Old Gods will stoop, but demigods are not above dealing directly with lesser beings, provided that proper obsecance is given. In exchange for a piece of their soul (say $0d+1$ of Fate), that person gets some sort of break, preferably one that can be made to happen with that curious human medium of exchange known as money. This could be that audition that gets you a career-making acting role, cosmetic surgery to improve your appearance, a better job, a new car, or whatever.

The person losing a piece of their soul only realizes it for a moment, and then their Blindness lets them live in blissful ignorance of what they have lost. Those who have the Sight have more soul to sell, and can command higher prices. Some simply do it so they will no longer see the true world. Others sort of take out a loan on their Fate, giving up some of it permanently in exchange for a tiny but direct conduit to the entity in the Prison. In game terms, they gain Fate instead of losing it, but are beholden to the other entity for it, and often end up as powerful but tormented thralls, twisted out of human shape by energies their bodies were never meant to contain. Last, some give up some spiritual power in exchange for a much greater share of financial or political power. These people are exceptionally dangerous. At the highest levels of politics and finance, only the most ambitious and intelligent will thrive. Any edge can be a significant edge, and those living in that world often have arrogance and pride enough to think they can outwit and outscheme beings who have existed for longer than human history. People that talented, that ambitious, and that self-centered can be extraordinarily dangerous if given enough power to overcome any unaided opposition. Too often, these individuals make their way into positions of power and influence that put them in direct opposition to the Brotherhood.

The Fate harvested from a mortal can be directly transferred to some Evil like a demigod who manages a direct connection to this reality, but is more often collected by some minion on this side. This minion usually disgorges it to some more powerful minion of an Old God, who then uses it for other mischief, or to help wedge a given crack into this world just a little bit wider, or combines it with their own essence to make some sort of artifact that will somehow further that Old God's agenda. Or, this gift of power seals the mortal to the Old God in some way, and the Old God uses that link to project power through the mortal, in effect making that mortal a high priest of that Old God, desirous of doing that being's bidding, and compelled to even if they might want to change their mind. These priests insulate themselves from Brotherhood action by use of secular power, wealth, family ties or the privileges of political office. The priest works to do the Old God's bidding, while the Brotherhood seeks to thwart it, and both operate circumspectly, for neither group can afford to draw the wrath of the largely Blind legal system. So, a high priest of Evil who is a corporate CEO might eventually be brought to justice for securities fraud rather than human sacrifice. The Brotherhood tries to avoid outright assassination in these cases for the simple reason that the Old Gods are stingy with their power, and a live but ineffective high priest ties up that power, while a dead high priest can be replaced with someone unknown to the Brotherhood.

Unlike the old tales, once you sell a piece of your soul, it is gone forever. There's no loophole in the contract that lets you get it back. A binding deal with Evil does not require that you become Evil but it is a very likely eventual outcome.

▼ **THE THIRTEENTH FAIRY** - In some versions of the classic fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty, the princess is cursed by the wicked twelfth fairy godmother, that she would die on her fifteenth birthday. But the thirteenth fairy godmother had yet to give her blessing. She could not undo the curse (something about union rules or professional courtesy), but she *could* adjust it. Instead of dying, the princess would instead fall into a deep enchanted sleep. And we all know how the story goes from there.

Code:Black has got about twelve evil fairy godmothers. Evil is powerful, numerous, relentless and some of the best tools adventurers have at their disposal can corrupt them towards Evil. But, humanity is also *the* Good that remains in the universe, and has held Evil at bay for more millennia than the Blind think that human civilization has existed.

So, can a gamemaster put some true Good in the campaign? Yes. In moderation. The battle against Evil is a fluid situation, and just as Evil adapts when defeated or thwarted, so can those who fight against Evil. Adventurers (or extras) can perhaps learn esoteric skills to reach levels of enlightenment that allow them to begin to access the powers that Good once used to defeat not just minions or demi-gods, but defeat and imprison the star-shattering Old Gods themselves.

What does it take to be Good? - Good, in its purest form, is about motive and intent. Humans are too flawed to ever be completely Good. We are too ruled by the most primitive of biological instincts, reproduction, self-preservation, fight or flight and so on. What we call civilization is but the thinnest veneer over the unprincipled animal beneath. Even in the "civilized" parts of the world, all it takes is a scratch to expose it, with riots and looting and racial or ethnic persecution from people who really ought to know better. That's what we *are*, and what we have to overcome in order to give our Good a chance to show itself.

The only power that most adventurers will ever have is the ability to use Fate to affect dice when dealing with Evil. This is mostly uncontrolled and reactive. You can stop a bullet in mid-air, perhaps two or even three of them, but the accumulated Good potential a merely good person can use is quickly exhausted. The powers of *genuine* Good are more durable. In game terms, we will call the ability to rise above our biology and inherent evil a Personality called "Inclination towards Good".

We can't be more specific than that. Good is going to be like love. If you have not experienced it, it cannot be truly understood, and if you have experienced it, no explanation is necessary.

No power of Good can be accessed unless a person's inclination towards Good is greater than the sum of *all* "negative" Personality levels they have. Neutral Personality levels have no effect, and Personalities that the gamemaster deems good (honesty, loyalty, etc.) will count half. This means it is an uphill battle to simply reach a point where Good power can be detected, much less be useful. In game terms you can easily imagine the sorts of people who can reach this level, monks engaged in lives of ascetic contemplation, those who give up fame or fortune to devote their lives to helping others, and so on. The former may do what they do simply for the sake of being Good, though some may be warriors for Good as well, 🍀 while the latter may have Good powers and not even know it.

Powers of Good - These powers fall into several categories, and all of them are entirely dependent on the person having more inclination towards Good than all their negative Personality levels combined. In general, the maximum level a power can be used at is the adventurer's Fate or the degree to which their inclination towards Good exceeds their negative Traits, whichever is lower.

EXAMPLE: An adventurer with seven levels of "inclination towards Good", three levels in negative Personalities and a Fate of 1d+2 would have a level in Good powers of 1d+1. If they changed their levels in various Traits, they could eventually raise this to their Fate of 1d+2.

For sake of brevity, we're just going to refer the powers as "Good powers". Remember that a level in a power is 0d+1 and each three levels is 1d+0.

Intimidation: Evil instinctively fears Good. Levels of Good powers add to Will for any Fear check, skill use or intimidation against Evil.

Enhanced Fate: The first power is passive, but the adventurer can control when it is used. For each full or partial die in Good powers, they can get double the effect when using Fate for luck purposes, or they can use their own Fate to benefit someone else nearby at normal effect.

EXAMPLE: An adventurer with 0d+2 in Good powers could get an adjustment of ±2d for a single use of Fate. Since they only have one die (or partial die) in Good powers, they can only do this once.

This ability resets itself at the same rate Fate recovers from being used. This is usually between adventures, but one use is recovered if a genuine Evil is defeated in the encounter in which the enhanced Fate was used (see [page 3.3](#)).

Fate counters Fate: This is the same as the Evil ability ([page 3.24](#)), but improved. The adventurer gets a bonus to their Strength of their level in Good powers, with a maximum effect of doubling their Strength. This is only against inanimate objects or Evil. In addition, the level in Good powers ignores any reduction to damage an Evil creature gets, and the Good powers also act like a Strength that can affect normally incorporeal forces (legions would be considered to have an incorporeal Strength of $2d+0$). This means that a person with levels in Good powers could punch a globboth and the globboth would feel it (the Good levels only) and be hurt by it. A person with enough levels in Good powers could reach into a possessed person and literally pull the legion out and strangle it, or failing that, psychically punch it to death. This incorporeal Strength can be focused through a Champion's melee weapon.

Gifted: Each full die in Good powers should be a threshold that is a requirement for buying Gifted abilities only possible for Good. These would be designed by the gamemaster, and could include things like being able to resist damage, limited prescience (improved Dodge), and so on.

Good magic: Potentially the most powerful ability, but also the most difficult to learn. The useful levels in Good powers will act like a Fate, usable for casting spells that have the pre-requisite "only by those who are Good". The gamemaster will have to design the exact power framework, but the most important aspect of such powers is that they do *not* corrupt the user. It might even be possible that they un-corrupt the user, adding to one's inclination towards Good. Just as Sorcery corrupts someone to irredeemable Evil, use of Good magic might push someone towards a state of enlightenment that is incompatible with corporeal existence.

Using Good in the campaign - To be Good is to be alien to the way that most people think and act. The more levels in Good powers a person has, the more distant they become to even their closest friends (unless those friends are also Good). True Good is not understandable to us, and this makes those who take that path similarly enigmatic. It might even be that reaching a certain level of Good causes a person to transcend this level of reality and move to the next.

They would still be part of this universe, and would still fight against Evil in their own way, but they will have reached a level where the mundane ties of love, friendship and loyalty are subsumed to the higher needs of humanity as a whole. This is a way for the gamemaster to limit how powerful someone can become. A good boundary would be to say that the total levels in inclination towards Good cannot exceed a person's Will. If it ever does, that person transcends this plane of existence the next time they use any power of Good.

The other downside is that maintaining the mindset and emotional clarity necessary for Good powers is a tightrope. In addition to keeping their inclination towards Good greater than negative levels in Personality, short-term variations in their emotional state can temporarily detract from their powers. In many cases, the gamemaster can ask for a Will roll to see if an adventurer resists their inner demons in times of great stress. Failing the roll means the adventurer has two choices. They can take a penalty on their levels of Good equal to the amount they failed the Will roll by, or they can use their Good powers at the normal level, but they get 1A towards a negative Personality for each point they failed the roll by. Both restrictions last until the end of the scene in which the failed roll occurred.

EXAMPLE: An adventurer with five levels of Good powers (effect of $1d+2$) just saw a person they were protecting get killed by a globboth. The last desperate, betrayed look in the victim's eyes as they were engulfed haunts the adventurer, and the gamemaster says the adventurer has to make a Formidable(13) Will roll. The player rolls a 9, failing the roll by 4, and the adventurer is filled with rage and thoughts of revenge. They can either constrain their rage and power, dropping their Good powers by 4, down to $0d+1$, or they can use their Good powers while in the grip of negative emotions, and get 4A towards something like a level of being Vengeful.

Adventurers should not even be aware Good powers exist to begin with, and such powers might even be new to the gameworld. Evil will of course hate and fear such abilities in equal measure, and do everything in its power to crush those possessing such abilities. The gamemaster can if they want, keep a secret tally of Good "experience" for the adventurers, and if that tally ever would grant adventurer the potential to have Good powers, then it can be worked into the campaign as a surprise.



SORCERY



C.H. '07

In the tunnels uptown

the Rat's own dream guns him down

As shots echo down them hallways in the night

No one watches when the ambulance pulls away

or as the girl shuts out the bedroom light

Outside the street's on fire, in a real death waltz

between what's flesh and what's fantasy

And the poets down here don't write nothin' at all

they just stand back and let it all be

And in the quick of the night they reach for their

moment and try to make an honest stand

But they wind up wounded, not even dead

tonight in Jungleland

- from **Jungleland**, by Bruce Springsteen

Sorcery as a concept has a lure to anyone with significant levels of the Sight. Those who are already sorcerors try to discourage others from following in their footsteps. Those who are Evil often discourage others because they do not want competition. Those in the Brotherhood discourage it because they are merciful. Any romantic attraction a Brotherhood recruit might have towards the idea of sorcery evaporates when they successfully cast their first spell, throwing up with the same horror and revulsion they would have felt if they had dashed open an infant's skull and feasted on the brains. Once you have morally defiled yourself to this level, you can either give it up and never touch sorcery again, or learn to harness the power, by will alone learning to turn one Evil into a tool to defeat another, to make the most of the psychic stain you know you will never be rid of.

Sorcery twists the laws of reality as the Blind perceive them. While anything in this universe has to operate according to the laws of this universe, Evil entities and minions may have advantages and limits that come from their otherworldly nature. For instance vampires are vulnerable to sunlight, and werewolves cannot regenerate from damage done by silver weapons. On the other hand, vampires are far stronger than their apparent physique would indicate, and werewolves can regenerate physical damage far faster than a human could heal. A sorcerer can do things that similarly twist reality, but usually for shorter periods, though possibly in a more intense fashion.

The Blind cannot see sorcery for what it is. They will rationalize it if at all possible. A sorcerer hurling a fireball might be seen as a person with a large handgun. Someone who walks through steel bars might have been "seen" picking the lock, opening a cell door and then closing it behind them. A flying sorcerer might have a hang glider or parachute. If a person is directly confronted or targeted with sorcery, they normally deal with it like it had a Fear rating of 3, plus 1 for each full 1d of effect in the sorcery. Often they will be able to describe what truly transpired (not that anyone will believe them), but over time the memory will fade and they will rationalize it away, embarrassed that they believed something as outlandish as what they first described happening.

▼ **INTRODUCTION** - We've talked about sorcery and Evil and taint, but not in detail. Understand that in the **Code:Black** universe the linkage of sorcery to Evil is not a religious belief or a merely human moral conceit. In **Code:Black**, sorcery is Evil like water is wet. A practitioner of sorcery focuses and channels the Evil within them to locally warp the nature of reality, able to perform feats that are by all rational mundane explanations impossible. Only by effort of will does a sorcerer avoid succumbing to the lure of Evil that tugs at their soul, the temptation to use more and more power, for reasons that at first might seem rational and noble, but which quickly degenerate into madness and Evil.

Sorcery is the power to reshape reality, if only for a little while, yet for a sorcerer to stay sane they have to hold back and not use their power at the level they know they can. It is like a track star choosing to never run faster than a 15 second hundred meter dash, or a guitar virtuoso who never lets themselves play more than three chords. It is always frustrating to work at less than your full potential, and always tempting to push past the safe edge...just this once...because there is no other way...because I want to...

Sorcery is as much an art as a science. It is a part of the universe as much as Evil is, and part of what the majority of people are Blind to. To those that can practice it, it is clearly Evil, a constant source of temptation and a power whose source is clearly our ancient ties to the Prison and our Evil heritage.

Sorcery is something that you can learn and even research without knowing exactly how or why it works. It is a slippery knowledge that avoids being codified into forms easily taught. While the basic techniques to draw and focus energy can be learned by most, a spell is really a set of guidelines rather than a cookbook. A description could involve mental states, emotions, things to think of, things to *avoid* thinking of, techniques a particular sorcerer found useful, and so on. The template for a sorcery might be a book filled with nonsense phrases in no known language, a piece of music, a ditty that keeps running through your head, a painting or a piece of sculpture or even something like a wrought iron 'bar puzzle' or something like a Rubik's Cube.

To learn the sorcery, you have to understand what that template is trying to say, then figure out how to 'say' it yourself. There will be a lot of frustrating study time where absolutely nothing happens, until you finally have that "eureka!" moment when it all finally clicks together.

In terms of in-game power, sorcery can do things that technology can't, but it is extremely difficult to make a sorcerer adventurer who can do by magic alone what a normally skilled adventurer can do with tools, weapons and armor. Brotherhood sorcerers who can make minions of Evil tremble with the arcane wave of a hand are few and far between. Many agents will know a little Sorcery, because it is an "edge", and they need all the help they can get. Even low-power sorceries can be extremely useful against inanimate objects or the Blind.

▼ **Note** - This concept of how sorceries are communicated could be the background for an adventure. Imagine if some ancient 'lost sorcery' or true name was embodied in something like a book or sculpture, but a few pages of the book or a piece of the sculpture is missing. ❖ Incomplete, the object cannot be used to learn the sorcery, so the missing piece has to be acquired and reunited with the rest before final understanding of the sorcery is possible. Acquisition of the missing piece might involve theft from a museum, the murder of an antiquities dealer, a privately funded archaeological dig in an obscure location, car chases, gun battles, international smuggling rings and all sorts of other fun stuff. And that's just to keep the piece from falling into the wrong hands. And it could be the other way around. The piece might be part of a true name the Brotherhood needs to help defeat a particular Evil, so Evil will be going to some effort to make sure the Brotherhood doesn't get it.

In addition to this sometimes maddening vagueness, sorcery can also be linked to or altered by events that even the Sighted have problems understanding. For instance, the phases of the moon are important for some aspects of sorcery, though no one can say for sure why. Similarly, sunlight hampers some sorceries, while it seems to be required for the making of Elder Seals. Place is a component of many particularly Evil magics, where certain ceremonies can only be done effectively done in temples, on altars, by those who are fully Evil, and so on.

Governments and to some extent the Brotherhood have tried to develop sources of paranormal power that are not tied to Evil, with little success. The best that anyone has ever managed (as far as the Brotherhood knows) are dangerously psychotic sorcerer-like mutants that go on a rampage and have to be destroyed before they develop powers beyond human ability to control. ❖

❖ *The Ninth Gate*(1999), Artisan Entertainment
❖ *Sole Survivor*(2000), TV mini-series (Dean Koontz novel)

▼ **POWER FRAMEWORK** - Until the gamemaster has a solid handle on the gameworld, sorcery in **Code:Black** should be limited to the spells listed later, but for those wishing to add to this list, the following framework is used for all **Code:Black** sorcery:

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	+20
◆	Requires minimum Fate of 5	-5
●	Resisted power	-5
◆	Soul-staining effect	-20
●	Damages user's Hits	-5
●	Power use is distracting	-5
Total modifier		-20

The gameworld base is just a fixed amount that helps set the casting difficulty of sorceries to an appropriate level. Since sorceries require a minimum Fate of 5, this means that the Blind and marginally Sighted cannot be sorcerors (though they can learn the Sorcery skill and use items that require this skill). Resisted power means that the effect of any sorcery is automatically reduced by the Fate of whatever it is targeting or affecting. Inanimate objects are considered to have a Fate of zero.

EXAMPLE: If you have a magical shield up with an effect of 3d+0, it would stop a 3d+0 bullet. But, if a werewolf with a Fate of 2d+0 took a swing at you, your shield effect would be dropped to 1d+0 before the werewolf's claws connected with it.

A sorceror casting on themselves is counted as having a Fate of 0d+1 for each full die in Fate, and a genuinely willing target is counted as having a Fate of 0d+2 for each full die in Fate.

EXAMPLE: A sorceror with a Fate of 3d+1 casting a spell on themselves resists with a Fate of 1d+0.

This effect does not apply to indirect use of power. A rock hurled by sorcery is *not* reduced in effect when it hits a creature (but a rock actively manipulated like a melee weapon would have its effect reduced, since the sorcery is still surrounding the rock when it hits). A magical bolt of fire might be reduced in effect when hitting an Evil creature, but if it sets off a barrel of gasoline next to that Evil creature, the gasoline's effect is *not* diminished. The resisted nature of sorcery makes it easy for sorcerors to affect inanimate objects or the Blind, but difficult to affect other sorcerors or Evil creatures with a high Fate. On the other hand, many Evil creatures that are hard to hurt with mundane damage are quite vulnerable to sorcerous damage...if you can overcome their Fate.

The last three special modifiers are explained in detail below.

◆ **Soul-staining effect** (-20 cost) - In **Code:Black**, power corrupts. A sorcery is not like a gun, which is a physical object that simply projects the will and intent of the person using it. A sorcery is the barely controlled manifestation of the Evil in all of us. By letting it out, even for Good purposes, you are tempted and twisted towards Evil. Any time you use a sorcery at a base effect of *more than* your Will minus 1d, you gain 1 point towards a negative Personality Trait that is linked somehow to the nature or use of the power. Even benign powers like healing or protecting against damage can have their dark side. A person who heals might be tempted to secretly cause harm, just so they can gain glory or recognition by healing it. A person who armors themselves against damage might in time become reckless, or go the other way and be dependent on the power, fearing to do anything unless they have protective abilities ready.

On the other hand, if power use is kept to levels of Will minus 1d or less, no stigma is suffered. This lower level of power can be quite useful, but is by no means an overwhelming advantage, and the control evidenced by the limited use shows the sorceror is keeping the potential Evil in check.

By "base level" we mean the level of Fate you choose to use when casting the sorcery. Unless an adventurer is acting under gamemaster control, they may always choose to use less than their full Fate when casting a sorcery in order to keep this at a safe level.

EXAMPLE: A sorceror with a Fate roll of 3d+2 and a Will roll of 3d+0 has a maximum safe power level of 2d+0 (their Will roll minus 1d). This sorceror may choose to only use a Fate of 2d+0 when casting a sorcery, reducing their power effects to an Evil-safe level.

In the **Code:Black** universe, you may *not* get a reduction in difficulty for lower power levels *unless this is part of the power description* (the "reduced 1d effect" modifier). On the other hand, if you take the "increased 1d effect" modifier on a power description, this will increase the effect of a sorcery *without* increasing the base level of Fate used.

EXAMPLE: A sorceror using a 2d+0 Fate on a sorcery with "increased 1d effect" gets a 3d+0 effect but only counts as having used 2d+0 Fate.

EABA

Many sorceries will have an instant effect like damage, but sorceries can be cast with longer effects. Each 4 Time levels a sorcery lasts adds 1 to the base effect for purposes of comparing it to the Will minus 1d amount. If you suffer any soul-staining effect, it is an amount based on the *total* time, *not* each time increment over the safe amount.

EXAMPLE: An adept with a Will of 3d+1 casts a protective sorcery with a base effect of 1d+1, less than the safe power of 2d+1 that this sorcerer can safely channel. However, if the sorcery is maintained for a while, the corrosive effect on their psyche increases. At a time level of +4 (4 seconds), the base effect is counted as 1d+2, increasing to 2d+0 at a time level of +8 (16 seconds) and 2d+1 at a time level of +12 (1 minute). If it is maintained until a time level of +13 through +16 (1.4 to 4 minutes), the sorcerer will gain 1 point towards a negative Personality Trait.

Creatures or Evil humans have an identical power framework to that for adventurers, but *this* modifier becomes "must be irredeemably Evil (-20 cost)". Sorceries known before one becomes irredeemably Evil are still retained. Only the modifier changes. There are sorceries that can only be used with the "evil" modifier, so the bad guys can have sorceries that the good guys can never learn.

▼ **Note** - As a bit of game flavor, any sorcerous adventurers will have their starting Personality somewhat shaped by the use of full-power sorceries.

● **Damages user's Hits** (-5 cost) - This is a variant of the **EABA** power modifier of the same description. In this case, trying to cast any sorcery causes the sorcerer to take 1 Hit of non-lethal (fatiguing) damage. This happens whether the casting is successful or not. This damage cannot be recovered until the sorcery ends. For game balance, sorceries cannot be used to recover Hits or Attribute loss resulting from casting sorceries.

● **Power use is distracting** (-5 cost) - All spell use is distracting. Anyone who has a sorcery going that has longer than an instant effect will suffer a +1 difficulty on all other rolls while the magical energy courses through their body. The first few times a novice sorcerer casts a spell, their vision dims, their limbs start to quiver, and a torrent of sensation roars through their body, threatening to blot out awareness of anything except the magic and its target. With experience, a sorcerer learns to compensate somewhat, but continuous effects will always be distracting to the level of a +1 penalty.

Other modifiers - Sorceries can have any other modifiers the gamemaster chooses to allow, but there are certain effects that should be prohibited or looked at *extremely* closely before allowing:

Teleportation of any kind
Clairvoyance or any sort of remote sensing
Viewing of the past, future or anything involving more than the vaguest of prophetic abilities
Any creation of matter other than summoning
Evil minions
Powers that last forever

Sorcerers, especially those who are Evil, can be very powerful in a world of the Blind. Adventurers as sorcerers are limited by the soul-destroying nature of full-power sorcery, the eventual fatiguing effect of casting multiple sorceries, and of course, the problem that many sorceries are next to useless against Evil creatures with a high Fate. Evil however, can use sorcery to devastating effect on the Blind, so sorcerous human criminals can be more or less immune to capture or incarceration by Blind law enforcement authorities.

Individual sorceries may have some special modifiers appropriate to the **Code:Black** universe, but all sorceries must have the previous set. You can have more modifiers, but never less. In fact, most sorceries will have more modifiers, just to get the casting difficulty down to more manageable levels.

Sorcery and Adventurers - While the Brotherhood does much of its work in urban areas and its operatives are often highly educated, these types of people are often not the best sorcerers. Living in a highly structured world of fixed rules does not enhance understanding of the subjective and seemingly irrational nature of sorcery. A witch doctor has a better head start on sorcery than a Ph.D. The Ph.D. might know from demonstration that sorcery works, and that it is a knowledge that can be learned like any other, but he or she at some fundamental level does not *truly* believe, and has to overcome that resistance. The witch doctor on the other hand, has a belief in spirits and the unseen, and rituals with their own elusive logic to make things happen. This sort of differentiation is not enforced in the adventurer creation process, but it is something to think about. The gamemaster may set up adventurer templates or backgrounds, where a player can get a bonus in points that can only be put towards certain skills in exchange for taking certain limits on the adventurer.

The Blind perceive the effects of sorcery as some form of coincidence, a plausible use of technology with the same effect, and if no plausible explanation can be invented, they often simply "didn't see it". That is, if questioned later, they will say they "were looking the other way", or "I must have had my eyes closed", or "I was too busy running away", or anything that lets them convince themselves that they never saw it happen. As it often happens with other Evils, this self-delusion is "contagious" among the Blind. What a Blind person convinces themselves about a sorcery they see on a video record becomes what other people see as well. Or, more often than not, the video record gets "accidentally" erased, written over or lost, since that is the easiest way to make an unexplainable event "not happen". This is not a deliberate, conscious destruction of evidence, just a subconscious carelessness that can border on incompetence.

EXAMPLE: An building's security camera catches a fight between a Brotherhood sorcerer and a werewolf. The policeman assigned to retrieve the video record views it at the scene. He then puts it on top of his car when unlocking the door, and simply forgets to grab it before driving off. It falls off the roof somewhere on the way back to the station, and gets run over a few hundred times before anyone can retrieve it. Meanwhile, the security guard at the building has put the original DVD-RW back in the recorder and has accidentally overwritten the only other record of the event by the time the police call up and ask for a new copy.

Especially persistent and intelligent Blind investigators may come across information that simply cannot be explained by the way the world as they know it works. Over time this can result in personality problems, gaining Sight or both.

Using Sorcery - Sorcery skill (WIL based) allows use of powers, vs. a difficulty based on each individual sorcery. There is also an Enchantment skill that is used to make magical objects. However, Enchantment skill is not generally available to adventurers and is simply a background skill for select extras to have as part of a plot of campaign.

In the **Code:Black** universe, there is no overall Sorcery skill. Each spell is a *separate* Will-based skill. So, if an adventurer has Sorcery skill, they have *one* spell. When they first learned to channel and harness the power within, that was the sorcery they learned. Additional sorceries are 5S each, and are treated the same way. A player can if they wish, spend 10S on a new sorcery and get a +1d on their normal Sorcery skill roll with that *particular* sorcery. Sorceries learned after adventurer creation must be from time-based experience gains rather than adventuring experience. Any change in an existing sorcery costs 1S, and the sorcery can only be used in the way it is described.

EXAMPLE: If you learned a sorcery that required gestures and you eventually progressed to where you were able to do it without gestures, you could not fall back to using gestures in a difficult situation.

EXAMPLE: If you knew a generic "Slice" sorcery and then upgraded it to a "Slice" that used the true names of stone, that would effectively be two separate sorceries. You could not use the generic version after learning the true names version unless you spent 5S to learn the true names version as a new sorcery.

To learn a new sorcery, it usually must be taught in person by someone who knows it. In practical terms, it means the teacher is giving up 1S of time spent that could be spent on their own personal improvement to assist the person learning the new spell. To learn a new spell completely on your own or to design a brand new one (with gamemaster permission) will cost 10S instead of 5S. Half of these points must come from time-based experience gains. There is no limit to the number of spells an adventurer can learn, but starting adventurers can know no more than one at an Age of Young Adult, two at Adult, and two more for each bracket past Adult.

The gamemaster can look over the existing spell list and decide which if any of the spells have certain pre-requisites that must be known before adventurers can learn them. For instance, Brotherhood members may be prohibited from teaching spells (or particular spells) unless they have gotten permission from Brotherhood higher-ups. This permission may be based on an adventurer's status within the Brotherhood, their service record or personality profile. Adventurers denied permission might be able to find a teacher elsewhere (not all sorcerors are Brotherhood members), but if found out, it could adversely affect the adventurer's likelihood of promotion within the Brotherhood.

Special effect - One use of the "special effect (+10)" modifier is the notion of "true names". There are magics that are "banes", sorceries that affect only a specific class of being or material. Such a magic ignores *all* the *inherent* protections of that being or material and often directly affects the Hits of the target. Examples of a specific class might be weres, vampires, demons, wood, steel, bronze or stone. Such a spell does not negate any extra protection the target has, so a vampire in a bulletproof vest gets the protection of the vest against such a sorcery, even if the vampire's own ability to reduce damage is negated.

It is the nature of magic that being able to strike at the heart of a thing or being requires that the sorceror know the "true name" of the thing or being. For most objects or materials or non-sentient creatures, simply being able to accurately name the thing is enough (so being able to distinguish limestone from granite might be necessary to use such a spell on a stone wall). An animal that has an implied identity (a name it recognizes and answers to) would use that as its true name.

If a thing is a handmade item, or one in which the owner has invested considerable time or emotion, then the thing has a name, and the name must be known to gain the benefits of the spell. In the case of generic items or materials, knowing its true name is just an Average(7) skill roll on whatever skill is appropriate to the nature of the material and the spell. This roll can be made on a default Awareness roll for common materials, but esoteric materials will require an actual skill roll.

If a being is sentient, then it has a true name, even if it has never considered what that name is. A human (or former human's) true name is not necessarily the same as their given name or nickname. It may not be a name at all, but rather a concept, and it can even be something that cannot be put into words, but is simply a state of mind or being that can only be guessed at through long investigation and deduction. Regardless of its nature, the true name *can* be expressed by others, and so can be part of a sorcery that targets that class of being, and that being in particular.

As expected, anyone who knows of magic does not give out their true name, and the giving of a true name to someone else is the ultimate expression of trust in them. A true name is not words that can be read from a book. It is something that must be *understood*. That is, you could find the written expression of the true name of a demon in a rare old tome, but until you understand *why* the demon has that name, it would just be useless syllables. Those who know the true names of Evil beings tend to keep this to themselves. Since the simple sound or letters of a name are insufficient for magical use, if something powerful knows that you possess its true name, it will probably try to remove you from the picture before you can pass the information behind that name to anyone else...

The downside of a magic with this special ability to penetrate defenses is that the spell is *absolutely* useless and ineffective against any target that is either outside the particular targeting class, or whose name is unknown.

EXAMPLE: If you cannot tell between different types of stone, then the spell which allows you to slice stone with the power of your mind will do nothing at all to any stone.

The upside is that even the most powerful of beings can be harmed by such spells. But, it is worth noting that these powerful beings seldom rely on a *single* line of defense, and even a spell invoking a true name can bounce off some other kind of magical or mundane defense.

A special effect on a magic can work for both offense, defense or information purposes. Offensive use of a true name is simple, the defenses of the thing or being are bypassed (but your effect is *still* reduced by their Fate). Defensively, knowing the true name means that the inherent damage of the thing or being is negated (if your effect is greater than or equal to their Fate or the Fate of the item you are defending against). So yes, by invoking a defensive spell using the true name of lead, you could be immune to bullets...until someone changes to a clip of steel armor-piercing rounds. You could be immune to the Strength of a demon... until it picks up a baseball bat. There are so many easy ways to get around a defensive true name use that such spells are hardly used.

▼ **Note** - Defensive use of true names can leave interesting forensic evidence. A bullet stopped by the true name of lead is mashed like it ran into something, but there are no marks from what it ran into. A lead round with a steel core might be found with the steel core missing (still embedded in the victim). Other oddities might show up in police reports, and be things that catch the Brotherhood's interest.

An information spell using a true name simply bypasses any inherent barriers against gaining that information. It does not negate any need to overcome the Will of a target, but it does negate any inherent defenses against information spells the target might have. Again, beings with lots of secrets to hide usually have multiple layers of security on those secrets. An information spell, even with a true name invoked, cannot reveal other true names.

Last, no sorcerer has ever managed to cast a spell that invokes more than one true name, nor have multiple spells in operation that invoke true names. The use of true names is pushing the fundamental fabric of the universe, and if you try too hard, the universe pushes back. The side effects of this are up to the gamemaster, but they range from unpleasant to fatal.

▼ **KNOWN SORCERIES** - In a page or so is a partial list of the sorceries that might be known or known of by adventurers. The spells listed are in their quickest, simplest form. This may make some of them difficult to impossible to cast, but adventurers can learn them in forms with various crutches to help them cast it easier. The most common modifiers a sorcery will be learned with to make it easier to cast are below.

Modifier	Amount
● Requires gestures	-5
● Requires vocalization	-5
● Requires one turn preparation	-2
● Only during the day	-5
● Only during the night	-5
● Side effect	-20
● Reduced 1d effect	-10
● Requires a focus	-5
■ Power costs +3A	-10
◆ Triggered	+10

There are other modifiers that can be used, or to different levels. A ritual might take a lot of time, for instance, or a focus might be required instead of optional, or too cumbersome to carry rather than something easily worn like jewelry.

● **Side effect** (-20 cost) - A side effect on a sorcery is uniformly bad. It means you invoked the energies incorrectly and suffered some form of backlash. A side effect can only be taken on sorceries with a final modifier total of 23 or more *after* this modifier (a difficulty of Hard(11) to cast). That is, you can't have a side effect on a sorcery that you are unlikely to ever fail at. Appropriate side effects are 2d+0 non-lethal damage for instant effects, three levels in some form of Personality Trait appropriate to the sorcery for the intended duration of a long-term effect, or some dangerous or embarrassing situation that would result from a botch. For instance, a sorcery designed to make you invisible might make you be obvious, or a sorcery designed to confuse others might confuse you instead. A sorcery that already has a side effect in its description may not have a second one.

● **Requires a focus** (-5 cost) - A "focus" for most sorceries is a mnemonic aid, something with no inherent power, but which assists the sorcerer in acquiring the precise mental state needed to invoke the power. It could also be a psychological crutch, or a confidence booster the sorcerer is not comfortable without. In either case, lacking the focus increases the difficulty of the sorcery by +2.

EXAMPLE: Father Tobias no longer believes in the traditional view of Christianity, but his faith is actually stronger for *knowing* that Good and Evil exist, and that there is a place beyond mortal life for those who follow Good. Father Tobias is also a sorcerer. As the Evil energy courses through him, he clutches a crucifix blessed by Saint Charbel (a 19th century hermit who was also a member of the Brotherhood). Without the crucifix, he doubts his ability to withstand the damning effects of sorcery, and the difficulty of the task is increased by +2.

■ **Power costs +3A(-10 cost)** - For adventurers, the +3A modifier really means that the adventurer overdid it while learning the sorcery and suffered some psychological scarring. The +3A cost is for the therapy they underwent to undo this damage. They gained a greater insight into the sorcery from the experience, but they paid a higher price for it. And yes, you can have sorceries that *require* a sorcerer undergo and recover from a specific psychological trauma and recovery in order to learn them.

EXAMPLE: There might be a sorcery that requires a sorcerer learn it during an extended altered state through opium addiction. But they cannot cast the spell until they quit the opium, and go through full withdrawal while an opium pipe sits within easy reach...

◆ **Triggered(+10 cost)** - In this gameworld, the *first* spell an adventurer has cast with the "triggered" modifier is +0 difficulty to other actions when the spell is "waiting". On any turn the spell is triggered or active, the modifier increases to +1. Each triggered spell past the first that is "waiting" is a +1 difficulty to other actions, and is also +1 when it is active.

EXAMPLE: An adventurer might have an armor spell that only triggers when he is struck in melee. This is a +0 distraction normally, and +1 on any turn in which the adventurer is actually struck and the power flares up. The adventurer could not have such a spell to trigger on gunfire, because bullets move too fast for a perception-based trigger to react (you have to see it coming in order to trigger in time).

For a spell to have a non-instant duration after it is triggered, it must have a conventional duration *and* state-based duration. The state-based duration is "until the trigger condition is met" and the normal duration starts at that point. A sorcerer cannot have more "held" spells than their full dice in Fate.

EXAMPLE: An adventurer with Shield adjusts it to be triggered(+10 cost), state-based duration(+25 cost), total concentration(-10 cost), takes 3 minutes to activate(-15 cost), gestures & vocalization(-10 cost), for a total modifier on the spell of +0. So, once they have the spell prepared, they can just utter a magical syllable to invoke the Shield, which then lasts for the normal 30 second duration of the Shield spell.

The manipulation of modifiers also means the gamemaster can control the overall utility of sorceries by setting the other modifiers that are initially attached to each sorcery. Some might only be known in particular forms, and require time (and experience) from the adventurer in order to modify it.

So, adventurers can know a sorcery and be able to usefully cast it at their starting level of skill, and alter the modifiers as they improve their Will or Sorcery skill. In general, the fact that many adventurers will be casting at reduced effect to spare their sanity will make things easy enough.

Nomenclature - Most sorceries have some ancient name in a forgotten language, but 21st century Brotherhood members tend to give them simpler names in their native language. So, the sorcery which purists call "sisa", which means "righting of wrongs" in Sumerian, is usually called "null" or "nullify" or "counterspell" by most modern practitioners. You can almost tell the personality or background of a sorcerer by the terminology they use for their knowledge. For instance, sorcerers whose background is some branch of the Catholic Church will invariably use Latin names for their sorceries.

Shield - Protects against physical harm. There is a separate version that protects against energy (including magically created energy), but there is no version that protects against both at once.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Lethal damage	+40
●	Prevents an effect	+30
●	Physical damage only	-5
●	Lasts for 30 seconds	+10
●	Melee range	+0
●	Works on self only	-5
Total modifier		+50
Difficulty to cast at full effect		16

A sorcerer who can safely cast this at a 2d+0 level can make themselves pretty much immune to small caliber pistols, knives and blunt objects, and mostly immune to punches and kicks by the Blind. Blind assailants will tend to think their attacks missed, or were deflected by something the sorcerer was holding or carrying. Note that there are variants that protect a boundary, like the threshold of a house, or a circle on the ground, and such variants that resist energy also resist the inherent energy of anything with Fate, making it harder to cross (or escape through) that boundary.

Slice - A general purpose spell that only works against inanimate matter (Evil creatures are not inanimate). It is a handy means of breaking bonds, cutting guns in half with your mind[✿] and so on.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Lethal damage	+40
●	Melee range	+0
●	Inanimate matter only	-10
●	Only on very small objects	-10
Total modifier		+30
Difficulty to cast at full effect		12

Note that this spell has no duration, so each attack made against an object is a separate use of the spell. Sorcerers will often buy the duration up to a Time level of at least 3 (3 seconds) to give them a few attempts to cut through an object. Despite the name, the spell actually corrodes and weakens the object targeted, and the Blind will see the effect as someone just breaking a weak, rusted or corroded item. Remember that the spell only targets very small objects, which will be at least a +4 difficulty to hit. This is usually not a concern in non-combat situations, as the sorcerer simply grabs the object before casting the spell.

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Touch - This is the equivalent of having tiny invisible fingers. You can reach into a mechanical device and fiddle with it like you had a set of custom tools, except you can *feel* what the "tools" are touching. It has no specific effect and has a Strength of 0d+0, but it does allow the use of skills that would otherwise require the aforementioned tools. Brotherhood sorcerers can use it to pick locks, undo window latches from the inside, and so on.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Acts as Agility	+30
●	Range of 3 meters	+5
●	Inanimate matter only	-10
●	Lasts as caster wills	+15
Total modifier		+20
Difficulty to cast at full effect		10

The spell does *not* give any telekinetic "lift & carry" ability. The effect is localized to either a place or a thing. It could be cast at the place where a lock is, in which case it could act on anything placed at that location, or on the lock, in which case it could act on the lock anywhere it moves within the range of the spell. You could cast the spell 3 meters away to catch a thrown rope and then use it to tie the rope to something *at that location*, but you could not cast it on the rope and then carry the rope from one place to another. Remember that any use of a skill with this spell outside of touching distance will have an increase in difficulty equal to the Range level. Note that the spell will be resisted if the effect is touching someone, so tying a rope around a person would be at much reduced effect.

The Blind will perceive the use of the spell as some sort of tinkering (it looks like you are picking a lock or jimmying a window), or really clever use of a skill, like tossing a rope around something and having it tie itself into a knot.

✿ *Mystery Men* (1999), Universal Studios

EABA

Bane - A spell that bypasses inherent blessings or defenses of a class of things or a specific living thing, which requires the sorcerer know the true name of the thing affected. For inanimate objects, this usually requires an Average(7) skill roll to correctly ascertain the true name to be used. For creatures or other beings, knowing the true name is a matter of adventurer experience. So, if the game-master gave an adventurer the true name at some point in play, they have it, otherwise the spell is useless against that being.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Lethal damage	+40
●	Range of 15 meters	+15
●	True name effect	+10
Total modifier		+45
Difficulty to cast at full effect		15

Remember that this spell only works against a limited selection of targets, and living things still resist the effect, they just lose any inherent protection against the damage. Each Bane spell is separate, and affects a particular being or class of things. The uses can duplicate the effects of other spells. For instance, if you knew the true names of the metals involved, you could bypass the inherent armor of a set of handcuffs, which duplicates the effect of the Slice spell. One good use of the spell is against inanimate objects held or carried by the Blind, since the damage of the spell cannot harm the person carrying the item. See the previous notes on true names for more information.

Baneblade - Like the Bane spell, but it conjures a blade of spectral force that the sorcerer wields like any other kind of blade.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Lethal damage	+40
●	Melee range	+0
●	True name effect	+10
●	Lasts as caster wills	+25
●	Requires a mundane skill roll	-5
Total modifier		+50
Difficulty to cast at full effect		16

Damage from a baneblade is *not* modified by the Strength of the user, but the Strength of the user may come into play in any sort of shoving match involving the baneblade. This blade *can* be used to block or parry the direct effects of any creature it is used against, and suffers no damage from doing this. The user of the baneblade can be knocked off their feet by blocking an attack from a much larger foe, however. Use of the baneblade in combat is not subject to the +1 difficulty for having a spell in use, since using the baneblade is what the spell is about.

The Blind will perceive a baneblade as a sword or some other melee weapon appropriate to the area and culture.

Defy - This spell allows the sorcerer to contradict the normal laws of nature to some extent. This spell has many, many variants, each for a specific task. In general, it reduces the effect of a natural force, up to the point where it is negated entirely. An obvious example would be gravity. It does not grant the ability to fly, but it does allow the sorcerer to hover or leap amazing distances. In this case, the effect counts as Strength, and it is compared to the weight of what you are trying to negate gravity for. If the Strength can lift the object, the sorcerer can make it hover. You could defy momentum to negate the size advantage of a large object striking a smaller one, defy friction to let a person swim remarkably fast or make a surface too slippery to walk on, or defy conductivity to block the flow of electricity through an object. A Defy spell can act as armor against a particular type of incidental damage, but is not an armoring spell for use in combat.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Acts as/adds/subtracts Attribute	+30
●	Increased 1d effect	+10
●	Melee range	+0
●	Can only negate to zero effect	-10
●	Lasts for 10 seconds	+7
Total modifier		+17
Difficulty to cast at full effect		9

Remember that each type of Defy will be a separate spell, so if you wanted to Defy gravity (acts as Strength) and Defy electricity (subtracts from the Strength of the current) it would be two separate spells. The gamemaster will judge the exact game effects of a particular spell. In some cases, the same spell can be treated in different ways.

EXAMPLE: Defying gravity might count as Strength to see if it offsets your weight, but to see how far you can leap, it might add to your Health, and a running jump might get you as far as a sprint with the adjusted Health. A +2d effect would get you an extra 6 meters of distance, maybe enough to get from one rooftop to another while chasing something Evil through the darkness...

Verify - This spell gives the sorcerer heightened awareness to both analyze information and read body language and physical signs to better tell if someone is telling the truth. In game terms, the sorcerer gets a bonus to their Awareness of the spell's effect (up to double normal Awareness), which then rolls against the Will of the target (the gamemaster makes the roll). The result is 'true', 'false' or 'hedge'. That is, they are telling the truth as they believe it to be, they are not, or they are not telling everything they know. On a failed roll, the gamemaster can give any answer they want, even an accurate one. Anyone with a high Fate is largely immune to this spell unless you know their true name, in which case it has a better chance of working properly.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Adds to Awareness	+30
■	Lasts as caster wills	+25
Total modifier		+35
Difficulty to cast at full effect		13

This spell only affects the caster's Awareness for the described purposes. While they may be picking up very subtle visual or other sensory cues, the sorcerer does not have increased perception rolls for any purpose except reading the truth of other people's statements. The Blind do not actually perceive this spell, but may be impressed with the sorcerer's intuitiveness.

Blast - The generic name for any one of the many direct damage spells available. These can be based on kinetic punctures, electricity, heat, cold, and so on. Some creatures or materials are more vulnerable to some effects than others. In the modern world, electrical effects seem to be the easiest for the Blind to rationalize. The target is perceived to be struck by lightning, has a power line fall on them, or some other coincidental electrical mishap occurs.

The common characteristic of the different versions of this spell is that they are instant effects and require no continuing effort on the part of the sorcerer after they are cast. A blast can be against a single target or an area, but each variant is a separate spell. A variant of note acts like a melee attack, a sort of spectral sword. This can be done as an instant effect, but is more commonly cast once and maintained as long as it needed. This continual effect is distracting, but is not as draining as casting new spells. The distraction does not apply to anything the sorcerer is using the spectral blade against, since that is more or less the target of the spell. However, in some versions the sorcerer is less aware of other potential opponents.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Lethal damage	+40
●	Range of up to 63 meters	+25
Total modifier		+45
Difficulty to cast at full effect		15

Vampirism - There is no genuine healing possible with sorcery, since sorcery is the channelling of Evil, and an altruistic healing is not a normal aspect of Evil. However, Evil is more than selfish enough to realize that recovering the effects of damage is often to one's personal advantage. The vampirism spell allows a sorcerer to lay hands on multiple people and transfer damage from one to the other on a 2-for-1 basis. That is, each 2 Hits inflicted on someone heals 1 Hit on the sorcerer (or someone else). The maximum amount that can be healed is the adjusted Fate roll in the spell (counting each full die as 3 points), and this is a total, not an amount that can be healed per use of the spell. The resisted aspect of the spell applies to whoever is going to resist the spell the most.

EXAMPLE: So, if your adjusted effect after being resisted was 1d+2, you could heal no more than 5 Hits of injury on one person, by inflicting 10 Hits of damage on someone else. Once this healing had been accomplished, further sorcerous healing by that sorcerer would be ineffectual.

The damage inflicted by this spell can be spread out over several victims (one per 3 points healed). Recipients of this damage do not have to be willing, but they do have to be touched by the sorcerer, and the process takes about ten seconds of uninterrupted work. If there is a difference in hit brackets between the victim and the person healed, the difference applies to the Hits taken by the victim, with a minimum of 1 Hit taken by the "donor" for any healing. A small victim used as a damage sink for a large recipient of healing will be affected more, while a large victim used as a damage sink for a small recipient of healing will be affected less. The recipient of the healing and the victim must be the same type of being or at least halfway compatible. Any lack of compatibility reduces the healing effect by the proportion.

EXAMPLE: A half human-half devil sorcerer could use a full human as a source for vampiric healing, but would only get half the normal effect. The human victim would take the *full* effect, however.

This spell *can* regenerate lost body parts and heal critical damage, but how well depends on the power of the sorcerer. Amputations or critical damage heal at one-quarter the normal rate (1 Hit per 4 Hits restored). Minor losses like fingers might only require an effect of 1d+1 to restore. A hand or foot might be 2d+2, and an entire limb might be 4d+0. Trying to restore lost function after the injury has naturally healed is going to take more effort than normal.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Lethal damage	+40
■	Reverses an effect	+30
●	Melee range	+0
●	Takes 10 seconds to cast	-7
●	Two-for-one trade effect	-10
Total modifier		+33
Difficulty to cast at full effect		13

The Brotherhood has a number of highly skilled vampiric healers, who rely on various spell modifiers to get the extra dice of effect needed for regenerations and other difficult healing tasks. Finding "Hit donors" is the normal problem. It make not be ethically sound, but the Brotherhood does use captured Evil half-humans for this purpose.

To the Blind, this spell is likely to invoke a profound religious response if they are seeing the healing, and horror if they see the damage done, proportional to the level of the effect. It is not something they can easily rationalize unless the sorcerer happens to have a paramedic kit handy that the Blind can somehow convince themselves was used to save someone's life.

Convince - This spell attempts to shift attitudes, to add to a person's natural charisma, and at high enough levels, to mentally compel someone. The effect of the spell is compared to the Will of the target, and if the spell's roll beats the target's Will roll, the target can be convinced to do something that they would possibly do for someone they are friends with or have a great deal of familiarity with.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Subverts Will	+40
●	Increased +1d effect	+10
Total modifier		+30
Difficulty to cast at full effect		12

EXAMPLE: You might convince a guard that they don't need to see your ID badge, or convince a traffic cop to give you a warning instead of a ticket. But it is unlikely that you will convince the guard at a nuclear missile silo to let you in, or convince a government official to give you classified information.

Remember that this spell is resisted, so the effect is reduced by the target's Fate before you compare rolls. Convincing someone, even if it fails, is not seen as a suspicious act by the target, but it might adversely affect other attempts to convince the person, so it is best used as the last or only means to try to influence someone.

EXAMPLE: If you try to 'convince' someone and fail, there is no harm done, but if you fail and then try to bribe them, you may start to set off alarm bells in their head. So, you might try the bribery first, and if that fails, then try to 'convince' them.

If you attempt to *compel* someone with the spell, it is another matter. Compelling someone is forcing them to accede to the demand, regardless of who you are or the repercussions of the act. Compelling acts the same as convincing, but the target gets any modifiers they would normally have because of their personality against doing what you ask. Sense of duty, fear of job loss, patriotism and so on, which can add anywhere from +2 to +10 to the difficulty. If you succeed despite the added difficulty, they will accede to your demand, and probably be a bit hostile about it, or stiffly polite at best. They will rationalize it through the Blindness as best they can, perhaps believing you are someone else or that you somehow displayed authorization that gave permission to ask for whatever had been compelled.

EXAMPLE: Compelling a security guard might get them to open a door for you, thinking that you were someone important, had shown proper ID and such. If security camera footage later showed them opening the door for a total stranger, the guard would be completely at a loss as to why they let you in.

However, if you attempt to compel someone and fail, the target of the spell will *immediately* become hostile within the bounds of their personality and authority. They might attack you, have the bouncers toss you out, try to arrest you, immediately sound an alarm, or whatever is appropriate for the person and situation. Evil creatures are immune to being convinced or compelled unless the sorcerer has their true name, in which case the spell works normally. Half-breed creatures are affected or not, depending on whether or not they have chosen to embrace Evil. Non-sentient animals are affected normally by the spell. If you have the true name of a creature that has no inherent resistance to the spell, their Will is reduced by 1d.

The Blind simply see the effect of this spell as a person who has exceptional charisma, persuasive talents or "hypnotic" powers.

Hide - This spell is related to Convince, but it acts on people or creatures seeing the caster. The caster is subconsciously downgraded as being someone not worth their attention. If the spell works, people completely ignore you as long as you do not try to interact with them. The resisted effect of the spell is compared to the Awareness of anyone who would normally spot you or be concerned by your presence. If your roll beats theirs, they do not consciously notice you, or if they do, they see you as someone who belongs there and thus requires no action. If your roll does not beat theirs, you are still less "noticeable", and your resisted effect reduces their Awareness rolls to notice you. If they do spot you, they will act as they normally would in such a situation.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Subverts Awareness	+40
■	Sensory targeting	+20
●	Lasts for 30 seconds	+10
Total modifier		+50
Difficulty to cast at full effect		16

EXAMPLE: You could walk down the corridors of a corporate research complex, and if your spell is successful, people assume you are an authorized visitor. If you stop someone to ask for directions, only then will they notice you are not wearing a 'Visitor' badge and get suspicious.

Since this spell targets everyone that sees the sorcerer, the easiest way to do it is to apply a single roll that represents the average Awareness of the people in the area, noting that if people do not have a reason to be suspicious, their Awareness for looking for such things likely to be reduced a few points. If there are exceptional individuals the sorcerer might encounter, they can be rolled for individually, and if the sorcerer does anything obviously suspicious (like running down the hallway), odds are that observers will get another roll.

If someone spots the sorcerer, they can draw other people's attention to the sorcerer, and once attention is focused, the sorcerer is readily noticed.

"Hey Bill, who's the new guy?"
 "What new guy?"
 "That new guy."
 "Oh, *that* guy. I dunno. We better check it out."

This spell actually works against Evil creatures as well as it does against everyone else, but if you have a true name, the Awareness of a particular person you are trying to hide from is reduced by 1d. However, the spell only hides you from *that* person, not anyone else. Hide does make you harder to spot by *any* means a being or creature can use, including magical location attempts. The spell has no effect on technological devices, and if you set off an alarm, the alarm will draw attention and likely (but not automatically) draw it to you. The increased level of suspicion and awareness may force another roll to remain successfully hidden, however.

Bypass - This spell is one of the few that requires a true name to function at all. It allows the sorcerer to personally treat one particular material or closely related set of materials as though it simply were not there. And the material acts as though the sorcerer were not there. So, the sorcerer knowing the true name of steel could walk through a set of prison bars as though they were not there. A sorcerer knowing the true name of lead could ignore lead bullets (but not copper jacketed lead bullets!).

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Lasts as caster wills	+25
■	Extraordinary range	+20
■	True name effect	+10
●	Inanimate matter only	-10
Total modifier		+25
Difficulty to cast at full effect		11

This spell was much more useful in previous centuries when things were often made of single materials. A sorcerer might easily walk through stone walls several meters thick, but would be stymied by drywall over wood with plumbing and wiring inside it.

The effect of the spell applies to the sorcerer and things in close proximity to them (like clothing, but probably not a briefcase or backpack), unless those items in close proximity would be affected by the spell. For instance, a spell allowing you to bypass steel might cause your steel wristwatch (or handcuffs!) to fall off. This particular effect can be interesting all by itself. A sorcerer who can bypass glass could pull something out of the middle of a glass paperweight without damaging it or the paperweight. A thief might be able to reach into a safe and grab the contents without opening it. Unless of course the safe wall was made of two dissimilar materials by someone who knew of this spell...

The spell is not completely useless however, and if used correctly and cleverly can be a lifesaver. Used incorrectly it can range from embarrassing to fatal. An item cannot displace another object, which means if the spell is dropped while one object is inside another, something has to go somewhere. Normally you would bounce to the nearest open space and apply lethal damage of 1d+0 per range level.

At gamemaster option or possibly the use of an extra modifier on the sorcery, the spell can allow partial interaction with the material it affects. For instance, a person might be able to climb a glass-faced skyscraper by interacting just enough with the glass to get hand and foot-holds. This would normally leave no visible traces, though at a microscopic level, some alteration of the material will be detectable. Possibly, some of the material might also end up in trace quantities in the sorcerer's bloodstream and tissues as well.

The Blind will rationalize this spell as best they can. If someone reaches through a safe and pulls something out, it will be assumed that the safe was opened and closed while the observer was glancing elsewhere.

Boost - Boost is a class of spells, one for each Attribute, and a number of variants.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Adds to an Attribute	+30
■	Lasts as caster wills	+25
●	Works on self only	-5
Total modifier		+30
Difficulty to cast at full effect		12

Fate cannot be boosted for generating spell effects, but it can be boosted to resist them. Remember that full Attribute boosts are only up to one-and-a-half the normal Attribute level, while boosts of only part of an Attribute can double the Attribute.

This spell has innumerable creative uses. The Blind often rationalize what they see as those adrenaline-pumped feats of human endeavor, like lifting a car off a loved one.

Fear - This spell gives the sorcerer the ability to generate a Fear reaction in onlookers. The adjusted effect of the spell is a separate Fate that generates a Fear rating in a single target. If the sorcerer is not 100% human, the target of the spell may see some of their inhuman nature, otherwise they perceive the sorcerer as somehow, indefinably dangerous or threatening.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Adds to an Attribute	+30
●	Melee range	+0
■	Lasts as caster wills	+25
Total modifier		+35
Difficulty to cast at full effect		13

This sorcery can only be used in the same sort of situations that would normally generate Fear responses. That is, there has to be a confrontational aspect that is not readily avoided. The Blind do not perceive the spell as something they have to rationalize, they are just unexplainably intimidated by the sorcerer.

Healing - This is a sorcerous analog to a vampire's ability to regenerate damage. In this case, the healer gives up some of their own life energy to restore that of the person to be healed. The spell is the result of Brotherhood attempts to make the Vampirism spell a little less onerous or morally questionable. In addition to the normal 1 non-lethal Hit of fatigue from casting a sorcery, the caster takes 1d+0 damage to their Health, which is recovered like *lethal* damage (based on their adjusted Health). Some of the lost Health is from sorcerous leeching of life force from the casters blood. Blood transfusions can restore 1 point of Health per full 3 points of Health damage taken. The rest of the damage to Health cannot be healed by anything but natural recuperation.

This sorcery will regenerate lost body bits up to the size of fingers or toes, and any damage completely healed does so with zero or minimal scarring. Incompletely healed injuries will continue to heal naturally, with less scarring than normal.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Lethal damage	+40
■	Reverses an effect	+30
●	Melee range	+0
●	Takes 1 minute to cast	-12
●	Damages casters Health	-10
Total modifier		+28
Difficulty to cast at full effect		12

The Brotherhood has a number of sorcerous healers on call in cases where exceptional healing talent is needed, plus access to very good conventional medical care. Given that most field operatives will be seriously injured at some point in their careers, this particular sorcery is always useful to have around. The Blind reaction to this sorcery is much like that for Vampirism.

Spuedo - Also called 'speedo' or just 'speed', this is a genuinely ancient sorcery, known from ancient Greek manuscripts, which mention yet older texts they drew from. This sorcery and others like it harken from the era long before repeating firearms, when sorcery, strength and skill were the only way a person had a decent chance against weres, vampires and other hard-to-dispatch minions.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Adds to an Attribute	+30
●	Melee range	+0
●	Requires total concentration	-10
●	Requires gestures & vocalization	-10
●	Increased +2d effect	+20
■	Lasts as caster wills	+25
Total modifier		+35
Difficulty to cast at full effect		13

The sorcery could be cast on oneself, but the other limits on the spell make this a less effective use most of the time. Historically, it would be cast by a sorcerous adept on a warrior, and maintained by the adept while the warrior went out to battle, allowing the warrior the benefit of the sorcery, with neither the distraction nor the psychological peril. The melee range of the spell is only for the casting. The recipient of the spell can move outside of this range once the effect has been created.

There is a version of this sorcery for Strength (*stereo*), Agility (*spuedo*), Awareness (*anablepo*), Will (*bouvlomai*) and Health (*endunamoo*). In the distant past, a team of elite Brotherhood warriors armed only with primitive weapons might have been backed up by a dozen sorcerors, who were in turn guarded by a hundred unaugmented warriors. These sorceries are still used on occasion, to beef up some of a team's stats before a combat assignment, but they are not used as a regular part of daily operations. For modern adventurers, the closely related Boost spells are generally more effective. The Blind perceive these spells much like they would the Boost spells.

▼ **Note** - Remember that like all sorceries, this one is resisted by the Fate of the target, meaning that high Fate adventurers will see less of a benefit. Also note the additional +2d effect. This helps counter the Fate of the recipient and also helps the sorcerer cast it at a useful level for a useful amount of time without suffering undue soul-blasting effects.

Prism - This sorcery creates a 3 meter wall of force that distorts light passing through it, but only in one direction. The sorceror and anyone else on their side can see clearly through it, but anyone on the other side sees a confusing kaleidoscope of mixed up images. The net effect of the sorcery is to force an Awareness roll to accurately target anything on the other side, and the effect of the sorcery subtracts from their Awareness *before* they make the roll.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Subtracts from Awareness	+30
●	Sensory targeting	+20
●	3 meter radius	+25
●	Line effect	-10
●	Boundary effect	-10
■	Lasts as caster wills	+25
Total modifier		+60
Difficulty to cast at full effect		18

Note that this spell affects the light, *not* the people using that light. So, the effect is resisted by a Fate of 0, not that of anyone trying to see through the prismatic barrier. Even if you cannot accurately see through the barrier, attacks made into the area have a random chance of hitting each potential target. This would be a 7 or less on a 3d+0 roll for each possible target, for any attack passing through the barrier. The barrier as a whole is -4 difficulty to hit. The Blind will rationalize this spell as dust, smoke, fog or some other obscurement.

Signature - This is a sorcery cast on a small weapon like a knife or pistol, though there is a version that will work with large handheld weapons. It is not quite a true name spell, but has similar characteristics. The "signature" is unique to the spell, and is a broad class of things, people or entities (werewolves, rubber, TV cameras, etc.). As long as the spell is in effect, this weapon has +2 Accuracy for aimed shots against that particular class of things, and the penalty on actions for using a sorcery does not apply to use of that weapon. The weapon becomes something like a divining rod that wants to point towards the signature it is keyed to. This effect is not blocked by the first mundane barrier between the weapon and target. That is, the damage from the weapon may be blocked, but the wielder of the weapon can *feel* where a target is at, even through an intervening wall, and can make normal attacks at only +2 difficulty through such a barrier, the +2 penalty reflecting that the attack is deflected in some unpredictable way by the barrier.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
●	Range of 124 meters	+30
●	Special effect(accuracy)	+10
◆	Extraordinary range	+20
●	Only on very small objects	-10
●	Lasts for 10 seconds	+7
Total modifier		+37
Difficulty to cast at full effect		14

This spell will not ruin a champion's weapon, but the benefits of that weapon will be lost while the spell is in effect. A Blind person will not notice this effect used by someone else, and if the effect is on a weapon they are holding, the weapon will just feel exceptionally easy to aim.

Split seconds - This is about the limits of what should be allowed in terms of viewing or gaining information about the future. Each turn this spell is active, the sorcerer can ask (as a minor action) one question that could be answered (fairly accurately) by "yes" or "no" if the caster were to do an action, wait a second or two or do a turn or two of movement to investigate in person. The intent is that you can present the spell with two possible courses of action, and get an idea of which one is the better path, at least for the immediate vicinity and future.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
◆	Conveys information	+15
◆	Extraordinary range	+20
●	Usable only on self	-10
●	Lasts for 10 seconds	+7
Total modifier		+22
Difficulty to cast at full effect		10

EXAMPLE: Some useful questions might be "Is there someone on the other side of this door?", "Is the access code I'm about to enter the correct one?", or "Will cutting this wire disarm the bomb?". Questions that might not be answered accurately would be things like "Does this hallway lead to the control room?", "Should I keep this poker hand?", or "can this bomb be defused?". In the first case, the control room might be too far away for the spell to be of any use. In the second case, what you decide might cause the other poker players to do something different that negates your possible advantage, and in the last case the question is both vague and asks about things extending too far in the future.

The Blind see the affected sorcerer as having uncanny intuition, luck or tactical sense.

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Venom - This is imbued upon a melee weapon. If the weapon strikes and does lethal damage to the target, the sorcery does its resisted effect in lethal damage on the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 8th turns after the initial attack. The Blind might view this effect like a poison, acidic corrosion, flame or some horribly virulent flesh-eating bacteria. To the Sighted, greenish-black streaks spread from the wound like blood vessels were disintegrating and muscles were being eaten away, which in fact they are. The resisted effect of the sorcery is never more than the actual lethal damage done by the melee weapon, so a mere scratch (0d+1 lethal damage) only does 0d+1 each time the venom effect happens (a total of 4 extra Hits of damage). Remember that this effect ignores armor, since it is tied to an effect that had already penetrated defenses. In the most extreme of cases, a venom effect can be stopped by amputation of an affected limb before the corruption spreads to more vital locations.

The ensorceled weapon feels "wrong", even to the Blind, and those with Sight can see that arcane energies of some kind are coiled within the weapon and waiting to be released.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Lethal damage	+40
◆	Triggered power	+10
●	Melee range	+0
●	Lasts for 10 seconds	+7
●	Requires mundane skill to use	-5
Total modifier		+32
Difficulty to cast at full effect		13

The effect on the weapon lasts for a single use, but can otherwise lay dormant on the weapon as long as the original caster wants to be impaired by the potentially distracting effect of the sorcery. Remember that only the first triggered sorcery is a +0 distraction while it is "waiting".

Null - Reduces the effective Fate of any sort of sorcerous effect. If cast on a sorcery that is in effect or as it is being cast, the null subtracts its effect from the other sorcery. If the effect is reduced to zero or less, the other sorcery is completely negated. If it was a continuing effect, the effect ends, and if it was a triggered spell, it dissipates. The spell has the inherent (and unavoidable) effect of disrupting any sorcery on the caster of the spell, as well as its effect on whatever it was aimed at. So, it can drop a sorcerer's personal protections or enhancements, or possibly dispel triggered spells on them or on items they are holding or carrying. However, if the sorcerous effect is on a person, the Null is resisted by that person's Fate before reducing the sorcery it is meant to affect.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Prevents an effect	+30
◆	Triggered power	+10
■	Lasts as caster wills	+15
Total modifier		+35
Difficulty to cast at full effect		13

If cast against an object that has a permanent sorcerous effect, Null is resisted by the Fate in the object's effect or the Fate of the person carrying it, whichever is higher. The Null reduces the object's effect, but does not "disenchant" the object.

EXAMPLE: A null of 2d+2 cast on an object with a Fate effect of 1d+2 would reduce the object's effect by 1d+0, to 0d+2. If cast on an object with a Fate effect of 1d+1, it would reduce the object's effect by 1d+1, to zero. In this case, the object would cease having a sorcerous effect as long as the null was maintained.

Null can prevent a sorcery from having any further effect until its duration normally expires.

EXAMPLE: If cast on a person who had just been struck by a Venomed weapon, Null could reduce or prevent the Venom effect, and after ten seconds, Venom would expire and the Null could be lifted.

It is difficult to have a Null ready to counter an opposing sorcery, but Null can have the "triggered" modifier, set to automatically try and block the next sorcery cast at the sorcerer. Since the spell prevents the generic effect of "sorcery", it makes it a catch-all defense, but remember that it does nothing about mundane physical objects or energy.

Tripwire - This is a class of sorceries, all having the common characteristic of being triggered by proximity, touch or disturbance. For instance, a sorcerer might put one on a door. If anyone opens the door, the spell is broken, and the sorcerer knows it. In its simplest form, that is all it does, act as a form of alarm that does not require technology. A more advanced form will do something like the effect of the sorcery in lethal damage to whatever body part tripped the alarm, like the hand that opened a tripwired door, or the foot that crossed a tripwired threshold. So, the sorcerer simply has to return to the premises and see who is bandaged up or walking with a limp. A more complex form of the sorcery might cast an invisible effect on the intruder that lets the sorcerer track them down, for instance to see who might have hired the intruder.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
◆	Triggered power	+10
■	Lasts for one hour	+24
●	Password	+5
Total modifier		+19
Difficulty to cast at full effect		10

The password modifier simply is a unique trigger for the spell in addition to the normal one. This lets a sorcerer know that the Tripwire spell they see is the one they put in place.

The Blind do not see this sorcerous effect at all. Those with Sight may see the aura of the sorcery, depending on how or where it was placed. One might be placed on the outside of a door as an obvious ward to those with the Sight. In this form the fact of its existence is perhaps more important than its nature. It says "there's a sorcerer here". And you have no idea of what the nature of the triggered spell is. Or, a tripwire with a password "chime" could be placed inside a door, so that those outside would not know they had triggered it, but the sorcerer could use the password and listen for the chime to know if the tripwire had been set off before opening the door themselves.

Confound - Designed to help a sorcerer evade pursuit, it generates false impressions in anyone viewing the sorcerer. So, if there are three paths a sorcerer could have gone, three different pursuers might each think the sorcerer fled down a different one, even if they saw which one he took. This tends to split up or delay pursuit, which is often all that is needed.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
◆	Subverts Awareness	+30
■	Sensory targeting	+20
■	Lasts as caster wills	+25
Total modifier		+55
Difficulty to cast at full effect		17

The spell subverts sensory Awareness in anyone viewing the target of the spell, to the extent that if Awareness is adjusted to zero, they have a 50-50 chance of going the wrong direction any time they pursue the Confounding sorcerer past a directional branch, like Door A or Door B, right turn or left turn, up the ladder, down the ladder, etc. In groups, about half will go one way, and half the other, usually resulting on both groups stopping and trying to figure out why they're going in different directions after the same person. The Blind who are affected by the spell simply think they went the wrong direction.

Force - This is a limited form of telekinesis, where the sorcerer can impart a great deal of force to any small object they are holding. In the hands of even a mediocre sorcerer, a pebble can be as deadly as a small pistol (though not as accurate). The object accelerated must fit comfortably in the hand, and only gets its Accuracy of 2 if the sorcerer aims for a turn first, otherwise it is an Accuracy of 0. Targeting is made with the same sorcery roll as used to cast the spell, so it is possible to cast the spell, but miss the target. Objects made of light, irregular or easily broken materials (pebbles, pencils, coins) cannot do more than 1d+0 damage, those of medium strength (rocks, nails) up to 2d+0 damage, and sturdy or weapon-grade materials (bullets, ball bearings) are limited only by the level of the effect.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Lethal damage	+30
●	Only on very small objects	-10
■	Accuracy of +2	+5
●	Technological range	+25
Total modifier		+30
Difficulty to cast at full effect		12

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This sorcery has the advantage that inanimate objects have a Fate of zero, so the spell is *not* reduced by the Fate of the target. The Blind simply see this as an extremely powerful thrown object.

Fate mirror - This spell alters apparent Fate of the user in a purely passive sense. No direct benefit is gained by the recipient of the spell for any purpose, but any measurement that looks at the target's Fate will see a result that is the observer's Fate plus 1. The spell is resisted by the target of the spell (usually the caster), and the benefit can never do more than double the apparent Fate of the recipient of the spell.

EXAMPLE: If you have a Fate of 2d+0 and observe someone who has cast this on themselves, any measurement or implied measurement you attempt will show them to be slightly more powerful than you (Fate of 2d+1).

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
■	Adds to an Attribute	+30
■	Sensory targeting	+20
■	Lasts as caster wills	+25
●	Only for measurement purposes	-5
Total modifier		+50
Difficulty to cast at full effect		16

This spell can only be used by someone who is Evil, and the effect is obviously designed to shield the target of the spell from being detected as Evil by anyone else. The only problem with the spell is that any other sorcery cast while this one is active will ripple the effect and an astute observer might see the true nature of whoever is being shielded (if their Fate exceeds the *actual* Fate of whoever is being shielded). Also, the spell does not affect normal Sight. A devil will still look like a devil, even if they no longer register as "Evil".

▼ **Note** - This spell is clearly meant for the game-master to use, allowing Evil humans to operate more freely in the presence of the Brotherhood. The gamemaster could even expand the spell so as to block Sight, shielding Evil creatures so that they appear to the Sighted as they would to the Blind. Such a spell has a clear potential to tip the balance in the favor of Evil in many circumstances, so it should have limits and side effects to prevent it from being used for extended periods.

Open the Soul - This a collection of sorceries only possible for those who are Evil, or aware of Evil and fully willing to embrace it. The spell is similar to summoning, but less powerful. What it lacks in power, it makes up for in raw materials. The sorcerer allows themselves to be possessed and *transformed* by something else, though they do maintain some semblance of their own intellect and motivation over the new form. The inherent nature of what can be summoned means there will be conditions or time limits on the transformation, and possibly when the spell can be cast successfully. The most commonly known variant of the spell transforms the sorcerer into a werewolf. In this case, the sorcery can only be successfully cast at about the time of the full moon, and naturally expires at the end of this period. Anywhere in between, the sorcerer becomes a werewolf, with some slight control over the were's ravenous instincts. Instead of being random in its depredations, it might seek out an enemy of the sorcerer, or their family or friends.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
◆	Creates living item	+10
●	Increased 6d effect	+60
●	Extraordinary range	+20
■	State-based duration	+25
●	Takes 6 minutes to cast	-17
●	Requires gestures & vocalization	-10
●	Requires focus	-10
■	Side effect	-20
●	Works on self only	-5
●	Loss of control while possessed	-10
Total modifier		+23
Difficulty to cast at full effect		11

Since part of the effect is based on the sorcerer themselves, there may be certain thresholds to the spell, or reductions in effect if these thresholds are not reached. For instance, the spell above is sufficient to turn a person with straight 2d+1 stats into a werewolf. This spell does not require the true name of a particular creature, but it does require something akin to the true name of that class of creature. In this case, it is the focus requirement, some piece of flesh or bone or blood of a creature of that type which has been banished back to the Prison. This material forms the link necessary for the summoning.

The Blind generally refuse to even admit they saw a transformation happen, becoming irrational, hysterical or even violent if efforts are made to force them to recall what they observed.

Breach the Veil - This is the name of a collection of sorceries, each one specific to one particular powerful being that is trapped in the Prison. Each being (often an Old God of some kind) that would be contacted is a separate sorcery. Using this sorcery gives the being at the other end of the line the necessary information to create a version of the sorcery for contacting you from *their* end. The limits on the sorcery represent particular effects.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
◆	Conveys information	+15
●	Extraordinary range	+80
●	Lasts an instant	+0
●	Takes 1 minute to cast	-12
●	Side effect	-20
■	Cumulative difficulty	+0*
◆	Special conditions	-20
Total modifier		+23
Difficulty to cast at full effect		11

Extraordinary range: The +80 represents a good modifier for effects reaching into the Prison as deep as to reach where the Old Gods are metaphysically chained. Minions and lesser Evils are easier to reach. The modifier will vary, depending on the exact effect desired.

Side effect: The sorcery requires that you open yourself entirely to the whatever it is you contact. They can see you as you truly are, your true name, your *genuine* reason for contacting them, your motivations and aspirations. If this displeases them, they wallop you a good one. Be thankful they are locked up in another dimension and only a microscopic amount of their displeasure can be felt through the link. Typical side effects include lethal damage (often with scarring), temporary dementia or some form of paralysis (damage to Attributes instead of Hits). If you fail the Sorcery roll, it is assumed you made contact, but displeased the recipient of the call.

Lasts an instant: The spell conveys a single gestalt each way, a collection of thoughts or a concept rather than a conversation. However, the best way to handle it is to assume one short sentence can transpire in each direction, like "How may I serve you?". Spells that cross the boundary from this world into the Prison typically have only an instant effect, though it may seem longer to those under the influence of the sorcery. The fundamental nature of a true name *can* be conveyed in either direction by this sorcery.

Cumulative difficulty: The Prison is to some extent self-repairing, otherwise the Evils would have escaped long ago. The sorcery creates a unique link between the caster and the being on the other side. Each time the sorcery is cast, the Prison squeezes the microscopic crack closed just a little bit more, until it becomes impossible for the sorcerer to make contact. For gamemaster use, this modifier should apply to any sorcery whose effect crosses from this world into the Prison, or vice versa. Most summoning spells would be a good example. In game terms, this modifier increases by +3 each time the spell is cast (even if it fails), until it becomes too difficult to manage, after which that particular spell is useless to everyone, and a new one must be designed.

Special conditions: Each version of this sorcery will have its own unique twist. It might require being in a certain place, the use of an artifact, to be cast at a particular astronomical conjunction, only after ritually fasting and washing, etc. Each Old God will have its own unique conditions for contact, as long as they are worth a -20 modifier.

Naturally, as a final condition, this sorcery can only be cast by someone who is Evil.

Summoning - This sorcery pulls some being, a lesser Evil, through a crack in the Prison into this reality. A summoning requires the true name of the being that is to be summoned, which is inherent to the sorcery. The sorcerer has no inherent control over whatever is summoned, so they had best take other precautions or hope that the entity invoked is going to be friendly. Each summoning is a separate sorcery, rather than a single sorcery that can be applied with a number of names. So, if you know how to summon Xactachul the Unholy, you can *only* summon Xacachul the Unholy. Summoning Xchig the Devourer is a separate sorcery entirely.

Many Evil efforts involving bringing specific entities through to this reality as part of some larger plot. The beings might be enforcers, teachers, power sources, sorcerous homing beacons or agents provocateur.

Type	Effect or modifier	Cost
●	Gameworld base	-20
◆	Creates living item	+10
●	Increased 18d effect	+180
●	Extraordinary range	+40
■	State-based duration	+25
●	Takes 6 hours to cast	-29
■	Side effect	-20
●	Requires gestures & vocalization	-10
●	Requires focus	-10
●	Requires consumed focus	-20
●	Requires total concentration	-10
◆	Requires minimum Fate of 14	-15
■	Power costs +9A	-30
■	Power can be jointly activated	+5
◆	Other special conditions	-40
Total modifier		+46
Difficulty to cast at full effect		16

The normal form of the spell requires either several powerful sorcerers, each of whom have undergone some horrible ritual sacrifice or psyche-scarring initiation, or one sorcerer who feeds from the energy of many individual cultists. Or, possibly both. Each doubling of sorcerers, or twenty acolytes and each doubling is a -5 modifier on the sorcery, which will adjust the final difficulty. This is a slight adjustment from this modifier in **EABA** (page 6.28).

EXAMPLE: A circle of four sorcerers with this spell would drop the modifier to +36, and the difficulty to 14. A lone sorcerer and eighty fanatical devotees would drop the modifier to +31 and the difficulty to 13.

The focus is some sort of ceremonial implement, and can be as extreme as entire temple devoted to the sorcery, [☛] a large or immobile object like an altar, or a smaller object like a dagger or chalice (the bigger the focus, the better the modifier). The consumed focus is often a human sacrifice, which may be required to have certain characteristics (an enemy, a virgin, a warrior, a sorcerer, etc.).

Rituals often require a lot of chanting and gesturing. The sorcerers involved are focused on the ritual, and any devotees are in a religious trance and largely unaware of their surroundings. But there would no doubt be alert guards and good physical security to prevent interruption of the rite. This particular ritual description is sufficient to summon a Globboth or an entity of similar power, and gives you an idea of the depth of preparation required to summon anything more powerful than that.

[☛] 13 Ghosts(2001), Warner Bros. Pictures

A variation of the sorcery is used from the Prison side to "push" an entity into this reality. This is inherently more difficult, and in the thousands of years that Evil has been at it, most of the easy avenues into this reality have been blocked by the adaptive nature of the Prison. Conditions allowing beings to be forced through the cracks are uncommon, but when they do occur, the power available on the Prison side can push a lot more than feeble human sorcery can summon. The two sorts of sorceries could work in concert. A human sorcerer could summon an entity that is really just a very special "consumed focus" so that a greater Evil in the Prison can "aim" a powerful push from its side in combination with a special ritual at this end.

Each time a being is banished from this world back to the Prison, it becomes harder for it to be summoned again. While this increased difficulty can last centuries, it does not last forever, and particular places, times or astrological conditions can make an ordinarily impossible summoning merely difficult.

▼ **Note** - Remember that the modifiers and difficulties for the spells are the minimum required modifiers. Adventurers are not expected to take a sorcery with a difficulty of 18 at face value. If they learn it, they will learn it with enough extra modifiers to make it useful to them...

▼ **DESIGNING YOUR OWN SORCERIES** - If you are going to design up new sorceries for a **Code:Black** campaign, remember the nature of sorcery. *It is inherently Evil.* Sorcery is fundamentally different than a policeman using a gun to stop a criminal with a gun. You can have an entire group of adventurers who completely avoid sorcery. Even though they *might* be able to use it responsibly, having read the description of what it makes the user feel, their own moral stance will not let them touch that sort of power. And turning down this power is its own measure of character and strength.

There should be few truly altruistic effects associated with sorcery. For everything a sorcery gives, it should take something away. Part of this is inherent in the power framework. Fatigue, putting your soul in peril, and distraction. But more than this, try to make sure your sorceries have the right 'flavor'. For instance, the Healing sorcery makes the healer take damage instead of just using sorcerous energy to do the healing process. To help someone, you must first harm someone else.

▼ **FOCI** - A weapon which has been used to take another life in anger or malice or while in the grip of any of the "seven deadly sins" (lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, pride) becomes an inherent focus for Evil energies related to that emotional state. The Fate and appropriate weapon skill of any user is increased by 0d+1, as is the damage of that weapon. The boost in weapon skill and damage only applies when the weapon is being used in the same emotional state that caused it to be a focus for Evil. The Fate boost is always there, but is just for making Fate comparisons and defending against powers (which are resisted by Fate). The Fate, skill and damage of the *original* user is increased by 0d+2 for this purpose if they are Evil. This is known as a "cursed weapon". Virtually all weapons used as foci for casting Evil sorceries are going to be cursed weapons.

This is *never* cumulative with other weapons, and a person only gains the benefit of one weapon at a time. Note that a person does not need to have the Sight in order to give a weapon this characteristic, and a weapon can *never* be given this characteristic deliberately. It requires being in the grip of irrationality to the extent that such planning is impossible. One does not need to be irrational to benefit from such a weapon, but they do need to have elements of the original emotional state.

There is no direct effect of such a tainted weapon on the psyche of the user. However, the measurable benefit of having a particular emotional state while using the weapon is a constant, subtle tug that draws the user towards more and more expression of that trait.

On the flip side, a weapon which has both destroyed/killed/banished a significant Evil, and has never drawn innocent blood or been used to cause harm while in the grip of negative emotion is a "champion's weapon". This will convey the same benefits as a "cursed" weapon, but only to someone whose clarity of purpose transcends any possible emotional involvement they might have in the situation. For instance, you could not gain the benefit of a champion's weapon if deep inside, you were really just out to get revenge for your murdered partner.

A weapon which loses its champion potential through being used to take an innocent life loses that champion potential forever. On the other hand, a cursed weapon retains that taint forever, and it can never be removed short of melting the weapon down for scrap. And even then, the metal itself can retain an Evil taint that may transfer to some extent to any item made from the recycled materials.

A person with the Sight and a Fate roll of 2d+1 or more can "see" if a weapon has either of these traits, and possibly if the person using the weapon is the one who imbued it with the trait. Such weapons can also cast weird shadows, cause strange images to appear on photographs and have other minor extradimensional effects that can be used as plot devices.

EXAMPLE: An adventurer is cleaning a stubborn stain off their late partner's pistol. He looks down, for a moment, the light reflected off the gun looks like his partner's face, startled, looking at the door. Then the adventurer hears a creak on the floorboards outside...

Someone who is Evil will find it difficult to nearly impossible to pick up, let alone use a champion's weapon, and humans who are consciously working for Good (like most Brotherhood members) will be physically ill upon trying to pick up or wield a cursed weapon. Assume any use of the weapon by someone of opposite "alignment" is at a -2d penalty. At best, a person can wrap up an oppositely aligned weapon and put up with the discomfort while they transport it to someplace it can be securely stored or disposed of. The Blind will tend to ignore a cursed weapon if they are disposed towards Good, and be unhealthily fascinated with it if they are more disposed towards Evil. The Blind will tend to see that a champion's weapon is returned to its rightful (or a rightful) owner if they are disposed towards Good, and will tend to avoid or ignore the weapon if they are more disposed towards Evil.

Last, just as there are artifacts abandoned or lost by Evil in the last battles on or near Earth, so there are things lost by Good. Often, these can do the one thing that human enchanters have never managed, which is to put a bane effect into an object. This would be something like a mystical weapon that anyone (anyone non-Evil, anyway) can use to bypass the inherent protections of a particular Evil. Usually, this is against something Evil enough that even the forces of Good wanted a special weapon against it. Normally, rather than one specifically named Evil, such a bane weapon would have an effect against any Evil that is both aligned with that Evil and shares its protection, in kind if not in power. So, a weapon that is a bane spear against Astratho, That Which Should Not Be, should work equally well against its minions or any human agents who use sorcerous protection that comes from Astratho.

▼ **MAGIC ITEMS** - We've deliberately avoided the making of sorcerous devices, and while there will not be exact details, we will provide some advice to the gamemaster if he or she wants to put in some new items.

First, sorcerous items that can be created with the level of knowledge and power available to mere mortals will have a maximum useful lifetime of the lifetime of the enchanter. Sorcerous items become inert matter again if the sorcerer who created them dies. Second, the maximum power level of such items is likely to be no more than 2d+2 for Brotherhood or other "good" sorcerers, and no more than 3d+2 for anyone Evil.

A magic item with a continuing effect is a constant, low-level channelling of Evil, and this will gradually warp the psyche of the wearer. Normally, each 0d+1 of felt effect in the item is going to gradually cause 1 level in some sort of Personality, usually but not always related to the nature of the item. If the item is used constantly, the full effects may be felt in a few months, but if it is used only on occasion, it could take years or decades for the full effects to be felt. Note that the psychological effects accrue any time the object is in close proximity to the person, even if it is not actually activated. They just occur slower if the item is "off". It is *still* channelling Evil, just at a lower level.

Amulet of true Sight - This item grants a bonus to the wearer's Fate for purposes of granting Sight. The bonus is +1d over their normal roll, up to a maximum of double their base amount. So, for a person with a normal Fate of 0d+2, it can give them a 1d+1 roll, for borderline Sight. Such amulets might be worn by the rare non-Sighted people who are aligned with the Brotherhood, and to help convince people like political leaders that the world is not as they think it is. The normal effect of the amulet is to make the wearer psychologically dependent on it. They might be afraid of the world it gives them glimpses of, but they are more afraid of *not* being able to see it.

Ring of Deflection - This ring creates a pseudo-force field around the wearer. Anything that would strike the wearer for 0d+1 or more in damage is reduced in effect by up to 1d+2. This is separate from any armor or mundane protection worn (subtract 1d+2 of damage *before* figuring armor effects). Remember that this protection is reduced by the Fate of what is doing the damage (zero for most objects). The Blind see the effect of the ring as turning small attacks into near misses, and solid hits into more grazing ones. Those with the Sight see flashes of light and dimples in reality whenever force is being deflected, though this effect cannot be directly traced to the ring (it could just as easily be a sorcery). This ring has never been seen with an effect of more than 2d+2, and there are examples with as small as a 0d+1 effect. The wearer of the ring eventually develops an exaggerated over-confidence when it comes to damage, out of proportion to the ring's protective ability, but *not quite* a dangerously stupid reliance on it.

Charm of Intent - This charm grants the wearer an Awareness that helps them spot anyone who has hostile intent towards them, putting an aura around anyone in the wearer's field of vision who harbors an immediate intent to attack them. The limit is that the 1d+0 effect of the charm has to beat the Fate roll of the potential attacker in order to function. A wearer of the charm tends to develop an exaggerated sense of their own charisma and ability to read other people's moods and intents.

The charm or something like it is usually in the protective arsenal of any world leader or VIP who knows of the Brotherhood, or is worn by a body-guard with the Sight. While it will not warn of attacks by most Evil entities, it does an excellent job of picking up mundane loonies and non-magical assassins.

Spectral knucks - This is a set of rune-engraved brass knuckles that can be used to invoke a true name, giving the wielder a metal-reinforced punch that negates any special protections of a particular Evil. The knucks only work against a particular *class* of Evil (like vampires, werewolves, etc.), and are only mundane brass knuckles unless you have the true name of the actual being you are striking. That is, "spectral knucks vs. weres" can be used against any were that you have the true name of, but will grant no benefit against a vampire you have the true name of.

In any case, the knucks give the wearer punch+0 *lethal* damage. Those with Sight will see bluish-green flames licking up from the knucks if a True Name has been invoked (even if it is the *wrong* True Name). The psychological side effect of the weapon is that the owner will start looking for excuses to use it. This could be a simple increase in aggression, or it could manifest as a desire to do research into as many True Names as possible, just so you can later search out and attack the owner of that True Name.

▼ **Note** - The gamemaster should play up the emotional aspects of using sorcery at the levels damaging to the human psyche. Channelling Evil to cast any sorcery is a sickening revulsion that leaves a person feeling both physically and spiritually unclean. But it also gives the user a twisted sense of exhilaration, a massive power trip for the ego from bending reality to the sorcerer's will. The hardest thing about using a sorcery is having the strength to let go of the power, to come down from the Olympian heights and become merely mortal again. When a player pushes their adventurer to dangerous levels of sorcery, the gamemaster should play up these aspects and even try to tempt the *player* into pushing things even further. "*Just a little more power*", or "*just this once*", or "*I really need this to work the first time*".

Elder Seals - One of the few magical items that can be reliably (and safely) made by the adepts of the Brotherhood is the so-called "Elder Seal". This is a very primitive-looking bit of fired pottery with a disturbingly hypnotic tracery inscribed upon its surface. Placed by someone with the Sight, and activated by the use of Fate and certain arcane syllables, an Elder Seal plugs any temporary breach in the Prison in the immediate area. The Elder Seal must be placed within a few meters of the breach, but once activated, the pottery the Seal was represented by is merely symbolic. It can be broken without disturbing the actual metaphysical seal, but if the *metaphysical* seal is broken, the pottery incarnation of the Elder Seal cracks and shatters. The physical Elder Seal needs to be at the place it was activated in order for this to happen, so you unfortunately cannot just take the expended Elder Seal home and monitor it as a failsafe.

▼ **Note** - An adventure might involve safely transporting an expended Elder Seal to the site it was activated, to see if the seal is still holding.

The knowledge of how to make an Elder Seal is restricted to the highest levels of the Brotherhood. This is both to prevent the knowledge from possible perversion, and it also helps keep the Brotherhood in its position of influence (if no one else can make the seals, then you have to come to the Brotherhood if you need one). The knowledge of Elder Seals dates back to the earliest days of the Brotherhood, and is virtually unchanged from that time. Where the knowledge originally came from is unknown, save that it is different than any other magic humans have known and apparently has no Evil stigma attached to it. Brotherhood researchers have never been able to apply this particular flavor of sorcery to any other magical effect.

▼ **Note** - Within the game 'reality', Elder Seals are a Good magic, and humans simply lack sufficient quantities of Good to comprehend it well enough to modify it. This gives the gamemaster the ability to create unique non-player adventurers who have enough Good to comprehend greater things, but be unable to communicate them to anyone else. Such people would be a great threat to the cause of Evil and would likely be targeted for assassination the instant they become known.

▼ **OTHER MAGICAL ITEMS** - Those of sorcerous bent who are willing to dabble in Evil can make permanent magical items that embody the effects of a particular spell. These would be designed using the **EABA** enchantment rules and the limits of magic within the **Code:Black** universe. However, either making or activating an item with a power level that you could not yourself cast without suffering ill effects will cause you to take those very effects! That is, the power within the object tempts you towards Evil just as if you had cast the spell yourself. The benefit is that if the item is permanent or has a very long duration, these effects are only felt when the item is forged and first activated. After that, it is simply 'on' and there is no inherent taint to simply benefiting from the item's power. A person can be mundanely tempted by the advantages to be gained from such an item, but no more so than from any powerfully enabling technology.

The Brotherhood has and rarely makes enchantments of this sort, though any particular enchanter may only make a handful during his or her lifetime. So, actual ownership of such an item would be exceedingly rare, and the loan of its use would simply be rare and require exceptional circumstances.

The central Brotherhood archives of each country have a collection of artifacts recovered from various Evil sources that goes back for millennia in some cases. These are items that are kept under the strictest lock and key, for even holding some with intent to use or exploit it is enough to start a person down a path to utter corruption. *Why then are they not destroyed?* For the basic reason that each such artifact represents a tiny but measurable fraction of some Evil entity's power. Destroying the item would return that power to the entity, while holding it secure on this side of existence keeps that power from being used, and it is thought may make that entity a little less likely to pour some of their essence into another such artifact.

There are no Good items, at least not available to adventurers. They are theoretically possible. A gamemaster might rarely introduce an extra who has some special ability to manipulate a Good artifact as a plot device or complication,[✚] but adventurers do not have the easy out of a Good superweapon to regularly call on or call their own.

[✚] *Witchblade(2001),TV series (based on comic book)*

Enigma cube - It is a geometric figure with six faces of equal size and edges of equal length, but no two angles on it measure the same. In addition, the closer you get to the object, the more the value of pi deviates from the norm. The cube has no discernable purpose, but the fact that it distorts the spacetime continuum means it is considered highly dangerous (since presumably warping of the spacetime continuum is the nature of the Prison).

Sphere of Prophecy - A nearly perfect sphere, its major property is that it acts like a one-sided compass needle, always being drawn in a particular direction with a significant amount of force. Only in the 19th century was the nature of this tug deduced. It is pulled in exactly the direction it would be going if it had the Earth's rotational vector from about 17 minutes in the future. That is, it exists in this time, but it acts like it exists in the near future. Among other side effects, moving it is interesting, since it only begins moving 17 minutes after it is pushed, regardless of the force used. The Brotherhood currently stores it in San Francisco, in hopes that it can be used to give a short warning of the next major earthquake catastrophe there.

Gemini Crown - A pair of amorphous translucent headbands which apparently only function for identical twins. Over the centuries, they have been shown to allow telepathy over virtually any distance, double the magical potential of both wearers, change the wearers from right handed to left handed (or vice versa), or in one case, cause one twin to disappear and the other to double in intellect, but with none of the memories of the vanished twin. Exactly which effect will happen has thus far been unpredictable.

Vampire bracelet - These are often items of great antiquity, but extremely skilled sorcerors of more recent centuries have demonstrated the skill and power to make them. They are only useful in matched pairs. When clasped about the wrist, ankle or neck of a person, the "servant" bracelet provides a direct link to the wearer of the "master" bracelet. If the master takes any Hits, lethal or non-lethal, they are recovered at the rate of 1 Hit per turn, and the servant takes *double* the effect that is healed or recovered in this way. The disadvantage to the master is that they do not heal any Hits *naturally* as long as the servant is not at full Hits. The master's healing adds to that of the servant until this happens.

Neither bracelet can be removed short of amputation, destroying it or when either person wearing it is dead. If the bracelet is cut, it explodes with a $2d+1$ lethal explosion. The master usually wears theirs on a wrist or ankle, while placing the servant's on their neck.

Having more than one of these bracelets on does not give increased healing benefits, though a servant could wear multiple bracelets for different masters (and be a very unhappy soul).

Satan's Snowglobes - Glassy spheres that seem to be stasis chambers containing a dimensionally compressed globboth. It is not known if these globboths were imprisoned by Good and just got overlooked when everything else was put in the Prison, or whether some Evil left them behind as a tool for escaping the Prison, or more likely if they were summoned through cracks in the Prison and encased in this form. The spheres do not radiate any Evil vibes. They are not easily broken, but are far from indestructible. If cracked or broken, the globboth immediately materializes and by all accounts is fully awake and aware with no more than a second's hesitation. Disturbingly, more than one sorceror has developed a means of making these spheres, but only a few worldwide can also pull a globboth through the cracks in the Prison and control it long enough to imprison it in this way. These actually show up on occasion at online auction sites. Fortunately, most of the auctions are scams. A few, however, are for the real thing...

Singularity rod - Generates a spherical ball about half a meter across that expands and contracts in and out of existence thousands of times a second while moving at $.032c$. Anything the sphere "passes through" while it is moving simply ceases to exist. That is, it bores an absolutely perfect hole through any known magical protection or mundane material. The rods can only be activated by the mental command and physical touch of a sorceror (an Average(7) roll). The problem is that the rods eventually malfunction (or are misused), causing the sphere of annihilating force to appear centered on the rod, removing both the rod and the hand holding it from existence. This is only a minor problem for the wielder, since the annihilated rod becomes a miniscule, unstable black hole that sucks in everything in the immediate vicinity before evaporating a few seconds later in a burst of radiation and heat that will cook just about every living thing and piece of electronics within several meters. Only the desperate, ignorant or suicidal will use one of these devices.

Because the effect phases in and out so fast, there is a chance that anything "hit" by it will actually be during the "out" phase and remain untouched. For adventurers, getting this lucky would be a random chance of 11 or more on a 3d roll. Several of these devices are known to exist outside of Brotherhood hands, and a recent "terrorist incident" has led the Brotherhood to believe that a weak variant of the effect has been duplicated by forces yet unknown.

Invulnerability cream - This is known to many cultures, though very few actually manage to create it successfully (fresh human hearts are part of the ingredient list). The idea of using woad as a mystical shield is an example. When properly made and properly applied, any part of the body covered has the equivalent of from 1d+0 to 3d+0 armor, depending on the skill of the sorcerer. This would layer normally with other armors. However, any clothing or worn armor will readily rub off the protection. One jar is sufficient to protect one person for about one day.

Keyhole - This is similar in appearance to a monocle, but without glass, and with an overly ornate frame and engraving that is somehow impossible to read or trace with the eye. When activated by an Average(7) Sorcery roll and the expenditure of 1 non-lethal Hit from fatigue, the user can look through the opening in the monocle and see *through* any object as though they had a 1d+0 Awareness roll. They see through the *first* object looked at. So, you could see through a wall or a door, or a person with a low Fate. You see through the object as though you were looking through a hole the size of a monocle, so it is more like a keyhole than a pair of X-ray specs (hence the name). Using the keyhole has the same long-term effects as any other artifact, so the duration of safe use is naturally limited.

Homing dart - This is a ensorcelled metal dart that is activated with a Sorcery roll. Once activated, it flies like a homing missile towards its target, using a direct line-of-sight path over any distance. So, if there are obstacles that block seeing the target, it will hit them, but otherwise its range is unlimited. Note that the line-of-sight must be natural, with no technological or sorcerous augmentation. The dart acts like a 4d+1 physical attack when it hits. It is usually disintegrated to powder by the impact. The target of the dart must have been previously seen in person by the sorcerer who activates it, but the eventual target does not have to be known by the sorcerer who created the dart.

These darts are uniformly ancient. The sorcery to make them is still known, but technological weaponry does a better job for less effort. They have the advantage that they look like a piece of unusual metal jewelry and thus avoid being considered as weapons by the Blind (they are no longer than half a finger length). The darts also leave no traces that can be linked back to its owner unless it perchance survives impact and still has fingerprints or other trace evidence on it.

(Un)lucky charms - This is an item that can only be safely used by an Evil person or entity due to its continual effect while worn. It subtracts 1d+2 from the Fate of whoever is *closest* to the wearer (within several meters), and adds the same amount to the Fate of the wearer. The Fate subtracted and added *only* applies to the use of luck. Against the Blind, the normal effect is to reduce their Fate to zero for luck purposes, and it adds 0d+2 to that of the wearer. A Blind person standing next to the person wearing an (un)lucky charm is literally "out of luck..." Against someone with the Sight, the lucky charm is not strong enough to have any effect (the effect is resisted).

Infernal magnet - This item can only be used against large, inanimate objects like vehicles. The infernal magnet increases the metaphysical signature of the object without affecting its actual size. The net effect is that any sorcery or mundane skill targeting the object the magnet is attached to is counted as though the object is +4 in size. That is, all attacks are at -4 to normal difficulty. The Sighted can see the effect, but the Blind cannot. To them, the target just seems really easy to aim at. Since those with Sight can readily detect the effect and find the artifact, it is not very useful against them, but Evil can be creative about it.

EXAMPLE: As part of an assassination plot, an infernal magnet is incorporated into a mundane jet engine, one which happens to be slated to replace an aging engine in a presidential jet...



THE BROTHERHOOD



edh⁰¹

When I was a child I caught a fleeting glimpse
 out of the corner of my eye.
 I turned to look, but it was gone.
 I cannot put my finger on it now.
 The child is grown,
 the dream is gone.
 I have become comfortably numb...

- from **Comfortably Numb**, by Pink Floyd

▼ **INTRODUCTION** - The Brotherhood began some thousands of years ago, forged from the alliances made during the war against the sorceror-kings. While its mission has remained constant through the many centuries since, its organization and methods have evolved with changes in culture, morality and technology.

Do not assume that the Brotherhood, its leaders or members are paragons of virtue just because they fight against Evil and embrace the Good. While individuals might be such paragons, the Brotherhood has its share of skeletons in the closet. For instance, the Brotherhood had no objections to the concept of slavery for about as many centuries as the rest of the world. The Brotherhood would never force a slave into doing Brotherhood work (imperiling one's life is a task for *free men*), but Brotherhood members often had personal slaves. Similarly, organized religion, class and caste, male dominance and divine right of kings were all things that the Brotherhood has supported or used to its advantage over the centuries.

Even today, attitudes within the Brotherhood will vary from region to region. The Brotherhood in the United States largely reflects current ideals, with no barriers from class, race, creed or gender. There is still a slight "old boy" bias because the highest leadership is from a generation where all positions of authority were white christian males, but time is slowly taking care of that.

It is a (mostly) unspoken rule that Brotherhood members of different personal creeds keep things professional. Though as a strongly opinionated bunch, it is harder for some Brotherhood members than others to keep their mouths shut about beliefs they don't approve of. But in general, an American will not criticize the Indian on caste matters, the Indian will not criticize the Saudi on their diet and the Saudi will not criticize the American on sexual permissiveness. Individual sects likewise try to keep things professional, but this becomes a problem when two regions with friendly Brotherhood groups have governments that are at war or have some other major diplomatic problem. Then things get tricky and delicate. Imagine the problems involved for a Brotherhood operation in Iran that requires the expertise of an Israeli member.

Sometimes, regional Brotherhood operations try to do things on their own that they really should have gotten outside help on. When they fail, often with the loss of several field agents, *then* they will ask for the outside help they should have requested in the first place.



▼ **ORGANIZATION** - An important thing you must remember about the Brotherhood is what it would like to be, and what it *actually* is. It would like to be like the military, a strict top-down hierarchical chain of command sort of organization, with the further distinction that it would be where people of noble intent do as they are told not just because they are told to do it, but because they implicitly trust the people giving the orders.

However, the Brotherhood cannot pick and choose the type of people that have the Sight, and the psychological quirks that often come with the Sight don't help matters any. While the Brotherhood would like to be able to give orders and be certain they would be followed, there are far too many members who would just say "sod off!", pack up their toys and go home. And since the Brotherhood needs everyone with Sight that it can recruit, it has to make allowances. Allowances for personality, dress code, hair length, religion, sexual orientation, the works. As long as the operative can get the job done, just about everything else is tolerated. There is a compartmentalization of information, but the Brotherhood has found out that in most cases, giving people the information they need to know is the best course. And what they need to know is generally more than some people *want* them to know .

In exchange for this latitude, and for being in the loop for as much information as is safe, the Brotherhood asks members for enough loyalty to trust their higher-ups, and to understand that there are things they can't be told for various reasons (classified info, things that could be damaging should they be captured and interrogated, etc.). The Brotherhood also applies the subtle pressures of a good paycheck and benefits, things that might put the family home or the kid's college aspirations at risk if the operative lost their Brotherhood job or got demoted for too much insubordination.

The Brotherhood is run a lot like a hierarchic franchise operation. There is a central Brotherhood in each region or country, most of which are on good terms with each other. The highest levels of the Brotherhood in an area are usually controlled by or inextricably intertwined with the government. Power calls to power, and the Brotherhood has arcane resources that secular governments can only dream of. The Brotherhood retains its limited autonomy only because its expertise is permanently "on call" to protect that nation. A regional Brotherhood does not and will not operate to support "national interests" outside its home nation's borders, as this sort of thing would inevitably pit one Brotherhood against another.

Hawks within a government will want to make the Brotherhood into an arcane army, and the Brotherhood hierarchy is constantly struggling with the problem of rogue government elements trying to set up their own Sighted and sorcerous special agencies. Without Brotherhood guidance, these efforts almost turn into disasters that the Brotherhood has to go in and clean out and clean up after. The only concession the United States branch of the Brotherhood has made is that they have trained and organized a platoon of Sighted "special forces". These are normal soldiers who have the Sight, and who are trained to their best potential. They are not as mundanely competent as the regular special forces, but they hold up far better under the influence of fear and Evil and may have some sorcerous talent or arcane artifacts to boost their capabilities. This unit is under direct control of the military, but their training and most of their personal attitudes are influenced by Brotherhood doctrines. Like other Brotherhood operatives, they will not operate outside of their own borders without an invitation from the host country, unless of course that country's government is under the direct control or influence of Evil.

In addition to any highly skilled Sighted military units, most armies will have a handful of Sighted individuals who have managed to avoid both insanity or being recruited by someone or other. Often this is due to some sort of encounter with the unknown that gets quietly covered up before word of it reaches higher authorities. ❖

In exchange for or as part of their involvement with the government, the Brotherhood receives significant funding, but like any other government group, this money is doled out on a yearly basis and waxes and wanes with the political winds. While government funding is a significant portion of the Brotherhood's operating budget, they can manage without it if they have to (and this ability is also part of their leverage when dealing with a government). The biggest benefit of government involvement is that government influence can be used to get Brotherhood agents out of justified legal problems. This can range from discreet phone calls, government officials dropping or declining to prosecute a case, or Brotherhood suspects being picked up from local jails by government agents for transport elsewhere on "other charges", and then discreetly released later.

Of course, this interference in the normal rule of law has a political cost, and whether or not a Brotherhood agent gets sprung is based on both some government liaison with the Brotherhood, and the recommendation of Brotherhood higher-ups. There are few crimes a Brotherhood operative can commit that are unforgivable, if the crime was done in pursuit of a legitimate Brotherhood goal. Even the accidental death of an innocent can be forgiven, though the repercussions will follow the adventurer for years. Crimes done for personal gain, or because an adventurer has been seduced by Evil, or which were absolutely unnecessary, these are not forgivable. Adventurers who commit such crimes are dealt with by Blind justice system if possible, by Brotherhood tribunals otherwise. There is not much concern that a person will tell Brotherhood secrets (who would believe them?), but sorcerous agents may be hard to keep confined in conventional jails. The Brotherhood has no jails for its own, but they do have managing control of a single small government facility that is physically secure, warded against magical escape, and physically isolated. There are never more than a handful of inmates at this facility, and these are individuals whose guilt or Evil is still somewhat in doubt. Those who have clearly been overcome by Evil are dealt with like any other Evil, and summarily executed...

Of course, all this only applies to the Brotherhood in the United States. Things are similar in most western European countries, with perhaps less reliance on firearms outside of "official channels". In the rest of the world, Brotherhood operations may not have as much government support or funding. In some African countries and former Russian republics, Brotherhood operations operate with the consent of the government, but only under the same conditions as other shady enterprises (i.e. lots of bribery). These operations may get "foreign aid" to financially support them from wealthier nations, and might also have to resort to private contract work to help cover expenses.

EXAMPLE: A Kazakh organized crime figure is having some unexplainable personnel losses and the usual methods of violence, intimidation and reprisal are not stopping the problem or identifying the culprits. He has heard there is a special unit associated with the government that deals with "difficult problems"...for a price. And so the Kazakh Brotherhood manages to collect a hefty fee for a job that they would have done anyway, if the government and public information networks had been efficient enough to get them the information in a timely manner.

Since most people do not (re)develop their Sight until puberty or later, the Brotherhood in a country will generally have philosophies and attitudes of that country or region, which are often reflected in or because of national laws.

EXAMPLE: In the United States, most Brotherhood agents strap on a pistol before they put their socks on in the morning. In England, only a minority of Brotherhood agents own firearms, much less carry them around all the time. Instead, they generally put their time and effort into proficiency in sorcery. Brotherhood agents in the United States make comments about the loony Brits and their Harry Potter fetish, while British agents dismiss American reliance on technology as a crutch to compensate for their inability to be competent sorcerors.

Other countries may have Brotherhoods with stronger ties to organized religion, with different attitudes towards ethnic background, gender roles and so on. People in one country might disagree with the way another country's Brotherhood operates, but as mentioned, the general rule is to bite your tongue. However they're doing things, it has worked for them for centuries if not longer, and it is in the interest of international cooperation to not make too many waves. Of course, strong adventurer personalities and conniving game-masters can combine to make this difficult, and resolving it as integral to an adventure.

Very few adventurers would ever operate directly under a national level of command. Agents with extremely unusual natures, unique talents or limitations that make it difficult for them to live in normal society may operate directly under the highest level of Brotherhood authority. Most adventurers will interact with such agents rarely, if ever.

Once you get past the national level of organization, a nation is split into regions. These regions have local headquarters, and these sub-regions have individual chapters. In larger areas, a chapter may be a full-time operation, running under the cover of some legitimate business, and with the usually unofficial support of someone in the local government structure. It will have a number of full-time paid staffers, and a larger number of part-time or freelance operatives, all of whom have undergone formal Brotherhood training and security checks. An individual chapter would have some similarities to the United States National Guard. It provides supplementary income, members can be called up to serve at any time, anywhere, and all the really serious hardware available is kept under lock and key at a central depot and only released to its members when an assignment requires it. In the United States, a local chapter will usually be affiliated with a legitimate front business, with some connection to local police or government if at all possible.

As often as not, Brotherhood members are strategically placed in the local authority structure, able to cover for and assist each other in not-quite legitimate but easily covered up use of influence. If a chapter has a police captain, a mayor's aide, a reporter and a local bishop among its members, that's a lot of public opinion and official arm-twisting potential. This, combined with some really influential Brotherhood members in the central corridors of power and the general public Blindness to things they don't want to see, means that Brotherhood activities are routinely covered up and no one is ever the wiser. Even if a snoop thinks there is something fishy is going on, their Blindness will unconsciously turn them down blind alleys of investigation. And for the things that do draw too much attention to an individual, there is always relocation. The Brotherhood has numerous contacts at the United States Witness Protection Program. It might force an adventurer out of a particular region, but it does not force them out of the greater game.

In terms of adventurer abilities, the head of a local chapter would be White₄ or Grey₁, the leaders of a regional branch would be White₆ or Grey₃ and the leaders of a national level of the Brotherhood would be Grey₄ or Black₁ or higher. Actual ranks may vary depending on the region and its importance. A local chapter covering a broad swath of sparsely populated area may have people with less status, and a chapter covering a major metropolitan area may be a "chapter", but have regional importance and people to match. A regional branch will typically have three heads, who jointly decide on issues involving allocation of resources within their region, and they are assisted by a few aides (typically Grey₁), who often go into the field and act with a delegated authority that is higher than a individual chapter's head. A national Brotherhood may have several people at a very high status level, with numerous subordinates and a small bureaucracy. National level decisions are always made with input from all three branches, so one the regional White₆ field commander at the national location is also the senior military advisor. All the main policy decisions, research and cross-border or international operations are planned at the national level, though the actual people involved are usually from the best suited local branch. Note though, that international operations almost always involve some oversight and detailed after-action analysis at the national level, and the team will also act under the observation of local Brotherhood members in the destination country.

Each chapter, regardless of level, has some authority to bring in "outside talent" for specialized jobs. This is under strict limits which are stringently checked up on and enforced. There are certain guidelines for trustworthiness, discretion, exposure of the Blind to too much of the Truth, and so on. Some of the most trusted freelancers eventually join the Brotherhood, while others don't mind the work, but have not joined the Brotherhood for one reason or another. Adventurers can fall into the "trusted freelancer" category, people who the Brotherhood turns to on a regular basis, but who have no formal allegiance to the Brotherhood (and vice versa). This would be a strictly pay-for-play operation, where the adventurer has to cover their own weapons, ammo and medical expenses, and the Brotherhood disavows all knowledge of them if they get caught doing bad things that aren't part of an officially sanctioned operation. If it is part of an officially sanctioned operation, the Brotherhood covers for freelancers just enough to keep Brotherhood security from being compromised. Freelancers are not treated all that well compared to Brotherhood operatives, and this is deliberate policy. Making the Brotherhood the far more attractive option is meant to bring the freelancers "in from the cold". It works with some, and alienates others.

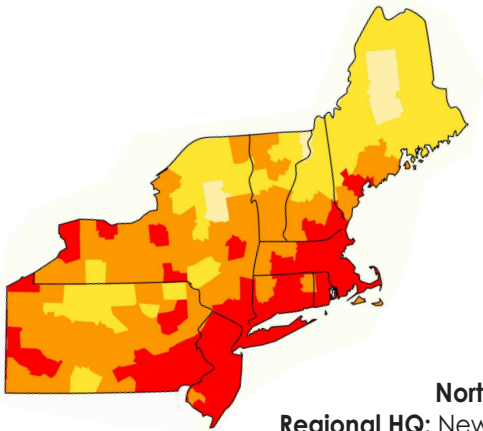
Of those that stay out of the Brotherhood, there are in fact entire freelance teams out there, some going so far as to specialize in a particular type of Evil to hunt down and banish (like vampire hunters). These freelance teams may do it because of personal grudges, or they might be bounty hunters for a Sighted but non-Brotherhood billionaire who has his own little mercenary army of Evil hunters. Operating through internet mail-drops and untraceable Cayman Island banks, these freelance teams rely on documenting their "kills" in order to claim bounties, and have their own network of informants and official information sources. ❖ Not everyone who has the Sight and is in a position of power is part of the Brotherhood. *Lest you forget, not all of the individuals are necessarily on the side of Good either...*

❖ *Vampires: Los Muertos (2002), Screen Gems Inc.*
 ❖ *Pet Sematery (1989), Paramount Pictures*

So far, all of this has mainly dealt with highly urban chapters of the Brotherhood. However, Evil is not confined to the big city. Smaller cities and towns may have their own Brotherhood chapters, though these are more accurately termed affiliates. These more rural chapters can be as small as one person, often retired from Brotherhood service elsewhere, and a few trusted freelancers. Possibly even a few good ol' boys with a touch of the Sight. With a shoestring budget and minimal personnel, they keep a low profile ear to the ground for anything stinking of Evil. This can be the occasional were, rogue devil or vampire (recurring vampire problems in rural Maine for some reason), but there have been the occasional problems with new "Native American burial grounds" and slobbering horrors related to sorcerous activities by meth-crazed cultists.

Sometimes, places will simply appear, like old ruins, megaliths and so on. These places are not inherently Evil, since that trait requires sentience, but they can represent weak areas in the Prison, where energies leak out that can corrupt flesh, spirit and the fabric of reality itself if left unchecked. The Blind will think these places "newly discovered", or someplace that "has always been there" (but which no one ever remembers visiting). Everyone knows about that ancient Indian burial ground a few kilometers up in the hills thataway. ❖ But nobody goes up there except crazy old man McCready. He babbles a lot, but pay him no mind. He's harmless...

▼ **Note** - On the inset maps that follow, the colors show population density on a county-by-county basis. Red areas are the most heavily populated, with more than 100 people per km², orange areas are more than 20 people per km², yellow areas are more than 4 people per km², and white areas are less than 4 people per km² (nearly uninhabited). Aside from state or national parks, there will be no large sparsely or uninhabited zones in the red areas. Bear in mind that the red areas can still have huge amounts of variation, as 100 people per km² is still only one person per two football fields of area. They will range from extremely crowded urban areas to suburbs to dense zones along highways, and areas with large daily variation in population, like industrial sites.



Northeast USA

Regional HQ: New York City

Brotherhood presence/resources: Strong/Strong

Urban/rural threat level: High/Low

Field operatives: ~525

The majority of this region's Evil woes have to do with the major urban areas, in the form of devil-based organized crime, vampire-related gang activity, a chronic were problem, self-taught sorcerers run amok, nameless cults and more than a few non-human UN personnel with diplomatic immunity. In terms of numbers, these far outstrip any rural threats, though the rural threats are no less dangerous on a case-by-case basis. Parts of the Adirondacks, Appalachians and the Jersey Pine Barrens have recurring problems, to the extent that state or federal authorities have restricted development or made areas into "parks". While this does not prevent people from going to these places, it does minimize their numbers and any long-term exposure to potentially Evil forces.

Because of the population, wealth and international representation in this area, it is the most connected chapter in the United States, with authority and an internal bureaucracy to match, and while it does have oversight at the national level, it is one of the few North American chapters that engages directly in negotiation with Brotherhood chapters overseas. The Mid-Atlantic chapter has more influence with the US government (since it has the overall leadership of the US Brotherhood), but the Northeast chapter actually has more international influence and personal contacts between its leadership and Brotherhood chapters in other countries.

▼ **RECORDS** - The Brotherhood has records that date to before conventionally recorded history. Unfortunately, none of the accounts are first-hand. While the Brotherhood was founded with the best of intentions, it has not always had the support of those in power. In some cases, Brotherhood kings had to wage wars both mundane and sorcerous against kings who had chosen to ally with Evil. And in such chaotic times, records are lost, libraries are burned, oral traditions snuffed out with their caretakers.

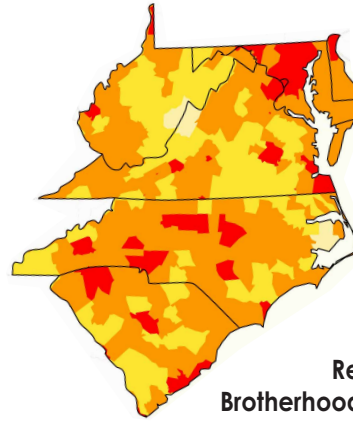
The records of the first few millennia of the Brotherhood are scanty, texts that make oblique references to works long lost, sorceries named but known by none, artifacts described but lost, Evils named but not Named. Not until about 1500BCE did the first systematic, redundant recordkeeping start. Of anything of great importance, three extra copies were made, sent to Brotherhood chapters far away. And if it was ever heard that evil befell a chapter, all records it had ever sent were copied again and sent to yet another chapter. It was a better system, but not perfect. Not all the copies made it to their destinations, the destinations themselves may have fallen to hostile action or natural disaster, or they may have been written in languages now lost to us. But, from about this time on, most major Brotherhood actions and foes are at least known of, sometimes second hand, sometimes with transcription errors.

Copying and loss and errors continued through the centuries, taking advantage of technological progress whenever possible. When the printing press was developed, important works were printed and distributed. The development of photography allowed pictures to be taken of manuscripts and artifacts, microfilm allowed compact storage of records, and digitization of records finally allows error-free copying and internet access (secure, of course) to many archives that would have otherwise required extensive time and travel to research. Sometimes, the available information is imperfect, like a digitized microfilm of an early 19th century photograph of a manuscript now lost. The best available record (the 19th century photograph) is still archived somewhere, and adventurers might have to travel to get access to it, should it seem vital to their current endeavors.

The real advantage the Brotherhood has in the way of information is the ability to cross-reference and correlate the actions and observations of Brotherhood agents worldwide, to spot trends or patterns of activity, alone or in combination with the conventionally reported news. Are a series of tiny earth tremors in Singapore an isolated incident, or do they somehow relate to that nasty incident at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Aykwan Tower skyscraper? Did the spike in news reports of gang-related violence in Detroit relate to the temporary breach of truce between the Neomen and the Brotherhood, or was there some other cause? And so on.

Also, in addition to those who have the Sight, the Brotherhood relies on mundane information sources. These range from the same informants police rely upon, to corporate whistleblowers, environmental activists, human rights organizations and so on. Unlike most "enforcement" agencies that restrict their actions to a particular sphere, the Brotherhood knows that Evil can pop up anywhere, and so it collects and correlates tips and information from the myriad of agencies and organizations its individual members are associated with.

The national HQ in Richmond in conjunction with other worldwide HQ's has in the past few decades engaged in heavy data mining. The Brotherhood does not have illegal taps on the internet or national or international phone lines, but they can access credit records as easily as a bank, the national criminal database as easily as a police department can, subscribes to virtually every legal and academic database, and adds this to its own massive internet search engine comparable to the largest commercial services, but designed to help find the unusual or anomalous. Brotherhood agents with the appropriate hardware keyed and software encrypted computers can access this search engine, with results limited by the rank and any security clearance of the agent involved. This does not provide any skill bonuses. Rather, *not* having access to this information would be a +4 difficulty when doing information searches for occult, sorcery or other Brotherhood-pertinent information.



Mid-Atlantic USA
Regional HQ: Richmond
Brotherhood presence/resources: Strong/Strong
Urban/rural threat level: High/Moderate
Field operatives: ≈300

The mid-Atlantic region is home to the national headquarters of the Brotherhood. While this chapter is the one whose leadership deals with the higher-ups in the United States government, a deliberate decision was made to keep the Brotherhood HQ geographically separate from that of the normal government. Among other advantages, it makes it somewhat inconvenient for government officials "in the know" to just drop in and visit, and Brotherhood leaders have a notorious tendency to ignore any government meeting request that in any way seems like a "summons". This region probably has the highest concentration of older, experienced agents, many of whom are now in management or leadership positions.

The mid-Atlantic region deals mostly with threats of an urban nature, though there are plenty of rural areas where trouble can pop up, including numerous state or national parks, the rugged North Carolina mountains where Eric Rudolph evaded federal agents for several years, North Carolina's Great Dismal Swamp, and areas of southwest Virginia where moonshiners still ply their trade despite the best efforts and technology deployed to find them. Of course, this region also includes important urban areas like the United States capital, the port and naval facilities at Norfolk, and major ports at Baltimore and Charleston. Of note is the special Brotherhood chapter in Washington DC, which operates in tandem and in secret with both DC police and the Secret Service, helping to investigate potential threats to the government.

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Neither the DC police nor the Secret Service appreciate outsiders "assisting" them with their own jobs, so cooperation is not all it could be, but due to past successes of the Brotherhood where both police and Secret Service have failed, there is a grudging respect for the Brotherhood operatives. The Brotherhood agents carry a special ID that most civilians assume is some sort of law enforcement badge, and which law enforcement figures is a front for some secret counter-terrorist outfit. All they know is that a call to the phone number on the ID quickly result in orders from very high up to not harass the bearer unless they are clearly a threat to public safety. Most Brotherhood agents would love to have this sort of *carte blanche*, but this perk is reserved for the DC chapter, whose membership includes some of the best of the best, who also have the psyche necessary to fit in the structured and politically sensitive environment of the nation's capital. Unshaven eccentrics and babbling conspiracy nuts need not apply.

Like the Northeast chapter, the Mid-Atlantic chapter (specifically the Washington DC area) has the touchy task of dealing with non-humans who happen to work for embassies and diplomatic missions, as well as the interesting problem of dealing with members of Congress who happen to be devils (don't tell us you're surprised).

▼ **Note** - Each of the regional descriptions has its own particular flavor and sort of threats/challenges for adventurers. This is meant to give you a feel for the sort of campaign you want to run (and where you might want to base it), along with priming the pump for adventure ideas. Different regions have different ways of doing things, which can be its own source of dramatic tension if adventurers have to pursue a case into another region and work under leadership that crimps their personal style.

▼ **CHURCH & STATE** - The government, any government, is not the Brotherhood, and the Brotherhood controls no government (at least not in the 21st century). But, the ties of obligation and the power inherent to each cause friction on a regular basis. At the highest levels, virtually all national governments are aware of the Brotherhood, and will know a great deal about the people involved with the Brotherhood within their borders (one reason why many freelancers avoid direct membership and often operate under assumed names on a cash basis). And while each of these governments would like to have sole authority and discretion to control Brotherhood operations within their borders, they don't have it.

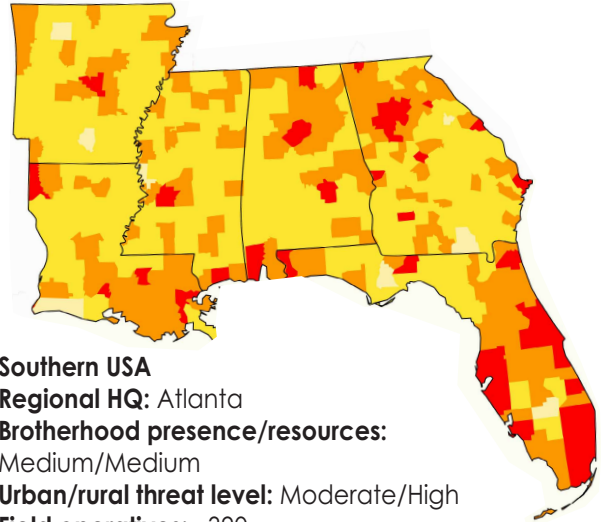
First, no one nation has a strong enough and deep enough reservoir of talent to handle every possible Evil threat. What governments have is money, law and sheer physical force. And against Evil, sometimes this simply is not enough. Brotherhood agents regularly cross national boundaries at the invitation of local Brotherhood groups without the consent of local government. Brotherhood agents would not travel so readily to help a group that had been forcibly co-opted into government service.

Second, the Brotherhood has access to far more magical talent, and makes far better use of information resources than most governments. The Brotherhood knows all the evil that lurks behind closed government doors, and any of the Evil too. This gives them leverage in the conventional sense of public opinion, scandal and criminal charges that can be laid against enough people in any given administration or cabinet to keep their operational freedom. By no means is everyone in positions of political power corrupt or criminal or unethical to the point of public censure. But, everyone knows someone or is somehow associated with someone who is, and when it "hits the fan", everyone gets splattered. The only way to avoid this? *Keep it from hitting the fan...* Does this mean the Brotherhood engages in polite blackmail and extortion against key political figures in order to maintain its operational freedom? *You bet it does.* However, using that particular tool generates a lot of ill will, so it tends to remain unspoken, doing more by the threat of its potential than its actual use.

Last, and related to the above, the Brotherhood is an "institution". It has been around so long, and its actions are so well documented (secretly), that everyone who used to be in political power and doesn't want their legacy associated with the often-violent actions of the Brotherhood, will use their connections and remaining influence to convince those currently in power that the Brotherhood is best left as is. *You don't mess with a system that works.* If the government refrains from interfering in Brotherhood business (which is in the best interest of humanity), then the Brotherhood doesn't try to influence the government and does not make any judgements or comments regarding political or social policy. That is, in an amazing display of common sense, the Brotherhood doesn't tell the government how to do its job, and vice versa. But it is not perfect.

The Brotherhood does tend to get into political meddling in local arenas. They may attempt to shift power balances, or just act as a politically neutral entity. Governments need control. The Brotherhood needs flexibility. The Brotherhood needs resources and legal fictions a government can provide, but it also needs the ability to act outside of and possibly against forces that might seem to be aligned with a particular individual or political party.

This makes for an uneasy alliance. In the United States, the Brotherhood is "managed" by high-level officials within Homeland Security, but also includes operatives in all the domestic intelligence and law enforcement agencies. However, some of the black money used to support Brotherhood activities also leaks out to some equally talented Brotherhood members who would just as soon have nothing to do with the government, either by personal preference, or because they are career criminals. These "unofficial" channels are too useful to give up, but too undisciplined to rein in. That is, government money ends up paying and protecting people that other branches of government want behind bars. It causes trouble at times, but it mostly works.



Southern USA

Regional HQ: Atlanta

Brotherhood presence/resources:

Medium/Medium

Urban/rural threat level: Moderate/High

Field operatives: ≈390

This region also includes Puerto Rico, and has cooperative agreements with Caribbean nations whose leaders are aware of the Brotherhood, but do not have the resources to deal with problems on their own. It serves as a base of operations to support Brotherhood operations in a chaotic and nearly Evil-overrun Haiti.

Brotherhood operations in this region spend a lot of time and manpower dealing with southern Florida, with weres, rogue vampires and cults of various sorts, usually with some human (and non-human) sorcerers involved. Plus, this is almost always related or entwined with ethnic problems (including ghuls), drugs, gunrunning and a Cuban expatriate community that is willing to go to *any* length to restore their homeland. The Cuban government is just as willing to go to any length to prevent this, and Cuba is also one of the places that the Brotherhood is not particularly welcome. The Cuban government has asked for Brotherhood help a few times in the past few decades. Access to people, places and information was still tightly controlled, and it is strongly suspected that the Cuban government really just needed the Brotherhood to bail them out of a situation that they had caused themselves.

Elsewhere in the southern US, things are fairly normal, to the extent that word can even be used in this gameworld. Occasional monsters eat hikers in the Ozarks, ancient Indian sites are "uncovered by floods", rural religions go astray, tent revivals with Evil charlatans leave chaos in their wake, and supremacists and agitators and activists sometimes are tempted by or gladly embrace Evil to further their personal agendas.

▼ **WHO KNOWS?** - Every leader of a major country or religion knows the Truth, or has been apprised of certain "unusual situations". Top religious leaders like the Pope, certain imams, rabbis and people like the Dali Lama know the Truth. The Brotherhood has a few artifacts and sorceries that can enhance the Sight enough to give a Blind leader a taste of the Truth, and with those visual images fresh in their mind, a briefing on the full nature of reality, along with whatever supporting evidence is required to drive the point home. For some, it is harder to live with than others. The Pope knows that there is no God. *At least not anymore.* If there was a single Supreme Being, He, she or it vanished with all the rest of the Good in the universe eons ago.

There are a few cults and fringe religions founded or run by people who had some glimpse of the Truth, either through some sort of Brotherhood connections or some near-madness experience that let them see part of the Truth. Some of these fringe groups are closer to the Truth than others, but fortunately very few of the Blind take seriously their stories of ancient alien fleets imprisoning billions of brainwashed souls on Earth. The fringe groups that do have an inkling and understanding of the Truth often try to enhance the Good in their members, and restrict the most dangerous of the Truths to the upper echelons and most enlightened members. Of course, the secrecy and insular nature of these fringe religions means their understanding of the Truth is usually limited and/or flawed.

Outside the Brotherhood, government and organized religion, there are also individuals and small groups that know some or all of the Truth. For instance, there is one Sighted billionaire who has avoided government entanglement and Brotherhood invitations, who runs his own little mercenary group of Evil hunters. What isn't commonly known is that he has a personal grudge against a particular Evil, which he has transferred to a personal crusade against Evil in general. Also not known is that he has avoided joining the Brotherhood at the behest of the United States government, who sees him as a sort of "backup" Brotherhood should relations with the Brotherhood take a serious negative turn. In return for him keeping his distance from the Brotherhood, the government is willing to bend the rules a little bit when it comes to approving certain permits or exceptions to particular import bans.

There is also an underground Sighted media, and a well-organized group of...the best word for them is heretics.

▼ **THE TANGENT** - In some gameworlds you can play either side, be a hero or a villain or perhaps an anti-hero. This isn't really an option in **Code:Black**. While normal adventurers have their own personal demons, the evil in **Code:Black** is *really* evil and not the sort of thing players are likely to get into. We're talking extermination camps, vivisectionists, serial killers, tobacco company executives, and the like. Humans who let their Evil run free are dealt with as often as not by existing laws enforced by the Blind populace.

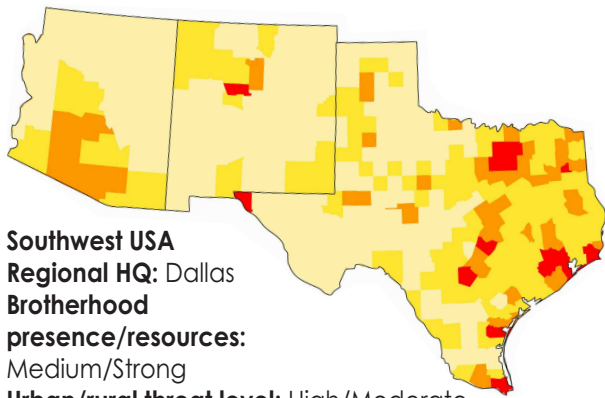
Playing *both* sides is another matter. Not so much personally playing both sides, but more like playing both sides against each other. There is an organization well aware of Evil and almost as old as the Brotherhood, but with different aims. They have gone by many names over the millennia, but in the early 21st century they are called The Tangent. They believe that Good and Evil are necessary forces in the universe, and that the absolute containment of Evil is ultimately a bad thing. They are both at odds and in cooperation with The Brotherhood, depending on the state of things and the particular nature of Evil at the time. The Tangent might, for its own reasons, think a particular Evil *should* be let loose, if only for a while, or that a particular Evil tilts the balance too far, and should be banished again. In the first case, they would actively oppose the Brotherhood, and in the second case, actively help it. The Tangent sees the inherent nature of Good and Evil as all-consuming. Good did at one time, completely rule the universe. Evil, if given a chance, would do the same.

The Tangent operates in a shadowy never-never land between The Brotherhood and the most depraved specimens of humanity and the lesser evils that walk the earth. Without the Brotherhood's resources and connections, they would be powerless against the numbers and force that the Blind authorities can bring to bear, and without members and contacts in the darkest corners, they would not have intelligence on what Evil is up to. Both the minions of Evil and the Brotherhood know about The Tangent and despise it, but as a conduit of information, both sides see it as a resource to be used as much as possible, and cooperated with as little as possible. There are secret Tangent members in the Brotherhood. There are Tangent members who only think the Brotherhood doesn't know about them, Brotherhood members pretending to be Tangent members, and Tangent members pretending to be Brotherhood members pretending to be Tangent members. *Whew.* And the same applies among the minions of Evil.

Like the Brotherhood, Tangentials (as they call themselves) have the Sight, and can have access to any power that the Sighted can develop. Unlike Brotherhood adepts who seek to purge themselves of any Evil taint they acquire through excessive sorcery, Tangential adepts often accept some of the effects as a means of maintaining their own personal sense of balance.

It might seem that Ghuls would be drawn to or more common in the Tangent, but you have to remember that a Ghul's loyalty is to themselves, not a larger cause. A Ghul in the Tangent is there for their own benefit, not because of any desire to maintain a universal balance.

Tangent members are designed like any other adventurer, but if it is going to be a Brotherhood campaign, membership in the Tangent is a major Secret.



Southwest USA
Regional HQ: Dallas
Brotherhood presence/resources: Medium/Strong
Urban/rural threat level: High/Moderate
Field operatives: ≈280

Most of the Brotherhood's resources in this region are devoted to urban matters, with the vast open spaces handled by a semi-autonomous group within the Brotherhood that calls itself the "Texas Strangers". The urban groups operate normally, and deal with a fairly normal set of woes, and few threats unique to the generally warm and dry climate. For instance, Globboths are more sluggish than normal and are as averse to boiling-hot pavement as you might imagine. On the other hand, rural areas have to deal with the occasional life-sucking chupacabra, and more than one ranch hand or illegal immigrant has "succumbed to the heat". Brotherhood agents in this region are often seen on the other side of the border, and just as often, Mexican agents are on this side assisting in matters of interest. However, this international cooperation does not include local police, and it is a *bad* idea to get caught with firearms in someone else's country.

Cults worshipping ancient Evils embodied in Olmec mythology are a recurring problem in this region, though sometimes they spread to urban areas in other parts of the United States with a large Central American immigrant population. These cults work fairly powerful magics fueled by human sacrifice, and summon a variety of obscure Evil servants to assist the plans of their dark masters. These human sacrifices stay under the radar of conventional law enforcement by selecting only those who are illegally in the country, or who will not be missed for other reasons. Very few of these cults are technically sophisticated, and draw their worshippers and leaders almost exclusively from immigrant populations. However, the Brotherhood has uncovered at least one operation where a nearly captive immigrant "work camp" was used, abused and terrorized by a white father-daughter sorcerer team, using magic, fear and summoned *things* to influence local and even state politics for a number of years before they were discovered. While eventually put out of commission, some of the people they helped put in office are still in office, or are still influential community leaders. Some of these people clearly knew some of what was going on, but they are not Evil, and there is no evidence that can convict them in a Blind court, so the Brotherhood has to settle for simply keeping an eye on them.

Because of the distances involved, the Texas Strangers have no fixed headquarters. Rather, they operate out of a high-end motorhome (like a tour bus), with some quasi-legal modifications and some official paperwork to explain things should a pesky state trooper want to step inside if the bus is pulled over at a routine traffic stop. Stranger teams operate in pairs or small groups out of crew cab pickup trucks (often with dirt bikes in the bed), or smaller motor homes. The Strangers have feeds from all the news services, police and aircraft radio scanners, and a tie-in to national headquarters that can feed them decrypted military chatter. The latter feed is only available on request, and has to be approved at the national level on a case-by-case basis (the national Brotherhood can get a decrypted feed directly from the military, provided they can justify a need for it that is related to the Brotherhood's mission). The Strangers deal mostly with wilderness and small town problems, and have a reputation for pushing the limits of what the Blind can accept. This is things like dragging a vampire out onto a public street in broad daylight, then "heroically" trying to put him out with a fire extinguisher for the benefit of the horrified onlookers.

▼ **THE MULKI** - During the war with the sorceror-kings, there were seen to be two sides, those of men who gave up their near-immortality in order to preserve and work towards Good, and those who clung to physical incorruptibility and banded with Evil. At first to rule, and later to simply survive against those arrayed against them. Unknown to both, there was a third faction, the Mulki. They were on the side of Good, but saw more than others the complete chaos and destruction the war would bring. To prevent the loss of all they had worked for, they made a devil's bargain, giving up their physical immortality in exchange for a more spiritual kind, but dooming themselves to the possibility of making the same mistakes over and over for all eternity. Neither able to ascend to wherever Good went, nor able to be influenced by Evil, they live normal lifespans, die and are reincarnated again. And again.

At first, this would seem like a pretty good deal, but the sorcery they cast upon themselves, while immensely powerful, had a number of limits and drawbacks.

From life to life, they retain *only* the memories they accumulated from when the original spell was cast to when their *original* body died. And they only gain these memories in their next life over a period of months after hitting puberty. If you don't see the problems immediately, let us explain in detail.

The mulki only retain memories of things they learned from after they cast the original spell upon themselves until they died. This is many, many years after they learned most of their skills, including such basic ones as language. A reborn mulki has images, personal recollections, and countless conversations and visual images that they have no context for. If there any spells in the reborn mulki's knowledge, it is only ones learned after the spell was cast, usually from other mulki. Some mulki had the misfortune of dying very soon after the spell was cast, and all they retain from life to life is a week or month of their old life, haunting images and undecipherable words, with no context to put them in. Only a sense of having lived before, but not knowing where or when.

At best, a mulki knows who and what they were, but most of their practical knowledge of day-to-day affairs in their original life is lost. The mulki were aware that this would happen, and tried to minimize it, making a point of learning or relearning languages, and learning old skills in new ways when possible, but they could not know how languages would mutate through the ages, nor what skills would be the most useful to relearn so that they could carry them through the centuries. The smart ones tried to learn as much new sorcery as possible, assuming that particular knowledge would always be useful, no matter how much the rest of the world might change.

A mulki has no knowledge of any past life except the original one. They have no perfect way to know who other mulki are or to recognize someone simply by their face, or who they were in a past life, no way to transfer information from life to life, or to leave messages for each other. During their original lives, many made arrangements to meet each other at particular locations on specific days of the year, like a specific hilltop or sacred site on days like the solstice, but as each mulki was reborn, the odds were their new life would have no way of reaching such a rendezvous. How would one reborn into an Andean hill tribe two thousand years ago meet someone else at the top of Mount Olympus on the summer solstice? One thing common to many mulki is a specific cuneiform glyph, and a particular pattern of specific colors that can be easily painted or woven into an ornamental piece of clothing. Thus, two mulki might recognize a kindred upon seeing an article of clothing, a sign or a tattoo. However, this is not foolproof. The glyph might be a popular tattoo somewhere because someone saw it and copied it. Or, the pattern on a piece of clothing might be worn by a descendant of the mulki.

Because being a mulki is akin to possession or insanity, mulki generally try to avoid leaving traces of their existence. The reincarnation does not run in families, so why cause embarrassment to a family name by leaving a diary behind that would make "Uncle Jason" sound like a total nutcase? The mulki feel that in a way, they are merely guests, residing in someone's life for a space before moving on, and when possible, they try to respect their host.

Only in the past few centuries has travel become safe and affordable enough for mulki to renew old acquaintances lost for millennia. And only in the most recent generation has the internet given them a way to leave messages that any reborn mulki can find with a simple search engine query. Of course, such web results would be hidden in symbolic references that only another person alive in that era would understand. In the past decade, some of the mulki have pooled their knowledge and tried to find a way to regain their original purpose, to help mankind by providing a sense of continuity from generation to generation, preserving what they could of specialized magics that seem to indeed be lost to the Brotherhood.

The mulki do have their advantages. The first is that you can't really kill them, you can just take them out of commission for a few decades. This usually suffices for most purposes, however. While mulki cannot ascend to true Good or the hereafter, they are also completely immune to the mind-ripping effects of Evil. This is despite the fact that they have a Fate of no more than 6 (and seldom less than 6, either). This limits the maximum effect of sorcery they can power up, but they can use the effect without fear of corruption as long as they want. In the modern world, many of them will usually have some sort of sophisticated, triggered defenses.

But, not all is well among the small band of mulki. While contact between mulki friends and acquaintances has had gaps that are measured in centuries or even millennia, some of the mulki have disappeared entirely, a loss felt by each of the mulki as some fragment of the great shared spell they wove is extinguished. None of the mulki knows how or why this has happened, but they are sure that it was not some slow disintegration of the spell they wove. Someone or something, once every few centuries, kills a mulki and they do *not* reincarnate from this death. Much more worrisome is that as information technology improves, so has the rate of killings. While there was only one mulki death from 1870CE to 1970CE, there have been three since then. This is making the few hundred mulki remaining in the world a bit skittish and even paranoid, afraid that one of their own is somehow the killer.

What do they do? - Aside from being continually reborn, the mulki originally set themselves a mission of preserving knowledge, and being sources of hope for Good, even though that ideal is forever denied to them. Upon reaching adulthood and slowly assimilating the memories of their past life, many show a sudden aptitude for ancient studies, and became scholars of the arcane. Some became priests or priestesses of whatever religion suited their goals and used this position to help other people fight Evil and realize the Good in themselves. Some of history's famous saints were mulki, and the miracles attributed to them were actually sorceries. Others took the fight to politics and tried to sway systems of government and laws, while others took the battle literally and became military commanders, using the forces at their command to root out Evil where it appeared.

But, they almost always avoid the Brotherhood, and its cousin the Tangent. The Brotherhood has records and searches deep enough that similarities between an agent from one reincarnation to the next could be suspicious, and the mulki are very keen on keeping their true nature secret. They will help the Brotherhood, or more particularly, its agents on occasion. The mulki may have first-hand experience with certain ancient artifacts, or know peculiarities or weaknesses of a particular Evil or Evil place. This, and their immunity to Evil corruption effects means they are good people to have on your side in a fight.

Last, because of their peculiar nature and origin, it is possible that mulki can have knowledge of a few of the Good magics, like the making of Elder Seals, and perhaps others that are known only from second-hand references in ancient Brotherhood archives. This makes them excellent one-shot adventure hooks, doing things no one else can, only to have them disappear afterwards, or die somehow and have it thought their knowledge was forever lost.

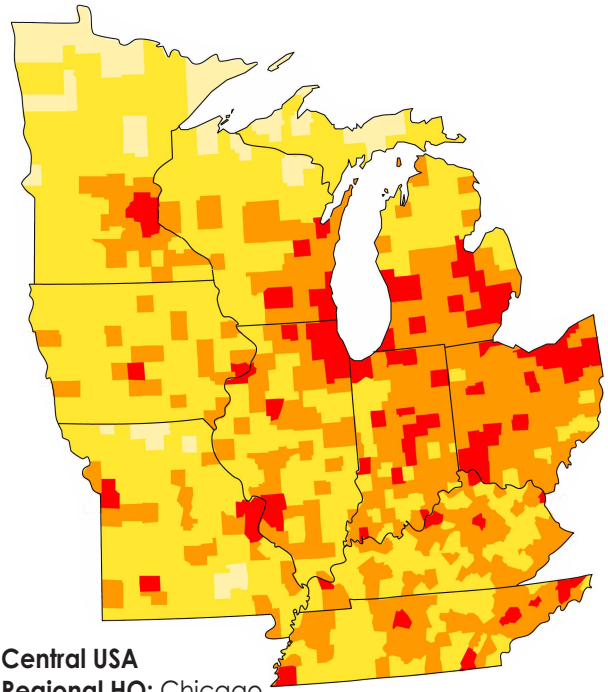
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Mulki as adventurers - Of course a player or two might want to have an adventurer who is a mulki and has secrets and powers above and beyond the secrets and powers available to the Brotherhood. We don't recommend this, but will not go as far as to say it can't happen. In its simplest form the adventurer has an Unusual Background and is Gifted. They can have up to 20S of their total in skills or sorceries not normally known or knowable by Brotherhood adventurers, with gamemaster approval on the sorceries and self-imposed limits on how and when they can be used (since they may need to be hidden from others). If they want more S points than this in "hidden" knowledge, each extra S they want costs them 2S from their point total.

EXAMPLE: A mulki adventurer normally can have 20S in skills or sorceries outside those normally allowed. If they wanted 30S in such abilities, it would cost them 40S (the 20S normally spent, and 10S that costs double).

The mulki adventurer cannot be or become a member of the Brotherhood or Tangent, and has to have a Fate of exactly 6, which can never be improved. The adventurer suffers no corrupting effects from using sorcery and no Fear effects from being confronted by Evil. A mulki cannot have for than two levels in any particular Personality Trait, and must act in a way that fosters the overall Good. This doesn't mean they can't be violent, or even ruthless if needed, but their overall mission is to work towards Good, and they will give up their lives for that goal if necessary.

▼ **Note** - The term "mulki" derives from a Sumerian term about a celestial body that had been cleaved apart, symbolizing the separation of their body and soul, and their soul from all other souls. The original term is far older, but Sumerian is as close as we can get to it.



Central USA

Regional HQ: Chicago

Brotherhood presence/resources: Strong/Strong

Urban/rural threat level: High/Moderate

Field operatives: ≈690

This region covers many highly populated areas on the Great Lakes, but also sparsely populated areas like Michigan's northern peninsula, northern Minnesota, and rugged and isolated parts of Kentucky and Tennessee. This region also includes a number of significant Indian burial mounds, some of them quite large, and far more ancient than Blind archaeologists would find believable. Virtually every US region has some of these, but this region has the most and the largest.

The Chicago branch of the Brotherhood is notable in that it is a sub-branch of the Chicago Police Department.⁴ Many of the Brotherhood field operatives are police officers, who have all been transferred to a particular "task force" that handles difficult or unusual cases. The mayor's office and the overall PD leadership do not know about the Brotherhood, but they do know that this task force has had some particularly notable successes, and has had some notable excesses as well. Half the time they need the expertise of this group, and the other half of the time it is under investigation or someone is trying to have it disbanded. This task force covers almost all the Brotherhood work in the Chicago area. It has a number of advantages in what it can do, but also has a semi-public presence and accountability that requires it use freelance assets for tasks that can't be legally done by police officers.

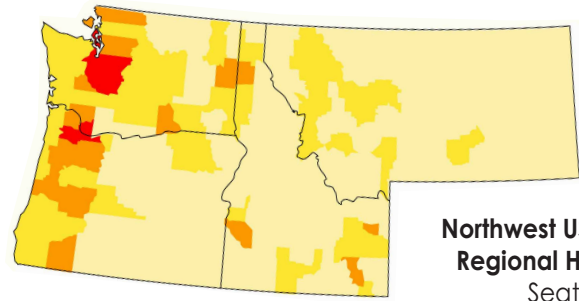
⁴ Special Unit 2 (2002), TV series

▼ **TABLOIDS** - Not everyone who has the Sight ends up in the Brotherhood or an asylum. Some end up working for the tabloids. These institutions cater to the public's need to "know", to have some sort of explanation for their subconscious to cling to, a coping mechanism for the constant denial of the Blindness. Reporters and photographers with the Sight sell stories vetted by editors who also have the gift, and all of course are driven by the higher calling of needing to make enough money to feed and shelter themselves. The mercenary aspects of reporting stories and those of keeping a publication afloat do not result in tabloids being the most reliable of sources, but for readers with even a touch of the Sight, the photographs are much more than the crude retouch jobs the Blind see when they look at them. *Are giant bats terrorizing our jetliners? Is Frog Boy a prophet of the apocalypse? Why is the government suppressing knowledge of crashed alien spacecraft?* We don't know, but the answers to these and more are in the latest issue!

Much as the government (and the Brotherhood) would like to shut down these rags, they do serve a useful and measurable purpose as a psychological safety valve for the segment of the populace that uses "belief in the absurd" as a way to channel the stress caused by their Blindness. And because the tabloids enjoy this relative freedom from censorship, dissident elements within the Brotherhood, Tangent and government use tabloid reporters as means to get out information that would otherwise be kept under wraps. Unlike news of corporate fraud or government abuse, the public does not take tabloid stories seriously, but the information *does* get into the hands of people who *might* be able to act on it.

Adventurers might have a tabloid contact as a Friend (or even Enemy!), but people with this background are not really good as adventurers. However, a Brotherhood adventurer might have been a "normal" tabloid reporter until that day when they *did* see the "Wolfman" and were shocked into Sight...

Code:Black^{v1.0}



**Northwest USA
Regional HQ:**

Seattle

Brotherhood presence/resources: Medium/Weak

Urban/rural threat level: Moderate/Moderate

Field operatives: ≈120

This region of the country has a fairly low population density, with about half the population (and field operatives) in the cities of Portland, Spokane, Seattle and Tacoma, the rest being scattered about in groups of about half a dozen field agents in Butte, Boise and smaller cities throughout the region.

There is a lot of backwoods and very rugged terrain in the northwest United States, and a long and poorly guarded border with Canada. This is not normally a problem, but it does mean that people and things can cross from one side to the other with little chance of being detected or caught, and these individuals are often up to no good.

The major rural threats in this region tend to be isolated eruptions of Evil that take the form of small sacrificial or ceremonial sites. These tend to call to the nearest Sighted individuals who can be tempted and corrupted by visions of power, even though the victim may go into it with best intentions. An increasing series of "end justifies the means" actions will eventually turn the victim fully towards Evil, at which point they become a willing participant in whatever larger Evil plan is afoot.

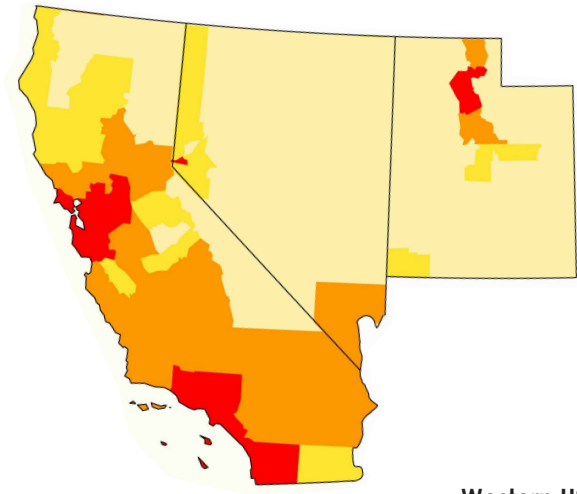
In the urban areas, especially Seattle, the scene has a lot of underground sorcery, and quite a few ghul, weres, devils and vampires managing a delicate balancing act of co-existence with each other and the Brotherhood. There is currently an active cult of both the Horrors and the Shivas in this region. The Brotherhood has evidence of their existence, but has not managed to localize where they are based or who is in charge (or what they are up to). At the moment, only disconnected actions have been detected and low-level foot soldiers or pawns have been dealt with. Far more is going on than the Brotherhood knows it sees, and it worries them.

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▼ **A DAY IN THE LIFE** - As mentioned elsewhere, Brotherhood field operatives are usually not doing Brotherhood work every day. They usually do something else entirely as their "normal" job. Consider them more like military reserve units. They can be called up at a moment's notice for a long-term deployment, but can go for long periods with no Brotherhood activity at all. For campaign pacing, odds are that an adventure may involve some continuous activity for a period of weeks, after which there may be a few months of inactivity, with perhaps some minor leads on open cases to be followed up on. And of course, agents always keep their eyes and ears open for anything suspicious. Administrative personnel have more continuous Brotherhood-related work, monitoring police and news reports, managing payrolls, researching and cataloguing finds, overseeing archaeological work, and so on.

Most field operatives work through a front organization or business. These businesses often have a travel component, and put field agents in positions where they can realistically go to a lot of places in their region or city. Food or liquor distribution, sales reps for computers or software, investigative reporters, safety inspectors, etc. Brotherhood activity is handled through the normal dispatch and communication channels within the front operation, using coded phrases or encrypted channels, and course through private meetings or other actions that seem perfectly normal to the non-Brotherhood employees in the operation.

In addition to the normal communication as part of a cover job, most Brotherhood personnel also get at least one computerized "challenge-response" phone call per day, at a random time. A text message or recorded voice poses a question or asks for an authentication code. If the proper response is not given within a certain amount of time, an alert is automatically sent to that agent's superiors (with time, GPS location, speed and direction, challenge and response), which in turn requires that some action be taken within a certain time period, or it gets sent further up the hierarchy, and so on. The idea is that if an agent is captured, incapacitated or otherwise under duress, the agent knows that regardless of what else happens, the system will automatically pick it up within no more than 24 hours. Agents can also enter a number of specific *seemingly* valid responses to a challenge, but these are actually code phrases to indicate some form of duress or compromised situation.



Western USA
Regional HQ: Los Angeles
Brotherhood presence/resources: Strong/Strong
Urban/rural threat level: High/High
Field operatives: ~380

The western US has some of the country's most urbanized areas (the Sacramento/San Francisco/Oakland and Los Angeles/San Bernadino/San Diego corridors), as well as some of the most desolate and uninhabited areas (Death Valley, most of Nevada). There are many areas with serious Evil potential that have been placed off-limits under various pretenses over the past century, like "waste disposal sites", "nuclear test sites", "weapon testing ranges", and so on. In at least two cases, "nuclear tests" were actually a last resort measure to stifle an Evil threat that had grown beyond what Brotherhood action could deal with, and *extreme* measures were necessary to keep it contained before it spread to populated areas. Brotherhood agents doing work in remote areas routinely carry firepower that requires a Class 3 firearms license, though this is material that is checked out of Brotherhood vaults for specific assignments rather than something carried around in the trunk of a car on a continual basis.

Urban threats are just as dangerous. The cold war with the neomen is more than a little warm. Enough truce-breakers have banded together that some sections of the major cities are almost off-limits to the Brotherhood at night, and only pressure from local dukes keeps them from running amok. They hire themselves out to the highest bidder, and will accept anyone Evil into their midst, provided they have something to contribute. Atavistic devils, weres, sorcerors, the works. In some areas there are even "clubs" where the bouncers simply keep out anyone who isn't Evil, and corporations with Evil connections use bribes and sorcery to make sure the police look the other way. ❖

❖ Angel (1999), TV series

There is a lot of "gang violence" in the news, which is how the Blind in this region rationalize anonymous gunshots in the middle of the night, disappearances and things they hear or see but would really rather not think about or understand.

This region also has the single greatest concentration of devils in the United States, which is to say, Hollywood. For every star who sells their soul (maybe literally) for fame, there are hundred others who have their dreams cheerfully crushed, their talent willfully squandered and their ambitions and hopes turned against them. And for each one who gives up or leaves, another gladly takes their place, sure that *they* are going to make the big time. This particular Evil is beyond the Brotherhood's control. It is part of how the the Blind actually perceive that industry, over-the-top caricatures, pointless greed, treachery, backstabs, conspicuous consumption, everything seen in Washington DC, but with more beautiful people. Only the Sighted realize that the reality is *more* extreme than what the Blind *think* they perceive.

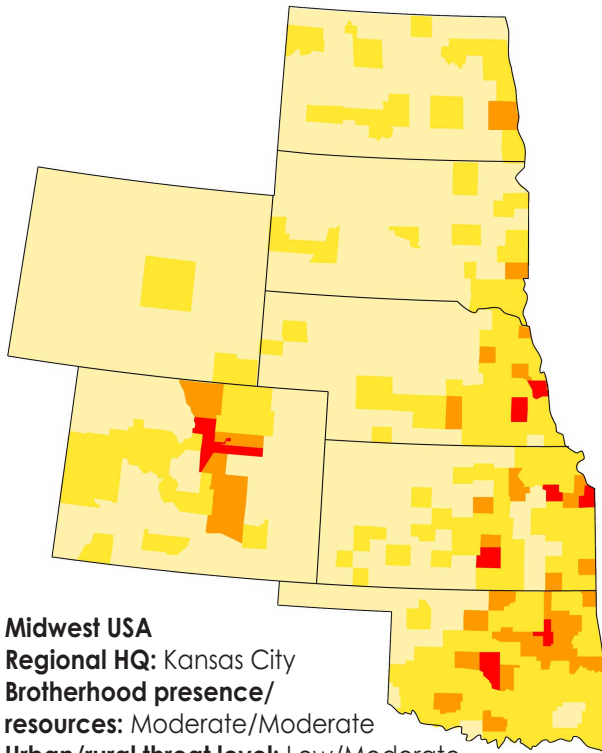
Also, the sheer number of non-humans and influx of people with at least marginal Sight means that the nature of reality is a little more in the open in some circles. It is still kept quiet, since the Blind are no more likely to believe here than anywhere else, but those who have the Sight and those who are seen with the Sight rub shoulders on a daily basis, and have their own social network that operates outside of but in tandem with normal channels. This serves to further concentrate non-humans in the upper social echelons. They are still a clear numerical minority, but you'll see a lot more beings with horns and cloven hooves on Rodeo Drive than you will on Broadway or the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Fortunately, the vast majority of these Evils are the self-centered, self-indulgent ones who really have no interest in releasing or being subservient to a greater Evil, and they are just as likely to assist the Brotherhood against their more Evil brethren...provided someone can make it worth their while to do so.

▼ **BOOTS ON THE GROUND** - In the early centuries after humanity's escape from the Prison, virtually everyone had the Sight and potential for sorcery. During the war against the Sorcerer Kings, this came in good stead, as Evils were summoned, released and vanquished that today's Brotherhood would have no chance of defeating without resorting to extremely destructive conventional weaponry. There were two side effects of that war. The first is that the most powerful of the imprisoned Evils, once banished, had that route of return forever blocked to them, making the level of Evil humanity has since had to deal with far less. The other side effect is that the talent for Sight and sorcery is to some extent genetic, and the greatest sorcerors of that age were either on the side of Evil and perished, or were on the side of Good and died in the struggle to defeat Evil. Combined with the unforeseen problem of the Blindness, the sorcerous and Sight potential of humanity dropped precipitously over the next millennia, to its current level of perhaps one person in several thousand. And of those, perhaps only one in five has what it takes to become a field agent in the Brotherhood.

In the United States, there are a approximately six thousand Brotherhood personnel, of which about half are in supporting roles and do not take part in field ops because of various reasons (not enough Sight, not emotionally suited, etc). The remaining three thousand are people like the adventurers. This means a group of five adventurers is an important chunk of Brotherhood resources. It also means that *on average*, there would be:

60 field operatives per state
1 field operative per 100,000 people

With an equal numbers in support personnel like friendly local officials or Brotherhood administrative personnel. So a city of five million might actually have about fifty field operatives and fifty people who have the Sight but have negligible combat or magical training, or who have such training, but are senior enough that they usually are running Brotherhood teams in an administrative role (or who are retired from active duty because of disability). So, Brotherhood operatives and supporters are pretty thin on the ground. True Evil is also spread pretty thin. The *total* number of non-humans and Evil humans is still less than a tenth of one percent of the overall population. This outnumbers Brotherhood personnel by maybe ten to one, but the Evils do not cooperate with each other, while the Brotherhood *is* well-organized and cooperative.



Midwest USA
Regional HQ: Kansas City
Brotherhood presence/ resources: Moderate/Moderate
Urban/rural threat level: Low/Moderate
Field operatives: ≈150

The American heartland is a fairly peaceful territory for the Brotherhood to work in. A lot of the "core values" make corruption of the populace just a little harder for Evil to manage, and most threats that happen are small scale and highly localized. A serial killer with sorcery, a were or two, a hard to pin down Legion, and so on. But, the isolation of many small communities means that if things do get out of hand, they can grow to dangerous levels before the Brotherhood gets wind of it, and a major and sometimes emotionally painful operation is required to deal with the matter. 🗡️

While Colorado and Wyoming are technically part of the Midwest operational region, in practice they tend to have different sorts of threats and problems than the rest of the region. The local branches in these two states (50 field agents) are a sort of sub-region with a fair amount of operational flexibility and autonomy. However, they still have to answer to the overall regional leadership, and they receive their funding from this source as well. There have been efforts every few decades to have these two states split off into a separate region, but these efforts have done little except stir up trouble.

▼ **RELIGIONS** - At the highest level, all the major religions know of true Evil, and the tenuous evidence for the existence of a "good" afterlife and the lack of evidence that God still exists in this universe. These religions nonetheless believe that fighting Evil is God's will for man, and that the Brotherhood, though flawed is probably a good thing. *And that's as far as it goes.* After that, all the religious hatreds and schisms are quite real. Acknowledging the existence of Evil is fine, but if you feel that someone else is causing humanity to come to harm because they are fighting Evil in the "wrong" way, then you are morally obligated to stop them, and often feel justified in using any means at your disposal to do so.

EXAMPLE: If say, your religion in the Middle East has a strong belief in how Evil is to be fought, and some other religion's belief on the matter has allowed an Evil to escape or otherwise run amok among your people, then your two religions (and the nations in which they hold sway) are going to be on very unfriendly terms with each other. And if these contrary beliefs on the nature of Evil and the battle against it are millennia-old traditions, neither side is going to change its attitude any time soon, and extremists among the two faiths may even feel it is their duty to eradicate the other faith...for the good of all humanity.

Compounding this problem is that members of opposing faiths may share membership in the Brotherhood, or members with particular expertise may be needed in a part of the world where their faith is not favored, and they will have to deal with the Blind who see only a member of an opposing faith, and not the larger struggle against the greater Evil.

The Brotherhood has long experience at dealing with situations like this, and at the highest levels, relations are generally pretty good. It is at the level of individuals in the field and dealing with Blind government officials that the greatest problems arise.

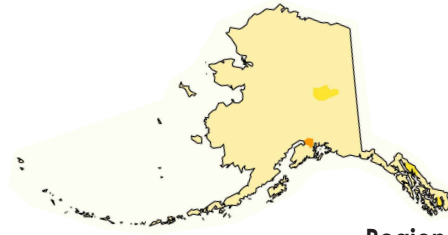
All of the world's core faiths derive from a common set of beliefs and knowledge that date from the time humanity first escaped from the Prison. After that, individual differences and hazy recollections of knowledge lost beyond that veil gradually turned into core beliefs that while mostly incorrect, have some kernels of truth in them. For instance, the Hindu Puranas have cosmic cycles of which the *shortest* is 432,000 years long, far longer than humanity has existed on Earth. These cycles date back to the days when Good and Evil warred across the universe, and contains seeds of information that have yet to be correctly interpreted and used. The Mayan calendar has a cycle that correlates with the emergence of certain Evils, and even the relatively recent Biblical prophecies of an end time have knowledge that the Brotherhood attempts to use. And these are just the documents that the Blind are aware of. There are other, secret documents that the Brotherhood has, and others that are still kept as jealously guarded secrets by various faiths and sects.

By and large, only the present and past core faiths of the world have knowledge of Evil or secret knowledge of any use. While minor denominations may have members with the Sight, or outcasts or rebels who carry snippets of Truth, by and large these minor sects are of little import in the greater struggle.

EXAMPLE: The Vatican archives may hold a lot of useful information to a Brotherhood researcher, but the archives of the Unitarian Church probably do not.

The secret information of each faith is generally only available to highly placed members of that faith, and only on a need to know basis. For the Brotherhood, this means that a member has to be of the appropriate faith in order to gain access, regardless of how important the situation might be. If the situation absolutely demands access, then the faith in question will appoint its own liaison to be the bearer of the information, entrusted with making decisions based on that knowledge, while revealing as little of it as possible. For a member to violate the trust of their faith by giving its secrets to the Brotherhood is the sort of thing that causes decades if not centuries of bad blood between the two, and both sides have made it clear to their members where the lines of loyalty lie, and what is and isn't allowed, given the sometimes opposing needs and desires of the Brotherhood and a particular faith.

Code:Black^{v1.0}



Alaska

Regional HQ: Juneau

Brotherhood presence/resources: Weak/Moderate

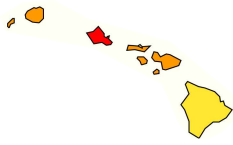
Urban/rural threat level: Low/Moderate

Field operatives: ≈12

The Alaska region has about double the average number of agents per capita, mainly because they have such a huge amount of area they have to cover. Even so, there are only a dozen field agents for an area the size of...well...Alaska.

Alaskan agents almost always carry firearms. Because of the occasional backwoods treks and the large size of local wildlife, the preferred sidearm is a large-caliber revolver. Something extremely reliable in all weather conditions, and packing a serious punch in case you need to defend yourself against a polar bear or other large, angry mammal.

The cover for most of the Brotherhood agents in Alaska is a little known "task force" of industry, conservation and Interior Department personnel. Supposedly an uneasy coalition that bickers a lot and gets little done, it nonetheless has connections and credibility to get permission to go just about anywhere in the state. It also has secret links to the commander of Elmendorf Air Force Base (outside of Anchorage). With a few phone calls, Brotherhood agents can get access to transport, satellite photos and even some heavy weaponry if necessary. The commander of the air base is not chosen by the government on the basis of Sight, but will have a background that lets them accept some level of weirdness with an open mind. Base personnel who deal with the "task force" all believe it is some NSA or CIA front organization that was repurposed from some secret Cold War operation after the fall of the former Soviet Union.



Hawaii

Regional HQ: Honolulu

Brotherhood presence/resources:

Weak/Moderate

Urban/rural threat level: Medium/Low

Field operatives: ≈12

This region covers the state of Hawaii, and the minor islands extending west from Hawaii out to Midway Island.

Hawaii is largely a tropical paradise with only a few serpents. The vampire presence is extremely small, there are only occasional were problems, the ghul keep to themselves and devils are content to simply fleece the tourists. There are the occasional problems that the Brotherhood has to deal with, which local government is more than happy to sweep under the rug for fear of damaging the tourist trade.

The major problem, and only in relative terms, is sorcery. The problems with Hawaiian sorcery date back to the 19th century, when the islands were forcibly annexed by the US government and the Hawaiian queen deposed. Many Hawaiians did not take kindly to that, and for decades mounted a sorcerous insurrection that got very little publicity in the outside world. While there are only a handful of independence-minded sorcerers on the various Hawaiian islands, the knowledge of sorcery (locally called *ho'omanamana*) is fairly widespread in particular subcultures and known sorcerers (or *kahuna anaana*) are respected and feared. Of course, some of these sorcerers succumb to the temptations of Evil, and either shield themselves from Brotherhood action by staying in the highly public urban areas, or they disappear into the wilderness. Outsiders tend to think of Hawaii as beaches and hotels and Pearl Harbor, but over fifty percent of the island's total area has a population density of less than 1 person per square kilometer. *There's a lot of places to hide out there.*

Evil Hawaiian sorcerers may be quiet, Evil hermits, in which case the the Brotherhood simply keeps tabs on them to see who if anyone they are visited by, or they become a more pernicious problem, extorting local residents, trying to manipulate volcanoes, cultivating sorcerously modified marijuana, starting criminal gangs, summoning aquatic horrors and the like.

In this case, the Brotherhood has to go in and take care of the problem. Sometimes this is a Brotherhood operation, sometimes the Brotherhood is a covert backup that "just happens" to be in the area when local law enforcement executes Brotherhood-influenced warrants for their arrest.

Hawaiian sorcery has its own unique flavor, and while its practitioners claim to be able to do things no one else can, this has not been borne out in practice (just about everywhere claims "their" magic is the best). Brotherhood agents in Hawaii tend to be more fluent in sorcery than their mainland counterparts due to difficulty of getting legal firearms and a similar difficulty in covering up incidents involving them, not to mention increased difficulty in hiding weapons under lightweight clothing. The climate also makes it obvious and suspicious to wear most body armor. Brotherhood agents in Hawaii tend to have a slightly lower standard of living than on the mainland, as their slightly increased pay does not entirely offset the greater cost of living there.

Pacific Territories

Regional HQ: Agana(Guam)

Brotherhood presence/resources: Weak/Weak

Urban/rural threat level: Low/Low

Field operatives: ≈5

The Pacific Territories include Guam, Wake Island, The Marshall Islands, The Marianas, Palau, Micronesia and a handful of other remote but inhabited islands in a region that has a total land area about the same as Vermont, but spread over an area about the size of the continental United States.

There is very little Evil activity in this region, but the problem is that when it does crop up, it can fester a long time before anyone notices it. On the good side, the resources that Evil can draw to itself in this region are extremely small.

This tiny chapter is a handful of older agents and support personnel who have retired here for various reasons, or who have had to "disappear" because of run-ins with authorities of a nature that could not just be "smoothed over", plus a few native-born Sighted agents who tend to live low-key lives in their own communities. The United States government has some influence over independent island nations in this region (many of them get substantial US foreign aid), though not all of them are aware of the Brotherhood or the other larger truths.

The main problem in the region at the moment is the island nation of Nauru, the worlds smallest independent republic (≈13,000 people, 21km²). After a century of mining Nauru's phosphate deposits for fertilizer, the island's ecosystem is in a shambles, the nation is a haven for "international banks" (i.e. money laundering operations), and it is home to an "out of sight, out of mind" international detention camp for inconvenient refugees. It is not a tourist destination, and known journalists, doctors, lawyers and human rights workers are routinely denied entry visas, so very little solid information about the island reaches the general public. This lock on access to the island is aided by government's ownership of the only port facility and a requirement that all flights to the island are through the government-owned Air Nauru. Something Evil is clearly going on, and has been for the past several years, but no one has figured out what it is yet.

Other regions

Regional HQ: n/a

Brotherhood presence/resources: Weak/Weak

Urban/rural threat level: varies

Field operatives: n/a

Those who have the Sight may end up in jobs where they cannot easily do traditional work for the Brotherhood, yet can operate as independent agents with Brotherhood guidance. Active duty soldiers, Antarctic researchers and embassy personnel are examples. They operate under US law on territory that it under US jurisdiction (like embassies or military bases). When possible, the Brotherhood and US government work to have these personnel assigned in such a way that they have the freedom to do Brotherhood work or liaison with local Brotherhood personnel should the situation require it. These lone agents have rough jobs, with very little Sighted backup within their normal organization, and no ability to call for local help if they need it (can't invite local Brotherhood agents onto embassy or base grounds just because some monster is running amok...).

Brotherhood agents travelling abroad will often have the nearest embassy or base agent as a contact, either overtly or covertly, depending on the operation and the normal job that agent does. An embassy contact is someone you could readily justify an appointment with. A gunnery sergeant stationed in the Korean DMZ is not...

Code:Black^{v1.0}

▼ **CODES** - The Brotherhood has its own jargon, and terms that are meaningless to the Blind world. In the 21st century, these terms are drawn from law enforcement, military and medical sources. Most Brotherhood members will have cell phones, and short voice or text messages give the recipient of the message some idea of what is going on, even if the actual details cannot be discussed on open lines:

Code:White	Official business of a non-critical nature. Report in when convenient.
Code:Yellow	New information has come in. Report in for a briefing on the situation at your earliest convenience.
Code:Orange	Evil activity is suspected in your operational area. Report in as soon as possible for further information.
Code:Red	Evil activity has been verified in your operational area. Report in immediately for further information.
Code:Green	Your expertise is required by another chapter. Report in for details.
Code:Blue	Local authorities are hindering work and you may run afoul of them. Proceed with caution.
Code:Violet	Your personal operational security has been breached. Abort whatever you are doing and get to a secure location.
Code:Black	All hell has broken loose. This usually means that the local headquarters has been compromised, some nameless horror is on the rampage, or your life is in imminent danger due to a security breach of some kind.

Sometimes, the word "code" is not used, but the appropriate color is inserted into a conversation or message in such a way that it is meaningful to a member of the Brotherhood, but does not seem out of place to anyone else overhearing it.



CAMPAIGNING



*"When it was accomplished, the adversary
vanquished, the haughty enemy humiliated;
when the triumph of Anshar was accomplished
on the enemy, and the will of Nudimmud was
fulfilled, the brave Marduk tightened the ropes
of the prisoners.*

*"He turned back to where Tiamat lay
bound...he smashed her skull (for the mace
was merciless), he severed her arteries and
the blood streamed down the north wind to
the unknown ends of the world."*

from the *Enuma Elish* (Babylonian creation myth)

▼ **RUNNING CODE:BLACK** - While we at **BTRC** are fond of obscure game settings and innovative ideas, **Code:Black** has a few elements that harken back to the earliest rpgs, namely that there is an identifiable, genuine evil out there, and that the adventure and challenge will never end, even if the adventurers do. While there are going to be moral ambiguities and merely flawed mortal foes, there also exists Evil in its purest form, unrepentant, merciless Evil that will stop at nothing short of the total enslavement or extinction of mankind, with adventurers the only thing standing between that Evil and its goal. So, you can shoot it, stab it, bludgeon or call in napalm strikes on it...and feel good about yourself in the morning for having done so. When adventurers confront Evil, they know that sending it back to the Prison by any non-Evil means available is the *right* thing to do. Some players live for the days when they can use every trick, gadget and clever tactic they've saved for a special occasion, because saving the world is about as special an occasion as you are going to find.

Code:Black^{v1.0}

And the world will always need saving, in ways great and small, obvious and subtle. Every fight, every investigation, every tiny bit of information tracked back to its source is a victory for Good. *But Evil is never defeated.* No matter how many times adventurers triumph, no matter what sacrifices they make to hold Evil at bay, there will always be new threats and new challenges to face. As the adventurers grow in talent and face down their own personal demons, their careers within the Brotherhood may change, but the war will not. Even if the Prison were sealed, the universe cannot exist without both Good and Evil in it, so the only way the Prison can truly be sealed again is if sufficient Evil has already escaped to balance the Good in humanity...and the struggle between the two will begin anew.

Starting a campaign - As a gamemaster, exactly where you start sort of depends on where you start. A small-town or rural campaign will have a radically different feel than one which starts in a big city. One that takes place in London will have a different feel than one which takes place in Hong Kong, and one with adventurers who have just been introduced to the Truth will be different than one with Brotherhood veterans.

There will be a few constants in any campaign. *Evil is out there, and it is irredeemable.* Evil wants nothing less than total freedom to do what it wants, and any deal or compromise or arrangement you might make with Evil will eventually be broken by Evil when it serves its purpose to do so. As humans with our own bit of evil in us, we are well aware of how that goes. Evil is to be banished, and it will be an unending job. There will always be some Evil in the world, at least as long as there is some Good that requires a balancing force. This means that a **Code:Black** campaign has no end. Agents will never run out of Evil to track down and banish. Agents will become better and better at what they do, and take on greater and more subtle evils, or die trying, but the fight itself continues.

And because Evil is irredeemable, it is a genuine "bad guy" that you can use excessive force on with few moral qualms. You get to use high explosives and machineguns in the name of Good and sleep untroubled for having done it. *What's not to like?*

All of this is good, but a campaign needs a little more structure than that. A **Code:Black** campaign revolves around one or two long-term plots, some one-off plots that have no long term consequence, and a few longer adventures that can introduce villains or plot elements that can come back on occasion or link up somehow to the overall game background.

A one-off adventure is just that, a game session or two that deals with a particular self-contained threat or problem. This is a good way to get adventurers started in a campaign.

EXAMPLE: A series of ghastly murders takes place. The press has called the perpetrator the "Full moon killer", but the Brotherhood strongly suspects a werewolf. Adventurers have to deal with the werewolf somehow. How difficult this is depends on who the werewolf is the rest of the month. But, regardless, the adventure is self-contained. There needs to be no outside force or larger plot involved, except possibly tracking down who turned the person into a werewolf to begin with.

An overall plot is something that sits in the background of a campaign. Little bits of it may surface every other adventure or so, things that by themselves have no apparent significance, but which will slowly accumulate into a dark force or lead to an inescapable and unpleasant conclusion, either or both of which must be dealt with somehow.

There are two overall plots that come to mind for a **Code:Black** campaign. The first is that Evil takes many forms. Some are impatient and petulant and atavistic. Others are inhumanly patient and coldly calculating. The Brotherhood's organizational memory is limited by the quality of its records and the mortal lifespan of its members. Evil has neither limit. The oldest religious prophecies all speak of some sort of End Time, when horrible things come to pass and terrible evils are unleashed upon the world. Many of these prophecies list that time as being sometimes in the early 21st century. While the prophecies remain, and a few other secret documents in Brotherhood archives around the world, the hard data on the exact nature of this Evil and how the plans come to pass has been lost. It is like having the knowledge of a bomb threat, but not what type of bomb, who planted it, or where, just some vague idea of when it is supposed to go off.

One or more of the Old Gods may have started a plan hundreds or thousands of years ago that is just now coalescing. Without knowledge of which actions by Evil relate to making the plan happen, the Brotherhood has no way to intelligently stop it. Only as the final pieces start falling into place does a pattern begin to emerge, and an ability to predict the next move becomes possible. But of course, by this time, Evil has a lot of pieces on the board, and thwarting the overall plan will be a major undertaking that will require resources and cooperation on a scale that the Brotherhood has never before managed. If the adventurers fail, Evil will permanently wedge open the cracks in the Prison, allowing more and greater Evil to escape into this world, perhaps forever altering the balance, the nature of the struggle and even how the Blind perceive the world and the truth of existence!

The other overall plot is that there is something rotten in Denmark. Or Paris. Or Boston. Sorcery is almost required to combat or banish some Evils, but this is fighting fire with fire. Or in this case, Evil with Evil. That use of power can corrupt even the best of intentions and subvert the strongest of wills. This is one reason why the Brotherhood is split up the way it is, and why each of the larger branches has several leaders of equal status. They keep an eye on each other, and if any leader falls to the temptations of the power at their disposal, they can be removed from office by a vote from the others. But, detecting Evil in a person or anyone else is not a simple matter. There is no technological "evil detector", nor can Sorcery detect an Evil being or even an Evil taint. An Evil human looks like a normal human unless they engage in confrontational behavior that brings out a Fear reaction. The best detection that sorcery can do is monitor emotional states and provide some basic lie detector capability. And of course, how much can you really trust a lie detector that is itself Evil?

Somewhere, in one or more major chapters of the Brotherhood, things have gone terribly wrong. The leadership has been completely subverted or is under the thrall of some sort of Evil. Perhaps one too many investigations of an ancient artifact in the locked vaults. Maybe a long-planned encounter with a parasitic Evil being, or even a generations-old plot by a secret cult to infiltrate the highest ranks of their mortal enemy. At the lower chapter level, things are going to be much the same as always. Maybe some personnel get shuffled in ways that are not perfectly logical. Maybe an operation or two goes wrong due to bad intelligence. Perhaps an after-action report gets ignored. These things happen. But as whatever plot there is unfolds, things will get more and more out of joint, to the point where the Brotherhood starts to turn against itself. Criticism gets punished. People are "transferred" and never heard from again. Accusations against other chapters are made. Loyalty oaths are required. Local leaders are replaced or being to act suspiciously, and Evil seems to be strengthening despite the best efforts of the people in the field. Something is horribly wrong, at the very top of your organization, and you can't use Brotherhood resources to figure out what or how best to fight it.

This could be separate from the first overall plot. It could be in addition to the first overall plot, or it could be a part of Evil's overall plot. Resolving it is no doubt going to result in casualties within the highest ranks of the Brotherhood, and even if these actions are absolutely necessary, they might still be hard to forgive. It will shake people's faith in the Brotherhood and the way it is run and led, and may lead to a complete reorganization of its structure and how it polices itself, at least within the framework of the countries in which it happens.

These are some "big picture" adventure threads. But, not every adventure is going to be tied to a larger plotline. A great deal of adventures will be self-contained, "one-shots" that take a short number of game sessions to resolve. These can involve things the adventurers discover on their own, investigations passed to them from higher up in the Brotherhood, and quite frequently involve cleaning up the mess after someone else's misadventure. 🐜

In terms of the small picture, look at the background of all the adventurers, the campaign region and the nature of the Brotherhood cover operation the adventurers work for or with. If an adventurer's parents were killed by some Evil that is still out there, someone has non-human blood in their veins, a past criminal record, a Friend in the police department or is a local expert on a particular obscure topic, all of these are hooks to hang an adventure off of.

Is the campaign region home to a particular urban legend or gruesome unsolved crime? Does the area have some unique or distinctive feature that has its own mythology? Alligators in the sewers, things living in the subway tunnels, its own variant of the Loch Ness Monster, Sasquatch, etc. The cultural history of the area is also important. The "gangster era" in Chicago could have events that are only now causing problems. The anti-Castro community in southern Florida has its own agenda. New York City was the gateway to the United States for millions of immigrants. Every area is likely to have some cultural or historical aspect that can be part of the campaign background.

Who are the local "bad guys"? Give a little thought about the presence of local vampire duke, or maybe a duke from elsewhere thinking about getting in on the local action (extorting tribute from the local neomen). Is there a ghul subculture, or just isolated individuals? Are there any devils in high places? Are all the local churches on the up-and-up, or are some of them actually cults with more dubious aims than redemption and salvation? Are there local firebrand preachers with a touch of the Sight, lighting fires they are incapable of putting out? Are there any local non-Brotherhood sorcerors that might cross over to Evil? All of these can be seeds or aspects of less earth-shaking adventures. Keep in mind that the interaction and clash of personality can be as confrontational and important as the flash of sorcery and crash of gunfire.

▼ **THINGS TO REMEMBER** - As a gamemaster, keep in mind important things about the **Code:Black** universe.

Evil ain't stupid - Granted, some Evil minions may be unfamiliar with this reality, or not be all that creative, but the forces behind the scenes and the Evils that survive the longest are no dummies. Evil not only has its own abilities, it also knows perfectly well how to take advantage of the Blind. A cult leader will surround themselves with fanatics, base themselves at a place that cannot be approached unobserved, or armor themselves in statutes on freedom of religion. A sorcerer who can walk through steel bars might let themselves languish in jail if they think they can get acquitted and then file a hefty civil damages suit against their accusers. Vampires protect themselves by mingling with the very people they prey on, and famous devils might have devilish paparazzi on their payroll just to provide alibis on demand.

Evil has all the benefits of sorcery, money, fame, political connections and an easily deluded public, and has absolutely no qualms about using any and all of these to its advantage.

If Evil could do what it wants to do without human help, it would have already done so. Corrupting and extinguishing the spark of Good in all of us seems to be part of what helps and feeds Evil. And in this, Evil is not stupid either. A sorcerous priest, cult leader or other Evil minion does not put out an advertisement looking for people who want to "kill puppies for Satan", or have new initiates bathe themselves in the blood of the innocent. This is the sort of thing that would repel the Blind and even most of those who might be inclined to join a fringe group. Rather, the call is seductive and slow. A home or refuge for the disenfranchised, mysteries that can only be revealed to a select few. A first, candidates are tested in simple ways. Breaking a law or two, with the result of a seemingly greater good. Like robbing the warehouse of a corporate supermarket chain to feed the hungry. Serious crimes, but which give the perpetrator a sense of importance and responsibility. Then, perhaps doing some minor physical harm, roughing up someone who has publicly criticized the group, or perhaps is merely investigating matters that are "none of their business". When the initiates have proven themselves capable of doing harm to strangers for no other reason than being commanded to, they can slowly be introduced to "the mysteries", things like sorcery or non-human entities.

At each step, loyalties are tested and probed and reinforced. Those who fail but are still useful stay in the group at some lower level of initiation. Those whose talents are identifiable are shunted to roles where their talents can be exploited. Those who fail and are deemed to be a risk...disappear. There will *always* be those eager to prove their loyalty by showing how well they can deal with the disloyal.

At some point, the spark of Good in a person will gutter and go out, or the person will realize that they are trapped in a web partially of their own making, and simply surrender to the Evil within them. Either way, Evil wins. Just take your cues from history and see how ordinary, average, seemingly good people have been seduced into supporting or doing the most abominable things in public, and then imagine how far it can go for those who keep their actions secret...

In addition, any Evil except the neophyte human dabblers who are corrupted by sorcery knows about the Brotherhood. Evil knows that if it keeps a low profile, the Brotherhood is likely to focus its attention elsewhere. Think of it like the police. Commit a robbery and the police investigate. Kill a policeman and you've kicked a hornet's nest. The Brotherhood is much the same. Kill a Brotherhood agent and you've opened a can of whoop-ass on yourself. Evils that do so are too dumb to know any better, or powerful enough that they don't care.

Patience is a virtue - Which means Evil does not have a lot of it. The greater Evils have nothing *but* time on their hands in the Prison, but they have waited a *long* time and been frustrated at every turn by the Brotherhood. This has not improved their normally foul dispositions. This can be to the advantage of the adventurers. Simply thwarting a plan with a minor setback could cause an impatient overlord to do something not entirely rational or in its best interest. This could further tip Evil's hand and give adventurers info they might have otherwise been ignorant of. Of course, this action is likely to be spectacular and violent and quite exciting if you happen to be the ones called on to put an end to it!

Those on the outside may be better informed than their masters, but they are ultimately loyal to the Evil they are bound to. This may not affect how smart a human or other minion operates in service to an Evil, but a capricious Evil overlord can throw the best laid plans awry, and these overlords often have little inclination to listen to the complaints of even the most senior of their earthly servants.

No honor among thieves - Evil is selfish by nature. Evil minions or hirelings whose devotion is not insanely fanatical will be looking to their own self-interests as much as that of whoever they are working for. If they think they can get a better deal elsewhere, and their greed overcomes their fear of reprisal, they will take the opportunity and bolt. Adventurers can take advantage of this at times. Of course, since Evil isn't stupid, it knows that some of its minions will bolt when things get rough, and may actually have plans that take this into account, feeding false or misleading information that it intends to fall into Brotherhood hands...

The most highly ranked of human servants of Evil have usually sealed part of their soul to their master, so their loyalty is absolute. They know that the Prison is their ultimate destination unless and until the greater Evils are freed, and their only hope is to remain loyal to the end, expecting (or hoping) that their master will eventually reward that loyalty when freed from the Prison, rather than leaving them behind in eternal torment. The Brotherhood knows this, which is why they have made the painful but necessary decision that humans who have chosen Evil are a permanent threat and cannot be allowed to live. The only exceptions have been cases where the person has information that is vital for the Brotherhood to find out, or has information that they would rather keep an Evil in the Prison from finding out. Neither prospect is going to be pleasant, but the Brotherhood does not cross the line into Evil in the way it treats those in its custody.

Remember that anyone who retains a shred of rationality realizes that they are very minor players compared to the greater Evils out there, and they set their ambitions accordingly. They are usually taking the angle that it is better to be an important slave than to be free but dead. They realize that their master is always going to be their master, and they are simply jockeying for the best position in service to that master. And if they can get a better position by deposing someone above them (and getting away with it), they will often give it a try.

Good has the ultimate power - In this case, that power is the gamemaster. If the good guys fail, very bad things happen. The gamemaster can't just let the good guys win, otherwise there would be no sense of risk or challenge. The good guys can get mutilated or killed, though. Hopefully humanity will survive, *though the individual adventurers may not*. Evil might run amok for a little while in the event adventurers can't keep it contained, but ultimately Good needs to prevail.

Even if the good guys are *supposed* to win in the end, they can lose battles on the way. There is no shame in being outmatched, and no honor lost in fleeing a fight you can't win. You and your cause are better served with you alive to provide intel and fight again. Better to run away than heroically dying *now* to accomplish something better served by making the bad guys perish *later*. Remember that adventurers can use Fate to represent the Good within them, and can modify die rolls to keep themselves alive, either to prevail, or to simply get out while they can, to fight again another day. If as a gamemaster you have overmatched the adventurers, whether deliberately or by accident, let them know in as subtle or blatant terms as you want. Give the players enough info to judge for themselves their chance of success, and let their final decision be an informed one. Maybe they will cut and run, maybe they will stay and fight. Maybe they will surprise you and win against all odds...or maybe some people will be making up new adventures next session.

Fear is scary - While many conflicts will be with human pawns of Evil, the genuinely Evil things out there are frightening at a level few of us will ever comprehend. Adventurers can succumb to Fear as much as anyone else. If you know there is likely to be something really scary out there, try to have your adventurer deal with the possibility as best they can. Succumbing to fear means the gamemaster gets control of the adventurer until you recover. You flee the scene, abandoning your friends and comrades. You fight in a blind panic, forgetting your years of martial arts training. You blast with sorceries at full power, too terrified to care about the cost to your psyche. All of these are bad things when your life and the lives of other adventurers are in the balance. As an adventurer, you know that fear is real, and dangerous. As a gamemaster, it is a tool to shape the nature of encounters, if nothing else, a way to suck up Fate rolls that the adventurers might otherwise use to easily defeat an otherwise tough foe.

Adventure ideas are everywhere - Any tidbit of weird news you hear about has potential to be part of a **Code:Black** adventure. What is simply odd to the Blind, can be far more sinister to those who have the Sight. So, when the words "unusual", "unexplained", "puzzling" or "weird" show up in mainstream news reports, catch the details and see if it fits into your game plans. For instance:

12-12-2005(Associated Press): *An outbreak of geysers spewing mud and gas into the air in rural Kingfisher County is puzzling state and local officials.*

Kingfisher Fire Chief John Crawford says initial reports of the geysers came in Friday morning, and that firefighters and Oklahoma Corporation Commission officials were on the scene yesterday.

The geysers have appeared throughout the countryside of rural Kingfisher, with stretches of up to 12 miles between spots, and some as short as a quarter of a mile.

Crawford says the threat of the gas igniting is unlikely, but he says there is a concern the gas could begin coming up through water-well lines.

He says sheriff's deputies were dispatched to inform residents of the possibility of gas coming through wells and water systems.

A good gamemaster can certainly get some mileage out of a story like that. There are also web sites devoted entirely to unusual news events, and of course, conspiracy theories of all kinds, both of which can be useful resources. Fark.com is usually good for a few news items with **Code:Black** tie-in potential per week. Forteanimes.com should also have some adventure fodder in its content. Web searches for "weird news", "cult news", "conspiracy news" and similar phrases will turn up enough ideas to keep you going for years. Find a handful of these sites, bookmark them and give them a check whenever you are planning an adventure. Even if an overall plot doesn't show up, oddball characters, weird events, tie-ins and of course, red herrings will probably present themselves.

Even better, conspiracy theories can be cover-ups for even deeper secrets! Are colonies of alien Greys living in US-built complexes under the New Mexico desert? *Of course not! That would be preposterous!* But something is going on out there with government consent or complicity, and a tale of aliens and underground bases is meant to distract the conspiracy fanatics from the truth, and give the Blind with some common sense a reason to ignore *all* stories about they might hear about that area. Maybe it is a training ground for sorcery-equipped Delta teams. Maybe it is the site of some experiment gone awry and the area is kept closed off with a high military presence as a matter of public safety. Maybe it is a secret government/Brotherhood prison or holding facility for Evils too dangerous to be sent back to the Prison (for who knows where or when they would reappear if they escaped again). There is an entire branch of the National Security Agency that is involved with planting fake UFO evidence whenever there is something like a rash of cattle mutilations. These same teams then attempt to suppress the evidence they just planted, thus giving it credibility. It's no wonder that the so called "men in black" show up so quick anytime UFO evidence is discovered... they're the ones who planted it! Similar teams may be dispatched to investigate anytime a meteor crashes through someone's roof or lands on their car:

10-13-1992(Gannett Suburban Newspaper): *A steady stream of curious onlookers continued flocking yesterday to the Peekskill neighborhood where a football-sized meteorite fell from the heavens and smashed through a parked car late last week.*

"We're up to almost 400 people since Friday when it happened," said Michael Aponte, 21. "People keep coming by, taking pictures and videotapes."

Aponte's girlfriend, Michelle Knapp, was watching television inside her family home early Friday evening when she heard the meteorite rip into the trunk of her 1980 red Chevrolet Malibu parked outside.

Yetis, UFOs, the Bermuda Triangle, the Loch Ness monster, faked moon landings, doctored photos from the Mars rovers, it's all part of a larger picture that you can keep going as long as weird things keep happening in the real world.

▼ **SAMPLE CAMPAIGN** - This information is for gamemaster eyes only. He or she will need to excerpt the bits that the players/adventurers get to know or need to know, as they need it. Some of will be things they need to know immediately, like the rules they operate under and the nature of the campaign region, while other bits will be doled out as part of individual adventurers or uncovered through diligent investigation or lucky breaks. If you haven't figured this out by now as a gamemaster, a good campaign usually has several plot threads running at the same time, sometimes intersecting, sometimes interfering, sometimes part of a much larger whole that is only gradually revealed. The following starter campaign has many of these elements, and can be tweaked to fit your own campaign needs. The sample adventures have lots of these elements in a sort of escalating way. A murderous but not necessarily evil human, dealing with non-humans Evil and otherwise, plots by lesser Evils, unaligned Evils of significant power, and plots by a greater Evil seeking to spread influence and eventually make its presence felt outside the Prison. These adventures are short, but start things in motion that could last for years of in-game time.

Backdrop - This is a regional campaign, mostly centered around a large urban area of several million souls, with some suburbs and several smaller communities within an hour or two of highway travel time (on a good day). Within this range is at least one major college, some sparsely populated farming areas, and a few native sites of moderate antiquity, dating back to the original colonization of the area. This could be Celtic tribesmen, Puritan settlers, Spanish conquistadors, or whatever is appropriate to where you center this region. Not all of these are initially part of a particular campaign thread, but it gives you more long-term potential without having to leave the area. All in all, maybe a hundred thousand square kilometers of sandbox to play in.

The Brotherhood has a regional headquarters in the major city, and manages the affairs of several separate chapters for the city itself (based on geographic, ethnic or status/class boundaries), plus a few more chapters that are based in the satellite communities. The adventurers should all start play belonging to the same chapter, preferably one in the city, and for a less affluent area. In addition to the normal skill levels required, someone should have some Area Knowledge, and someone with passable "people skills" is almost a must. The adventurers will be the equivalent of "beat cops" and detectives, at least to begin with.

The Brotherhood in this region has certain rules, standard operating procedures designed to maintain a certain discipline, and also to ease potential rough spots between the Brotherhood and the Blind authorities who really don't want to know the Brotherhood exists.

Rules to live by

- 1) You're not the police. You don't arrest people, you don't detain people, you don't stop crimes. *You fight Evil.* If you have to detain someone or stop a crime as part of fighting Evil, you can. Otherwise, you leave law enforcement to the police. Freelancers can kick ass to whatever extent they can get away with it.
- 2) You don't draw weapons on civilians unless they draw first. *Ever.* It is hard enough getting and keeping weapon permits for Brotherhood personnel without the problems of Blind civilians making official complaints that can eventually be traced back to you...and us. You can defend yourself, respond to lethal force or threats of lethal force from civilians with the same level of force.
- 3) If the Brotherhood has made an official arrangement or deal or decision, you are part of the Brotherhood and are bound by that decision, even if you don't like it. If you can't live with this restriction, you're working for the wrong people.
- 4) Try not to cause a mess. The Blind do not *want* to see what we do. Don't force it on them unless absolutely necessary.
- 5) It is harder to get forgiveness than to get permission, and permission is damn hard to get. So don't expect to get off lightly if you break the rules...even if you turn out to be in the right.

▼ **Note** - A group of adventurers should not be all combat monsters or all bookworms. Gamemasters may or may not have this problem, but if they do, some sort of incentive should be applied to give the group some balance, perhaps a package deal that is worth a few more points for an adventurer type that is likely to be under-represented, or having a certain number of "adventurer type" slots and letting the players decide who takes what role.

▼ **Note** - These adventure threads are written with the assumption of United States firearm laws. In the case of the major urban area, adventurers will at best be able to wangle concealed carry permits for a single pistol, which will be a specific model and serial number. Local law enforcement is under the Brotherhood-fostered belief that the owners of these permits are some sort of undercover federal personnel. They will treat any Brotherhood agent they catch with a gun the same as they would anyone else, at least until they confirm that any concealed carry permits are legit. Brotherhood agents are instructed to cooperate with local law enforcement "whenever practical to do so". There is enough of a Brotherhood presence here that they do not want to complicate things, and of course, they don't want to deal with Brotherhood agents and police shooting at each other.

If you set this campaign in a region with even more restrictive firearms laws, some Brotherhood agents may be able to pull off fabricated cover stories, like being special Interpol agents, or some other story that sets them apart from the local law enforcement community, yet gives a convenient (and verifiable) fiction for carrying a concealed firearm. Adventurers whose personal character or background precludes them from having an official license to carry lethal force will carry firearms at their own risk. Avoiding getting searched by the police for weapons is obviously a priority. Running away is fine, as is tossing a weapon to avoid being caught with it, as long as the police don't see you toss it! But if caught with one, standard orders are to let yourself get arrested, booked, etc., even if this lets whatever you might be chasing get away. *You never shoot or assault the good guys.* The Brotherhood will bail you out through official channels with some story that you are an undercover informant or contact or something that gets you loose with a minimum of fuss. Adventurers can be put into situations where bending the rules is a tough moral choice that they will have to live with one way or the other, but that's part of what adventuring is about...

Within this backdrop of place and time and ground rules, there are several threads that will be in motion, or be set in motion shortly after the start of the campaign.

▼ **BLOOD RED** - There is a serial killer on the loose. He is not Evil, though in time he might reach that level. He is merely evil and quite human. Twice in the past three months he has taken a victim. Both times in their own homes, both times with a large knife, each with one stab to the kidneys, one slice to the throat. As far as forensics can tell, both murders were done with little emotion. That is, the minimum force necessary was used. One slice, one stab wound. What has drawn the Brotherhood's attention is that he has drawn the same elaborate symbology in the victim's fresh blood at the site of each of the murders. This symbolism has been interpreted (incorrectly, it turns out) to be part of an elaborate summoning ritual. The media has picked up enough of the details to turn the two murders into a "serial killer's crime spree", and given him the name "Blood Red".

What happened then upped the ante. A Brotherhood agent investigating the situation with a little sorcery picked up a clue, and traced it by a lucky fluke to the killer's apartment address. A covert observation showing only a normal human with no sign of sorcery or Evil there, the agent made the fatal mistake of thinking he had actually scryed the killer's next victim. He went in without calling for backup to warn/protect the "victim". Confronted in his own home by someone who clearly knew both too much and not enough about the situation, the killer took the Brotherhood agent by surprise and killed him. He was quite surprised to find the agent packing both a pistol and body armor. Intending to use the agent's own car to transport and dispose of the body, he opened the trunk...and discovered all kinds of other interesting goodies.

Not highly educated but still technically savvy, he acted very quickly to obfuscate any electronic trail the agent might have left by driving the car to several other locations and leaving it parked there for an hour or two, before disabling any tracking electronics and using a pre-scouted river location to dispose of the vehicle and body for the foreseeable future. Using his charm and conversational skills, he then hitched a ride back to someplace he could catch a transit bus, rode to the last location he parked the agent's car, then turned the agent's GPS phone back on and taped it under one of the bus's seats. He then took a *different* transit bus back home and undertook the messy but necessary cleanup of his own premises, followed by giving notice to the landlord and packing up to move somewhere else in town. A place that takes cash, at least for now.

Our killer, who we will call Blood Red, is not remarkable in any way. He would pass without notice on the street. Aside from the minor quirk of being a cold-blooded serial killer, his only other distinguishing characteristic is a concern for physical fitness. He is not spectacularly strong or agile or fit, but he is above average in each of these categories, and is easily on par with most adventurers. He also can be a charmer, and is good at making people feel at ease around him. Whether by accident or design, his body language is non-threatening and he can verbally defuse most potentially hostile situations he is in.

Why he does what he does is a mystery, as is the symbol he has chosen to leave at the scene of his crimes. *He knows, but he'll never tell.* He is not the type who secretly wants to be caught, nor will he taunt the police, send cryptic letters to the newspapers, or call up morning radio shows just to hear himself on the air. He won't be easy to track down or predict. If he survives long enough, there will emerge a sort of pattern to his kills. Some of these items will be obvious to those investigating the crimes (like #3), while others will have to be inferred (like #1), and others will only be found out through very detailed investigation (like #2).

- 1) He only kills victims who stand some sort of chance in a fair fight. Maybe not a very good chance, but he will not choose someone who is utterly outmatched physically. They have to be "healthy".
- 2) He always investigates his victims first, using conversational skills to find out things about them (like where they live and work).
- 3) He only kills victims in their own homes. He will surreptitiously enter the home, hide and then wait for them to return before stalking and/or surprising them from a place of concealment.
- 4) He only kills victims who are alone. He will wait for hours for a chance to sneak back out of a home if more than one person enters.
- 5) He attacks by surprise and goes immediately for a killing or incapacitating blow.
- 6) He is well-read enough on modern forensics to avoid leaving obvious traces. If ever linked to the crime, a thorough investigation can probably get enough trace evidence to place him at the scene, but by itself that is not necessarily enough to convict.
- 7) He has no prior criminal record and is not currently in any sort of fingerprint or DNA database.

After killing and disposing of the incautious Brotherhood agent, Blood Red starts looking through the interesting toys he has "inherited". Exactly what these are is up to the gamemaster, but they should be trinkets he can appreciate and which can make life more difficult for adventurers who encounter him (see the **Gear** chapter for details). He may not understand the tech behind all the things he has, but he can understand their use and appreciate it. An MC-bladed knife, shear-thickening armor (with any tracing circuitry clipped out), and maybe an adaptive camouflage suit or power boots would all make him more effective at what he does. It would also give him an appreciation of what any Brotherhood agents might be equipped with should he run into someone he suspects is one. For instance, he will know where they are armored and aim for *other* locations. In addition, he has the agent's handgun. While he does not normally carry a firearm, he will probably stash it somewhere off premises (not in his car or apartment), just in case he needs a gun for some reason. He is also smart enough to know (or figure out) that concealed carry weapons in this area have their ballistics registered with the police. If he thinks he can cause trouble by doing so, he is quite capable of shooting someone just so he can watch the news and the street to see who starts asking questions and why.

Blood Red has to make a living somehow. He is skilled in a few trades and is currently working an industrial construction job. This keeps him in shape and covers his modest living expenses, with enough savings to cover him during the week or two it takes to find a new victim, which he does between jobs.

Now, as far as the police are concerned, Blood Red is a serial killer, and is getting the due attention such deserves. The Brotherhood is doing its own investigation, partially because of the occult angle, and more so since a Brotherhood agent was killed pursuing a lead in the case. Through its police channels, the Brotherhood is getting any info the police have, as well as any reports from government forensic specialists or profilers. The dead agent was at least White₃ in rank, so they were fairly experienced, and their loss will be keenly felt by that chapter. Officially, the agent is missing and presumed dead, in the investigation of what the Brotherhood thinks is a long-term summoning ritual. So, there is a *lot* of Brotherhood effort being put towards tracking this guy down. The agent may have been part of the chapter the adventurers are part of, or one of the neighboring chapters, depending on how much personal emphasis the gamemaster wants to put on this thread.

The Brotherhood still assumes Blood Red is Evil, either by nature or possibly possession by a Legion. They have not eliminated the possibility that it is a rogue vampire, but it is considered unlikely, and any freelance sorcerers of potential Evil mien are being checked out for alibis. But at least for a while (two or three more killings), it is unlikely that any solid leads will develop.

To further complicate matters, after the third killing, Blood Red will get a "fan", a copycat killer who does a very good job of mimicking the *modus operandi* of Blood Red, at least at first. The copycat killer is a bit stronger and less skilled with a blade, and does not investigate his victims with as much thoroughness, but until the copycat has killed at least three people, there will not be enough evidence to ascertain that it is indeed a separate person. Remember that if Blood Red starts using the dead agent's blade, this will be a change in the nature of the knife wounds, so a further change by the copycat is not a direct indication of a second killer.

There is a very good chance that the copycat will be the first person arrested for the Blood Red killing spree, and will cheerfully claim credit for *all* the killings. The real Blood Red is neither flattered nor insulted by the copycat, but will postpone one or more of his own killings if the increased vigilance by law enforcement would make things too risky for his own operations. This will actually play into the Brotherhood hypothesis of a Legion possession, the same general *modus operandi*, but done by a different host body.

If the copycat is caught, the Brotherhood's investigation will quickly rule out possession as a cause, and the clearly fabricated story about the bloody symbol left at each crime scene will send investigators back to square one as far as the motivation for the crimes, at least as long as they think the person in custody is Blood Red. This will last until the *real* Blood Red strikes again.

Potential clues for the long term start with the slain agent's car. It was parked within a block of Blood Red's address, in addition to the other places Blood Red parked it in a clever way to muddy the trail. Several thousand people probably live within a several minute walk of where the agent parked when investigating Blood Red. But, with a lot of digging, this location in combination with his rapid exit from his lease may be a clue. But one which does not lead directly anywhere, since he is living "off the books" now, and for several months will probably be using a check-cashing service that doesn't look too closely at names (i.e. his paychecks are not in his real name). It is also possible that the car itself could turn up as a lucky fluke (some boater's anchor got stuck in it). There won't be anything useful there, but the fact that the agent had all his gear stolen and that none of it has turned up on the street may be useful knowledge in and of itself (they know the killer may have some high-tech Brotherhood stuff at his disposal). It also means that any thoughts the agent had gone AWOL will be put to rest.

The next clue is security camera footage. Since Blood Red associates with his victims, there will *somewhere* be pictures from street cameras, ATM's, elevators and the like with him and each victim, or possibly talking to the victim's co-workers or neighbors. He will be wearing a baseball cap or other headgear that obscures his face from view by an elevated camera, but his build, race and gender can be determined from the pictures. This clue will take a bit of work, and will probably not turn up a conclusive pattern until at least the third or fourth killing. Without a facial match, there is no way to try and track him through public databases. This would be fruitless in any case, since he makes a point of altering his looks for official photographs (hairstyle, facial hair, cheek padding, posture, etc.). Blood Red is insane and murderous, but is also highly intelligent.

The last clues can be gleaned from forensic analysis of the crimes. Both Blood Red and the copycat are right-handed, the angle and depth of wounds gives an idea of strength and approximate height, and footprints in soft soil give a shoe size. Blood Red uses different shoes (from a thrift store) for each killing, while the copycat does not (but has the same shoe size). In addition, the time of day for the killings, their widely scattered locations and any security camera footage that comes up will give the indication that he is not holding down a 9-to-5 day job, which may also be of use to investigators.

None of these clues are something that can be dealt with by a single, lucky skill roll. Tracking down the information required is a matter of months of footwork or analysis, using not just the skills on the adventurer sheet, but also some genuine cleverness and insight on the part of the players. The reward, if it comes at all, will not be without a lot of effort. But, if the players are actively part of the investigation into Blood Red and do play a key part in tracking him down, they deserve to be there when it all goes down. Blood Red is not superhuman, but he is more intelligent than most. He's already decided that he'd rather go down fighting, which gives him viable courses of action even if all escape routes are closed. Adventurers who are not careful could easily get seriously injured or killed. And, just to add icing to the cake, both his crimes and the investigation are being observed indirectly from afar. If and when the net finally begins to tighten around him, Blood Red will get an anonymous tip about what is coming and what to expect. This unknown benefactor will remain cloaked in shadow for the time being, but may be a recurring figure, sometimes hindering adventurers, sometimes helping.



Blood Red

Strength: 2d+2

Agility: 3d+0

Awareness: 2d+2

Will: 3d+0

Health: 2d+2

Fate: 1d+0

Notable skills:

Knife: +1d

Brawling: +1d

Stealth: +0d

City knowledge: +1d

Running: +0d

Notable abilities:

Pain Tolerance

Possible gear:

Knife

Pistol

Body armor

Code:Black^{v1.0}

The most important thing to remember about Blood Red is that he's a red herring. Sure, he's a very bad person who needs to be taken off the streets, preferably permanently, but he is neither Evil nor working at the behest of Evil. He is merely evil. His apprehension and subsequent justice falls squarely within the purview of normal law enforcement, and squarely *outside* what the Brotherhood is about. As long as there exists the possibility that his crimes are part of some larger, more sinister sorcery, he is a legitimate target for Brotherhood investigation. But, if and when it becomes clear that there are no sorcerous traces, or if they decide the symbology isn't an arcane reference after all, the Brotherhood will let the matter drop and close their investigation. This won't fly too well with the rank-and-file. After all, a Brotherhood agent was killed pursuing this case. This will be especially hard to take if the slain agent was a friend of one of the adventurers. Being told to drop an active investigation in a case that killed someone you care about is not going to be easy. Someone (like adventurers) may insist on bending the rules by investigating on their own time, or using Brotherhood resources when they really shouldn't. This is a case where loyalty to a comrade is to be commended, but since it is also in direct violation of what you were told to do by the Brotherhood, it shows that your loyalty to the higher cause can be compromised. If an unapproved investigation by adventurers ends up with the apprehension of Blood Red, they'll be commended, but at the same time it will probably quash their next attempt at promotion. On the other hand, if such an off the record investigation has them run afoul of police or strains relations between the Brotherhood and any of the various factions in the area, they are likely to get severely reprimanded and can just forget about any sort of career advancement for quite some time.

▼ **Note** - Remember that Blood Red is a fairly slow to develop plot thread and is not going to be the focus of every adventure. Rather, it is a recurring thread that comes to the forefront whenever there is a new killing or a major break in the case.

▼ **THE GHETTO'S GOLEM** - In the ugliest part of the ugliest neighborhood of a city that wasn't all that pretty to begin with, there is a ghul enclave. It is fairly large, and fairly prosperous, as such things go, and over time has attracted a "veil" of generally unwanted immigrants. In this case, mostly Nigerians, Haitians and a handful of Turkmenstani. And over time, as such things happen, there are a number of ghul half-breeds in the community. Remember that the Blind immigrants see the ghuls as their own countrymen, and love can be very blind as well. There are two other factors involved, depending on gender. First, a ghul might treat a female immigrant with more respect than their male countrymen might. Also, never underestimate the lure of US citizenship. The ghul will be full US citizens, and the benefits will trickle down to any spouse of a US citizen. It would be a sort of multi-species green card marriage, which might eventually turn to true love. For the part of the ghul, it could be to their personal advantage to have a human mate. Remember that ghuls live significantly longer than humans, so their plans can be a bit more long term than humans would normally consider.

It is a tight-knit little ethnic enclave, maybe with its own internal stresses and squabbles, but with a unified front against outside interference. Any sort of skill use that would be seen as intrusion into internal community affairs would be at +6 difficulty. This could be things like "I didn't see anything", "I no speak English" or just general stonewalling.

Now, half-breed ghul are a great resource for any ghul community. They have some of the Ghul advantages in terms of physique, but they also have some of the human sense of loyalty and friendship, which means they can show a sense of concern and responsibility towards the ghul community as a whole. That is, as a half-breed, they can actually be more trustworthy towards ghuls than a full ghul can (whose only loyalties are to self and family).

This community of Haitians, et al has drawn the ire of a bunch of local inbred cretins fancying themselves as Nazis, and they look on the immigrants as "mud people" and genetically impure. As first, they went around as gangs of loud-mouthed youth, just tossing insults and roughing people up, but they have since graduated to vandalism, arson, assault and murder. A few actual ghul have been killed, but even so, little cooperation has been given to the police.

Normally, most ghul would see this as sadly unfortunate for the victim, but a career opportunity for the spot in the community just vacated by the deceased (that personal ambition thing ghuls have). But in addition, a few of the human-ghul half-breeds have taken it as a personal affront. Their human social reflexes scream that this is an "us-vs-them" situation, and they intend to protect *their* community.

A few of the half-breeds, and one in particular, have started patrolling the community and dealing with troublemakers. Harshly. Very harshly. The most fanatical of these "Chastisers" has only managed to corner a few of the neo-Nazis, but he happens to have a black belt in street fighting (along with some genuine martial arts), and has acquired a pistol and a second-hand set of police body armor. The others doing the patrolling are less gung-ho about it, and just travel in pairs carrying baseball bats and pepper spray canisters the size of small fire extinguishers (bought at an out-of-town sporting goods store as "bear repellent"). There are about seven of these half-ghul Chastisers in all, but only one of serious talent. The others operate at least in pairs for their own safety as much as anything else, but their tendencies towards self-interest interferes with their development of true teamwork.

This sort of "community activism" generates complaints, and the Brotherhood's ears will prick up when they come across reports of bullet-resistant assailants disappearing into the night near a known ghul enclave. For a twist, one agent may come to investigate that, while another is asked to help by one of the elder ghuls in the enclave, a wily old geezer named Ferengo who is at least a hundred years old and probably has a few more decades left in him. He calls the Brotherhood maybe as part of a deal, or in return for past or future favors.

Just to add a touch of moral ambiguity to the whole mess, some of the local ghul who are asking for protection are known drug dealers. They don't peddle the "club drugs" like Exstasy since their charisma isn't going to get them in the door, but for less savory drugs, their seediness may actually be a benefit. So, you end up with the Brotherhood investigating the actions of a ghul who is defending drug dealers from humans who think (for whatever reason) that the immigrants/ghul are a bad thing for the city as a whole. The neo-Nazis are right, but for the wrong reasons, while the chastisers are wrong, but for the right reasons.

And of course, no one ever sees anything. The neo-Nazis cannot really claim they got beat up or shot while trying to set fire to someone's business, and especially not when they got trashed by someone or someones they outnumbered by several to one. The Chastisers certainly aren't going to confess to armed assault, and no one in the immigrant community is going to rat out someone who is protecting them. Even if a ghul might see some self interest in dropping info on the chastisers, there is a strong negative social factor in the backlash they might receive, including that from the chastisers themselves. A reward of money isn't enough to overcome the risk, since they will still have to live here when it is all over.

▼ **Note** - In ghul, the word for "chastiser" comes out phonetically as "bambu", and since the actions of the Chastisers are first noticed by the ghul, the word quickly spread from the ghul to the immigrant population. So, if there is a ruckus and the police eventually show up, the word "bambu" may show up in their reports. Adventurers poring over reports will not find any match in the databases for any of the immigrant languages, but a cross-reference in ghul symbology will turn up the English definition of the word. This has no great significance, but is a detail to add some depth to the situation. The Blind police have absolutely no idea about the word, and have really gotten no further than looking for someone named "Bambu". If you want to escalate the tension, they might find some unlucky immigrant named Bambu who pulls out his ID a little too fast and gets shot half a dozen times by trigger-happy cops. To further complicate matters, this could cause riots in the immigrant community, and the lead Chastiser might decide to work over the police involved in the shooting next time they show up around the enclave.

The lead Chastiser is going to be the focus if there is a continuing problem. If the neo-Nazis just lick their wounds and back off, he might just fade back into the woodwork. Or, he might keep going as a self-appointed community guardian, taking his protective role too seriously (like breaking the arm of someone who uses a racial/ethnic insult against one of "his" people). At this point, he might become enough of a problem that people will look the other way if someone rats him out. Or, he might just expand his interests outward, looking for real or perceived threats to the ghul community anywhere they might happen in the city, or even starting to meet out justice whenever he feels it necessary, for whatever reason. Mutilating a pickpocket on the subway, knee-capping a crooked cop, dragging a wounded vampire out into the sunlight on a crowded street, and so on. As a half-ghul he isn't just an ordinary criminal, so seeing him brought in is both a task for normal law enforcement *and* for the Brotherhood. Adventurers should be made aware (if they haven't figured it out) that ghul are not Evil, and continued good relations with them are in the Brotherhood's best interests. So, overwhelming force and overt interference in enclave affairs are to be avoided if at all possible.

Is he doing "good" work? *Sort of.* Is he going about it the wrong way? *Certainly.* Getting him off the street and under control is going to be the main thing, preferably without killing him. Someone with his skills could easily be a Brotherhood recruit, if his violent tendencies can be controlled and his loyalty channelled. On the other hand, any sort of Evil looking for "hired help" could do far worse than acquire this particular Chastiser. Bertram Awlthey or his followers may troll around the enclave looking for "recruits", and the Chastiser would be a prime find if they could get him. He may never be truly Evil, but he can easily be persuaded to do bad things for what seem to be good reasons. He would be a good foot soldier, a great patsy and a readily expendable pawn. He doesn't know enough about the "big picture" to be able to tell the truth from a plausible lie, and in combination with his anger and recently developed sense of justice, he is easily manipulated. If he ever becomes on close terms with any of the adventurers, it may eventually come out that his initial decision to take on the neo-Nazis sprung from a casual but deeply moving conversation he had with a stranger he bumped into on the street one day, a very memorable individual who ironically, he can't remember any details about.

EABA

This particular plot thread is a good one for starting adventurers to be involved with. The neo-Nazis are good for a knockdown-dragout or two that will probably put someone in the hospital, but is unlikely to send anyone to the morgue. Agents have to deal with suspicious people wary of their help, not-quite human quasi-foes that really shouldn't be killed, and other tests of their skills, patience, character and mettle.

▼ **Note** - In addition to the ghul who are the focus of the enclave, some of the human immigrants were what you might call "witch doctors", men or women who either naturally or with the aid of some herbal potions, have a touch of the Sight, and perhaps some tiny skill at sorcery. Not enough to be dangerous, but more than enough to demonstrate that they do have some connection to "higher powers", thus giving them a measure of respect and fear within the community as a whole. Their talents are believed in by the superstitious, and ignored by the rational community. Their talents can include things like psychic surgery, aura reading, and other talents that can be useful with a Fate of 1d+2 and a spell or two. These individuals can be useful sources of information and local color later on, but are not a focus of this particular plot thread.

Chastiser

Strength: 3d+0
Agility: 2d+1
Awareness: 2d+1
Will: 2d+1
Health: 2d+2
Fate: 1d+2

Notable skills:

Brawling: +2d
Pistols: +0d
City knowledge: +0d

Notable abilities:

+1 hit bracket

Possible gear:

Pistol
Second-hand body armor
Baseball bat
Pepper spray



▼ **THE DEVILS YOU KNOW** - The city is home to a family or clan of devils, several actually, but only one is the focus of this particular plot thread. This particular clan operates somewhere in the grey area of the economy, acting as information brokers for knowledge legit and otherwise. They are an Evil based on mischief, but very low on the scale, and an Evil the Brotherhood puts up with, much like you would ignore dandruff or a wart if you were busy trying to fight off a case of Ebola. The devils by and large are not assisting major Evils in attempts to break free of the Prison because their own selfish Evil doesn't see any advantage in it.

The family traits of these devils revolve around gifts that link to the family profession. Many can read the surface thoughts of low-Fate individuals like the Blind, and they may also have subtle powers of suggestion and very small amounts of telekinesis, enough to influence the Blind and manipulate small objects (letting air out of a tire, flicking the safety on a gun, etc.). A few have just enough skill or limited precognitive power to predict the most likely outcome of any immediate situation that isn't too muddled by random chance or could actually be pulled off by a very lucky or astute observer. For instance, they might not be able to pick lottery or roulette numbers, but they are better than average at blackjack and poker, and be very unlikely to step up to a window if there was a sniper looking for an opening to pot one of them. In none of these cases would their knowledge be something they could put a name to. They would not think "it would be dangerous to step in front of that window". Instead their normal actions would just have them do what they normally do... somewhere else. *It is just feelings and hunches.* Some of this clan might be able to read a person's mail just by walking past the mailbox. Others could guess computer passwords or the location of hidden keys by asking seemingly innocent questions and reading surface thoughts for the answers. *They're just full of obnoxious tricks.*

All of this, combined with their deliberate reading of surface thoughts and their ability to plant suggestions, means they can sell just about anything to anyone.

And since their nature is Mischief and to some extent dark irony, they make a handsome living by selling overpriced flawed goods to people who can't really afford them. While a few of them might be used car (or other) salesmen, most actually deal in information, since it is so much more ambiguous, and any failure to provide the "right" information can be deflected back to the client.

EXAMPLE: "You didn't ask me about *that*. Since you didn't ask, I just assumed it wasn't important to you. So sorry. But now that you bring it up, I can sell you that information at a discount..."

Some of them are drawn to work in the public bureaucracy, where the notion of collecting a salary drawn from tax revenue for a job where they can make life difficult for the taxpayers is too much fun to resist. They don't interfere (much) in things the Brotherhood deems important, but woe befall any agent who crosses one of them. Utility payments can get lost for months on end, resulting in water or electricity being cut off, parking tickets appear on cars legitimately parked, or a house could suddenly get assessed for double the normal value, and taxed accordingly. And let's not even get started about the local department of motor vehicles...

Leaving out the minor functionaries, the main information brokers can actually be useful to adventurers, and are supposed to be a long-term player in the regional campaign. The devils give flawed information that has some truth in it, and the Brotherhood pays in information, money or favors that don't compromise operational security. Individual adventurers might deal with these devils, but this is always a "let the buyer beware" situation. The devils can and do give out perfectly accurate information at times, but only if they think it will be interpreted wrong, or used in such a way that ends up amplifying discord.

EXAMPLE: In the "Ghetto's Golem" plot thread, the whereabouts of an immigrant named "Bambu" might have gotten into police hands through a devilish police informant, who got paid for giving *true* information that ends up giving the police a public black eye. Stunts like this are how this clan measures skill and status among themselves.

Code:Black^{v1.0}

There is no particular skill roll to determine what part of these devil's information is true or useful, and what part is incomplete or likely to have side effects. Everyone knows that the devils have to be useful in order for people to keep coming to them, but that is about it. Players have to look at each piece of info they get from a devil and decide what to do with it. For the gamemaster's part, if the Brotherhood passes information to adventurers, and that information comes from one of these devils, the nature of the source is clearly noted.

▼ **Note** - If the campaign region has jurisdictions where organized gambling is allowed, at least one (and maybe all) of the local casinos are going to be devil-owned (despite the Brotherhood's best efforts), and this could make them a powerful political and economic force. They will all have a strictly enforced policy against anyone who has an inherent or learned ability to manipulate games of chance...



William Q'auii Zeborav III

Strength: 2d+2

Agility: 2d+2

Awareness: 4d+0

Will: 2d+1

Health: 2d+0

Fate: 2d+1

Notable skills:

Sorcery(1): +1d

Information broker: +2d

Negotiation: +1d

Notable abilities:

+1 hit bracket

Larger than Life(AWR)

Can read emotional states

Possible gear:

Competent bodyguard

▼ **WHO'LL STOP THE RAIN?** - Vampires do not have a formal hierarchy or government. Rather, the strongest and cleverest impose their will through cleverness, guile and outright force. *Which, we suppose is close enough to government for most purposes.* When the Brotherhood deals with vampires, it deals with these leaders, of which there are several in the main city of the campaign region. Here and elsewhere, they tend to call themselves dukes or princes, though they have seldom been either. They are wealthy, but not ludicrously so (income of several million at most). Too many of the paths to modern secular and financial power rely on being out and about during the day. Stock markets, shareholder meetings, normal hours of operation for business and government, all work against vampires. The success of vampire dukes comes from nocturnal businesses that are not already handled by any organized crime in the area, and by taking a cut of income from any vampire in their region. They are closer to urban warlords than mafia dons, black marketeers rather than corporate CEO's. In this region, a vampire duke might have sufficient assets to own a single industrial or office complex as a headquarters, and employ a few dozen lesser vampires whose own ambitions are kept in check by keeping them too suspicious of each other to ever be sure of taking on the actual duke or duchess. In addition, each duke will have some amount of human retinue, some of whom are in thrall to Evil, and some of whom are merely Blind employees. The duke will have plenty of contacts throughout the region, resources, information, favors and all the other things they need to stay in power and make themselves useful.

The main reason they can be called dukes is that it is the highest title that is *not* king. The vampire dukes ally and squabble to keep any one of them from gaining absolute authority. Their authority among lesser vampires is strong, but not absolute. In time, each of them will probably be deposed, just as they deposed someone else to take their current position of leadership. Such a coup is currently in the making. A group of disaffected vampires of lesser rank have been planning to overthrow one of the dukes for some years. It is not so much that they plan to overthrow their leader, it is that their plan will result in their deaths unless they succeed in gaining control of their part of the city. They plan on doing some *serious* trucebreaking.

In this area at this time, the truce between the Brotherhood and vampires is much as described elsewhere, but in general, the vampires are allowed to feed, but not to make new vampires or kill any human (and Brotherhood informants and contacts keep a pretty close track on them). Vampires can break the truce, but then it is open season on them. Whatever the vampires do to make money is up to them, but if they run afoul of the law, the Brotherhood isn't going to protect them from the light of day. Since the average vampire can easily escape pursuit by police at night, they are arrested very infrequently.

What keeps vampire numbers in check is not the other Blind sheep. It is the sheepdogs of the Brotherhood. The group of coup plotters is going to try for a surgical strike on Brotherhood assets, followed by creating new vampires and using their new assets/servants to overthrow their local duke. By the time the Brotherhood recovers its footing, the balance of power will have shifted, and the coup plotters will now be the ones the Brotherhood has to deal with. The other dukes, much as they might despise such upstarts, will not back the Brotherhood desire to take them out, because it would set a precedent that might be used against *them*.

As we said, these particular vampires have been planning this for years, and have the history of Brotherhood and vampire interrelations to work from when trying to predict the possible outcomes. So far, they are not planning anything particularly original. The particular twist is that they are planning to stage their coup *during the day*. Vampires are not very good at sorcery, but they *can* use it if powerful enough, and know it when they see it. The leader of the coup plot and would-be duke is a vampire about a hundred or so years old named Frederick Rugur. Moderately wealthy when human, he was financially ruined during the collapse of the German economy in the 1920's. *At least that's what he says.* He actually lost most of his money through a lack of restraint during his first years as a vampire, when he had no real income and squandered the family wealth he inherited after the "mysterious deaths" of both his parents and elder brother.

Fleeing debts owed to more powerful Evils and a (temporarily) restored Brotherhood presence in late 1920's Germany, he fled to the United States in the third-class accommodations of a Cunard liner, and eventually made his way to this city. After that, he learned some restraint and managed to acquire enough wealth to allow his preferred standard of living. This was mostly through the theft, brokerage and resale of valuable artwork and jewelry.

Some decades ago, Frederick came across a sorcerous description, a painting that disappeared from public view in the 1930's when the National Socialist Party confiscated it from a German Jew. It made its way down the years through a number of illicit sales and eventually ended up in the hands of Neward Awlthey, the father of the current eldest son of the family, Bernard Awlthey. Neward was unaware of the true nature of the piece, thinking it merely a work by an obscure 17th century master, made somehow more desirable to him by its illicit provenance. After Neward's early death, the piece was inherited by Bernard, who was aware of its provenance, but didn't even move it from its place on the wall in his private study. Frederick recognized the painting for what it was when he burgled the Awlthey mansion in the 1970's. It was nearly the perfect crime, since Bernard clearly could not claim insurance on a piece that was acquired illegally. So, since the thief did leave some traces of the break-in, he did the next best thing. He removed one of his more valuable legitimate pieces and reported *it* stolen instead. He collected a fat insurance settlement, and eventually disposed of the piece through channels that coincidentally included Frederick Rugur.

The problem with this arrangement was that the Duke of that part of the city made his money then as now by taking a cut from the illicit activities of the vampires under his "protection". The actual value of the theft of Awlthey's artwork was bumped up by Awlthey's fraudulent insurance claim. The local Duke claimed his cut from the *perceived* value of Frederick's "theft". This wiped out much of Frederick's savings, which he was only partially able to recoup by the humiliating task of secretly fencing the painting he was assumed to have stolen. Frederick has harbored a grudge against both his duke and Bernard Awlthey ever since. More than anything else, this fueled his desire to overthrow the duke and to get out from under the restrictions the "inferiors" of the Brotherhood imposed on the vampires of the city.

Originally, he had hoped to sell the sorcerous painting to an equally sorcerous art collector (a very limited pool of potential buyers). Instead, he devoted quite a bit of time to deciphering the painting, and once he figured out what it was, decided to use the painting's information as part of his revenge.

The painting was the description of a sorcery that could be used to tweak the massive energies of an existing weather system. The problem was that it required enough sorcerous energy that no human, or anything else alive, could cast the sorcery and live. Frederick, by now a passable sorcerer despite being a vampire, altered the sorcery itself. He made it possible to use a vampire's ability to regenerate to power the spell, powering the sorcery with the blood of his victims. *The goal?* To take an existing storm system and make it so overcast that vampires could walk about without hindrance during the daylight hours, taking both the Brotherhood and other vampires by surprise.

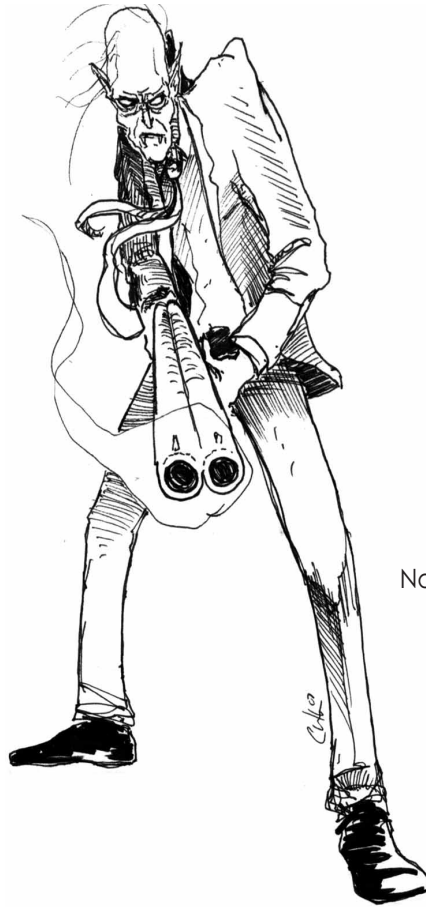
After that, it was simply a matter of time and planning and patience. He had to befriend or ally others unhappy with the status quo. He had to learn the sorcery. He had to travel to someplace he could test it. He had to collect information on Brotherhood facilities and operations as well as those of the local duke and the ever-changing political situation. And he had to do all this without drawing attention to himself. This was more or less impossible, so he did the next best thing. He made himself look incompetent at it. He hid what he was trying to do, but in such a way that it was an open secret among those in the upper echelons of vampire power in the city. This was cover. His true inner cabal was *genuinely* secret. His practice with the sorcery and the bloodletting it required, kept secret from even his closest associates. His true plans, known only to himself.

And now, the time seems to be approaching when all the preparations come together. A major weather front is approaching with sufficient lead time for both mundane and sorcerous preparation, the inner circle is trained, and a big pop star is scheduled to have a concert. A few dozen of the out-of-town concert attendees will be the blood sacrifice needed, and will hopefully not be missed until it is too late.

The way it is supposed to go down is this:

- 1) The conspirators meet. They and some lesser vampires they have duped will abduct a few dozen humans, preferably homeless or concert-goers.
- 2) Drain half the humans to death, in such a way that they will rise soon again as new vampires.
- 3) Frederick uses the temporary energy boost to cast the sorcery which will increase the depth of the approaching cloud cover, then drains more victims to replenish his depleted body and put him back at full strength.
- 4) Under the cover of a dawn that breaks grey and bleak, they Pearl Harbor the Brotherhood members where they live, and torch any local businesses that are front operations for Brotherhood activities. If possible, the Brotherhood members and their families are drained and made into new vampires, to rise within a day or so.
- 5) Again replenished in strength, the plotters assault the headquarters of the duke. The duke and his followers are no pushovers, very competent, well armed, and with well-trained human security guards to cover the normal daytime security duties. All are caught off guard by a trio of large car bombs that nearly turn the whole building to rubble, with massive human and vampire casualties. The plotters go in and mop up the stunned survivors, announce their coup to the other dukes, then disappear into the pouring rain to watch and see who jumps, and in which direction.
- 6) The next night, turn their newly created vampires loose on the streets to feed, and interrogate any turned Brotherhood members in order to best counter the Brotherhood's most likely retributive attempts.

The Brotherhood cannot really blame the duke for breaking the truce, since he was not involved, and is likely to be dead as well. The Brotherhood may be down anywhere from a third to a half its personnel, and some of those risen as Evil will now willingly turn on the Brotherhood they once swore loyalty to. The total number of vampires in the city might double in a matter of days, and triple or quadruple before the new duke reins them in, giving him a large power base and very strong negotiating position when the Brotherhood returns to the city in force. How it all shakes down from there is anyone's guess.



Frederick Rugur

Strength: 3d+2

Agility: 3d+2

Awareness: 4d+0

Will: 4d+1

Health: 3d+2

Fate: 4d+1

Notable skills:

Sorceries(1): +2d

Sorceries(3): +0d

Brawling: +1d

Saber: +1d

Firearms: +1d

Running: +0d

Notable abilities:

Normal vampire abilities

Possible gear:

Sawed-off shotgun

Tailored body armor

Duelling saber

But, all of this is a worst case scenario. It is a plot that has yet to come to fruition. For adventurers, this is not a plot that should happen until they have a year of experience under their belts. When it does start to develop, it does so very rapidly. The entire sequence of events just listed take place in less than 36 hours. The only way the Brotherhood can slow or alter the listed sequence is to put together disparate pieces of information that even the paranoid local dukes have missed.

The adventurers might have figured out something is up from clues the gamemaster has slipped out, or maybe one of the inner cabal is having doubts about the likely success of the plan, and wants to cut a deal for himself with both the Brotherhood and his duke. Or maybe the Brotherhood gets lucky and notices a huge number of missing persons reports and at least has their guard up, expecting something, but not knowing what or when. This is a case where the color codes can go from a low level all the way up to Code:Black in a distressingly short amount of time. This is *not* an adventure thread that should be started until the players are comfortable with the gameworld and the adventurers have a bit of experience under their belts.

If it does go down, the adventurers will be confronted with a very violent situation, where central Brotherhood authority will not be able to provide guidance, and central stores of high-powered equipment may not be available. It will be a test of fire that not all will pass. It will be a very dicey situation for a while, leading to a new power equilibrium and certainly a heightened level of tension between the various factions in the region.

Bernard Awlthey has no inkling of what is going on, but he is targeted for elimination, just to satisfy an old grudge of Frederick's. This will likely be quite a surprise to whoever is sent to do the deed, since Bernard is likely to be a pretty good sorcerer by then (see the "Cult of O'Fra" adventure), and is going to have a number of non-human followers, loyal and able to give a vampire a good fight. The dragon does not know, but neither would he care, save if this coup would interfere with his plans. If he becomes aware of the plot, he might start dropping hints where Brotherhood assets can find them. If it starts going down, he might make a cameo to protect any individual he considers important, but otherwise does what he does best, watches and learns from the mistakes of others.

▼ **RED HANDS, COLD HEART** - Before the Great War of Good vs. Evil, before the Prison was built, before Evil was vanquished, there was a race of beings that the War would split in two. Many were terribly, cruelly Evil, of the sort that might make even an atavistic Devil wince. But nearly as many embraced Good. These, with their various Good allies, were able to overthrow and Imprison their Evil brethren... and earned the same reward the rest of Good did. Individually physically imposing, potently sorcerous, inhumanly wise, these ancient beings left subtle but nigh-indelible claw marks on the universe, and the psyches of all lesser beings who dealt with them. We remember them to this day: the Dragons.

After the chaos of the war against the sorcerer-kings, there were a series of brushfire wars against Evil that flared up over the next few centuries. The most powerful servants of the sorcerer-kings knew they could not stand against the new alliance that would someday become the Brotherhood of Gilgamesh. These servants sought new masters and summoned powerful servants of their own and generally made a mess of things that destroyed what few monuments and records survived the war.

One of these powerful sorcerers sought to bring forth a powerful agent of Evil to be a servant and guardian. Not quite a demigod, but more than any lesser servant, it was a desperate gamble by a desperate man. Even using a true name, he could not have commanded or controlled the entity he summoned. But in the end, it did not matter. An army of sorcerers worked to the limits of their sanity, interfering with the final summoning ceremony, but not quite enough to stop it. The entity, a dragon, had been successfully pulled into this world. But, the human sorcerers *did* bring down the dark temple, crushing the Evil sorcerer, his servants, and very nearly the dragon. The human alliance could sense that Evil still survived deep underground, but it was beyond their ability to reach, and their own losses were terrible enough that they simply left stone markers to warn future generations. A contingent of warriors and sorcerers chose to stay behind to monitor the Evil, they and their children forever more.

Time passes. Many generations. The Evil lurks. Still grievously wounded, still trapped, barely aware. The many times grandchildren of the warriors watch and sense as a religious duty. Reports are sent to the original members of the alliance via the few travellers that passed their way. More time passes. Eventually, a natural disaster strikes. A typhoon of unprecedented magnitude swept over the region, wiping out the small city and the priesthood watching the ancient Evil. Only a handful survived, and unable to maintain their vigil, they scattered, vowing to pass on the legacy and return someday to watch and to guard. But, this never came to be. More time passes. Wars, disasters and accidents destroy almost all traces of the battle, the watching, and the place where the Evil lies.

And the Pyramids have yet to be built.

After a few thousand more years, the dragon finally awoke. After a thousand more, it had healed enough to cast its awareness outwards and catch glimpses of a world distant from anything it had imagined. But it was free. *Sort of.* While still trapped, at least it was outside the Prison. After another thousand years it was strong enough to dissolve the stone around it and reach the surface. Looking at the stars, it tasted darkness not of the tomb for the first time in many millennia.

It measured itself. It knew that it was not and would never be complete. Some of what it was and knew was gone, perhaps from the interruption in the summoning, perhaps from millennia of bleeding underground, perhaps from a weakness so great that parts were sacrificed to preserve the whole. But it looked at itself and the world around. Females were capable of great guile and cruelty, but males seemed stronger and more ambitious. Though the terms were physically meaningless to the entity and it was capable of great guile, it chose to consider itself as "he". He lived on a Mediterranean islet for a few centuries, terrorizing unwary sailors. He made a choir of tortured children and slit their throats after a final, perfect performance. He bred families of servants and bodyguards, each who advanced in rank by slaying a parent or elder sibling and taking their place, knowing that their own children would have to be strong and clever enough to kill *them* one day.

He walked the earth for many centuries, killing and learning, acquiring and manipulating the concept of wealth, both to manipulate others and to gain information. It was like the devils it saw, sufficient Evil unto itself. Perhaps during the great war it had been an ally or a servant of a greater Evil, but now he saw himself as free. Perhaps not the greatest of Evils ever loosed from the Prison, but possibly the greatest one that did not care to free a greater master. He had taken many names over the years, none of them giving any hint of his true name of course, but sometimes he thought of himself as what the humans called him in their nightmares...the dragon. The only one. *The Dragon.*

The Dragon had no faith in humanity. He knew of their kind from the last days of the great war, the lowest of foot soldiers, weak, easily manipulated and unreliable. That they now ruled this world and the universe as the sole agents of Good was an irony that he failed to appreciate. They were *still* weak, unreliable and easily manipulated. If they were the guardians of the Prison, then the Prison *would* fail. If not this century, then next century, or the one after that. He didn't care if it *did* happen, he just didn't want to be there *when* it happened.

It was now 1918CE, as humans measured it. The Brotherhood had, at terrible cost, beaten back an epidemic of wraith-like entities that sucked the life out of the healthy and used it to breed more of their kind. The dragon was not impressed. Rather, it just confirmed his fears about humanity's inevitable failure to keep the Prison sealed.

So, within the limits of his personal influence and wealth, and his significant physical and sorcerous power, he decided to make his escape. To do that, the Prison would have to stay closed for at least a century more, and humanity would have to escape to the stars. The other Evils might someday escape, but the universe is a big place to hide. He would aid humans with what knowledge he had which their limited minds could comprehend, they would eventually build a ship to the stars, and he would take it and its crew. They would be his new servants, and he would be their new god. They and their descendants would build him a better and faster ship, and they would fly to where other Evils would never find him.

The Dragon lives outside the main city of the campaign region, but is seldom seen. He arrived in these parts a decade ago, and plans to stay for two or three more. The dragon thinks long, and thinks deep. He makes plans that will not bear fruit for many generations. He brings men and women together solely for plots that will involve their grandchildren. He has set nations against each other just to profit from the war that comes after the peace at the end of the first war. He is wealthy beyond measure, but does not use it as such. It is just there in case he needs it for something, and he likely does...someday. Anyone in town who has investigated him (which is everyone of note) has come up with incomplete records indicating he is more than he seems, but no crime or reprehensible action has ever stuck to him. He seems to be a multi-millionaire who inherited his wealth, keeps to himself, and hires people to do things for him if his fanatically loyal servants lack the skills for such tasks. He pays people well enough that they do not talk about working for him for two reasons. First, if they ever hope to work for him again, and second, if they ever hope to live long enough to spend his money. Since he takes no sides and shows no direct interest in either Brotherhood or Evil activities, he is not factored into anyone's calculations except as a footnote. He is thought to have sorcerous potential and the Sight, but claims ignorance of both.

He lives in a luxurious apartment near the top of a high-rise apartment in a major city, and seldom leaves it. Through a corporation which he owns via some untraceable legal fictions, he also owns the entire building, and uses the floors above and below his apartment as offices, storage and living areas for his loyal private staff. His control of the building also gives him access to the full security system of the building, along with some illegal modifications which can be remotely controlled from the lair as well. This arrangement also gives him legal cover, since said security system is owned and controlled by the corporation that owns the building, which cannot be traced back to him.

The fate of humanity and the Dragon somehow involves the adventurers, either singly, some or all of them. Perhaps he sees them as key to keeping the Prison closed for another generation, perhaps he has something in mind for one of their children not yet born.

The Dragon stays in the shadows, for he fears. Human sorcery is now like firecrackers to him, limited by humanity's feeble attempts to cling to Good, but human weapons and numbers are things he is concerned about. For all but the past few hundred years there was no weapon that could touch him, but now a single individual can wield enough power to cause him inconvenience, and a group of humans or a well-armed vehicle could actually destroy him, and that would bring about a reckoning back in the Prison he would rather not face. So, the Dragon works from the shadows, living reclusively and using agents and money to further his agenda when at all possible. Only when the confluence of events is such that he see personal intervention as necessary to his plans will he be seen, and then only for the shortest exposure possible.

The Blind see the Dragon as human, middle-aged, tall, dark haired and a figure to be admired, desired and feared, depending on your status, gender and such. To the Sighted, he is much the same, except that he exudes an aura of potentially sorcerous power. The unique talent of dragons is that it requires extraordinary levels of Sight to see him as anything other than what he wishes to be seen as. This and great cleverness has let him live through the centuries unseen, casting off old identities and gaining new ones with practiced ease. His true form is a bulk that cannot possibly fit within the confines of his human body, expanding beyond the ceilings and walls of a normal room, yet fully within them, a walking Escher that drives weak human minds to incoherent madness. Even when non-confrontational and in human guise, the Sighted find him intimidating to deal with, and the Brotherhood thinks he might be a sorcerer of note, powerful, but aligned with none (remember that in addition to the Dragon's ability to mask himself, neither Good nor Evil can be seen with the Sight unless your Fate exceeds theirs). However, he has claimed ignorance of all matters magical aside from a known penchant for collecting arcane artifacts (that much is known about him). His fear is a mixture of his inhuman size and form and a metaphysical scaling effect. The closer you are to him, the smaller you feel and look, and the larger he does. If you were close enough to shake his hand and he chose to awe you, you would feel like a mouse beneath the foot of an elephant...in a phone booth.

The gamemaster is supposed to use the Dragon as a hidden manipulator, a force that can help or hinder the adventurers for reasons known only to himself. Neither the Brotherhood nor anyone else fully knows about the Dragon. Anyone with great power or good records knows that there is a hidden force out there that manipulates events for what seems to be random purposes, but no one has the information or perspective that lets them connect all the dots through the centuries to see that the interference and manipulation is all the result of a single, very powerful individual. Plus, the Dragon works to remove anyone who knows anything about him that he deems threatening. At best, the Brotherhood has traces of a trace of information on the dragon. Somewhere in the near East, there is a valley of twisted and stunted vegetation, still poisoned by the Dragon's long, long underground presence. At the valley's head, there are the melted ruins of an ancient temple complex, with stellae in an unknown ancient tongue warning of a buried Evil beyond measure, and a pond that was a crater, filled with caustic sludge, showing that the Evil is buried no longer.

In game terms, the Dragon is on a physical par with a demigod. He cannot be killed or even inconvenienced by anything smaller than a heavy machinegun, and has sufficient strength to claw open bank vaults given enough time. *And he would.* His millennia of captivity and memories of the Prison make him loath to stand for any form of confinement, and while nigh-invulnerable to slings and arrows and assault rifles, he is more inclined to defend himself with sorcery rather than attack with it. No game stats are given for the Dragon. *He's that tough, that smart, and that powerful.* Even if adventurers find out about him, he should be enigmatic enough that they can never be sure they have what they need to take him on.

He is also a genius with an intellect beyond human measuring, limited only by humanity's crude tools and his limited remembrance of his culture's technology (one can be a computer programmer without being personally able to build a computer). His sorcerous powers are not nearly on the same level as his physical abilities (his Fate attribute was permanently crippled during his long imprisonment), but he makes up for his only moderate power with extraordinary levels of skill, a talent which is often used to bolster his defenses. Plus, he is completely larger than life, using "best four" instead of "best three" for all die rolls. He has nothing approaching human values or morals. He *understands* human concepts of loyalty, greed, vengeance, and so on, and can manipulate people via these emotions and concepts, but he does not *feel* them himself. His emotional moods are subtle, and humans are not even equipped to understand them, much less give them a name. If he kills, it is without remorse or hesitation or any sort of twitch or telegraphing of his intentions. If he has any regrets about killing, torture or anything else he does, it would only be because it inconveniences his *other* plans. He does very little without thinking about it first, and he has been around long enough to have thought of a lot of things well ahead of time, from what (or who) he will have for dinner next Tuesday, to how he would react if a full-scale military assault were to be made on his person while he was walking down the street. He does very little without having both a plan, a backup plan, and a second backup plan.

▼ **Note** - The Dragon has complete control over the lives of his servants, and he has been selectively breeding them for centuries. They have been bred and culled for the qualities the Dragon finds most useful. Some are fully human, for dealings with those who are both suspicious and Sighted. Others have characteristics of human, ghul, devil, were and vampire. Tough, strong, fast, smart and Evil. Maybe not so much as all of these creatures put together, but formidable nonetheless, with skills appropriate to a life spent perfecting them so as to better serve the Dragon. Like their master, they lack any tug of human emotion that would turn them from an assigned task. Service to the Dragon is all that matters. To fail the Dragon is to deserve death and oblivion. Any one of them would not hesitate to kill themselves before being captured, and would willingly go on a suicide mission without a second thought.

▼ **A TALE OF TWO DRAGONS** - Several years ago, an unaligned sorcerer of some modest power felt the heavy hand of age upon his frame, and determined to find a way to delay his final reckoning...perhaps indefinitely. He decided to research a spell to allow him to emulate the longevity of ancient races, by modifying his bodily energies to match those who went before. He knew there were risks. The Bible mentions great elders like Methuselah who lived for centuries, but the teller of ancient tales who inspired the more recent Methuselah legend did not mention what happened to those who sought this longevity and failed. Two months ago, the sorcery was complete. Researched by one, meant for the same, naming himself True, cast upon an astrological convergence unique to who he was, he pried open the door of Creation and peered through the crack.

The sorcerer's plan worked. *Too well.* Gazing and gaping into the void, he swallowed a bug. Or, more accurately, a lizard. An ancient soul slipped through sorcery-widened cracks in the Prison, stepped into his body, consumed his mind and assimilated his memories. *He had been eaten by a dragon.* Only in the final moments after completing the sorcery and knowing his irreversible mistake did he understand why a sorcery so readily devised was not used more often. *And of course, he would never be able to warn anyone else of that trap.*

Not as strong as a demigod, the dragon did not tear at creation like avatars and demigods do. A sudden storm, all the dogs in the county howling all night...but these things happen. A secluded, rural area; no one saw.

Well, almost no one. Technically, one could say there were two. *At least for a few minutes.*

While most Brotherhood attention was directed elsewhere at the time, at bigger, more obvious fish to fry, a lone Brotherhood operative was in the immediate vicinity, dispatched to investigate and tail the sorcerer in question. Trained and well equipped, he was still unprepared for the nature of his opponent: taken by surprise, he was rent and devoured, and the ruins of his body and his gear burned to ash.

The other witness was the man who would become Blood Red. He was camping and hiking in the area, and was awoken by the storm and the commotion. Through binoculars, he saw the dragon/sorcerer breaking its fast on the Brotherhood agent. Though hundreds of meters away from him, in the dark, the dragon lifted itself up from feeding and stared at him. It knew he was there. Something in him...bent. Repulsed and petrified, he could not stop looking at the horror, and remained catatonic in that position until the sun came up and the dragon was hours gone. Blood Red is still mostly Blind, and cannot and will not let himself remember the events as more than a particularly bad dream (which he will tell no one about, even if captured). But that event marked the beginning of his desire to kill, and the beginning of his fascination with the symbol he scrawls in blood at each of his murders.

The symbol that Blood Red leaves on his victims has been interpreted by Brotherhood analysts as referring to the final stages of a ritual to release something moderately big from the Prison. Big enough to be a problem. This interpretation, as it turns out, is mostly correct. The mistake they made was in assuming the release *hadn't happened yet.* This may be considered a forgivable error. When a major Evil shows up on Earth, restraint is usually not on its menu. Usually. But this time was different. This time what leaked out was...patient. The Brotherhood does not know that the second dragon is *already loose.*

When the first Brotherhood agent failed to check in, the rest of his chapter equipped themselves with trackers, and started looking for signs of his gear in the nearest town and county. Days, weeks, *nothing.* Then the Blood Red killings started, the arcane symbol left at the scene, and accounting for their late comrade became a secondary matter. But a few kept the tracking gear on them, to be checked on occasion. And so it was that a second agent, the one Blood Red killed, had tracking gear in the trunk of his car. And so it was that Blood Red realized that the gear he had just "inherited" was traceable...unless he took those tracking elements out. Unfortunately, he also knew he would have to disable the tracking gear itself when he was done.

This dragon is similar in thought processes to the other, but physically is *far* different. The two might not even be the same species, or perhaps are physically different castes that never mingled, like aristocrats and assassins, technically the same race, but segregated for eons. While the first dragon, who we will call the greater Dragon, is a shapeshifter only in terms of what the Blind see, the lesser Dragon is not limited by human form and can become something physically different. His true form is closer to that of a large velociraptor, with functional wings or not, as he chooses, radiating a primal ferocity and bloodlust that triggers a cower or flight reflex in all but the strongest-willed. This true form is not something that can be rationalized as human by the Blind. They will think him an escaped tiger or bear, or a flock of voracious eagles. If he uses sorcerous flames, they will come up with something remotely plausible, like a fallen power line across a car's gas tank, a lightning strike, a policeman's stray bullet hitting a gas line, and so on. The lesser Dragon is not nearly as physically strong as the greater, but his sorcerous potential is much, much higher. He is naturally gifted at Sorcery (Larger than Life only on Will and Will-based skills), and his main talent is the creation of a clinging sorcerous fire that can melt steel and turn flesh and bone to ash. This is fatiguing, but one hit will turn a normal person and everything on them to ash and slag before it finally gutters out. But for all of this, he is not as *tough* as the greater Dragon. The lesser Dragon is no tougher than a vampire in terms of his defenses, and has a weakness in both sorcerous and psychological terms when it comes to magical protections. He is more a creature of concealment and sudden attack, lurking like an alligator, silent enough to be mistaken for the scenery, then lunging forth with tremendous violence before blending into the background and disappearing from sight again. He knows that he is alone in this world, and while he searches for any sign of a greater servant of his true master, he has yet to find one. This of course implies that there is some division of ultimate fealty among the greater Dragons, since the lesser does not see the greater as its own rightful master, or perhaps it somehow realizes that the greater Dragon is no longer loyal to whatever its original master might have been.

The lesser dragon has his own agenda, but we do not know what that is yet. He is still assimilating the memories of the sorcerer he devoured, in order to cement his foothold in this world. He does plan to leave the city eventually, though he may stay in the region. About a month ago, he was walking down a street when he happened to glance at a limousine pulling up to one of the city's finest restaurants. What got out was by no means human. The lesser Dragon is the *only* being in the campaign region with sufficient Sight to recognize The Dragon. The lesser Dragon immediately assessed the power of the greater, and decided that staying hidden was the better course of action. So, he knows of The Dragon, and has cautiously been accumulating as much data as he can. Whether or not the greater and lesser are part of the same species, the lesser dragons *are* territorial, and the lesser correctly assumes the greater would not tolerate its presence without its loyalty. The lesser is still getting used to being fettered by the constraints of "society". This doesn't mean he is a law-abiding citizen, just that he has accepted some level of personal restraint. He *has* killed and eaten a number of people in the past few months. One migrant worker, one gang member, one transient, people who were already headed out of town, people whose life and lifestyle too often results in unexplained disappearances. *No bodies, no witnesses.* Only one of these cases is actively being investigated, though all are on the books should anyone try to link them. He also killed a vampire who made a threat the lesser Dragon took literally and responded to instantly, then incinerated the rapidly decomposing body and incidentally burned down a dilapidated apartment building at the same time. Both the Brotherhood and the vampire dukes noticed the coincidental timing of the fire and the disappearance of the vampire, but without a body or sign of foul play there was no proof the two were connected. Since both sides know they didn't do, each suspects the other of foul play, but has no proof and no real motive. There has been no official breach of the local truce, but there is a marked increase in tension.

The memories of his host body are useful, but all the best information is centered on this area and people in it. Gaining sufficient knowledge of "humanity" to exist unseen in a new area will take some time. The lesser Dragon is slowly contacting his host's old acquaintances, getting them used to accepting any way his personality is different than it used to be, and continuing to wear a guise of old age and increasing frailty in public. Fortunately, the lesser Dragon is patient, and can shift to *other* human forms to mask activities he does not wish to link to the still useful guise of the elderly sorcerer. Through his memories, the lesser dragon knows of the Brotherhood, and his memories have several contacts among that group. So he knows that there are people skilled at looking for one such as he, and also capable of causing him grief. Also of course, he knows that the man he first feasted on was one of this group, and that humans often seek vengeance for the loss of one of their own. Which is how it *should* be, after all. The lesser Dragon is lightly testing the Brotherhood in this area, to see if there is any chance these mere humans can penetrate his disguise. If not, he can perhaps use them to his advantage. He is circumspect in dealing with the greater Dragon, avoiding the areas he is known to visit or have visited, but the lesser Dragon is not shy about being seen in public elsewhere in town. He is still practicing to be human, and that requires some level of interaction.

The lesser Dragon is patient to the point of seeming impassive or unconcerned. If he arranges a meeting and says he will meet someone at a given place, he will wait there all night, and not take offense unless the person he is to meet is a complete no-show. For the time being, he tends to take (and make) human statements very literally, and is not deft with using or understanding idiom or slang. At the same time, he is *quite* Evil and can be devilishly twisted.

Cornered victim: "If I tell you what you want, you'll set me free?"

Dragon: "As free as the birds." Victim acquiesces. Dragon confirms the data is valid, then slowly assumes his true form.

Dragon: "I feed upon birds, as well."

Victim: Short scream, cut off by a loud crunch.

▼ **Note** - For the gamemaster, the two dragons, like Blood Red and the copycat killer, can confuse the issue should adventurers ever start to get a handle on things. Not that adventurers *should* be deliberately given the runaround, but with two beings of similar thought processes trying to plot and plan while staying hidden from view, there is always the possibility that the actions of one will be attributed to the other, or that the actions of both will be considered the acts of a single individual. Also, the existence of dragons in general is something the gamemaster may want to consider as a long term plot thread. If like humans, dragons are capable of being Good or Evil, then it might be that there are dragons in the Prison who have some of both (a lot of Evil and a little bit of Good), and can like humans, choose whether or not they will fully embrace that Evil. Of course, this is a moot point if pulling *any* dragon free from the Prison involves Evil sorcery, being psychically devoured in the process, or both.



▼ **THE CULT OF O'FRA** - Bertram Awlthey had owned the amulet for over thirty years. When he was twenty-five, his terminally ill father gave it to him, along with the family story and such scraps of evidence he and his ancestors had collected. In one version, an Earl of Awlthey had brought it back from the Second Crusade, along with a dark and mysterious heathen wife who had supposedly converted to Christianity. In another version, the Earl had the amulet before he left on the Crusade, and it was what drew the dark woman to him in the first place.

The amulet was little more than a twisted, somewhat organic-looking lump of silver, with a natural hole in the top to string a lanyard or neck chain through. But, it was far heavier than silver had a right to be, and it never tarnished. But, its unusual weight and strange lustre were the last things that Bertram thought about when he touched it. He did not really believe in God, but there was a sense of *Otherness* about the amulet, the near-certain feeling that there was more to existence than senses of the flesh betrayed, a sense that there was something moving just out of the corner of his eye, tantalizing, but never quite seen. It was special, more so when his father called in the cook to give an opinion of it. The man held it, appraised it with a cool eye, said something vaguely complementary and went back to his work. Only direct descendants of the Awlthey line felt what he and his father felt upon touching the amulet.

As the tale would have it, the amulet had been passed down from father to son or sometimes daughter for as long as anyone could remember. A second-hand reference attributed to the third Earl of Awlthey hinted at antiquity beyond measuring, but also noted that the Earl was illiterate and thus his grasp of historical age was somewhat suspect.

Bertram kept the amulet on a chain in a bell jar on his desk, a reminder of his father, his heritage, and as something to ponder while working late. Special as it made him feel, it didn't grant wishes nor manage the Awlthey investments, so it wasn't worth obsessing over how or why it did what it did.

Until one unseasonably chill night. Working late, Bertram heard a faint keening. Melodic at first, the bell jar began vibrating, ringing, eventually rattling against its wooden base, but before he could reach out to steady it, the sound and vibration abruptly stopped. And the bell jar shattered. Not violently, it just crumbled into hundreds of tiny shards that made dull, flat sounds as they bounced onto the desk. He lifted the amulet off its hook to examine it...and was thrown backwards into the bookshelf behind him. That fraction of a second passed in glacial clarity. He saw and heard and felt everything about it like his thoughts were moving a hundred-fold faster than his body. But this was nothing compared to what he felt from the amulet. What he normally felt when touching the amulet was magnified a thousand-fold. He felt things he would never be able to totally recall, emotions and sensations he somehow knew his flesh and psyche were simply not capable of processing...they were the feelings from a body far different than his own. Feelings he could not feel...feelings he was not worthy of experiencing. Experiences and memories not his own blinded him with their brilliance before vanishing into the dark corners of his mind. But among the unfathomable, unexpressable and there were two things he did recognize. Exultation and Command. *She Who Shall Be Obeyed had touched the mortal world again!* And Bertram was to wait for the one She had sent to seek him out. Bertram now knew and understood his destiny, as certain as if he had been consciously waiting for it all his life.

And then he slammed into the shelves behind him and everything went black.

He awoke hours later, face down on the carpet, surrounded by fallen books. The noise from the incident was apparently not enough to awake anyone else in the house. Far more sore than he should have been, he slowly got up, the amulet crushed in his grip. Caked blood was crusted between his fingers from where protrusions on the amulet had pierced his palm. Washing his hand and the amulet off, the amulet stayed dark, lustrous still, but with a hint of crimson that no washing would make clean. Bertram put the chain around his neck. The sensation of *Otherness* was there, but it was also *not* there. What was once distant was now nearer, and what was hidden out of the corner of his sight was going to finally come into view.

Soon. Very soon.

O'Fra, known also as She Who Shall be Obeyed, or She of the Cursed Largess is one of the Shivas, whose closest historical analogue is perhaps Kali, and elements of some African religions also derive from her ancient worship.

Independent adviser to the Metropolitan Police John Azah said that since the Climbie case and the ritualistic murder of a black child known as "Adam", there were concerns the police were only touching the "tip of the iceberg".

"A few weeks ago the Metropolitan Police put out a number of 300 black children missing from schools. There's no evidence that any of these children have been traced."

"Therefore perhaps there's something terrible happening out there which we are not aware of."

BBC News (June 15, 2005)

O'Fra of course wishes to be free of the Prison, but failing that or on the way to that goal, she wishes to experience the outside universe through the senses and sacrifices made by her followers, exulting in the death and suffering of those who dare enjoy the freedom that she cannot. In return for the unspeakable acts she demands as her worshipful due, she grants gifts that eventually turn to ashes in mouths of the recipients, a devil's bargain that even devils would blanch at. And she does so in a way that the ultimate victims never realize the error of their ways until it is far too late.

The Awlthey line, though millennia diluted, is still the ancient line of her chosen priests, and Bernard Awlthey is one of a handful of people in the world who has the *potential* to perform the most complex (and perverse) rites of O'Fra. But for Awlthey to reach this potential, there is much he has to learn. The confluence of thought and astrology and sacrifice by unwitting pawns that opened the tiniest of windows into this world for O'Fra was used to shove into this reality a being called a *shiniave*, which with some risk, made its way through an unfamiliar reality towards the one known as Bertram Awlthey.

A shiniave is not exceptionally powerful as far as Evil minions go, though it is quite disturbing to look upon. The shiniave exists to teach Bertram the path of O'Fra and the rudiments of Sorcery. The shiniave is compelled by O'Fra to obey him in *almost* all things, and to teach Bertram a sorcery that will transfer much of the shiniave's other knowledge to him. This sorcery will require a serious amount of blood and emotional sacrifice, much of both coming from the shiniave itself. While the shiniave is compelled to teach Bertram a sorcery that requires its own death, it is *not* compelled to obey any commands to meekly allow it or submit to it. It cannot, the sorcery involved in its sacrifice *requires* that it be an unwilling victim. While it must teach the sorcery, it does *not* intend to be its victim, and whether or not Bertram is clever enough to survive the completion of his instruction is a test of whether or not he is worthy to be the new high priest of O'Fra. If he fails, there are others elsewhere in the world who can feel the call of the amulet and the desire for the power offered.

O'Fra has one main desire at this point, and that is to have the site of one of her ancient temples reconsecrated. This requires the services of a high priest of O'Fra, of which there are currently none. Thus, she must first see that one of the proper lineage is re-ordained.

The Kiss of O'Fra - This is a dark sorcery requiring the sacrificial deaths of a human *and* something already sealed to O'Fra (in this case the shiniave). Both deaths must be physically *and* emotionally traumatic. The knowledge of the shiniave passes through the human sacrifice and is made understandable, then passes from the human sacrifice to the sorcerer casting the spell at the moment of the human sacrifice's terror-filled death.

The result is that the sorcerer gains a fraction of the knowledge and power both the sacrifices. In this case, Bertram will gain +1d to his Sorcery skill, three spells (gamemaster's choice), a +1d to his 'Cult of O'fra' skill roll (a religion), and +1d to his Will and Awareness. Note that the Will boost further increases his Sorcery roll, and the Awareness boost his religion roll. Normally, power-based increases to Fate are not allowed, but since this is Evil and they don't play by the rules, you can also give him a boost on Fate. Otherwise, he would still be a very mediocre sorcerer. This sorcery is meant to last for his lifetime. He is not *inherently* better, he just has a permanent sorcerous boost to several abilities, reflecting the sacrificed abilities of the shiniave (now back in the Prison).

O'Fra can at times, express her will and emotions through this link. Seldom in the form of words or coherent communication, but rather an indication of how pleased or displeased she is. Her beneficence can be addictive and rapturous to the point of corroding the flesh, and her displeasure is something a mortal would do *anything* to avoid feeling twice. As a high priest of O'Fra, Awlthey can convey this rapture or agony to any sworn to O'Fra with a touch, as a reward to those who serve well (and they bear the scars of this corrosive pleasure with pride), or a reminder that there are things worse than death for those who displease her.



Bernard Awlthey(after)

Strength: 2d+0

Agility: 2d+1

Awareness: 4d+0

Will: 3d+1

Health: 2d+1

Fate: 3d+1

Notable skills:

Sorceries(1): +1d

Sorceries(3): +0d

Cult of O'Fra: +1d

Investing: +2d

Area knowledge(finance): +1d

Notable abilities:

Touch of O'Fra

Possible gear:

Amulet of O'Fra

Amulet of O'Fra - This lump of metal is a melted fragment of a larger ceremonial object unmade by Good eons ago. It is now mostly just a psychic link to her high priest. Through it, O'Fra can taste the emotions of Awlthey or his victims and the emotions of her worshippers at any ceremonies. However, if pressed to the flesh of one of her followers by Awlthey, O'Fra can push a splinter of her essence into that person. This causes that person to melt into a mass of gore and have their soul sucked through the amulet for O'Fra to devour, a process that is either divinely rapturous or supremely awful, which depends on whether the person so touched is being given an ultimate reward or ultimate punishment. Simply observing such a dissolution would have a Fear rating of 6. The Amulet may also act as a sort of vampiric bracelet between Awlthey and a chosen one of O'Fra's sworn followers.

O'Fra's nearest ancient temple site is at the moment an old brownfield (an abandoned industrial facility), which is of little concern to O'Fra and actually makes things easier for her minions in the long run. Fortunately for her (her destiny, she would say), one of those followers is 'old money', has just enough Sight to believe, and has delusions of grandeur about being the high priest of the reborn cult of O'Fra. This means that what would be the most difficult for many groups is actually simple for him. *He buys the brownfield.* The rest is difficult. He has little or no sorcerous talent, and not many boots on the ground to do his bidding, both of which need to be corrected if his ambitions have any hope of fruition.

Awlthey has to have several plans going concurrently. Mundanely, he has to rehabilitate the brownfield sufficient to be allowed to rebuild there, and he has to come up with a cover story or business that will house the reborn temple, and facilitate the awful uses it will be put to. He has to learn sorcery, and the Cult of O'Fra, and then find the useful, the disaffected, pawns, foot soldiers and true believers to be the congregation of O'Fra. Among other things, he will need them for many stages of the consecration of the temple, most of which will require some sort of abominable act or atrocity, which all involved must partake in to further seal themselves to O'Fra. Awlthey must also of course arrange and survive the ceremony that transfers the knowledge of the shiniave to him, and only then can he perform the consecration of O'Fra's temple. The fully consecrated temple is as close to an Evil piece of real estate as is possible, and the actual temple will be more or less invisible to the Blind. They simply will not be able to accept the existence of something so abominable. Building inspectors will not check that area of the structure, police with warrants would not search there, and anyone mundane who happens to work in the building would have absolutely no curiosity about what is beyond a particular door. Or in this case, a sub-basement that can only be accessed by a keyed button in a service elevator.

If and when all this is accomplished, acolytes of O'Fra can be taught by Awlthey, to form a second rank of the priesthood, and advanced ceremonies can be performed to grant "gifts" to the followers of O'Fra, that they might spread her word and intimidate those who would dare to speak, act or even think against her.

▼ **OTHER PLOT THREADS** - The previous adventure ideas have enough detail for you to start running or introducing plot elements into your campaign. Here are a few adventure seeds for you to think about.

First, Do Some Harm: The greater Evils know that if they ever escape, they will far overshadow and overwhelm any of the lesser Evils that precede them. The lesser Evils who exist in this world and who feel that the escape of greater Evil is inevitable attempt to assist or ally themselves with greater Evil, in the thought that it is better to be a slave to a great Master than to be its lunch.

An Evil of some type is (through some escaped intermediary) contacting devils who are in medical fields, particularly mental health professionals. The idea is that people with newly acquired or borderline Sight are likely to seek professional help to explain the things they are seeing. The recruited mental health professionals will be contributing to a database, and forwarding these individuals to a nationwide "support group". Evil operatives in this group then, through various "therapy sessions" split the patients into wolves and sheep. The sheep are useless to Evil's ends for whatever reason. They get some marginally effective therapy and some drugs to dull their Sight, are pronounced "cured", and go back to their normal lives...until such time as this Evil needs a marginally Sighted victim for some reason. The "wolves" are gradually introduced to their full Sight, using methods similar to the way the Brotherhood helps new recruits accept the new reality they see. However, in this case, the recruits are slowly and deliberately driven to insane dependence on a powerful Evil minion. Once this process is complete and sealed with some abominable act that confirms it, these new servants are also declared "cured" and return to their previous lives. However, they remain as part of the support group "as a service to the people who helped them out", but this is actually so they can be schooled in the basics of Sorcery and a spell or two.

Within a year or two of gaining their Sight, these servants of Evil are now minor sorcerors, using their mundane jobs and influence to help further the goals of their master, who in turn serves a greater Evil.

Sorcery.net: It is easiest to learn sorcery when you have a face-to-face teacher, but it can be done on your own. You can download the basics of many spells from the Internet. However, like a lot of information on the Internet, it is incomplete or has hidden hazards. The Blind see these sorcerous directions as signs of Satan worship or meaningless gibberish that clearly has no effect. Real sorcerors can use the information as a guideline to learning a new spell, but those without experience may find the hidden pitfalls in these spells the hard way.

The two most common Evil plots regarding internet sorceries involve Sorcery skill itself and a handful of simple but useful spells. Among the Blind, there are still some who believe in something akin to the Truth, but simply cannot see it. But they *desire* to see it. There are others who can practice Sorcery, but actually lack the Sight (they have a low Fate, but a Forte for performing Sorcery). To both of these, the basic techniques of learning Sorcery are presented, a set of mental exercises and rituals that if followed, will eventually grant the practitioner a +0d skill in Sorcery. These directions also include some recommended herbs (or drugs) to take while studying, and actions one can take to "open one's inner awareness". The former may provide a temporary boost to Fate for purposes of Sight, encouraging the student to further efforts, and the actions taken encourage negative Personality Traits that send the student further down the path towards irredeemable Evil. *As a self-referential matter, some of the material for self-teaching of Sorcery and sanity-stripping spells may be couched within the dark backgrounds of role-playing gameworlds...*

The simplest spells available are those which a young, deluded man or woman might find an attraction to. Something for subtle vengeance against an enemy, or to seduce or emotionally bind a member of the preferred gender, maybe a spell with some vandalistic or anarchic bent, or a spell to boost Fate for Sight purposes. All of these spells have some sort of limitations or side effects that tend to drive the user towards madness and Evil faster than normal.

There are not a lot of people worldwide who are attracted to Sorcery in this way, *and* have the mental discipline necessary to see the process through. But, it is a no-cost, no-risk strategy for Evil. Plus, through aggressive data-mining of people who visit these web sites, whatever Evil is in charge of it collects a lot of names and information about potential recruits and cannon fodder for cults, or possible patsies to blame Evil actions on.

EXAMPLE: Imagine an Evil sorcerer needs to keep suspicion away from his own activities in a particular city. He finds a disillusioned youth who has made various unwise and violent comments on a particular bulletin board, and who lives in that area. One sorcerous delusion and set of false memories later, this grief-stricken youth is ready to confess to a heinous crime that they didn't actually commit, and the sorcerer is one step closer to whatever goal they are trying to reach.

Deviant Inc.: *We don't make the things you use. We make the things you use ~~better~~ evil.* There is a corporation out there that makes or supplies parts or raw materials for a major consumer product. And this corporation uses its international assets to seek out and acquire Evil or tainted artifacts by any means possible. It then melts these artifacts down and puts the recycled material in the things that it sells. As a provider of parts or materials, it never suffers any public or legal stigma from anything unfortunate that results. If a hundred people are maimed because their lawnmower suddenly started up while they were sharpening the blade, it can't possibly be the fault of the blade supplier. If a wall-mounted blow dryer keeps falling in people's bathtubs and electrocuting them, the maker of the heating coil isn't to blame, nor is the maker of a bumper on a car which tends to explode when rear-ended. Whenever there is an opportunity to produce a part for a product which can cause harm or has an already questionable design, this corporation is there with the lowest bid, no doubt aided by the low overhead in their Third World factories (which 'aid struggling economies' while encouraging hopelessness and political oppression by appalling working conditions and bribery of local officials to overlook it).

This corporation acquires known tainted or Evil items through its own arcane channels. It also has a public face where it turns 'swords to plowshares', buying old weapons from war zones and melting them down, plus giving people in those areas humanitarian aid. Of course, it only buys weapons from areas of the worst humanitarian abuses, increasing its chance of acquiring tainted items, and the humanitarian aid it provides is ensorceled to make it especially desirable. Worth fighting over, even. Any items found that are tainted by Evil are processed in special batches, to insure the Evil is not diluted across a large production run, but instead is concentrated into a few dozen or a few hundred products. This is not going to cause items to be possessed and start seeking out victims, but it can statistically alter the chance of bad things happening when that product or component is involved.

This particular low-level Evil is masterminded by a lesser member of the Shivas, who for the time being is content to remain in the Prison and devote its energies to sowing general chaos. Perhaps it is the Evil that would have been known as Eris or Loki.

Terror on the High Seas: One of several long-term plots you can have involves a terrorist group run by an Evil sorcerer of moderate talent who has the assistance of a handful of Evil minions as well as a large number of unwitting followers. The sorcerer's eventual goal is the construction of a custom nuclear weapon. It is not for blowing up a city, but for changing the weather. The goal is to put it on a ship, lower it into a particular spot in the North Atlantic and detonate it to disrupt a current called the Atlantic Conveyor. If successful, it will shut down the Gulf Stream for decades if not centuries, significantly altering weather patterns in North America and Europe, possibly causing famine and eventually war over scarce resources .

Throwing the developed world into chaos and making communication and travel much more difficult will make it harder for the Brotherhood to quickly respond to incursions of Evil. Which is the entire idea. This sorcerer is a willing servant of the Horrors, and of course is quite insane, but in a coldly calculating and selectively moral kind of way that can be mistaken for deep devotion to a higher cause. The Horrors have other plans unfolding at the same time, but all are dependent on this one proceeding unimpeded. Ancient and patient, they see connections between people and places far ahead of when they will actually happen.

This is not prophecy, merely eons of skill and experience. So, adventurers may find themselves the target of assassination attempts for no reason they can fathom, simply because the Horrors predicted that one or more of them might be a threat some months or years down the road.

Mysterious Cults: An urban preacher is drawing a following among the disenfranchised, and among his inner circle, is rumored to work miracles. Nothing abnormal, but it seems that some of the worshippers are disappearing and fingers point to the preacher or his inner circle.

Death of a Salesman: A Brotherhood roaming troubleshooter has come up missing, and reports of unusual happenings seem to be centered around the troubleshooter's last stop. Adventurers have to investigate and figure out how to deal with a newly erupted Indian ceremonial site (or megalith circle).

Monstral Cycle: Someone out there has captured a werewolf. That's not terribly unusual. What is unusual is that they are kidnapping victims for the were to wound and infect, building up an army of bloodthirsty, uncontrollable killers, a process that will take many months, a lot of money and an extremely secure holding facility to accomplish. *But what do they intend to do with them?*

Self-interest: Ghuls are not Evil, but neither are they Good. They are just self-centered, and within those bounds can be manipulated. Some-one or something out there is subtly influencing the Ghul community to act against the Brotherhood's best interest. The Ghul would never organize themselves to do this sort of thing, individual ambitions would get in the way. So, someone has found a way to push a lot of individual Ghul's buttons, or set up the perception of events such that Ghul would naturally come to the same conclusion and act in a predictable way, a way that is actively interfering with Brotherhood actions in the area. *Who has the talent to do this, and what is their goal?*

Food Chain: There is an Evil that awakes only once each three solar cycles (about 33 years), and only feeds on people with certain genetic traits. [⚡] Some of the events are in the Brotherhood archives, but they have never been in the right place at the right time. The lone survivor of the last feeding gained the Sight from the horrible event, but kept it secret. He has figured out enough of the truth, and is now trying to keep his grandchildren alive when the creature awakes again, without being thought mad by the rest of his family.

▼ **SECRETS** - The Brotherhood is the keeper of knowledge the Blind cannot fathom or at best, treat as myth or legend. But, the Brotherhood is ancient enough to have its own myths. Internal turmoil and the changes in languages and ways of thinking through the millennia mean that the Brotherhood's own records are no longer complete nor fully understandable. There are important events whose records have been completely lost, and others which can only be guessed at from references made to them in *other* documents, and documents in languages no longer known. For instance, there are no original documents relating to The Dragon. There are references to entities of that "species", and events involving them, but these are references to documents long-lost and have little useful detail of their own. Some of humanity's oldest conflicts may resonate down through the centuries to cause problems for your modern adventurers, and grave warnings from centuries past may have been lost, leaving the Brotherhood of today unready to deal with events their forefathers tried to prepare them for.

For the evil plots whose warnings have been lost, and the ancient events whose records have disappeared into dust, the gamemaster has free rein. After all, if every possible Evil was known about in advance, there wouldn't be a lot of challenge or surprise for the adventurers. What follows are tidbits of things that are known or surmised, or which diligent Brotherhood researchers can dig up (often literally) once events start transpiring that give them knowledge or incentive of where to look. Most of the Brotherhood's archive of ancient documents and secret histories are available as copies to those with the proper authorization. And in some cases, only the originals will do, mandating travel and possible adventures in unfamiliar territory.

[⚡] *Jeepers Creepers(2001), United Artists*

In previous centuries, these records were hand-made copies. Starting around 1500CE, typeset and printed transcriptions illustrated with woodcuts. Later still, they were bound volumes of photographic reproductions, then microfilms, now as digitized copies, and there is a current effort to make 3D scans of all Brotherhood material that can be viewed in a variety of wavelengths and spatial orientations. As we said, some of the originals have been lost over time, so a researcher might have to deal with a digitized copy of a century-old photo of a hand-drawn copy of an original. At the most rarefied level of research, the most subtle clues cannot be had from such copies, and a researcher will have to travel to where the actual source material resides and examine it onsite, but this is not the level of research nor clearance that new adventurers will have. They will have to put in a research request and hope that the information filters back down to them in a few months (giving the gamemaster time to set things up plot-wise).

▼ **Note** - Any sort of sorcerous description usually has to be exactly duplicated in order to be studied, or created by someone who knows the sorcery. So, a photo of a sorcery-describing sculpture is not sufficient. However, a sorcery whose description was created electronically can be perfectly duplicated as many times as desired.

Each of the fragments of knowledge that follows has several possible short- or long-term plot threads that a gamemaster can use. We won't bludgeon you with the possibilities, but you can read between the lines and see which things will work for your campaign and the temperament of your players and adventurers.

Arhocs archive, tablet 7, fragment 3, translation from the original proto-Sumerian (clearance Grey₁):

"...so did the ummani (artisans?) forge the alani (axes of power?) against the day when the uruku xul (larvae spirits?) would burst forth from the kadingir xul (gateway of the evil gods?).

And it came to pass that the puhrum (council /circle?) of dugnamtar (elders/fate speakers?) saw the wickedness of Man, that with no fear of ana simtim alaku (going to one's fate/death?), few sought to do what was right, leaving the improvement of their souls for the morrow. And so the council did, without consulting the people, weave a mighty nusku (incantation/magic?), cursing all men with mortality, and all their children for all of time.

And the (elders), being of great age, perished as they knew they would, as did the greater part of the host of Man. Those who remained, knowing their time was to measured in years short enough to be counted, did turn their thoughts to their eternal souls, and to the alme itima (besieged dark place/prison?) of the rabi xul (old gods?). Those who perished lost all but their shi (breath of life/souls?), and wandered between (the prison) and anunnaki (heaven?) until they could give (souls) to the bodies of Men and live a mortal span once and no more, after which they would descend to (the prison) or ascend to (heaven).

But the pain of mortality was not felt by all. One of the (elders) did hide his soul from the magic, and warned his gudaman (followers/acolytes?) to do the same. They alone among Men were untouched by mortality, and sought to rule all Men as ilu (demigods?), calling upon anzillu (abominations?) from (the prison) to do their bidding. But the mortal Men, with the jealousy of ensi (righteous rulers?) did cast them down, gaaz (breaking into pieces?) those they could and eseru (imprisoning?) those they could not.

The kataru (alliances?) of Men did then come together and invoke the nergal (great watcher?) to..."

What it means - When humanity first escaped from the Prison, it was as numerous, perhaps more so than people are today, and all were immortal or nearly so. With no Evil overlords to rule them, and no Good to threaten them, men lived a life without care or ambition. They knew that they would *eventually* have to nurture Good within themselves in order to avoid an eventual return to the Prison, and knew that they would *eventually* have to deal with the slowly widening cracks in the Prison caused by their own indolence. But with death from old age being a matter of centuries or millennia, there was always time for that to be done "tomorrow".

When they were suddenly cursed with mortality by a group of their eldest and most skilled adepts, things changed. Depending upon their individual natures, men went from having lifetimes of millennia down to centuries down to mere decades. What they hoped to accomplish, they had to accomplish *now* rather than later. The threat of return to the Prison was something imminent, and in the case of accident or the actions of other Men, possibly in each person's very near future. This was a chaotic time, and also a golden time. Chaotic, for many of the oldest, most powerful magics were lost when the only people who knew them perished. Chaotic, for the centuries of the Eon War had come. These were the days of the great sorcerer-kings, when the few elders and followers who cheated death tried to rule the world as demigods, even going so far as to summon minions from the Prison to help cement their rule. Golden, for in those days *all* men were sorcerors and none were Blind. With mortality binding them and death a constant threat, mortal men worked to preserve and codify what they knew so that it would not be lost to future generations. Golden, for knowing that the souls of those they knew and loved would be reborn into new mortal bodies, they tried to build a world that would be a better place for those yet to come, and worked that they might personally find a way to whatever was apparently beyond this world, yet not the Prison, the *erset la tari* (land of no return), which eventually became known as what we call heaven. What it is, none truly know, but men of those days were certain enough that it existed to devote their lives towards achieving a state of spiritual being that would let them reach it upon the end of their mortal span. Exactly *how* this was to be accomplished was a matter of some minor and not entirely amicable disagreement that continues even today...

In the end, chaos corroded the gold, but the gold tempered the chaos.

The great works of men were destroyed in the battles to overthrow the sorcerer-kings, and most of the laboriously preserved knowledge was lost. But, the defeat of the sorcerer-kings required a cooperation and organization that became the core of the Brotherhood, and much of the knowledge that was saved was because of those who sacrificed their own mortal futures to make a better world for those not yet born.

Most sorcerer-kings were utterly sundered. They were not sent back to the Prison, but were broken into spiritual fragments and scattered on the metaphysical winds. Some of the sorcerer-kings were too powerful for this, had made deals with their captors or cast magics to make them resistant to dissolution. Rather than returning them whole to the Prison, to possibly escape and again wreak havoc, they were magically bound and warded, and secretly buried in places far from the travels of men. In this way, it was hoped that any men who still worshiped them would be unable to find them, and by the time the concealing and binding magics might fail, men would be powerful enough to deal with them.

Unfortunately, neither the original elders nor the newly mortal men who deposed the sorcerer-kings foresaw the Blindness. Over time, men became less powerful in magic, though perhaps more inclined to Good. The Brotherhood worked to keep the Prison sealed and return that which escaped to its extra-dimensional incarceration. The imprisoned fragments of the sorcerer-kings, already shrouded in secrecy, were forgotten by all but a few of their servants, who continued in the old ways and never stopped searching for their fallen masters, passing their religion in secret from one generation to the next.

Now, many thousands of years later, the seals on some of the bound and forgotten sorcerer-kings are weakening. Men have also developed science that when combined with sorcery, might allow the hidden crypts to be located. And, the metaphysical winds are slowing for a space. The scattered spiritual fragments of some sorcerer-kings are slowly drifting out of the ether and coming to rest in this reality. The ancient mortal sorcerors did their work well. None of the dissipated sorcerer-kings can ever be made whole again, but even the fragments each contain some shred of conscious thought or personality or motivation, along with enough raw magical power to turn even the Blind into formidable sorcerors. Sometimes these fragments come to rest in a place, sometimes in a person, sometimes in a thing. Each has a different effect, but all are Evil.

Arhocs archive, Lt. Bertram Sentrion Clarke, 1917, final dispatch (clearance Grey₂):

"If ever at any point I wondered if men could truly be Evil, I would wonder no longer, for the present shows me the horror that we must have been capable of in that distant Archean past when we supposedly marched willingly to the beat of Evil war drums. And the future? It must surely be brighter, for men could assuredly never be more Evil than they are today."

"The wraiths took Pvt. Johnson last night. Blind, and atheist, he resisted the 'prayers' I said over the rest of my decimated company. Prayers that I fear are damning my soul, but not just yet, and while the energies are dark and swirling and clearly unwholesome to gaze upon, to the wraith they burn like fire and they seek easier prey in other trenches. But not before taking Johnson. I swear I could hear them cackle as they dove through his body, oozing out in bubbles of spittle as they slowly sucked the life from him. Were he stronger, he might have fought them off, but the trenches are life-sucking abominations as well and had their way with him first. Were I stronger I might have had some sorcery to kill them, but all I have is a warding and a few other charms."

"At least he rests not in those god-forsaken slits of festering mud. We buried him in good ground this morning, in the cemetery outside the Monastery Sivrie. I know not how the orders were given, or why, but they are official and clearly genuine, and ordered us to this place after the 3rd pushed across no-mans land the night before last. They also held a Brotherhood cipher, terse to the point of my wondering if they were concerned the message would be intercepted. Short though it was, it explains something of the emptiness of Sivrie. The men are thankfully Blind, most of them anyway. The smell here is unnatural and foul, and the blood-stains on the walls too regular and thick to be the result of shrapnel and machineguns tearing through frail mortal flesh. Some of the men have seen enough in this accursed war that they now See. With the Captain dead from a nosferatu nearly four weeks past, they turn to me for leadership now. I tell them what I dare, what I hope they can understand, about a larger war than any of us ever imagined. Sgt. Smythe could not take it. He wandered into the dark between the trenches a week ago and never came back."

"I see now why there has been no officer sent to replace my temporary command. It was meant that someone from the Brotherhood be here, at this place, with Sight and armed men who had seen the horrors of this war and already walked with death in their hearts. My men with Sight look at the iron-bound doors that lead underground, and shudder, for it is from these portals that the infernal miasma leaks. The rest of the men, who would have normally torn apart this place's cellars looking for wine or spirits, pass by these doors as though they do not exist, and seem even to avoid the halls that lead to them. Yet it is through these doors we must pass at sunrise, and through those doors I must lead them. What I fear, what I find most inconceivable, yet which I know will be true, is that what lurks below the ground here is going to be more Evil than that which is above it. Why else would my dispatch case carry this eldritch piece of crockery, and instructions on how to use it. I have heard of such things, but never before held one. It is curiously light, and somehow comforting to hold. Perhaps it gives some strength to the one who must bear it. I shall soon enough find out."

"I send this dispatch with Cpl. Stevens, who can See, but needs more than the meagre guidance I can provide, and perhaps for the sake of his betrothed Sarah, whom he speaks of often. He has not Seen enough to lose hope. May God, wherever he is, have mercy on our souls."

What it means - World War I produced some of the most gifted and powerful sorcerors of the past century. Perhaps this was because of the horrors they experienced, or perhaps something in them rose up to challenge and fight the those horrors. In addition to the blood and gore of war, of trenches filled with mud and rotting flesh of the dead, rats and poison gas and artillery and machineguns, there was also plenty of Evil not of human making. The wraiths that the Blind thought were influenza got their start here. Vampires roamed unchecked through deserted towns, feeding on anyone they thought they could take. Ghuls looted the corpses of both sides, and devils profited.

But there were things far worse. The Monastery Sivrie, built by Christians upon an ancient pagan site, which was in turn revered in a far older time, lay upon a confluence of cracks in the Prison, a self-contained pustule of Evil blocked by an Elder Seal thousands of years ago. In an ignored passage in a cave under the monastery, something buried so long it had become encased in stone felt the acidic drip of water tainted with rotting flesh and innocent blood. It took years of sacrifice, painful deaths and wasted lives to break the bonds of the seal placed upon it. It rose, thinking itself free, but cried out in inhuman rage to find itself bound yet again, by a younger, weaker, but larger magic. Descendants of those who had imprisoned it put in a safeguard, one that would not last forever, but long enough to warn others, who would hopefully then come to restore that which had been broken.

The seal was restored, at a terrible cost in life and sanity. Later in the war, the Monastery Sivrie was turned to rubble by artillery fire, and was nothing more than shattered stones, splintered trees and bloody mud by war's end. Brotherhood operatives searched in vain for the natural entrance to the cave after the war, but never found it. Even the exact location of the monastery could not be ascertained to closer than a hundred meters. It became a site to be watched, a spot on a map, a note in a database.

During World War II, the cave was found by Resistance fighters, who used the well-hidden but accessible entry chamber as a storage and hiding place. Only a handful of the fighters survived the war, and only a few of them ever returned to the cave. And only one felt the curious pull from the back of the cave, and returned over the years to remove the blockage, at first alone, then with his wife, and then with his children. What they found and why they were compelled to find it they never told anyone. The wife died shortly thereafter of a rare consumptive disease. The husband, some said tormented by the ghosts of the war, went mad and was committed to an asylum where he raved for months about the "shadow cast by darkness" until he one day had an attack of some kind and vomited black blood until he died. The body was never claimed.

The children and grandchildren disappeared. They are still out there, but no one was or is actually looking for them, since they have yet done nothing to draw attention to themselves. And what they found remains their secret...for now.

Arhocs archive, The account of Thomas Samuels, 1666 (clearance Black₁):

"I am asked to write of all I remember of the 2nd of September, the year of our Lord 1666, and all things great and small of the days before and after."

"I was honored to serve the Ancient Brotherhood of Gilgamesh as Master of the Guards to Lord Burton of the Black. I had not a great Sight, as some others did, but Lord Burton did assign me to himself for he said I had 'uncommon will, and great strength', and I was tasked with finding similar men to be the personal guardians of his estate and the halls of meeting where they did discuss diverse things that were beyond my ken."

"There had been no small agitation among the White and Grey, for reverses and losses amongst our numbers had been rising of late, Evils thought contained escaped inexplicably, those thought gone reappearing, travels to find and uproot them finding nothing but innocents, goatherders and long-empty crypts. Concern was great, so much so that I was told there would be a conclave of the Black from as many nations as could send representatives, a thing so rare that I had not recalled it ever happening before. As master of the guard, it was my duty to insure the safety of all involved, a grave responsibility, even though most of those we were tasked to protect had sorcerous talent sufficient that our cantrips and swords would hardly matter."

"At the appointed hour, there was a great commotion outside the chambers. The Marquis Aristede had drawn a scroll and intoned severely from it in Latin. I caught not all the words, save references to tests of some sort, and diabolism and imperiled souls. Lord Burton was most wroth at this, as were his fellow Blacks, but confronted by Marquis Aristede and most of the assembled others from the Continent, he seemed to accede to the request, though he called it an 'impertinent demand'. He did quote his own Latin back at them, again which I understood little of, but it seemed to speak of nakedness. I did not understand until all those assembled began to remove their weapons and jewelry, leaving it with lesser Whites who would not have entered the chambers anyway."

The Marquis had no weapon or adornment to offer, save a ring, which he did remove and hand to me, saying quietly "wear this for me until I return." I felt, even with my poor Sight, that it was a talisman of some type, and only then understood the reference to nakedness. Those involved in the test or the testing must be free of sorcerous encumbrances. After some dark looks from Lord Burton to the Marquis and others, they entered the council chambers and bolted the doors. Myself, the guards and the lesser White stood and waited. I, for reasons I am unsure of, removed the ring from my pouch and slipped it upon my finger. It was though I had opened my eyes for the first time. I did not see any more, but I Saw more clearly. Truly a useful thing to have, but perhaps dangerous to rely upon too much."

"After some time, the murmur of discussion from inside became more heated. No words passed through those thick doors, but clearly many people had something they wished to be heard. Then, it went unnaturally silent. There was something between a heartbeat and a breeze. We felt it through the door, rippling the tapestry and tugging at the candle flames. Then it was like the hammer of God struck the doors, blasting one off its hinges to sail across the room and instantly slay a White from the Hungarian Empire. The other door hung askew, smoking. And the screams started. Sorcery was thick in the air, enough to make a man retch. Smoke and screams and inhuman howls came from the chamber. I had barely drawn sword when Lord Burton staggered forth, shouting "The Marquis is possessed, and must be slain!". I saw the Marquis raise hand and gesture arcanelly, and my Lord Burton do the same. With clarity of the ring, Marquis Aristede was a swirling mix of light and darkness, but Lord Burton was black and something blacker. I could see that he had light swirling about him, but also saw that it was merely illusion, hiding the true Evil beneath. He saw me bring my sword up as though to strike him, and the sorcery he meant for the Marquis, he aimed at me instead. I hope never again to see eyes like his staring at mine. I knew then that my sword would not touch him, and why he had surrounded himself with those who had only the slightest of Sight."

"I was a coward, and dove to one side, which cost me my arm instead of my life. Before I passed out, I saw flames from the Marquis spatter across some sort of mystical shield Lord Burton had protected himself with, adding to the blaze that was already consuming the building beyond hope of extinguishing."

"I remember nothing from that point until I awoke in the back of a cart, being pulled by various Whites and Greys away from the conflagration. Things danced around the plumes of smoke, sometimes swooping down to the street, sometimes being struck from the air by unseen sorcery. The poor Blind upon the street gazed at the spectacle, and Reason fled from their eyes. I tried to warn them to flee, flee like Lot and turn not their gaze behind them, but I had no voice, no strength. I was told I did not speak sense for a full day. The physick removed what was left of my arm while I raved, the ring upon its charred hand melted by the heat."

"I am told to speak of these events to no one. Inconceivably, the Masters of the Scottish Rites lead the English Brotherhood now, but to allay the suspicions of all, they have stated that they shall step down as soon as possible, that good Englishmen can once again lead it. I had thought that I should be blamed for failing to see the treachery beneath my nose, but it seems I am forgiven for what I failed to See until too late. With but one arm, I am useless as a warrior, so I am to be a leader and teacher. It seems fitting that having lost my innocence as a White, my color is to become Grey."

What it means - In every century before the 19th, the most powerful force the Brotherhood could bring to bear on Evil was sorcery. The more powerful Evils like Globboths were nearly immune to conventional weapons, and strong enough to pierce through any armor. Those who fought directly against Evil survived only with the aid of sorcery. And sometimes they succumbed to its dark, seductive call. Even in those times, there were policies and protocols in place to deal with subversion of the Brotherhood from within, but of course trying to implement those protocols can be difficult when the ones subverted are highly ranked within the Brotherhood.

These things have happened numerous times in the history of the Brotherhood, but seldom at the highest level, as happened in 17th century England. Over the course of two decades, the most highly ranked members of the Brotherhood there were slowly corrupted by Evil, from the influence of an artifact referred to only as the *manus malum* (evil hand). Those who were not affected by it, or became suspicious, died seemingly natural deaths. Eventually, evidence collected in other parts of Europe pointed to a central source for various misdeeds, betrayals and botched operations, and that source could only have been at the highest level of the English Brotherhood. Confronted, forced by ancient protocols to submit to examination and questioning by their peers from other sovereign nations, they showed their true colors, and the depth of the taint. Hundreds of Brotherhood members died in the resulting battle, which set much of London ablaze and drove hundreds of the Blind completely insane. The *manus malum* was never recovered, and the blaze was such that it was never certain that all the conspirators perished, for many bodies were simply never found. The Brotherhood collected as many first-hand accounts as possible in hopes of discerning the fates of all involved, but in the end there were still gaps in the record and figures unaccounted for.

The Brotherhood does not destroy the records of its own internal failures, but it does keep them hidden from the average members. Only those who have reached the highest ranks know the full details of the failure of their predecessors.



Code:Black^{v1.0}

▼ **SCALING YOUR THREATS** - An unarmed human is usually not an even match for even the lesser Evils out there. *Fortunately, adventurers are seldom unarmed.* The gamemaster can use the following guide when trying to scale an encounter to match the capabilities of his, her or its opponents.

Normal damage effects: Normal human or animal. May have increased Hit Brackets, Pain Tolerance or Toughness to make them more of a match against an average person, but they still take damage much the same as everyone else. Suitable for toughs or public encounters where display or use of firearms or lethal weapons would tend to get people arrested.

Takes -1d from damage: Very low level Evils like vampires. A normal person does a punch damage of 1d+0, so a creature with this level of damage immunity is not at all bothered by a normal person doing punch damage or using lethal weapons with punch+0 damage. Even damage of more than this is reduced enough to make the creature seem extraordinarily resilient. If the creature is intelligent and humanoid, it can wear mundane body armor, to increase its protection even more or protect particularly vital areas. A creature with this level of damage immunity is a challenge to an unarmed adventurer, but an armed adventurer should have no problems killing one. It will just take a bit longer than normal.

Takes -2d from damage: Low level Evils like weres. Creatures with this level of immunity to normal damage will completely overmatch street-level law enforcement or security personnel and will win an unarmed combat against a normal person 100% of the time. It would take a very strong adventurer, preferably with martial arts to stand a chance in unarmed combat. These creatures virtually ignore small caliber firearms like .45 or 9mm handguns, but can still be brought down with sufficient quantities of high-powered handgun rounds. If the creature is armored or has sorcerous augmentation to its protection, it can be very durable indeed. This creature is a match for a few adventurers with heavy handguns if it is played intelligently, but one person with an assault rifle and time to fire several shots can take it out. Remember though, some of these creatures can incapacitate a person with a single attack, and if you can only get off a few shots before that attack lands, the creature limps away and the shooter doesn't.

Takes -4d from damage: Medium level Evils like Globboths. These are things that you have to empty an entire assault rifle clip into to put down, and which are immune to anything smaller than that. One of these, acting intelligently, can be a serious hazard for even a heavily armed group of adventurers. Adventurers armed only with concealable weapons will be outmatched and will have to resort to sorcery or extreme cleverness to prevail.

Remember that for Brotherhood operations in the developed world, you can't just go around toting assault rifles and other heavy hardware, and in the parts of the world where you can, Evils that lurk are probably able to handle them with no problem. Most of the time, agents will be using concealed or concealable weapons.

EXAMPLE - If your "day job" for the Brotherhood is to be the guy driving the soda truck to convenience stores (a good way to chat with a lot of people and pick up local gossip), you are only going to be able to carry a small pistol on your person. At best. More than likely, your weapon is going to be under a false access plate in the floor of the vehicle.

The other thing to remember about scaling threats to the power level of the adventurers is that the Blessing Trait that allows various Evils to ignore damage *needs to be used creatively*. Otherwise if you have an Evil that can ignore a given amount of damage, the solution simply and always becomes "more damage". So, take the idea and adjust it a little bit. If a creature can ignore 2d of damage, say that it can ignore 3d from gunfire, but only 1d from blades and blunt weapons. Or say that it has total protection from physical attacks, but no protection against energy attacks. Or give it 2d+0 armor in addition to some other variation. The idea is that new Evils are popping out all the time, and Evil isn't stupid. If its minions are getting sent back to the Prison in short order by gunfire, the next batch is going to minimize the vulnerability. Either through improved protection, or maybe even a sorcerous ability or gift that interferes with certain forms of technology. Make the players have to *think*, rather than just reaching for more firepower.

EXAMPLE: Entering a crypt, adventurers find it cluttered with dusty cobwebs, but thankfully no spiders. Only later do they find that the sticky strands have hardened around the moving parts of their weapons....

▼ **DARKER THAN DARK** - The setting presented for **Code:Black** has mostly been centered around actions in the United States or Europe, with hints at operations elsewhere. In the more developed nations, Evil tends to be a little more "civilized", though "discreet" might be a better word to use. For instance, vampires have to operate within certain limits, and Evils with long-term goals have to avoid the notice of the Brotherhood for their long-term plans to come to fruition. But, if sheer volume of bloodshed, carnage and firepower is more to the taste of your players, set your campaign in someplace a little less civilized.

There are plenty of places in the world where the battle betwixt the Brotherhood and Evil is more in the open and "gloves off". The Blind are still Blind, but in a place where murders go without notice, atrocities happen on a daily basis and the horrific is commonplace, one more grotesque scene on the street isn't going to make any difference. The Blind compensate as best they can, often through a Forte on Will that lets them cope with the things they still cannot accept the existence of, or a fanatical devotion to a cause, however irrational, that gives them an emotional anchor to cling to.

Now, it would be nice if we could actually blame some of the world's ills on Evil from beyond time and space, rather than our own inherent evil. Like the more than three hundred women and girls killed and mutilated in Ciudad Juarez over the past decade and a half, with no sign the local police are going to arrest or even seriously look for the perpetrator or perpetrators. According to a web site promoting tourism there, Ciudad Juarez *also* has "great restaurants, attractions, and shopping value". And this takes place right across the border from El Paso, Texas. Or, consider the dozens of corpses, sometimes headless, dumped on the street each week in Baghdad, the genocide in the Sudan or Rwanda or Bosnia, the thousands of amputations and mutilations associated with "blood diamonds" and so on. In the **Code:Black** universe, all of these are thankfully associated with *true* Evil corrupting a vulnerable humanity, rather than solely being our own stupid fault, pointless bloodshed and sorrow stemming from perversity, greed and ultimately meaningless differences.

In **Code:Black**, these are places where the normal rules do not apply, where Evil walks openly, and the Blind are terrified but do not know why. Life is cheap, loyalties are either non-existent or fanatical, and players should not get too attached to their adventurers. These are places where ten year old children are combat veterans and drug dealers, where United Nations peacekeepers run child prostitution rings, where simply stepping off the road incurs the risk of mutilation from land mines, where representatives of “socially responsible corporations” are giving duffel bags of cash to warlords and corrupt government officials so they can use slave labor to exploit natural resources, where the streets are hardly safe during the day, and only those wishing to kill or die go abroad at night.

These are the places where everyone makes mistakes, even the good guys, and people die as a result. *Constantly*. Adventurers are both more heroic than normal, and also more flawed. Their sacrifices and compromises weigh heavily on them, those they tried to save and failed, those they thought were guilty and weren't, discovered too late, innocent blood on well-meaning hands.

Adventurers who still retain their sanity but can no longer handle the restricted nature of Brotherhood operations in the developed nations often volunteer for assignments in these areas. Those who are still “good people” but who have committed offenses unpardonable in civilized society also volunteer for “abeyance” assignments in these regions. Very few who go this way ever return.

These are the darkest places in the world and most soul-wrenching way to run a **Code:Black** campaign, close to what the world would be like if Evil prevails. It is a part of the game universe, but a part that most adventurers, even those who have confronted terrible Evils, can hardly believe exists. Tread there at your own peril.

▼ **FINAL NOTES - Code:Black** has a certain designed feel to it, desperation, hope, Good, Evil, external foes and inner demons, a globe-spanning conspiracy thousands of years old whose players walk undisguised down public streets. But, you don't have to run it that way. You could say Evil has already run amok, and that adventurers are part of a Good guerrilla action. You could make the Brotherhood a secret branch of the government, making adventurers full-time agents with police powers, or a sorcerous and high-tech military response team. *Or all of the above*. The world is a big place. There is a small military response team with the Sight. If there are adventurers in Haiti, they are certainly outnumbered and outgunned by Evil there. The Chicago branch of the Brotherhood is for all practical purposes part of the Chicago Police Department.

The main thing to remember is to keep a sense of balance. It is probably better to make it too easy for the starting adventurers instead of too hard. *It's no fun to have your adventurer killed on the first night of play*. Once you figure out the strengths and weaknesses of the adventurers, and see how they respond to danger, unforeseen complications and moral choices, then you can gradually ramp up the danger, threats and terror to a level that will keep them (and you) on the edge of your seats.

Death comes in many forms. In **Code:Black** most of them are going to be horrible and violent, some in ways that are too much for even the adventurers to comprehend and remain sane. Without this ultimate threat and risk, adventures may not be as thrilling, but the thrill pales very quickly if an adventurer dies. The thing about **Code:Black** is that adventurers are trying to make a difference, to save the world, and maybe leave it a little better off than it was when they arrived. People in the real world willing risk and give up their lives in pursuit of higher goals all the time. If a game situation turns out to be fatal, it is pretty much your responsibility as a gamemaster to see that the adventurer's death counts for something, and the responsibility of every other player to make sure that sacrifice was not in vain.



GEAR

"A path is only a path, and there is no affront, to oneself or to others, in dropping it if that is what your heart tells you. Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself alone, one question. Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't it is of no use."

- Carlos Castaneda

▼ **INTRODUCTION** - The world of **Code:Black** is the modern world. Guns and conventional weapons are a big part of the arsenal of the average Brotherhood agent. But, since they have to deal with extraordinary threats, there are some special notes for adventurers and the gamemaster.

Gun laws - Remember that different localities and nations will have different laws about what is and isn't allowed for civilian ownership and how it can be carried or stored. An agent in the United States might have a concealed carry permit, but this is only good in a particular state, with possible reciprocity in other states. If you want to get into this level of detail, you can check it out online. On the other hand, an agent in Great Britain who would be fortunate to get a permit to merely own a shotgun, which would have to be stored in a safe, except when being transported to and from a registered firing range. Of course, this is what they can legally own as a civilian. When "on duty" and using some form of quasi-official ID is another matter... Notwithstanding the laws regarding legal firearms ownership, a black market for firearms does exist in most places and people with the right connections can acquire prohibited weapons without too much difficulty. However, attempting to illegally procure firearms carries its own risks.

The following guides apply to *civilian, citizen* ownership of weapons in various parts of the world (subject to the frequent winds of political change). The guidelines are general, due to local variation. For instance, in the United States many urban areas have more restrictions than the nation in general, and in some nations .22 rimfire rifles or single-shot weapons are less restricted than other weapons in the same class. In most cases, a more restrictive part of a nation will be one category higher than the rest of the nation. Each category of ownership is several times as restrictive as the next. For instance, in the United States the difference between "restricted" and "unrestricted" categories is a background check, fingerprints, a 200Cr fee per weapon and giving the government rights to inspect the premises where the weapon is owned at any time. In France, weapons in "military" calibers are not allowed for private ownership (which includes 9mm pistols), and in Mexico there is *one* gun store, and otherwise spotless US citizens have spent time in jail for crossing the border with a single bullet rattling around in the trunk of their car. The categories are:

1 Mostly unrestricted for private ownership.

Public carry subject to local laws (concealed carry permits, kept locked in trunk of car, etc.)

2 Restricted private ownership. Permits required for ownership and/or purchase, possible restrictions on caliber or magazine capacity, strong restrictions on carry or public transport. With few national exceptions, no concealed carry of weapons in the appropriate class.

3 Very restricted private ownership. Permits solely as discretion of local authority. There may be limits on type of weapon, quantity of ammunition owned, storage requirements, and transport restrictions (only to and from specific locations).

X No private ownership, or restrictions are so harsh as to be identical to an outright ban.

It is safe to assume that the more restrictive a nation's firearms laws are, the more likely that there will be exceptions that make things complicated, and more likely that "self-defense" is *not* a legal justification for use of lethal force. The more X's a nation has, the more likely increased restrictions on the remaining types of weapons will be. Nations with * have enough corruption, violence, porous borders or lack of enforcement that *actual* gun ownership does not correspond well with the actual laws. Virtually all nations will also have a black market in weapons and a criminal element that simply disregards the laws.

	Taser	Handgun	Shotgun	Rifle	Autofire
Australia	X	3	3	3	X
Canada	X	2	2	2	X
China	X	X	X	X	X
Denmark	X	3	3	3	X
Finland	X	2	2	2	3
France	2	2	2	2	X
Germany	1	3	3	3	X
Great Britain	X	X	3	3	X
Hungary	1	3	2	2	X
India	X	3	2	2	X
Indonesia*	X	X	X	X	X
Israel	1	2	2	2	X
Italy	X	3	3	3	X
Japan	X	X	3	3	X
Kuwait	X	X	X	X	X
Mexico*	X	3	3	3	X
New Zealand	X	3	2	2	X
Norway	X	2	2	2	X
Russia*	X	X	2	2	X
Saudi Arabia*	1	2	2	2	X
South Africa	1	2	2	2	X
Spain	X	2	2	2	X
Sweden	X	2	2	2	3
Switzerland	X	2	1	1	2
United States	1	1	1	1	2

It is worth noting in the case of the EU, that if you acquire a "firearms pass", it will allow you to transport a firearm that is legal for you in your home country into another EU country for a temporary stay. Use of that firearm in the destination country is however, still subject to all local laws. One gun-related exception worth noting is that Australia has a total ban on civilian ownership of bulletproof vests or modern body armor.

More gun stuff - Some of the weapon or ammo modifications or enhancements that follow are illegal or borderline at best. Agents need to have demonstrated a certain level of competence, responsibility and/or restraint to request these items, though if a situation requires it, the agent's superior officer can issue it on their own authority (if they have sufficient rank), but this means that the superior is taking personal responsibility for the item and will suffer a good deal of the consequences if the item is misused.

▼ **SPECIAL WEAPON PARAMETERS** - To add some depth and customization to weapon choices, several optional rules are available for **Code:Black** weapons. These will take the form of superscripted bits after particular stats, or special use of that stat.

Unaimable: Weapons with an Accuracy of "-" are considered to have an Accuracy of zero, but are not aimable. That is, the accuracy and aimability of the weapon is not high enough that you can get a bonus to hit by spending extra time aiming. This would mostly apply to pistols with extremely short barrels and/or rudimentary sights. Tasers are also unaimable, since the two darts fired have slightly different trajectories. You can do called shots, but you never have an Accuracy of greater than zero with the weapon.

Slow: A "slow" firearm is one that can only fire once per turn. Single action revolvers, bolt action rifles and pump shotguns would be an example.

Penetrating/Stopping power: A weapon with "penetrating power" will have a "P" after the damage. If you use this modifier, increase the listed damage by +1 for purposes of penetrating armor, but decrease the amount of damage *after armor is penetrated* by -2, with a minimum of 1 point of damage done. So, against unarmored targets, actual damage done is 1 point less, but you have a better chance of getting damage through any armor. Of course, if you are shooting a creature that ignores some part of normal damage, it's not likely to matter that you got a point of damage through on it. Weapons with this modifier are generally small, fast bullets.

A weapon with "stopping power" will have a "S" after the damage. If you use this modifier, decrease the listed damage by -1 for purposes of penetrating armor, but increase the amount of damage *after armor is penetrated* by +2. So, against unarmored targets, damage is effectively increased by 1 point. The total damage done is compared to any resistance to normal damage a creature might have, so this modifier can end up doing damage in cases where an equal weapon without stopping power would not.

EXAMPLE: A Glock 36 has a listed damage of $1d+2^5$. If you use the normal rules, it has a damage of $1d+2$. If you use the "stopping power" rule, it has a damage of $1d+1$ before being compared to armor, but anything that gets through armor is increased by +2. So, if the bullet hit a $1d+1$ armor, it would do nothing, while the same bullet *without* the stopping power rule would do $0d+1$. But, if it hit a $1d+0$ armor, then $0d+1$ would get through, with an additional +2, for a total damage of $1d+0$, while the $1d+2$ bullet without the stopping power rule would only have done $0d+1$.

Weapons with stopping power are generally slower, heavier bullets, especially those with a real or imagined reputation of being better "man-stoppers". The penetrating and stopping power rule is optional, but it gives players more ways to think about which weapons they want, and why.

Armor-piercing: Armor-piercing ammunition subtracts $1d$ from armor. This modifier has no effect on the inherent ability of some creatures to ignore damage, but it can negate some of any armor they might have in addition to their natural abilities. Armor-piercing ammunition will be illegal in most localities and would only be available through Brotherhood, police or military sources, though civilians may be able to acquire armor-piercing ammunition in 9mm, 5.56mm and 7.62mm through military surplus found at gun shows.

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

+P+: This is just a designation as to how close to safety tolerances a bullet is loaded. +P ammunition is more powerful than normal ammunition, and +P+ is more powerful still. +P+ ammunition adds $0d+1$ to the listed damage of most weapons, and is the maximum safe load that can be run through the weapon. It will not make modern weapons any less reliable, but they will tend to wear out faster (not really noticeable in game terms), and are louder and more noticeable. Most firearms-using agents will load their weapons with this ammunition. This ammunition can be combined with the bonus from using MC alloys in a weapon, for a total of + $1d$ damage over the listed value. This can get a lot of weapons into a damage range where the recoil becomes physically punishing. ⁵

Recoil - Brotherhood agents may end up using some very heavy weapons. Too heavy, sometimes. For a weapon with recoil, the maximum damage you can safely fire with one hand is your Strength plus $1d$. For firing with two hands, your Strength plus $2d$, and for firing from the shoulder, your Strength plus $4d$. Padded gloves or shoulder pads can increase effective Strength by $0d+1$, but pistols of less than 1.0 kilogram decrease effective Strength by $0d+1$ and those of less than .5 kilogram decrease effective Strength by $0d+2$. Any excess is taken as half-lethal damage to the firing hand, hands or shoulder, counting amounts of less than $1d+0$ as non-lethal hits.

EXAMPLE: An agent with a Strength of $2d+1$ is unwisely firing a Smith & Wesson Model 500 (damage of $4d+0$) with one hand. The maximum safe damage he can fire with one hand is his Strength plus $1d$, or $3d+1$. The $0d+2$ difference is taken as non-lethal damage to his hand.

EXAMPLE: An agent has a Smith & Wesson Airlite .357 Magnum (damage of $2d+1$), with MC alloy reinforcement, loaded with +P+ ammunition, for a final damage of $3d+1$. To fire this safely from one hand would require a Strength of $2d+1$. But, this pistol has a loaded mass of less than .5 kilogram, so it decreases the effective Strength of the user by $0d+2$. This means the agent has to have a Strength of $3d+0$ to fire this weapon from one hand without taking bruising damage to their hand. In the *real* world, this particular weapon has punishing recoil and will bruise the hand of a normal person after several shots, even when firing it two-handed, with a muzzle flash and report that will draw the attention of everyone else at the firing range. So imagine what it would be like if you *doubled* that power...

Shotgun rounds - Listed damage for shotguns is for a solid lead slug. Buckshot rounds get up to 3 hits at $2d$ less damage.

EXAMPLE: A $3d+2$ slug could be replaced with a buckshot shell that does three $1d+2$ hits.

EABA

The 18.5mm bore of a 12 gauge shotgun is sufficiently large to carry a useful payload, and the Brotherhood has a number of shells that look like civilian rounds, but which are color coded and have special capabilities. Most of the rounds coded White₁ are probably not illegal (local laws will vary), but are only available through specialty channels. Items of White₂ are probably restricted or illegal for civilian use and items White₃ and up are almost certainly illegal for civilian ownership.

Door breacher(black): Does normal lethal damage, but has no fragmentation or ricochet potential, making it ideal for use against solid targets as close range. Count it as a round with stopping power.

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

Armor-piercing(black with white stripe): Does normal lethal damage, but ignores the first 1d of armor.

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

Incendiary(red): Does 0d+1 less damage than normal, but has a white phosphorous core. It does 0d+1 damage each time level for 8 time levels if it fully embeds itself in an object. This is often sufficient to set flammable items on fire.

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

Dragonfire(yellow): Fills a line 1 meter wide by 10 meters long with white-hot flaming particles. Anyone in the path takes 1d+0 lethal damage, but the damage is reduced to zero by *any* armor or clothing, making it only useful against targets that are affected by fire and do not wear armor, like weres and globboths, and there are certainly other targets it will be useful against. It has the chance to blind or otherwise cause damage to anyone who is looking at the blast. Because it fills an area a hexagon across, the difficulty to hit something with the blast is reduced by 2.

Brotherhood rank required: White₁

Pepper spray(green): Fills a path 1 meter wide, with 3d+2 non-lethal damage at the muzzle and dropping 0d+1 each distance level. Because it fills an area a hexagon across, the difficulty to hit something with the blast is reduced by 2.

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

Stun bag(blue): Expands into a fist-wide sack of lead powder or something equally heavy. This drops the Accuracy of the weapon to zero, and does half-lethal blunt damage instead of the normal lethal damage.

Brotherhood rank required: White₁

Rubber buckshot(blue with white stripe): Does half-lethal damage instead of lethal buckshot damage, but drops the weapon's Accuracy to zero.

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

Silver buckshot(grey): Does normal lethal buckshot damage, but is silver-plated for extra effect against weres. Remember the limits on the source of silver used for this purpose. These rounds are specially made from silver donated for that purpose and code numbered so that the owner knows which rounds are theirs.

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

Frag(orange): Acts like a miniature frag grenade, doing 1d+1 lethal damage in the hexagon they detonate in and the surrounding hexagons. It has a damage for penetrating barriers or 1d+1, sufficient to penetrate auto windows and other normal glass before detonating. Frag rounds do 2 lethal Hits to Globboths and no damage to adjacent hexagons, as it penetrates a significant distance before detonating.

Brotherhood rank required: White₄

Shaped charge(white): Contains a tiny shaped charge. Does +1d more than normal ammunition *and* acts as armor-piercing (ignore the first 1d of armor encountered). It counts as a physical attack of 1d less than normal ammunition for breaching barriers, and as an energy attack of its actual damage for special effect purposes.

Brotherhood rank required: White₄

Flechette(white with black stripe): Does buckshot damage, but counts as armor-piercing (ignore the first 1d of armor encountered).

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

Compact(translucent): Readily distinguished from regular rounds as they are two-thirds the length of normal rounds, and are available as normal slugs or normal buckshot. In shotguns with tubular magazines like the Remington 870 or Benelli M4, it increases internal magazine capacity by fifty percent (round down), but makes the weapon count as Unreliable (jams on a skill roll of 7 or less).

Brotherhood rank required: White₁

Grenades - These come in several varieties, and are all standard items with no particular special tech involved in their manufacture, but being caught with any sort of grenade on your person by the authorities *is* going to generate complications, the severity of which depends on the type of grenade. For instance, smoke grenades may not technically be illegal, but they are suspicious and may be cause for a more detailed search, which might turn up other stuff of a questionable nature.

All stats listed are for thrown grenades. The same types of grenades can be fired from 40mm grenade launchers. These are slightly smaller, and generally have one of the following reductions: -1 meter radius of effect, -2 to lethal damage, -1 to non-lethal damage.

Smoke grenade: Instantly creates a 3 meter radius area of near-total obscurement (+8 difficulty to see into or through). This dissipates at the rate of +1 point of difficulty per 2 time levels. More than one grenade going off in the same area adds +2 to the difficulty of seeing through the smoke.

Brotherhood rank required: White₁

Irritant grenade: Creates a cloud of tear gas or pepper spray the same size as a smoke grenade cloud. This does 1d+1 non-lethal damage each turn someone is exposed to it, and the damage drops by 0d+1 each 4 time levels. More than one grenade going off in the same area adds 0d+2 to the damage done. Vampires are unaffected by irritant grenades or similar weapons.

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

White phosphorous grenade: Acts like both an irritant grenade and a smoke grenade. However, the damage done is 1d+1 lethal rather than non-lethal, and the damage continues even if you leave the area (you got sticky burning bits on you). More than one grenade going off in the same area adds 0d+2 to the damage done. Anything that takes damage from fire is affected by a white phosphorous grenade.

Brotherhood rank required: White₄

Stun grenade: Does 4d+1 non-lethal damage as an explosion.

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

Frag grenade: Does 3d+2 lethal damage as an explosion.

Brotherhood rank required: White₅

Tasers: Tasers operate by using a compressed air (nitrogen) charge to fire a pair of darts into the target. These darts trail wires back to the weapon, and once they strike, the user of the taser can shock the target at will. On a hit, it can do the rated damage by pressing a button on the weapon. This can be done once per turn, as long as the target stays within range of the weapon's wires. A target with sufficient presence of mind and will can pull the wires out, which is a full action and an Average (7) Will task.

The The X26 is the compact police version, and the MX is the "animal control" version (not legal to use on people). The B26 is a custom weapon manufactured by the Brotherhood that looks something like a sawed-off shotgun, with a larger power pack and four long-range taser cartridges. Obviously, Brotherhood agents will want the taser with the best damage, and in the case where agents get a taser from the Brotherhood, it will have been covertly modified to MX damage levels and will use police-only 11 meter range cartridges (relabelled as 5 meter range civilian cartridges). The B26 is clearly not a normal taser, and will draw suspicion from law enforcement officials if they find one.

Like the lightning rod weapon, many Evils resistant to physical damage can be readily affected by a taser, but also like the lightning rod, the damage is half-lethal, meaning that you still need a way to permanently dispatch the Evil once you incapacitate it. However, as a less-lethal weapon, tasers are very useful for incapacitating more or less innocent victims, like brainwashed but not-yet-Evil cultists. Tasers are also fairly quiet, with just a muffled "pop!" when fired. They also have the advantage that as "less-lethal" weapons, there may be fewer restrictions on civilian ownership. In the United States they are not counted as "firearms" and can be carried concealed without permits in most states. However, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Wisconsin, Michigan, Hawaii and some individual cities in other states do not allow civilian ownership of them.

Tasers do full damage through up to 1d+0 of clothing, but do *no* damage if blocked by 1d+0 or more of genuine armor or any physical barrier, even something as insubstantial as a screen door. All taser models may be equipped with laser sights, allowing aiming as a minor action, so you can aim and fire on the same turn without penalty, though not as fast as simply firing.

Brotherhood rank required: White₁

Paintball guns: The Brotherhood has a wide array of modified paintball guns that it uses for non-lethal purposes. Even though they are pressurized to velocities that are dangerous, they still do little inherent damage. Rather, they carry specialized loads meant to intimidate or incapacitate particular threats. For instance, silver-plated balls filled with silver nitrate for use against weres, self-igniting balls designed to burn once they penetrate a Globboth, acid-filled balls designed to annoy the heck out of vampires, or pepper-spray or tracking dye balls for use against people.

The projectiles have a half-lethal damage of 1d+2 (1d+1 non-lethal and 0d+1 lethal hits), plus they may have some other special effect that is decided on by the gamemaster. Yes, at the pressures the Brotherhood operates paintball guns at, you can *eventually* kill an unarmored person with one.

One advantage of these weapons is that paintball is a popular and legal recreational sport in many areas, so possession and transport of the weapons is not inherently suspicious. However, carrying them around in public is likely to draw some attention.

In game terms, paintball guns used by the Brotherhood will have Accuracy of 0 or 1, run off of high pressure air or disposable carbon dioxide cartridges (for small pistols), may be autofire or autoburst, and are always considered Unreliable weapons. Magazines are almost always internal to the weapon and range in size from 10 to 100 paintballs. The minimum size of a paintball pistol would be about at the +3 concealment level, and the largest ones would be at the +1 level.

Concealment - On the lists that follow, most weapons will have notes about autofire, reliability, etc. In addition, the weapon will have a superscript notation, which is the concealment bonus/penalty for concealing the weapon under clothing. Bigger numbers mean smaller weapons. Spotting a weapon *if you are looking for it* is an Awareness roll based on range (minimum effective range of 2 meters, an Easy(5) task), plus the concealment number, with a further modifier for the clothing worn. If a person is hiding multiple weapons, it is usually just -1 difficulty per extra weapon.

If you do not have at least a +0d skill with the weapon type in question, the Awareness roll is counted as unskilled use (Awareness minus 1d instead of straight Awareness). Generally, average bystanders will *not* be looking to see if people are carrying concealed weapons, and also take a -1d penalty to their Awareness roll, while adventurers and their foes *will* be keeping an eye out for such things and will not have any penalty on Awareness. The fact that you are looking for items hidden on a person is only obvious if you keep at it, hoping to get a better roll.

In general, you only get one spotting roll, and the gamemaster can allow new rolls if the situation changes enough to make it 2 points easier.

Clothing	Example	Concealment
Minimal	Bathing suit	-8 difficulty
Very light	Shorts & t-shirt	-6 difficulty
Light	Slacks & shirt	-4 difficulty
Average	Slacks & jacket	-2 difficulty
Heavy	Winter coat	-0 difficulty
Very heavy	Trench coat	+2 difficulty

EXAMPLE: An agent hiding a +4 concealable pistol under average clothing would be at +2 difficulty to have it spotted. Someone at a range of 6 meters (difficulty of 8) would have to make a difficulty 10 Awareness task to spot this weapon, *if they are actively looking for it*. On the other hand, trying to hide this weapon under a pair of swim trunks would be at -4 difficulty, so someone at 6 meters would only have to make a difficulty 4 Awareness task to spot the bulge.

In general, it is pretty safe to say that if the rating of the weapon plus the concealment of the clothing is *less* than zero, it is fairly obvious, even to those who aren't looking for the weapon. If a person restricts themselves to a limited set of actions and movements, they can sometimes count a total of -1 or -2 as zero.

EXAMPLE: It is hard to reliably conceal a +3 weapon under clothing with a -4 concealment modifier (slacks & shirt). While it may *technically* be concealed from view, body movements will imprint suspicious bulges on the clothing when the person turns, bends or runs. If this person wore a baggy shirt and let it hang over their waistband, they could count the total as +0 instead of -1 difficulty, but it would only count as concealment if the wearer was very careful about how they moved about. The weapon is concealed from casual view, but there are circumstances that will make the weapon more obvious, and some of these circumstances are beyond the person's control.

Certain types of clothing are less practical than others in some areas. Agents in Hawaii would only have a limited set of situations where even Average clothing would be normal, and most of the time Light clothing would be the norm.

▼ **Note** - For **Code:Black**, concealment modifiers for weapons are the **EABA Universal Chart** entry for their length (on the Size column), plus the entry for their loaded mass (on the Lifting Capacity column), divided by -4. So, a 1.0kg pistol 18cm long would have a total of -17. Divided by -4, this becomes a +4 concealment modifier. For bulky weapons, use (length + width + depth) instead of just length.

Holsters for concealment do not make a weapon harder to spot. They just make it more secure and easier to get at in the location you put it, and give you more possible locations to put one. A good concealed holster for a weapon will run about a quarter the cost of the weapon.

EXAMPLE: You can tuck a pistol in your waistband, but you run the risk of it falling out if you run or bend over. You can put a gun in a jacket pocket, but it is a lot easier to get at with a shoulder holster.

Use common sense. The Blind may not see sorcery and Evil, but they see assault rifles and sawed-off shotguns just fine, and will quickly call the police to get the dangerous lunatics with heavy weapons off their streets.

Possession & ownership - If a weapon is autofire or clearly military (like frag grenades), adventurers generally *cannot* buy it with their own money. It simply isn't on the market unless the adventurers (depending on locality) procure costly licenses, pay lots of bribes, buy from the black market or do other things the Brotherhood will notice and disapprove of, since it draws attention to the adventurer. Adventurers usually have access to (at no cost to themselves) the weapons their superiors think they need to do the job they are supposed to do. This means that if they *need* an anti-tank rifle, one can probably be acquired. Maybe not immediately, but within several hours or a few days. Of course, if they need that sort of firepower, it means that someone screwed up somewhere, because an Evil that requires that sort of firepower to deal with doesn't ooze out of the Prison on its own. Those weapons are a last resort, where a lot of cover-up will have to be done, and a lot of collateral damage explained and paid for. In game terms, if adventurers screwed up to the point where this sort of weaponry is the only option for dealing with the fallout from their mistakes, the players should not expect any experience point bonuses and adventurers should not apply for promotion...

Just remember that for small things like pistols and any legally ownable (if questionable) weapons, adventurers *will* be paying for those, but for the heavy stuff, they are only going to have their pay docked if they lose the stuff due to negligence or incompetence. **Code:Black** isn't about saving up your money to buy the coolest stuff. *The Brotherhood already has the cool stuff.* Adventurers just have to be responsible enough and senior enough to get their grubby mitts on it.

These weapons *can* fall into the hands of the adventurers. They could be issued for a mission by the Brotherhood, or they might be acquired from someone who "isn't going to need it anymore". In the latter case, it is standard procedure to turn said loot into the Brotherhood, but not everyone does so. Odds are, this will eventually come back and bite them, when they end up using an undeclared weapon and *then* have to explain why they had it. To the Brotherhood's credit, unless a weapon is so "out there" that it simply is not acceptable for an agent to keep it, once a weapon is cataloged and investigated (to see if it is in law enforcement databases), there is a chance the adventurer will be able to claim it and keep it. The Brotherhood is to some extent control freaks, but they also understand human nature, trophy collecting and pride.

EABA

Exceptions are when the weapon would draw exceptional interest if found. A weapon that was stolen from police lockup, weapons belonging to the police, weapons with ballistics matching those of unsolved murders, cursed weapons and so on will never be returned, and will often be destroyed.

▼ **Note** - Some weapons, when converted from real-world stats to **EABA** stats, are clearly better than others of the same approximate size, cost and weight. This is usually because one of the weapons did not quite make a breakpoint in some game stat, and the "better" weapon did. Sometimes the disparity is inherent to the technology. A .45 ACP bullet is substantially larger than a 9mm or a .40 S&W. So, a clip of about the same physical size will hold less ammunition. There are also intangibles that may apply to a particular weapon that are only of interest to a small number of players. As an example of one of these, the USP Tactical pistol is threaded for a silencer, and the .45 caliber model can fire subsonic ammunition with less of a damage penalty than the .40 S&W version. So, if a player is a gun geek, they might choose the .45 USP Tactical despite its lower damage, if they wanted a weapon that could easily be silenced. Finding and using the idiosyncrasies of particular weapons within the **Code:Black** universe is up to the players or game-masters who find the effort worth the trouble.

How you deal with any stat disparities is up to you. Usually, adventurers will choose the best weapon they can get for a particular duty. But they may not always have that choice, and the same applies to their foes.

▼ **ADVANCED GEAR** - The Brotherhood has access to a technological base a bit ahead of the rest of the world. This is partially due to the occasional super-genius among them, and partially from loans of bleeding-edge technologies from secret military labs. This means by the way, that super-secret military elite units will have this tech as well. The highest level of tech available on the *commercial* market is Late Atomic Era, and this is all that adventurers of White₁ and White₂ rank are likely to have. White₃, Grey₁ and higher ranks may have occasional access to Post-Atomic Era tech. It might be experimental, cantankerous, insanely dangerous or all of the above, but it is stuff that is a fraction of a tech era ahead of what the rest of the world thinks is possible. A few examples follow. "Rank required" is a guide for the gamemaster as to what adventurers might gain access to particular technologies. This is a general guide. The *actual* deployment of an item will depend on the tactical or strategic situation, the skills of the adventurers, their past record about keeping expensive stuff intact (or secret), and so on. Adventurers might not even know about a piece of advanced tech until they are issued it for the first time (and they cannot really ask for something unless they know it exists to begin with). All of the following gear is Brotherhood (or military) property. None of it is material that adventurers can buy or own. They are loaned the gear as needed. This may be on a near-permanent basis, but it is never theirs to use for personal gain any more than a armor commander can take a tank out for a cruise to impress a date.

Silver weapons: Weres a vulnerable to silver, but it is not quite that simple. The silver such a weapon is made from can come only from a gift made by a blood relative with Good motivation, and no subterfuge involved. That is, the motivation of the giver has to be Good, and actions the recipient takes cannot taint the gift. The best family gifts are those from father to son, or mother to daughter. And all of this has to stay within the bounds of secrecy the Brotherhood asks of its members. It does not have to involve awkward questions. It could be as simple as inheriting the family silverware. The silver does not have to be one hundred percent pure, but it does have to be at least sterling silver quality. Brotherhood researchers are not exactly sure how or why silver transfers and holds the Good vibe, only that it does. Most agents will be asked to acquire such silver before they are promoted to White₂. It is not a requirement for promotion, but the Brotherhood wants to have the ammunition or weapons ready in the event an agent needs it.

In more primitive times, silver would be hammered into grooves etched into a blade. In modern times, a network of lines are machine or laser-etched into a surface, and silver electroplated deeply into the grooves, with the rest of the weapon heavily plated in silver. Silver bullets are slightly undersized bullets that have been dipped in molten silver and then resized to proper diameter. Unless an agent is really lucky, they will not have access to enough silver to use it in body armor.

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

RFID ammo: Some evils are extradimensionally resistant to gunfire and other sorts of mundane damage, but these attacks still penetrate their bodies and often stay lodged there for hours to days (some evils eventually reject foreign matter, others incorporate it). RFID ammo incorporates a small transceiver that gives a radio frequency "chirp" when struck with a particular coded signal. This allows a field agent with a vehicle-mounted or handheld tracking device to locate and track whatever the bullet is embedded in. Handheld trackers are good for a few hundred meters (in optimum conditions), while vehicle-mounted trackers are good for up to a kilometer.

RFID ammo does the same damage as normal ammo, but penetrates actual armor as though its damage was 1d less. Most restricted Brotherhood gear has similar RFID chips in it, with a self-powered timer. As long as the operative resets the timer via a coded keypad, biometric ring or other means appropriate to the device, the device *cannot* be tracked this way. This keeps any enemies with sufficient technical prowess from tracking Brotherhood agents. However, if the gear falls into the hands of someone unaware of the tracking potential, it can be located as soon as the time delay expires.

Brotherhood rank required: White₂

Creditcam: This is a device the size and shape of a thick credit card, and can easily be carried in a wallet. It has an electrochromic coating, solar cells, and a magnetic back with a peel-off adhesive strip. It also has an encrypted wi-fi transmitter/receiver and a TV camera with a wide-angle lens, though its quality is limited by the very thin format of the device.

The idea is that it can be slapped on just about any surface to act as a surveillance device, using sensors in its edges to detect the color of what it is mounted on and changing its color to match. It can send moderate quality sound and low-resolution pictures up to a hundred meters under good conditions (possibly more if the receiver has a directional antenna). It can also be programmed to just take snapshots and sound bytes when it senses motion, for later download, and can act as a repeater for a short range mesh network. A creditcam will electronically self-destruct on command (frying its own circuitry), or if it has not received a proper authorization code after three days.

Brotherhood rank required: White₃

Stavatti TIS-1: A portable, nuclear-powered laser rifle. It uses a polonium₂₁₀ core as a heat source to power a gas dynamic laser. The gas reservoir can be refilled when empty, but the radioactive core is 'on' all the time, and gradually cools over the isotope's half-life of 138 days. The weapon's advantages include being a 4d+2 lethal energy-based attack that avoids the inherent protection of many of the lesser Evils, an effective flight time of zero and an Accuracy of 7, allowing it to hit rapidly moving targets at long range, and no forensically traceable evidence. Disadvantages are that the radioactive core requires as much cooling as a typical house when not in use (a large supply of cold running water will do in a pinch). It can only be safely deployed away from a cooling station for a few hours or it will melt down. If it is breached by damage or meltdown, the radioactive core could poison an area of several city blocks for years if not rapidly contained. Naturally, this weapon is not directly available to the Brotherhood, but can be deployed with US military units acting under Brotherhood direction. Due to the short half-life of the power core, there are only two active power cores in US military stockpiles at any given time. If there is sufficient need, the weapon and a team qualified to use it can be delivered anywhere in the world in twelve hours or less.

Brotherhood rank required: n/a

Adaptive camouflage: This uses a dedicated microprocessor and several color-sensitive sensors in combination with an electro-adaptive fabric. Whatever color and patterning the armor sees on one side, it duplicates on the other side. The net result is that from whatever angle you look at it, it does a pretty good job of matching the color and pattern of what is behind it. It is not perfect by any means, but it is very good. A person wearing a full adaptive camouflage outfit is +4 difficulty to be spotted by normal sight or light amplification devices. It cannot mimic heat signatures and the adaptive circuitry gives no bonus against thermal imagers. It does have an irregular pattern of heat insulating and reflecting panels to break up the wearer's heat signature, which gives it a +1 bonus against thermal imagers.

Brotherhood rank required: White₃

NM-03 ADS: The ADS is a portable 100GHz microwave weapon that works by heating water molecules in the upper millimeter of skin to near-boiling temperatures. The effect is not quite lethal in nature, but it is *extremely* painful to most forms of conventional life and a few of the known Evils. The weapon fires a narrow, cone-shaped beam and the effect felt is clearly directional (victims know which side of their body is getting flash-fried). The damage done is only 0d+1 per turn, but anything other than complete metal armor is useless against the effect. It is meant to be a crowd control weapon. You aim it at a bunch of people, and within a few seconds they all get the idea that somewhere in the *other* direction is a good place to be. It can also be used to non-lethally neutralize groups of people who have fallen under some sort of possession or mental influence. People under the influence of a Legion are doubly affected and Globboths take lethal damage instead of non-lethal damage (their Blessing does not apply vs. this weapon).

Brotherhood rank required: White₅

EMP grenade: This is an explosive charge wrapped around a fully charged superconducting coil. When the explosive is detonated, it compresses the magnetic field of the coil at supersonic speed, generating an intense and highly localized blast of electromagnetic energy. This acts as a 1d+0 lethal explosion, and as a 7d+0 lethal explosion that only affects the internals of electronic devices. These devices get their normal armor value against this attack. Items that are turned off get +1d armor, and military or shielded electronics get an additional +1d armor.

The EMP also fries CD's and DVD's, corrupts hard disk data, fuzzes video tape, blows circuit breakers, destroys electronic ignition systems and erases magnetic stripes on credit cards. There are also a few known Evils that are particularly affected by EMP devices. Legions can be stunned by them, for instance. A piece of electronic gear can take up to half its Hits from such an attack, the rest of its Hits being its physical structure rather than its working bits. An EMP grenade must have its core chilled to liquid nitrogen temperatures *and* be charged up before use. Once ready, it can stay chilled from a small on-board liquid nitrogen supply for up to six hours. After this, the coil discharges and the grenade is useless until prepared again.

Brotherhood rank required: White₄

MST armor: This is a form of body armor that takes advantage of a phenomenon known as "shear thickening". In layman's terms, it is a thick fluid that exhibits properties of a solid when placed under sudden stress. For instance, a blob of silly putty might slowly stretch, but if pulled suddenly, will snap in half. An MST armor is made from a ballistic fabric base with overlapping pockets of a very strong shear thickening mixture. In game terms, an MST body armor has all the benefits of a flexible armor in terms of how well it can be concealed or affects an adventurer's range of motion, and it also counts as a rigid armor against all forms of attack. Punching someone with this armor is more like punching a wall than punching a side of beef. In addition, a ferromagnetic compound is added to the mix, along with sensors that determine the current state of each particular pocket. If a pocket becomes rigid, a current pulse is sent through that pocket within microseconds, further stiffening it through magnetic compression. An MST armor counts as a Post-Atomic Era body armor, and the built-in battery pack is good for several dozen impacts before it needs to be recharged. One problem with the armor is that attacks which do not penetrate it can still rupture individual armor pockets, reducing the overall effectiveness of the armor. Each hit of 2d+0 or more will reduce the overall armor rating by 0d+1 after that hit. The gamemaster will decide if this effect applies in a particular case (like if an adventurer took several hits to the front, and then a hit to the undamaged back of their armor).

Brotherhood rank required: White₃

MC alloys: Magnetic compression superchilled alloys. Special metal alloys that are superchilled to an amorphous glass-like (rather than crystalline) structure, followed by exposure to explosively compressed magnetic fields. The resulting alloy bars are then machined into the desired form by specialized tooling. It is an advanced material that allows for superhard blades and gun barrels and receivers capable of withstanding higher pressures. It allows firearms of conventional design to safely fire ammunition loaded to Early Post-Atomic era levels of damage and inherent armor (usually 0d+2 more than normal). This is the most common method of overcoming the ability of many Evils to resist conventional damage. *Just do more damage!* As a side note, other parts of such a weapon will have to be adjusted or reinforced as well. Recoil springs will need to be very stiff, for instance, making a weapon harder to cock.

▼ **Note** - A Brotherhood specialist with a MC alloy .50 caliber sniper rifle can put the hurt on just about anything. Only the fact that such rifles mass 10+ kilograms and are a meter and a half long keeps them from being commonly used. In the current anti-terrorist climate, lugging one of these around tends to draw unwanted attention. Plus, not all possible encounters give you the luxury of finding a convenient rooftop to take a shot from, and these rifles are not very useful in close-quarters action. So yes, adventurers might get an anti-globboth rifle, but opportunities to use it in that role may be few and far between.

Firing such high-powered ammunition through an Atomic Era weapon will cause it to suffer a malfunction and 1 Hit of damage on a skill roll of 11 or less when using the weapon. Bladed weapons made of MC alloys are counted as armor-piercing and have inherent armor based on Early Post-Atomic era levels of technology (usually 0d+1 more than normal).

Brotherhood rank required: White₄

Degenerate matter - This uses a tungsten-based molecule that undergoes a structural phase change at 1120°C. When cooled to below this, it alters to a form which reduces the size of its crystalization matrix. A touchy and not totally reliable process layers this compound on itself like layers of an onion, each layer being allowed to cool before the next one is applied. The entire process takes place at a microscopic level, and when successful results in a bacteria-sized grain hundreds of layers thick, each layer shrunk over and compressing the layer beneath. At the core of this molecular onion is a tiny kernel of degenerate matter, matter so tightly compressed that its electron shells have collapsed. When made in quantity, you get an extremely dense powder that is incredibly hard. At this time, the material cannot be made in batches of more than a few kilograms, and is available only as powder, but it has been used by the Brotherhood as the main structural component in MST armor (several thousand Credits worth to make a torso-sized piece of armor). A more costly and difficult use is to incorporate it as a powder into most metal alloys or any sort of molded material, allowing them to be counted as a heavy Post-Atomic Era armor. Since the powder is dense enough to settle out of any liquefied mixture, special manufacturing techniques are required to incorporate it effectively.

Brotherhood rank required: White₅

Jumpbike - This is a motorcycle-like vehicle that has an MC-alloy enhanced turbine engine. The power to weight ratio is sufficient that it can take off vertically, and fly at 150kph for about an hour. It steers using swivelling thrust ducts at the front and rear. It can carry a total load of just under 100 kilograms and its vital components are only marginally armored (1d+0). The only safety feature is an emergency parachute, which can only be reliably deployed at altitudes of over 50 meters. A jumpbike can only be operated in a flying mode, and would not be mistaken for a conventional motorcycle under *any* circumstances. Operating one safely requires a special +0d skill, though basic familiarity can be had with a 1S special skill.

Brotherhood rank required: White₄

Point-defense laser: Used on buildings and in designated escort vehicles. It has a short-range radar and a high-intensity pulse laser (2d+2 lethal damage) designed to intercept and detonate explosive projectiles like anti-tank rockets. Often, the rocket is detonated only a few meters from the vehicle. This can be bad for anyone near the vehicle, but it is usually far enough away that conventional blast damage does not harm the vehicle. For a VIP convoy or some other form of escort duty there will typically be one or two vehicles equipped like this. The power supply, laser and other gear will take up the entire half back of a HMMWV or SUV, and the vehicle will have a clearly visible and unusual-looking turret. This turret may also have a medium-caliber machinegun for conventional suppression duties, but this is secondary to the vehicle's main mission. The laser can be used as a direct fire weapon to target suspicious packages or detonate visible mines or other explosive devices. It can also target most flying objects within a few hundred meters. All of these other functions require turning off the point defense function.

Brotherhood rank required: White₆

X-ray specs: This is a fairly involved device that is worn as a harness under normal clothes, with output routed to a wireless heads-up display concealed in a normal pair of glasses. It operates by picking up millimeter-wave microwave energy that is emitted by virtually every object. Think of it as the radio equivalent of heat. The advantage is that as a radio wave, it penetrates non-metal coverings very well. The net effect is that the user can see through clothing and similar forms of obscurement, and anything that would block or interfere with the radio waves is clearly visible as a difference in shading appropriate to its material. Guns, knives, cell phones, hidden transmitters, loose change in a back pocket, body armor and so on are clearly visible. This view is mostly superimposed on what the wearer is facing. The sensors are in the body harness rather than the glasses, so the correspondence is not perfect, and it also means that even if you can see someone, if someone is standing in front of you, that person is blocking your sensors.

Brotherhood rank required: White₅

Stickyfoam gun: This looks like a cross between a submachinegun and a fire extinguisher. It can spray a narrow stream or a wide spray of an extremely sticky and fast-congealing organic foam. Anyone hit by the foam runs the risk of having their body parts stuck together, and anyone crossing an area sprayed with it might get their feet stuck, or fall down and get stuck to the floor. The danger is that a person could easily get smothered or blinded by the stuff. The Brotherhood does not use these devices on people, but they are used against weres, vampires and the like. The weapon has a maximum range of about ten meters in direct fire mode, and only a few meters if used as a spray (covers a 60° cone-shaped area three meters long). As a direct fire weapon it will cause a -1d penalty on the Strength and Agility of the target, with additional hits being an extra -1 to the effect (so four hits would be a -2d penalty). As an area-denial weapon, anyone trying to cross the affected surface suffers a -2d penalty to their Health for determining their base movement rate. If this drops their Health to zero, they are stuck. If they fail an Average(7) Agility task, they fall down and additionally suffer the effects of a direct hit with the weapon. The stickyfoam loses cohesion after a few hours, or can be dissolved in a few minutes with a vinegar-based spray. Creatures like globboths that are inherently slimy are unaffected by stickyfoam.

The Brotherhood also has a small variant of the gun with a less viscous formulation that can be used to glop over door handles, camera lenses or various types of sensors from several meters away.

Brotherhood rank required: White₄

Lasertorch: This appears to be a large, very high power (but legal to own) laser pointer. However, it uses technologies not commercially available to generate output several times the normal amount. This is not going to carve open safes or anything, but it can ignite paper at a distance of tens of meters, permanently scar the imaging chips of television sensors, crack plate glass, blister paint, and of course, permanently blind anyone unlucky enough to have it hit their eyes for more than a millisecond. Among the other things it can do is interface with a Brotherhood phone and broadcast directly to Brotherhood HQ via geosynchronous weather satellites (if the sky is clear). Operating the lasertorch in high power mode requires a coded sequence to be pressed on the on/off switch, otherwise it simply operates at safer power levels.

Brotherhood rank required: White₄

Grease grenade: This looks like a medium-sized aerosol can with a grenade pin and lever on top. Which is exactly what it is. Two seconds after being thrown, it violently discharges its contents in all directions, bathing an area five meters across in a thin layer of an organic superlubricant. On any normally smooth surface (like most interior flooring), it becomes slicker than wet ice, making any sort of controlled movement across it next to impossible. Any action taken while on the affected surface is at a -2d penalty to Agility, and unless an Average(7) Agility roll is made (after the penalty!), you fall down. Adventurers with a skill that might give them an edge in such conditions (skating, snowboarding, etc.) can use their skill roll instead of Agility, noting that their maximum skill roll is reduced because of the Agility penalty. If a person is in the area of effect when the grenade goes off, they are covered in the stuff, and will find it nearly impossible to hold onto any item. Recoil from a gun will make it fly out of your hand, a knife will slip from your grip after a single hit, and so on. On rougher surfaces like sidewalks or pavement, the effect is reduced to a -1d penalty, and on soft or very rough surfaces (dirt, grass) the effect is only a -1 penalty. The superlubricant is volatile but non-flammable. It has a nasty smell in enclosed spaces but is not toxic enough to do more than make someone woozy. It will completely evaporate in a matter of minutes.

Brotherhood rank required: White₃

Wheezer: A slightly-beyond-cutting-edge gas and liquid sampler. About the size of a PDA, but thicker, it does a basic component and elemental analysis of any atmosphere or liquid sample, then connects to a Brotherhood database, which tries to analyse the results and send a conclusion back to the device. The whole process takes between thirty seconds and a minute, accompanied by the repetitive wheezing sound of the internal sampling pumps. A wheezer gives a -4 to the difficulty of many forensics tasks, especially those involving toxins, blood chemistry, or even some emanations or excretions of extra-planar entities.

Brotherhood rank required: White₃

Power boots: There is not a lot of use for these, but they do exist. They look like a combination of combat boots and a leg brace, but most of this can be concealed with ankle-length pants. There is a small piston on each side of the boot, which operates like the pistons of a car engine. When the person jogs, runs or sprints, it operates to push a plate below the sole of the boot, amplifying the wearer's stride. For movement purposes, the wearer's Health is increased by +2d, but at a penalty of -1d to any Agility roll that has to be made *while using the increased movement*. The boots carry sufficient fuel for a few hours of use and are easily refilled from the butane tanks you recharge a cigarette lighter from. The boots have a distinctive sound when in use (described as similar to a shod horse on pavement) and stealthy movement is not possible at speed.

Brotherhood rank required: White₃

▼ **Note** - In game terms, a person with a normal Walk movement of 4 meters (a 3d+0 Health plus a Forte or Running skill) would have a top sprinting speed of 65kph/41mph in these boots, or they could jog at 25kph/16mph (a 3:48 minute mile) for hours before getting exhausted. They could also do a running jump of 16 meters and a vertical jump of 4 meters. A merely average person (Walk move of 2 meters) could do a 5:20 mile for several hours straight.

Shokpack: This is a combination item designed for non- or poorly trained personnel to provide immediate response to catastrophic injury. It is a combination of clotting gels, antibiotics and a number of genetically engineered molecules. In general, if poured on virtually any wound and held in place with a pressure bandage, it will stop any further blood loss and negates -2d of Health penalties for purposes of making shock rolls (**EABA**, page 4.8). Some of the custom drugs in a Shokpack could conceivably be reverse-engineered and modified into street drugs, and normal police field-kit drug tests on a shokpack will get the person carrying it a trip downtown in the back of a squad car.

Brotherhood rank required: White₃

Second sunrise: The colloquial name for a sleep-deferring drug Brotherhood agents sometimes have access to. It allows the user to ignore the need for one day's normal sleep, allowing them to keep normal mental function for about 42 straight hours. After this, one really good night's sleep is necessary to recover. Doses may be taken consecutively, but if the user does not make a Hard(11) Health task, they will begin to hallucinate and exhibit psychotic behavior about midway through that dose. In game terms, the person will start seeing, hearing or smelling the nature of any Evil in everything around them. A manipulative schemer might look like a giant spider at the center of a web, or a embezzler might look like a leech or bloodsucking tick, etc. Increase the most intense Personality Trait the person has by two levels. If this takes an adventurer past eight levels in the Trait, the gamemaster gets full control of the adventurer, and they will wake up a few days later with no memory of what transpired in the interval.

Brotherhood rank required: White₃

Cold fusion fuel cell: Cold fusion is a reality, but is not quite as safe or easy as first thought. The Brotherhood has access to cold fusion devices for long-term power at remote sites. They operate quietly, and generate heat and electricity on very little fuel. However, the fuel is expensive to produce and the core of the fuel cell has to be replaced every several hundred hours of use, making it uneconomical for commercial power generation. However, if you have an expedition going to the middle of nowhere and need to run a lot of power-hungry devices, this is the man-portable device to get the job done.

Brotherhood rank required: White₅

Combat suite: This is a set of gadgets that attach to weapons and body armor. It provides each member of an assault team a real-time interface to everyone else, showing a heads-up display indicating each member's position relative to yours, plus their health and weapon status. Video feed from any given member is accessible to any team member, and all weapons have low-light and thermal TV cameras so they can be aimed around corners. If a team member has +0d skill in "combat suite", they can get a +1d complementary skill bonus in most of their combat or tactical skills, if there are other team members whose data input is useful to the situation. The high rank required reflects the leader of a team so equipped. Individual members or specialists on a team may be as low as White₂, but must be vetted by the team leader and approved for the training. Normal operatives do not generally have access to this gear. It is only for dedicated strike/assault teams.

Brotherhood rank required: White₄

Überinterface: This is a high-speed global satphone link to a Brotherhood quantum computer array, combined with a number of conventional inputs and outputs like sound, video, broadband RF, etc. It provides a -4 to the difficulty of any sort of decryption task or security system deactivation where it could possibly be of use. For instance, if placed up against the door of a safe, it would help you determine the combination of a mechanical lock. If connected to an electronic lock, it could run through the possible combinations. On a computer, it could guess passwords. It could jam a passive infrared motion detector, do a thermal scan of an ATM machine to see the last keys pressed (like a person's access code), and so on. It does not provide any inherent skill, so if a task can't be done with a default Awareness roll, an überinterface is useless. But, if you have at least a +0d skill roll with anything useful, the device can be of great assistance. Naturally, these gadgets are highly regulated, have built-in GPS transponders and remote self-destruct codes. Plus of course, they are useless if there is no access to the quantum super-0computer that does all the analysis.

Brotherhood rank required: White₅

Lightning rod: A UV laser powerful enough to ionize the air for a short distance, combined with a powerful electric discharge fed down that path. A wireless electrical stunner. It is effective against people and a number of Evils normally immune to physical attacks, but it is limited by a short range and bulky power supply. The weapon loses 1d+0 of effect for each 0d+1 of armor at the location struck, and loses 0d+1 damage for each range level past 8 meters.

Brotherhood rank required: White₄

NR-9: An upgraded version of the NR-7 research submersible, the world's smallest nuclear submarine. The NR-9 is stealthy if not particularly fast, has more or less unlimited range and underwater endurance limited only by food supply and life-support consumables. It can carry a dozen passengers (or half a dozen and a lot of gear) in addition to the three person crew. It has a diver airlock, decompression chamber, and small but serviceable facilities for most needs. It is extremely efficient and compact, but not for the claustrophobic or anyone obsessed with personal privacy.

The NR-9 is a US Navy vessel. The government gives the Brotherhood a lot of leeway, but letting them own their own nuclear-powered sub is past that line. Permission to use the NR-9 can be requested by Brotherhood higher-ups on short notice. The captain and crew have the unique qualifications of being career Navy personnel with high security clearances, oceanographic skills, and just enough Sight to understand that there is some really weird crap out there. They know about the Brotherhood in concept and through experience in dealing with them, but they are Navy first and foremost. Brotherhood passengers can direct a mission in the NR-9, but the captain can (and will) refuse any directives that would put the vessel directly in harm's way.

Brotherhood rank required: n/a

▼ **Note** - The NR-9 is modelled after a *real-world* sub, the nuclear-powered NR-7 research submersible. There is no NR-8 in the **Code:Black** gameworld. Or, we should say, there was an NR-8, but it went missing with all hands about a decade ago on a mission whose details are still shrouded in mystery...

Most of these items have embedded radio-frequency ID tags, similar to the technology used now, but on different frequencies and protocols. Basically, unless deliberately shielded, the Brotherhood can drive a tracking van around a city-sized area and pinpoint the location of any of these devices to within a few meters in a matter of hours. So, in the event one is lost, stolen or held by the authorities, appropriate measures can be taken to recover it before anyone else gets too close a look at it. In some cases, it is easier to just remotely trigger a self-destruct on the item.

Riot suit - Normal body armor covers the most vital areas of the body against things like gunfire. The riot suit tries to cover about everything else. It counts as 2d+0 armor against cutting, piercing or blunt attacks to the front of the upper and lower legs and upper and lower arms. Remember that most Evil creatures with natural attacks will reduce mundane protection by 1d, meaning that this armor will only give 1d+0 protection against something like a vampire, were or globboth. This armor is form fitted to be less detectable under normal clothing, but an Awareness task at +6 difficulty (or a pat-down search) will spot it.

Riot suits can be custom ordered by any agent of sufficient clearance and are paid for out of personal funds.

Advanced riot suit - Like a normal riot suit, but with a thin layer of shear-thickening armor instead of high-strength plastic. The protection provided is increased, but the cost is markedly greater.

Riot shield - This is a large and fairly heavy shield with an electrical grid that can be used as a bash attack.

ATOMIC ERA RANGED WEAPONS

NAME	USES	ACCURACY	DAMAGE	SHOTS HELD	WEIGHT	COST	ARMOR	HITS	NOTES
NAA revolver ⁽⁺⁷⁾	.22 Mag.	-	1d+0 ^P	5 internal	.2kg(.0)	200Cr	1d+1	1	Reliable, slow
Kel-Tec P32 ⁽⁺⁶⁾	7.65mm ACP	-	1d+1	7 clip	.3kg(.1)	250Cr	1d+1	2	Unreliable
Seecamp 380 ⁽⁺⁶⁾	9mm short	0	1d+1	6 clip	.4kg(.1)	850Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
Glock 36 ⁽⁺⁵⁾	.45ACP	0	1d+2 ^S	6 clip	.8kg(.2)	550Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
S&W Airlite 360PD Sc ⁽⁺⁵⁾	.357 Mag.	0	2d+1	5 internal	.4kg(.1)	650Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
FN Five-sevenN ⁽⁺⁴⁾	5.7mm FN	1	2d+1 ^P	20 clip	.8kg(.2)	850Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
Glock 17 ⁽⁺⁴⁾	9mm	1	2d+1	17 clip	.9kg(.3)	550Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
Glock 18C ⁽⁺⁴⁾	9mm	1	2d+1	19 clip	.9kg(.3)	1000Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable, autofire
Glock 19 ⁽⁺⁴⁾	9mm	1	2d+0	15 clip	.8kg(.3)	550Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
Glock 22 ⁽⁺⁴⁾	.40 S&W	1	2d+1	17 clip	1.0kg(.3)	500Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
Glock 30 ⁽⁺⁴⁾	.45ACP	1	2d+0 ^S	10 clip	1.0kg(.3)	550Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
Glock 31 ⁽⁺⁴⁾	.357 Sig.	1	2d+2	15 clip	1.0kg(.3)	550Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
H&K USP ⁽⁺⁴⁾	9mm	1	2d+1	15 clip	1.0kg(.3)	800Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
H&K USP Tactical ⁽⁺⁴⁾	.40 S&W	1	2d+1	13 clip	1.1kg(.3)	800Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
H&K USP Tactical ⁽⁺⁴⁾	.45 ACP	1	2d+0 ^S	12 clip	1.1kg(.3)	800Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
S&W Airlite 386 ⁽⁺⁴⁾	.357 Mag.	1	2d+2	7 internal	.6kg(.1)	800Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
Walther P99 ⁽⁺⁴⁾	.40 S&W	1	2d+2	12 clip	.9kg(.2)	550Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable
Desert Eagle .357 ⁽⁺³⁾	.357 Mag.	2	2d+2	9 clip	1.9kg(.3)	1200Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable
Desert Eagle .44 ⁽⁺³⁾	.44 Mag.	2	3d+1	8 clip	2.0kg(.3)	1200Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable
S&W Model 29 ⁽⁺³⁾	.44 Magnum	2	3d+1	6 internal	1.5kg(.2)	750Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable
Ruger Redhawk ⁽⁺³⁾	.454 Casull	2	3d+2	6 internal	1.7kg(.2)	850Cr	2d+0	3	Reliable
S&W Model 500 ⁽⁺³⁾	.50 S&W	2	4d+0	5 internal	2.2kg(.2)	900Cr	2d+0	3	Reliable
H&K MP5K ⁽⁺³⁾	9mm	1	2d+1	15 clip	2.3kg(.3)	1800Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable, autoburst
H&K MP5 ⁽⁺²⁾	9mm	2	2d+2	30 clip	3.1kg(.5)	1600Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable, autoburst
H&K MP7A1 ⁽⁺³⁾	4.6mm	2	2d+2 ^P	40 clip	2.0kg(.2)	1000Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable, autofire
FN P90 ⁽⁺²⁾	5.7mm FN	2	3d+0 ^P	50 clip	3.0kg(.5)	2100Cr	1d+1	2	Reliable, autofire
M4A1 carbine ⁽⁺²⁾	5.56mm NATO	3	4d+0 ^P	30 clip	3.0kg(.4)	1000Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable, autofire
M16A4 ⁽⁺²⁾	5.56mm NATO	3	4d+1 ^P	30 clip	4.0kg(.4)	1000Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable, autofire
Steyr AUG A3 ⁽⁺²⁾	5.56mm NATO	3	4d+1 ^P	42 clip	4.2kg(.5)	2000Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable, autofire
FN FS2000 ⁽⁺²⁾	5.56mm NATO	3	4d+1 ^P	30 clip	3.8kg(.4)	2000Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable, autofire
Enfield L85A2 ⁽⁺²⁾	5.56mm NATO	3	4d+1 ^P	30 clip	5.0kg(.4)	1500Cr	2d+0	4	Reliable, autofire
M8 SAR prototype ⁽⁺¹⁾	5.56mm NATO	4	4d+1 ^P	100 drum	5.5kg(1.0)	2500Cr	1d+2	4	Reliable, autofire
QBZ-95 ⁽⁺²⁾	5.8mm PRC	3	4d+1 ^P	30 clip	3.7kg(.4)	600Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable, autofire
AK-47 ⁽⁺²⁾	7.62mm Sov.	2	4d+1	30 clip	4.3kg(.6)	400Cr	2d+0	4	Reliable, autofire
M24 SWS ⁽⁺¹⁾	7.62mm NATO	6	4d+2	5 clip	5.8kg(.2)	2000Cr	2d+0	4	Reliable, slow
H&K G3A4 ⁽⁺¹⁾	7.62mm NATO	4	4d+2	20 clip	4.8kg(.4)	2000Cr	2d+0	4	Reliable, autofire
Barrett M468 ⁽⁺²⁾	6.8mm SPC	4	4d+2	28 clip	3.8kg(.5)	2500Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable, autofire
Barrett Model 82A2 ⁽⁺⁰⁾	12.7mm NATO	4	6d+1	10 clip	13.5kg(1.0)	5000Cr	2d+0	5	Reliable, slow
Steyr AMR ⁽⁻¹⁾	15.2mm	7	7d+2 ^P	5 clip	19kg(1.0)	15KCr	2d+0	6	Reliable, slow
Sawed-off shotgun ⁽⁺³⁾	12 gauge	0	3d+0 ^S	2 internal	1.4kg(.1)	200Cr	1d+2	2	Reliable
Benelli M4 ⁽⁺²⁾	12 gauge	2	3d+2 ^S	6 internal	4.0kg(.2)	500Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable, slow
Remington 870 MCS ⁽⁺²⁾	12 gauge	2	3d+2 ^S	8 internal	3.8kg(.3)	600Cr	1d+2	3	Reliable, slow
Taser X26 ⁽⁺⁵⁾	5mm dart	-	1d+2	1 internal	.2kg(.1)	1000Cr	1d+0	2	Reliable, 5m range
Taser MX ⁽⁺⁴⁾	5mm dart	-	2d+2	1 internal	.5kg(.1)	800Cr	1d+0	2	Reliable, 11m range
Taser B26 ⁽⁺³⁾	5mm dart	-	2d+2	4 internal	1.0kg(.4)	1200Cr	1d+0	2	Reliable, 11m range
MM-1 launcher ⁽⁻¹⁾	40mm grenade	1	varies	12 internal	8.7kg(3.0)	2500Cr	1d+2	4	See grenade notes
M136/AT4 ⁽⁺⁰⁾	84mm rocket	2	11d+2 & 5d+2 explosion	1 internal	6.7kg	3000Cr	1d+1	3	Armor-piercing
RPG-7V ⁽⁺⁰⁾	93mm rocket	2	12d+2 & 6d+2 explosion	1 internal	9.5kg(2.6)	2000Cr	1d+1	4	Armor-piercing

POST-ATOMIC ERA WEAPONS

NAME	USES	ACCURACY	DAMAGE	SHOTS HELD	WEIGHT	COST	ARMOR	HITS	NOTES
Lightning Rod ⁽⁺⁰⁾	electricity	3	5d+2	10 clip	11kg(3.0)	11KCr	2d+0	5	see p.7.16
Stavatti TIS-1 ⁽⁺⁾	electricity	7	4d+2 ^P	400 internal	6.0kg	200KCr	3d+2	4	autofire, see p.7.10
NM-03 ADS ⁽⁺⁾	electricity	1	0d+1	≈	100kg	20KCr	2d+0	12	see p.7.11

ATOMIC ERA MELEE WEAPONS

NAME	DAMAGE	DAMAGE TYPE	LENGTH	WEIGHT	COST	ARMOR	HITS	NOTES
Brass knuckles ⁽⁺⁶⁾	punch+1	half-lethal	short	.3kg	20Cr	1d+1	2	balanced
Small knife ⁽⁺⁶⁾	punch-1	lethal	short	.2kg	30Cr	1d+2	2	balanced
Large knife ⁽⁺⁵⁾	punch+0	lethal	short	.3kg	50Cr	1d+2	2	balanced
Hand axe ⁽⁺³⁾	punch+1	lethal	short	.8kg	30Cr	1d+1	2	unbalanced
Lumber axe ⁽⁺¹⁾	punch+3	lethal	long	2.5kg	50Cr	1d+1	4	unbalanced, uses two hands
Machete ⁽⁺²⁾	punch+1	lethal	medium	1.0kg	40Cr	1d+2	3	balanced
Sword cane ⁽⁺¹⁾	punch+1	lethal	long	.9kg	120Cr	1d+2	2	balanced
Longsword ⁽⁺¹⁾	punch+2	lethal	long	1.3kg	170Cr	1d+2	3	balanced
Truncheon ⁽⁺³⁾	punch+0	half-lethal	short	.3kg	20Cr	1d+1	2	balanced
Hvy. walking stick ⁽⁺¹⁾	punch+2	half-lethal	long	1.0kg	50Cr	1d+1	3	unbalanced

PRIMITIVE ERA OTHER WEAPONS

NAME	DAMAGE	DAMAGE TYPE	LENGTH	WEIGHT	COST	ARMOR	HITS	NOTES
Thrown rock	punch+0	half-lethal	-	.5kg	0Cr	1d+1	1	Accuracy of 0
Thrown hand axe	punch+1d	lethal	-	2.0kg	250Cr	3d+0	4	Accuracy of 0

ATOMIC ERA OTHER WEAPONS

NAME	DAMAGE	DAMAGE TYPE	LENGTH	WEIGHT	COST	ARMOR	HITS	NOTES
Frag grenade ⁽⁺⁵⁾	3d+2	lethal explosion	-	.4kg	10Cr	1d+0	1	Reliable, 4 turn delay
Stun grenade ⁽⁺⁵⁾	4d+1	non-lethal explosion	-	.4kg	20Cr	1d+0	1	Reliable, 4 turn delay
WP grenade ⁽⁺⁵⁾	1d+1	lethal area	-	.3kg	50Cr	1d+0	1	Reliable, 4 turn delay
Irritant grenade ⁽⁺⁵⁾	1d+0	non-lethal area	-	.4kg	50Cr	1d+0	1	Reliable, 4 turn delay
Smoke grenade ⁽⁺⁵⁾	-	obscurement	-	.3kg	10Cr	1d+0	1	Reliable, 4 turn delay
Grease grenade ⁽⁺⁵⁾	-	special	-	.4kg	50Cr	1d+0	1	Reliable, 4 turn delay
EMP grenade ⁽⁺⁴⁾	-	special	-	.7kg	250Cr	1d+0	1	Reliable, 4 turn delay
Brick of plastic expl. ⁽⁺⁵⁾	4d+0	half-lethal explosion	-	.5kg	10Cr	1d+0	2	Reliable, see EABA page 5.5

ATOMIC ERA PERSONAL ARMOR

NAME	ARMOR	COVERS	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Level 2 bulletproof vest ⁽⁺⁶⁾	2d+2	torso	1.6kg	250Cr	concealable, covers loc. 10-11
Level 3 bulletproof vest ⁽⁺⁵⁾	3d+1	torso	2.7kg	400Cr	concealable, covers loc. 9-11
Level 4 bulletproof vest ⁽⁺⁰⁾	4d+2	torso	10.0kg	1250Cr	not conceal., hardened, covers loc. 9-12
Riot suit ⁽⁻²⁾	3d+2	torso	5.3kg	1250Cr	not concealable, not appropriate vs. gunfire, covers loc. 5-6, 9-14
Riot shield ⁽⁻²⁾	2d+2	-	2.0kg	400Cr	+4 on blocks, transparent
Shin guards ⁽⁺⁷⁾	3d+0	legs	.6kg	200Cr	concealable, not appropriate vs. gunfire, covers loc. 15-16
Forearm guards ⁽⁺⁷⁾	3d+0	arms	.4kg	125Cr	concealable, not appropriate vs. gunfire, covers loc. 8

POST-ATOMIC ERA PERS. ARMOR

NAME	ARMOR	COVERS	WEIGHT	COST	NOTES
Grade 1 MST vest ⁽⁺⁶⁾	3d+2	torso	2.2kg	2000Cr	concealable, covers loc. 9-11
Grade 2 MST vest ⁽⁺⁵⁾	5d+0	torso	6.3kg	4000Cr	not concealable, covers loc. 9-12
Improved riot suit ⁽⁻¹⁾	3d+2	torso	3.2kg	2000Cr	not concealable, not appropriate vs. gunfire, covers loc. 5-6, 9-14

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Code:Black

Blacksburg Tactical Research Center

Who am I? _____
 What am I? _____
 Why am I? _____

Corruption

AGILITY
skill

WILL
skill

STRENGTH
skill

HEALTH
skill

FATE
skill

AWARENESS
skill

d+

+1d

-1d

dodge

level	level	level	level
1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3
4	4	4	4
5	5	5	5
6	6	6	6
7	7	7	7
8	8	8	8
9	9	9	9
10	10	10	10
11	11	11	11
12	12	12	12
13	13	13	13
14	14	14	14
15	15	15	15

d+

+1d

-1d

Hits

1 -0d

2

3

4

5 -1d

6

7

8

9 -2d

10

11

12

13 -3d

14

15

16

17 -4d

18

19

20

21 -5d

22

23

24

Traits

	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S
	A/ S

Gear

Armor

+4 arms **d+** 7-8

+2 body **d+** 9-12

+2 legs **d+** 13-18

Experience

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August 1, 2004

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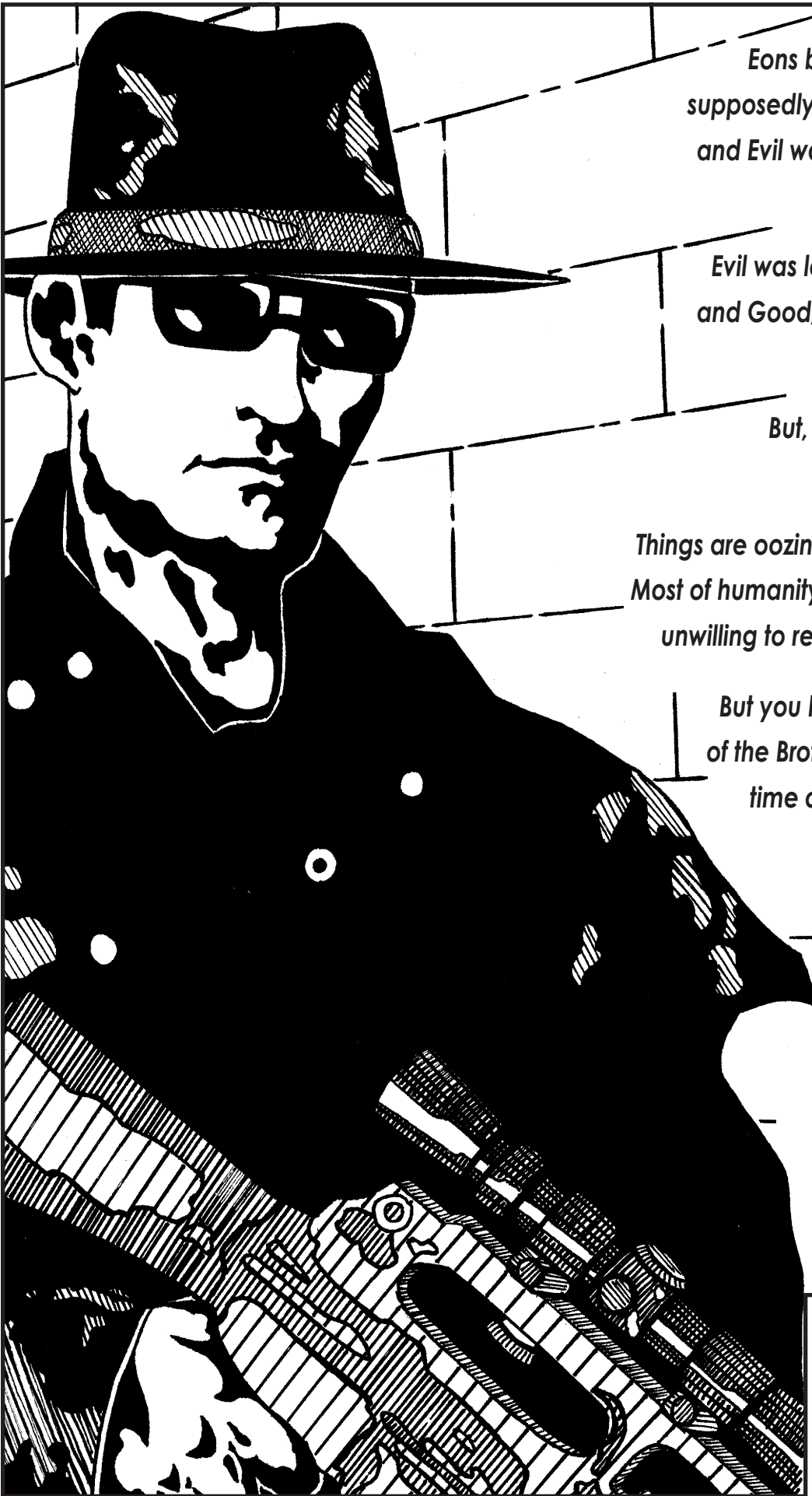
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Eons before recorded history, the supposedly final battle between Good and Evil was fought. Evil made its final stand here...and lost.

Evil was locked away for all eternity, and Good, its work done, vanished to dimensions unknown.

But, eternity is a very long time, and nothing lasts forever.

Things are oozing out of their eternal Prison. Most of humanity is Blind to them, unable or unwilling to recognize the Evil in its midst.

But you have the Sight. You are part of the Brotherhood, fighting since the time of Gilgamesh to keep Evil in its Prison.

A war without end, fought in secret in broad daylight.

It is your penance, your burden. For you, with your trace of Good, were the first to escape the Prison, and it is now your job to keep everyone else in...

US\$22.00



BTRC 6110 ISBN 0-943891-53-1