

for EABA™

# Brecken Ridge

a campaign location for Code:Black



 **BTRC**

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## **Brecken Ridge™** v1.0

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*I met a girl who sang the blues,  
and I asked her for some happy news.  
But she just smiled and turned away...  
I went down to the sacred store,  
where I'd heard the music years before.  
But the man there said the music wouldn't play.  
And in the streets, the children screamed,  
the lovers cried and the poets dreamed.  
But not a word was spoken,  
the church bells all were broken.  
And the three men I admire most,  
the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost,  
They caught the last train for the coast,  
the day the music died...*

- Don McLean, **American Pie**

▼ **INTRODUCTION - Brecken Ridge** is a campaign location for **Code:Black**, a place of unique background and character that can be the focus of a single adventure, or a place of recurring interest.

In 1982CE, a heavy earthmover uncovered the tip of what would turn out to be a crashed ship from the closing days of the supposed final conflict between Good and Evil. After untold millennia of burial, the ship was merely wreckage, nearly devoid of anything still working or usable, but it was a ship built and equipped to assist in the vilest of sorceries. High-tech sacrificial altars, AI's specializing in torture, reality-ripping weapons powered by the eternal horror of souls torn apart on the horizons of black holes, etc. The wreckage was *not* Evil, but it was *definitely* cursed, and a weak spot in the Prison. Buried under millions of tons of sandstone, Evils in the Prison had nothing to push through this weak spot that could escape the rocky tomb. So, it was largely ignored. Over the millennia, erosion slowly ate away at the sandstone covering the ship, until only a few tens of meters remained, a hummock of rock on the banks of the Potomac River near the center of Brecken Ridge. A mound of stone unnamed on the city maps, but known to some of the older folks as the Witch's Knuckle. And then someone decided they wanted to put a building there...

Excavation of the site progressed without incident at first. Controlled blasting sheared away the old stone, and earthmovers hauled away the debris. Until the dust settled after one blast to reveal something clearly of *artificial* origin. It was unusual, given where it was found, but workers had dealt with buried storage tanks before, and aside from its dark bronze iridescence, there was no indication the rounded metallic surface they had uncovered was anything more than a forgotten storage tank from an old gas station. The only feature of note was a door-shaped hatch, visible only by a fine layer of silt that had over the millennia, penetrated the hairline seam between the hatch and the hull.

Then one of the workers laid a hand on the hatch control. Eons-old powercells gave up the last of their energy and crumbled into powder. With a tortured snap of crystallized metal, the locking bolts fractured, and the hatch opened a crack. Pry bars did the rest.

No one knows exactly what the workers found that day. Some, even in the Brotherhood, think this is for the best. Whatever it was, the Blind did not see it unless they were forced to. And once they were forced to, they were in thrall to whatever was emanating from the wreckage.

It was a little more than two weeks before the Brotherhood got the first inkling that something was wrong in Brecken Ridge. Shipments of all sorts from the town had slowed noticeably, and many people who were visiting the town for various reasons were not returning. From their reports, the first Brotherhood team found no evidence of anything wrong for several days. The last phoned in report was cut off mid-sentence, along with all phone service to the area. It was later found out that two of the agents were arrested by the local police on fabricated charges, and then never heard from again. The other two agents simply disappeared, though interviews with the survivors indicated there was a lot of "fireworks" being set off that night, and an odd glow to the sky. There are no Sighted accounts of what transpired, and no trace of the agents was ever found.

Aerial photographs that were recovered from the scattered wreckage of a Brotherhood-piloted recon plane showed no sign of the alien ship, but did show several hectares of interlocked hexagonal ziggurats where none should have been. The last frame of usable film in the camera was a clear image of a glittering sacrificial altar, and something that was once human holding a bloody heart in the air and staring straight at a camera lens some tens of kilometers away. Yet not more than a hundred meters away, people seemed to be going about their normal lives, utterly Blind to what was going on nearby.

It took three more days for the Brotherhood to gather sufficient personnel and equipment to consider dealing with the threat, including US government assistance in the form of loitering fighter planes equipped with laser-homing missiles and an elite squad of Sighted Special Forces.

By the time the Brotherhood strike force entered Brecken Ridge, whatever had originally manifested there had summoned or become a demigod. A quarter of the population of the town was missing (and never found), over a thousand were in complete thrall to Evil, and the rest were suffering various forms of insanity. The demigod's assumption that sorcery was the greatest threat to it proved to be its undoing, as forceful application of technology was sufficient to at least temporarily incapacitate it. The struggle then was to fend off the Evil hordes in its thrall while transporting the incapacitated demigod to its own altar, placing an Elder Seal upon its bound form and escaping the implosion of reality that sucked the demigod back into the Prison and sealed the breach.

And for the most part, it worked out that way. *For the most part.* The demigod, the ziggurats, the altar, even the alien ship, all pulled into the Prison. But, *something else* happened. Elder Seals are not known to malfunction, but there is always a first time. The energies that were supposed to simply seal the breach continued to pour forth. Perhaps there was some captive singularity in the ancient alien wreckage that distorted the flow of time in the Elder Seal's effect. Maybe the Evil demigod did something desperate that was able to affect the functioning of the Seal.

The result is something like a pair of magnets. One pulls anything with Sight towards it, the other pushes anything without Sight away from it. The US government has contingency plans to label still-hazardous Evil areas as toxic waste dumps to keep people out, but in this case it was unneeded and in fact, it was hard to even guard the place. The explanation given to the Blind for what happened was a leak of toxic chemicals from a WWII era munitions factory. This was supposed to explain the erratic behavior of the populace, the explosions, the hallucinations, the declaration of part of town as a toxic hazard, the "special teams" to remove "unexploded munitions" and so on. It was a cover story that only the Blind could believe. *And they did.*

The residents of Brecken Ridge, over the course of the following weeks and months, gradually and for reasons plausible only to themselves, left town. Businesses closed, homes became vacant, streets emptied. On the other hand, those with Sight who wandered up the road to Brecken Ridge found themselves edging towards an abandoned sand quarry, moving towards and eventually vanishing into a glow that only the Sighted could see. A few Brotherhood agents sent into Brecken Ridge were also lost.

The only people who ended up immune to the effect were those with Sight within the radius of effect when the Elder Seal activated. This was a handful of Brotherhood agents and those surviving Evil humans who had developed the Sight from their proximity to the demigod. Oddly enough, those individuals are not pulled towards the Elder Seal, but are repelled from the outside world. Anytime they try to leave, they find themselves walking or driving back into town.

A few of the surviving agents agreed to be the caretakers and guardians of Brecken Ridge. The rest ended up being drugged and reassigned very far away, far enough that they are "surrounded" by the outside world and feel no push or pull to speak of.

In 1996CE, a Brotherhood sorcerer investigating the Brecken Ridge phenomenon was able to come up with a sorcery that made a talisman able to ward against the effect for weeks at a time, which allowed other agents to visit Brecken Ridge with minimal risk of being sucked into some other dimension.

▼ **LOCATION** - Brecken Ridge was formerly accessed from an exit off US Route 219, but that exit is now blocked by a guardrail and has clearly not been travelled in decades. People drive by the blocked road every day, and have not the least curiosity about where it goes. Despite, or perhaps because of its unuse, the road is still in excellent condition, though weeds sprout here and there along the margins of the pavement.

The only reliable access to Brecken Ridge is from the *next* exit down Route 219, via an unremarkable dirt road that cuts through a patch of woods and connects to the two-lane rural route from the previous exit. There are other rural roads that connect to Brecken Ridge from various other small communities, but they have been blocked off by gravel berms, and of course, the Blind population doesn't travel that direction nor even wonder why they aren't curious about what lies in that direction.

In 1982CE, there were no CD databases of road maps, no Internet mapping services, and the full constellation of GPS satellites was nearly a decade from being complete. Brecken Ridge existed only on paper maps, and as these were updated, Brecken Ridge disappeared from them, and as these databases were used for digital mapping, Brecken Ridge dropped off the face of the Earth. Only in libraries with physical maps from before 1984 will Brecken Ridge be shown. It cannot be found by Internet search or map tools, it has no zip code, no phone exchange. Its only online reference is a fleeting trace among those who make a hobby of visiting ghost towns, and even among these people, none have ever actually been to Brecken Ridge. If you know the map coordinates, you can get satellite photos of the area, but no name is associated with the empty town that shows up on your screen. And if you do not have the Sight, you tend to forget about the location anyway...

With no former address in any database, the former residents of Brecken Ridge are just as hard to track down. They are out there to be sure, but it is difficult to tell that they ever lived in Brecken Ridge just from looking at the publically available records.

Brecken Ridge, with a former population of nearly twenty thousand and a thriving sand and sandstone industry, is now a ghost town with less than a dozen permanent residents. The city has no central utilities of any kind, no power, no phone service, no running water, no sewer system. The few residents manage off of solar power or windmills, live in houses that have wells and septic fields, and keep in touch with each other via radio.

The Brotherhood has installed a pair of solar-powered, encrypted cell-phone boosters, aimed towards two different cell towers well outside the Brecken Ridge area. This gives local Brotherhood operatives a secure, redundant communication line to the outside world. Once a month, a Brotherhood truck brings in food, fuel and other supplies, both for the Brotherhood agents here, and any of the other residents that request them. The Brotherhood would rather have the non-agents gone, and has repeatedly arranged to buy them out and provide "counseling" to help them adjust to life elsewhere (i.e drugging them senseless and moving them very far away), but over the years only one resident has taken them up on it. The supply truck is ostensibly a "government relief effort", but by now all the remaining residents know that something else is going on, but honestly, they don't really care. As a subtle encouragement to get people to leave, only the most basic of supplies are provided to the non-agent residents. No mail or package deliveries, no luxuries, just the necessities of survival. The non-agents who still cling here have learned to do without, and are doggedly proud of their refusal to give up on the town.

**The Zones of Brecken Ridge** - Brecken Ridge is currently divided into three zones on Brotherhood maps. The outermost zone is the Green Zone. It has no easily defined outer edge, but the inner edge is about a kilometer from the center of town and the outer edge is somewhere around ten kilometers from the center of town. Generally, any spot that can see Brecken Ridge is considered to be at least in the Green zone. The Yellow zone runs from the inner border of the Green zone to about a hundred meters from the part of town where Witch's Knuckle once stood. It covers the entire downtown area and a few of the residential neighborhoods. The Red zone is everything inside the inner border of the Yellow zone, and is easily noted by a swath of bulldozed buildings, a four-meter high chainlink fence, rolls of concertina wire on either side of this fence, and anti-vehicle cement pyramids a meter tall and two meters apart outside the concertina wire. The Red zone has a single reinforced gate large enough for a vehicle, and a person-sized door set into this gate. There are no guards, but numerous sensors facing in and out of the area. There are three obvious but non-descript armored turrets inside the perimeter, with clear, overlapping lines of fire to just about every area in the Red zone.



▼ **Note** - There is no map provided for Brecken Ridge. You can set it up to be any way you like, and place it anywhere in the country you want. The real Brecken Ridge is (or was) an industrial town of about 20,000 people, with most of the industry set on one side of a small river, most of the business district along the other side, with most of the residences on the business side, on the slopes of the low mountains that surround the river valley. The town was unplanned, and the roads and streets follow the topography and property lines more than any sort of regular grid. The main road and an overgrown rail line exit Brecken Ridge to the north along the steep slopes of the valley the river winds through. Visualize some iron truss bridges crossing the river, rusty and with flaking green paint, mostly overgrown roads, architecture mostly from the 1930's, wood and brick houses with little yards and big porches, a main street with crumbling brick facades and long-closed mom-and-pop stores, and imposing old small-town banks with stone walls and wrought iron gratings on the windows. Toss in some abandoned cars from the early 1980's, add the general decay of decades of abandonment and the occasional crater or still-visible signs of the final combat, and you can visualize Brecken Ridge far better than you could with a plain map with some coencentric rings on it.

**The Brecken Ridge effect** - The overall effect, as mentioned earlier, is to push those without Sight away from the area, and to draw those with it to the center of the area (and their doom). It is a subtle effect, one to which the victim is blind. You might be walking, thinking about something else, and before you realize it, you're several blocks from where you wanted to be.

In general, each time you make any sort of excursion in Brecken Ridge, and at least once per day, if you have Sight, you have to make a Will task against a difficulty of the numerical value of your Fate, modified by any Personality that might keep you where you are or drive you in one direction or the other. Failing the task means you move one zone closer or one zone further away before you realize what has happened. This can even happen while you are asleep (sleepwalking). In the Green zone, your Will is counted as normal, in the Yellow zone it is reduced by 2, and in the Red zone it is reduced by 4.

**EXAMPLE:** A normal vampire has a Will of  $2d+2$  and a Fate of  $2d+0$  (or 6). In the Green zone, they get a roll of  $2d+2$  to match or beat a 6, in the Yellow zone they get a roll of  $2d+0$  to match or beat a 6, and in the Red zone they get a  $1d+1$  to match or beat a 6.

Failing the roll in the Yellow zone means you bump up against the barrier there. Evil creatures can for the most part, tear their way through these barriers with little problem. For instance, the vampire in the previous example gets to increase his Strength by his Fate if trying to tear at the concertina wire (Evil creatures add their Fate to Strength when damaging inanimate objects), and the damage the barbs do is likely negated by his  $-1d$  effect on physical attacks. The fence does however, do a good job of delaying those who are *not* Evil. Under compulsion or not, if you are tangled up in the concertina wire, you're not going anywhere...

Failing the roll in the Red zone means you are gone. *Poof!* You wander into a discontinuity in the fabric of the universe and are gone forever. If you are Good, hopefully you go to a better place. If you are Evil, the Brotherhood is fairly certain you are headed back to the Prison.

If you do not have Sight, the rolls are similar, except Fate is  $+1d$ . So a person with a Fate of  $0d+2$  would be counted as  $1d+2$  (or 5) for purposes of their rolls. If the roll is failed, you find yourself one zone *further* away. If you were in the Green zone to begin with, you find yourself somewhere outside of town. The ties of home, hearth and family make it easier for people to stay, but the constant pressure will over time cause families to simply decide they would just be happier living elsewhere, even if they can't put a finger on why this is.

The Brotherhood has long been interested in investigating the effect, though this is dangerous to do at close range for obvious reasons. Within the Red zone, presumably the pressure to move in closer escalates to a fever pitch the closer you get to the center. The standard operating procedure for researchers wishing to observe the discontinuity close up is to have an armored electrical cable locked around their waist, with the other end hooked to a winch. If the researcher fails to follow orders to return or move away, fifty thousand volts is sent through the cable, and the incapacitated researcher is unceremoniously winched back through the gate. Researchers wishing close up access are *required* to be zapped into a stupor, just so they know exactly what they are in for if they disobey their handler. The handler will be one of the Brotherhood agents who is living in Brecken Ridge, and the handler usually has a backup.

The talismans the Brotherhood has whipped up for visiting agents simply provide a +1d boost to Will for purposes of resisting the effect. These are good for a few weeks before they wear out. They are normally incorporated into a GPS transponder and superglued around the wrist of the visitor. The GPS transponder automatically alerts Bill Trammel and the other agents in town if the wearer gets within two hundred meters of the center of the effect, and automatically starts shooting 0d+1 non-lethal jolts into the person's wrist if this happens. This particular effect can be programmed out via a keypad on the unit if the visitor is going to need closer access.

**The Military** - You did not think that the US government was going to leave the Brotherhood to monitor this unique situation all by itself? The US government has its own observation posts and sensor networks around Brecken Ridge, in the guise of several "environmental quality monitors" and "automated weather stations", whose output is routed to a manned station a safe distance outside the Green zone. The government *would* like to simply occupy the place in force. It tried that in the first year after the troubles, but the rate of psych problems and desertions was staggering, even among people hand-picked for the job.

This is a case where the Brotherhood and the government clearly do not see eye to eye. The Brotherhood does not want anyone spying on its activities, simply because it does not want to lose the bargaining chip of its unique abilities, abilities that might be copied or compromised through repetitive high tech surveillance of its operations and personnel. Brotherhood members have *carte blanche* from the Brotherhood when it comes to disabling any form of surveillance of their activities. This isn't to say that individual agents won't get harassed or arrested for it, but the Brotherhood will bring all the resources it has to bear to defend those agents and *forcefully* make it known that the Brotherhood *demand*s at least the same level of privacy afforded anyone else. So, the Brotherhood and the US government had a bit of a falling out for several years, the Brotherhood sabotaging the sensors, and the government interdicting supplies into Brecken Ridge. Eventually, a compromise was reached, with a limited number of sensors and a limited coverage area, more than the Brotherhood would have liked, and less than the government would have liked. As a result, there *are* coverage gaps, notably for personal privacy (resident's homes), sensitive areas (around the Red zone), and some spots the Brotherhood chose on a purely arbitrary basis (just to confuse the issue), but the government still has a decent idea of the overall picture in town.

The Brotherhood assumes that the area is also under the eye of recon satellites (US and otherwise) several times a day, and makes a deliberate effort to schedule Red zone operations under overcast or foggy conditions. At times, the Red zone turrets have aimed skyward and temporarily dazzled orbital sensors with a high-powered laser, or shot down supposedly stealthed recon drones.

**Other Features** - Brecken Ridge is a ghost town, and its infrastructure has not been maintained at all since 1982CE. Unused, unpaved roads in the area are all but overgrown and impassable. Smaller bridges may be unsafe for vehicle traffic, older roofs may have collapsed under heavy snows, some roads have fallen trees over them, a flood a decade back damaged a number of structures close to river level, and so on. Naturally, there is no water, phone, power or other utilities, so everyone living there has to provide their own or do without.

In addition to the obvious signs and results of neglect, there remain several unexplained artifacts from the "trouble". The first is in numerous spots in the Yellow Zone. Anything ferromagnetic (usually iron) has a chance of being warped, curled or highly magnetized. Even a few steel-framed buildings were slightly twisted. Most of this effect apparently happened when the Elder Seal was triggered. A handful of smaller items were twisted into shapes that were similar but not identical to proto-Sumerian cuneform glyphs, and due to a few Grey-level classified incidents involving them, those discovered by agents or residents are still treated with the same level of caution as unexploded cluster bombs.

The other unexplained phenomenon is that every church bell in Brecken Ridge has been shattered. Not by any sorcerous force, but by high explosives and bulldozers. For some reason still unknown and unremembered by the survivors, every place of worship with a working bell in it was demolished, usually with dynamite or other industrial explosives, though a few were simply pushed over with heavy earthmoving equipment. Either the demigod held some ancient grudge against all forms of bell-based worship implements, or the sound was in some way offensive or harmful. The Brotherhood would love to know the answer, but is unlikely to get it.

**Brecken Glyphs** - The aforementioned lumps of metal do not appear to be anything other than wierdly, very wierdly shaped piece of mundane iron. Normally, they are made from the reinforcing bars used in steel-reinforced cement, but pieces of wrought-iron fencing, crowbars, tire irons or even large nails or screwdrivers have been shaped this way by unknown forces.

These glyphs were created by a confluence of sorcerous and magnetic forces eddyng about the final conflict in Brecken Ridge, and they take three forms. The first is simply wierdly shaped metal, with no taint or unusual properties. They are shaped into obscure combinations of proto-Sumerian glyphs associated with one or more elemental forces, sorcerous tenets or a particular pantheon of Evil entities, but they have no taint or effect on the Blind or Sighted.

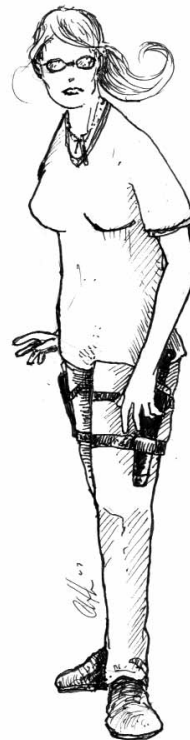
The second form of glyph looks the same, but is something akin to a spell description. The energy that shaped the metal is a template for the sorcerous effect that passed through it. Anyone who knows any sorceries can use their Will roll to push energy through the glyph and generate a weak shadow of the effect that created the glyph. This is usually something destructive, transformative or both. While this form of glyph is akin to a spell description, it is not usable as one. You can use it as a way to generate an effect, but not as a way to learn the sorcery that generates that effect.

The last form of glyph is like a sorcerous spring that was coiled up by the energy passing through it, and it sits in a delicate state of balance, where even a mild physical disruption can release the energy stored in the glyph. This would be a non-directed sorcerous effect that has to make a Average(7) task plus range difficulty on 3d+0 to hit anyone in line of sight. The sorcerous effect, whatever it might be, usually has a 4d+1 effect. Even against high Fate targets, this can be serious. These glyphs can be as touchy as nitroglycerin, or require something as serious as a hammer blow to set them off.

A few dozen of these glyphs (mostly the first two types) are in circulation outside Brecken Ridge. By now, almost all of them are in the hands of Evil minions or private sorcerors. Given that most of them mass several kilograms and are the size of a bicycle wheel, they are not considered an undue hazard by the Brotherhood, but standing orders are to acquire any that are encountered.

▼ **PERSONALITIES** - The following individuals are mostly tied to Brecken Ridge, which makes them unsuitable as adventurers unless Brecken Ridge is the main campaign location. But, each of them has a story and adventures in Brecken Ridge can involve them or revolve around them, and you can always have them be able to leave Brecken Ridge for short periods if it suits the campaign.

**Sarah Baker** - Sarah was 14 years old in 1982, when "the trouble" hit Brecken Ridge. In thrall to whatever came forth from the Prison, but not driven mad nor turned irrevocably towards Evil, she had a sort of temporary Sight when the Elder Seal sucked the ancient demigod back into the Prison. Even though she lost the Sight as the memories faded, she was still one of a handful of residents who felt as compelled to stay as everyone else did to leave.



**Sarah Baker**

*"make me...just try."*

Strength: 2d+1

Agility: 2d+2

Awareness: 3d+1

Will: 3d+0

Health: 3d+0

Fate: 1d+1

**Notable skills:**

Firearms: +1d

Brawling: +1d

Short blade: +0d

Motorcycle: +1d

Homesteading: +1d

Mechanic: +1d

Area knowledge: +2d

Scrounging: +2d

**Notable Traits:**

Forte on Fate(luck)

Mature age

Fiercly independent(3 levels)

Paranoid(1 level)

Superstitious(2 levels)

Conservative values(2 levels)

Her family, like everyone else, packed up and left over the next few months. Sarah would not leave with them, and so her family left her. As a minor, the government forcibly evacuated her to be with her family, but she kept running away and returning to Brecken Ridge. Not because of some arcane compulsion, but because she genuinely wanted to stay there. What she never told anyone is that her boyfriend died during the troubles.



Despite her young age, she was very deeply in love with him, and he with her, and even though he is gone, she will not leave the place where they once were happy together. This love and commitment is an spark of *true* Good in her, and she has a Forte on her Fate for the use of luck. Perhaps her old boyfriend truly is her guardian angel...

Eventually, despite juvenile detention and other punitive measures, she kept coming back. When she turned 18, she could not legally be prevented from coming back. The Brotherhood (and the government) could play cards like trespassing, evict her from her family home by confiscating it for non-payment of taxes or any other number of legal fictions, but as long as Sarah was outside, she could force the matter into the court system, and thus force the Blind to look at something they would rather ignore. So, in 1986CE, they let her stay.

*She has been here ever since.* She has borderline Sight, just enough to sometimes tell if something is not quite as it seems. And while she has retreated into a comfortable near-Blindness, her experience during the troubles has left a mark on her. She will deny believing in the supernatural, yet she wards her home with Pennsylvania Dutch hex signs. She stays supremely fit, and packs one of the handful of pistols Brotherhood and Army searchers didn't find when they swept the town in 1983CE, a magnum revolver loaded with silver bullets she cast herself. She wears a crucifix around her neck along with a vial of holy water supposedly blessed by the Pope, carries a dagger she hammered out of cold iron and can sometimes be seen laying heavy punches and kicks into a bag of sand hanging from a tree in the backyard of her family home.

Some of this might be useful, some might not. She denies the supernatural, but deep down inside she is deathly afraid of it and lives her life like it is going to ambush her if she is not eternally wary. She seems to have an inherent feel for weaknesses in certain Evils (like weres), without having ever been taught them, and Bill Trammel will sometimes ask her "hypothetical" questions just to see how well her answer corresponds to the Brotherhood's "conventional wisdom" on the subject.

Sarah spends a lot of her time improving her quality of life, tending a garden, raising chickens, sewing her own clothing and so on. The rest of her time she spends patrolling the town (on bicycle), or at the town library. Sarah is quite intelligent, but her knowledge base is stuck in 1986CE. She can tear a car apart and utilize every bit except for the grease spot underneath, but she is flummoxed by any electrical device more complicated than a pocket calculator or electric typewriter.

She can get radio and catch network television via regular broadcasts, but she has no Internet, no phone, no newspapers or magazines, and a worldview that is seen through the lens of network news, sound bites and a 10th grade education. She was a traditional girl from a small town in a conservative state. She was not exceptionally religious, and was never going to be the sort to meekly submit to her husband, no matter how much she might love him, but she nonetheless has some conservative notions about what is right and what is wrong. For instance, while she still has a lot "girl next door" pretty (even going on 40 years old), she would not be caught dead in most beachwear of the early 21st century. She has a strong bias against homosexuality, and while she is not racist in the sense of hating or feeling superior to other races, she *does* feel (and look) uncomfortable in the presence of non-whites.

Sarah *did* manage to leave Brecken Ridge once, and nearly killed herself in the process. Knowing about the Brotherhood delivery truck, she made a sling to hang under the high-clearance chassis, climbed into it and then drugged herself into a stupor. She woke up in the middle of the night, battered and busted up in the front business used by the delivery truck. Crawling out, she set off alarms and barely got away, leaving her sling and fair amount of blood pooled under the truck as evidence of what happened. However, she was out of Brecken Ridge. *But not far enough away to resist the call back.* However, she was intending to go back anyway. She held out until morning, by which time she had made herself presentable, then bought some new clothing and proceeded to pawn several thousand Credits worth of valuables she had scavenged over the past few years from various abandoned homes and businesses. With the proceeds, she bought an off-road motorcycle, a bunch of bicycle tires, several hundred rounds of ammunition, two dozen pairs of "John Lennon" style sunglasses (which make her look sort of like Lara Croft) and a handful of other small items the Brotherhood would rather she hadn't gotten hold of. Laden down, she piloted the motorcycle over back roads back into Brecken Ridge and simply pretended she had never been gone. The Brotherhood knew better, of course, but couldn't or chose not to do anything about it. *Except make sure that particular stunt would never work again.*

**Bill Trammel** - Bill Trammel was a mid-level FBI agent in 1982CE, and a White<sub>3</sub> agent, the only government-affiliated Brotherhood presence in Charleston, West Virginia, and the most senior of the four Brotherhood operatives in the immediate area. When the troubles happened in Brecken Ridge, word came down from Washington that a full tactical team was to be mobilized, to be led by agent Trammel due to "unique experience and qualifications of a classified nature". This didn't go over too well with his FBI superiors, but orders were orders. Agent Trammel, his FBI team and three "special talent" individuals met with several other heavily armed federal teams with similar Brotherhood talent, plus a National Guard armor company and two squadrons of A-10 Thunderbolts, the former guarding the main roads in and out of Brecken Ridge, and the latter staying out of line of sight, given what befell the last planes to loiter in the area. The Brotherhood survivors of that operation don't talk much about what happened during the assault. The Blind survivors don't talk about it at all.



*"I'd rather talk about something else..."*

### Bill Trammel

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

### Notable skills:

Firearms: +2d  
 Brawling: +1d  
 Sorcery(6): +0d  
 Sorcery(research): +2d  
 Land vehicles: +0d  
 Leadership: +1d  
 Area knowledge: +1d

### Notable Traits:

Middle aged  
 Claustrophobic(2 levels)  
 Traumatic flashbacks(2 levels)  
 Superstitious(2 levels)  
 Status(Grey<sub>4</sub>)

When the Elder Seal was fired, Trammel and the survivors of his team were pinned down by sorcery, gunfire and horrors. It was hoped that they would be able to escape when the Elder Seal began pulling the dimensional rift in on itself, along with everything that had come out of it.

This wasn't the case. The team was well inside whatever effect triggered with the Elder Seal. The Blind agents and others who were pinned down suffered little more than mild dementia for a few days, and once they recovered, went back to normal duties with no more than a few minor quirks and a reluctance to talk about the mission, further reinforced by it being given a "classified" notation. Agent Trammel and the two surviving Brotherhood operatives were hit harder. Trammel was in a coma for weeks afterwards, and only came out of it after the Brecken Ridge effect began surfacing and someone had the bright idea of moving him to the Brecken Ridge hospital for observation. The main sorcerer on his team had to be retired from active duty due to recurring nightmares. He was relocated to New Zealand in a training and recruitment role, and the last Brotherhood member of his team lost most of his Sight, but it slowly returned over a period of years and the agent is still in active service.

Bill Trammel quickly recovered his physical and most of his emotional wounds in Brecken Ridge, but was effectively a prisoner there. Not only was there the unconscious compulsion to stay, but forcibly moving him out of town causes him to fall into a coma. So, he has never left, making him the *de facto* caretaker and senior Brotherhood agent in Brecken Ridge. With no real field duties after the town evacuated itself, he devoted his time to more intellectual aspects of Brotherhood work, and has become an expert sorcerer and craftsman of the arcane, talents he showed little aptitude for when first recruited into the Brotherhood. His insights have been sufficient that he is currently a Grey<sub>4</sub> in rank, missing the Black only because he cannot attend the most classified and important meetings in person. He does have an encrypted satellite link to Brotherhood computers and keeps detailed records of every measureable phenomenon in the Brecken Ridge area, especially near the Red Zone.

Bill is 46 years old, fit but with a slight paunch from not quite enough work or too much time in front of a computer. He carries a Ruger Super Redhawk in .454 Casull on his hip everywhere he goes, and a Smith & Wesson Airlight .357 Magnum as a backup gun. Both are modified to absurd levels of damage (MC alloy *and* +P+ ammunition), but the first round in the big gun is at a level safe for him to fire. He figures if he has to shoot anything around here *twice*, spraining his wrists is going to be the least of his problems. He is an accomplished sorcerer, but when it comes to damage, he just plain prefers guns. Even after over twenty years, he still has occasional attacks of claustrophobia related to the events in Brecken Ridge, and any traumatic event involving Evil is likely to give him recurring nightmares for weeks afterward.

**Wendi Trammel** - When her husband Bill had to stay in Brecken Ridge, Wendi's choices were to either file for divorce or move to be with him. She chose to be with him, which is rather difficult, since the Brecken Ridge effect compels him to stay and simultaneously compels her to leave. Their workable compromise is that they live in a home that is at the edge of what they both can tolerate, and their emotional bond to each other allows them to stay there. Without her, he would not be able to live that far from the center of the effect. Without him, she would not be able to tolerate living that close to the center of the effect.



*"Well, maybe I can loan it to you..."*

**Wendi Trammel**

Strength: 2d+0

Agility: 2d+1

Awareness: 3d+0

Will: 2d+2

Health: 2d+1

Fate: 1d+0

**Notable skills:**

Firearms: +0d

Brawling: +0d

Sorcery(research): +1d

History(ancient): +1d

Land vehicles: +0d

Homesteading: +1d

Area knowledge: +0d

**Notable Traits:**

Middle aged

Forte on Fate(Sight)

Forte on Will(resisting fear)

Dislikes lethal weapons(4 levels)

Status(Grey<sub>1</sub>)

As the wife of an FBI agent, Wendi knew that her husband did things outside the normal job requirements of most people, but it was not until she moved to Brecken Ridge that she was made fully aware of the Truth, and that was only after Brotherhood psych people certified that she was likely strong enough to handle it. Loan of an artifact granting Sight let her See for the first time, and while she was badly shaken, she did keep her sanity (if not her worldview) intact. That was twenty years ago. Now 43, Wendi has spent most of her adult life isolated in Brecken Ridge, helping her husband with his duties for the Brotherhood. While she does not have true Sight, she is nonetheless a member of the Brotherhood now, with a Grey rank relating to her experience and contribution to Bill's research. She is technically the second-in-command at Brecken Ridge, and while she has never had to take that role, she is cool-headed enough to acquit herself well in that event.

Over the past few decades in Brecken Ridge, Bill has taught her to "See". She does not have genuine Sight, but she has learned to see *past* the Blindness enough to count as a Forte on her Fate for Sight purposes. She still does not see things as they *truly* are, but she can tell if they are not what they *appear* to be. For instance, if someone else saw a werewolf as a pack of wild dogs, Wendi would also see the pack of wild dogs, but would notice that the sound wasn't quite right, or that they weren't leaving enough tracks on the ground. A Ghul might look like a person, but there would be a characteristic scent or feel to their skin that isn't quite "right", or a devil might sit differently than a person because of different joint structure in their legs. She still won't See the Ghul or Devil as they are, but something in her "clicks" enough that she can intellectually understand who or what she is dealing with.

Wendi, despite being married to a Brotherhood (and FBI) agent, has a personal code against using guns, and despite Bill's wishes, will not carry a gun, making her the only person in Brecken Ridge who doesn't have one on their person at all times. Instead, she carries a large can of "pepper spray" and an "animal control" taser. She knows that the "pepper spray" has been enhanced by the Brotherhood to be effective against Evil creatures, but she doesn't know how. In a white lie kind of way, this is true. Originally, the cannister she carries was simply filled with concentrated sulfuric acid. This was amazingly dangerous, and thankfully she never had to use it. After technology progressed a little, an improved version was made that uses concentrated hydrogen peroxide. Her can of "pepper spray" blasts out a jet of superheated steam. This fills a line 1 hexagon wide with a lethal heat-based attack of 2d+1, which loses 0d+1 of damage for each range band past 1 meter distance. She has had to use it a few times over the years, once on a rattlesnake, once on a rabid raccoon, and once on a were that had broken into their home and had been weakened by a burst of assault rifle fire from her husband.

Wendi is always subject to unconscious pressure to leave Brecken Ridge, just as Bill is subject to the push to stay. Once every several months, she rides back out of town with the Brotherhood supply truck, to visit relatives and do other things that require a personal presence in the outside world. She rides back into town a month later, often with one of the talismans given to researchers, and waits at home for Bill to return. With her gone, he is pushed away from the outskirts of town and cannot bring himself to return to that distance until Wendi's presence overcomes the compulsion that pushes him away from the outside world.

As the wife of a Brotherhood agent, she does have other access to the outside world in terms of the Internet, satellite TV, magazine subscriptions and mail order. It hurts her that she cannot share these luxuries with the non-agent residents, so she tends to use them as little as possible so as not to offend her "neighbors", who mostly understand her difficult position. While Bill does not approve, she will sometimes allow the civilian residents to "borrow" some of her luxury items, and it is not unheard of for an item or two she has ordered for "herself" to get lost and end up in someone else's hands.

Like Sarah Baker, Wendi has a small garden, though she could never bring herself to raise and kill chickens like Sarah does. Virtually alone, she fills her time by helping her husband. Over the years, she has become as good a Brotherhood research assistant as is possible for someone who is Blind. She and her husband work so well together that they automatically get a +1d complementary skill bonus on just about any joint project, and her decades of living in Brecken Ridge makes Wendi's observations from a Blind perspective an invaluable data point for anyone doing research into the Brecken Ridge effect.

**Freebird & Luna** - A common-law married couple with a little something extra. Back in 1982CE, they were teenagers who met at a hair-metal concert in the DC area, and immediately hit it off due to a deep connection neither of them realized. They ran away from home, "married" in a private exchange of vows and decided to disappear for a little while in the wilds of West Virginia. They chose Brecken Ridge as a place to make some money before moving further out to a place of their own, and had only been there a few weeks when the troubles happened.

They do not remember what happened from shortly after the troubles started, until shortly after they ended. They do remember that they woke up together, naked, drenched in blood, surrounded by mutated, mutilated human corpses. In the past twenty-some years, they have talked about this exactly once with each other, and never with anyone else. They made up a story and stuck to it, and that's been it.



**Freebird**

"everyone's got inner demons..."

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

**Notable skills:**

- Firearms: +0d
- Brawling: +0d
- Equestrian: +1d
- Homesteading: +1d
- Mechanic: +0d
- Electronics: +0d
- Scrounging: +1d
- Running: +0d

**Notable Traits:**

- Forte on Will(intimidates Evil)
- Mature age
- Pacifist(3 levels)
- Absolute devotion to Luna(6 levels)

What they know now, to some extent, is that they have more than a little of non-human in them. Several generations ago, one of the Dragon's female guardians was captured...alive. By parties still unknown. By science or sorcery (or both), her fertilized eggs were implanted in unwitting human host mothers. Before whatever this plan was came to fruition, the guardian escaped or was "rescued" by other of the Dragon's agents. *She did not survive.*



Neither did the kidnapper, his agents, his facility or his records. All in all, a few dozen children were born, half human, half whatever strange hybrid the Dragon found useful at the time. Most of these hybrids were human-looking, but had defects in body or mind that caused them to come to bad ends. A handful survived to adulthood, married and had children of their own, ignorant of their mixed parentage.

Freebird and Luna are each the grandchildren of this experiment, and possibly have other non-human blood in them as well. Had they ever encountered the Dragon, they would probably feel an intense genetic loyalty to him, but failing that, they feel a deep, compelling loyalty and attraction to each other, enough that they were willing to immediately abandon all ties of friends and family simply to be with each other.

When the troubles hit, they were "recruited" by the same means the rest of the population was brainwashed by the demigod, but it didn't work on them. Their genetic loyalty to the Dragon, which was transposed on to each other, countered the sorcerous compulsion to turn towards the Evil demigod. They fled and hid, but they could not outrun sorcery. When the final conflict began and Evil energies were coursing through the entire area, Luna and Freebird transformed to *something else*, a sort of were-vampire-ghul hybrid with almost no intelligence, an insane bloodlust, and an irresistible desire to destroy any who would try to subvert their loyalties. They cut through the human servants of the demigod like a scythe through wheat, stopping only when the Elder Seal was triggered, ending the energies that fueled their transformation. They woke up with no memory of what had happened, but were more than smart enough to realize that the shreds of flesh under their fingernails and between their teeth were somehow, inexplicably, those of the mutated corpses surrounding them.

This hit them very, very hard. Emotionally, they were both mild pacifists (and vegetarians!), and what they seem to have done filled them with revulsion. They did not have the Sight, had no Brotherhood ties, and no idea of even where to start looking for answers. Isolated in Brecken Ridge, they began to look the only place they could... within themselves. With the aid of various home-grown psychoactives, they opened up a touch of the Sight within each other, and while they still appear perfectly human to those with the Sight, to each other they can see that they have *something else* within. In time, they figured out under what conditions they could actually release it again, and they have each done so...once. And it scared them so much they have never tried it again.

But, they do keep the supplies they need for the transformation, just in case a situation arises that calls for that desperate a measure. The only outer sign of what they have within is a boundless level of stamina and speed that is completely at odds with their appearance. Any other abilities or skills they might have while transformed, they do not have access to while they are "normal".



### Luna

"would you like some brownies?"

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

### Notable skills:

Firearms: +0d  
 Brawling: +0d  
 Equestrian: +1d  
 Homesteading: +1d  
 Herblore: +1d  
 Area knowledge: +1d  
 Scrounging: +1d  
 Running: +0d

### Notable Traits:

Forte on Will(intimidates Evil)  
 Mature age  
 Pacifist(3 levels)  
 Absolute devotion to Freebird(6 levels)

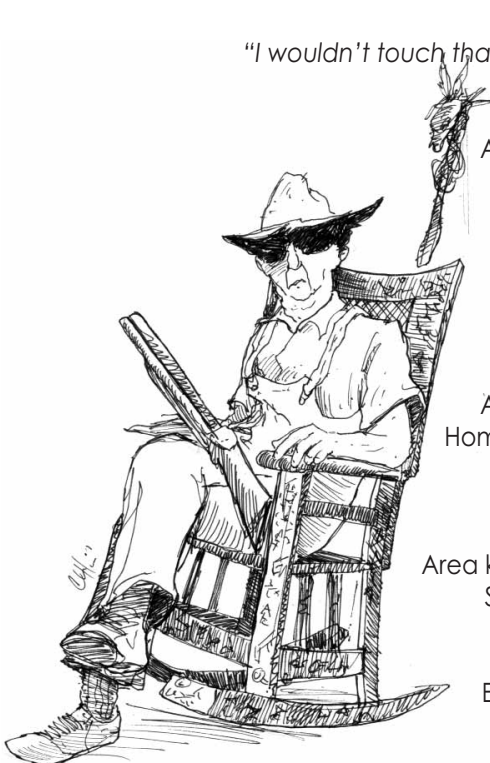
Less affected by the Brecken Ridge effect than most, they live on the outskirts of town, grow their own food along with various "herbs", and use horses to get around when they don't want to walk or run. They can manage to be out of the area just long enough to sell some of their very, very high quality "produce" to local distributors, often for goods rather than cash. Both Freebird and Luna carry pistols, but have never had to use them. They have tried to have children a few times, but something was "wrong" with the fetus each time, and Luna miscarried so often she eventually became sterile.

Freebird and Luna are not Evil, but they *can* be. Like weres, they can transform into *something else*, something that scares even them. And though they do not know it, lesser Evils are a little scared of them too, though they do not consciously recognize it as such. This unassuming couple is just inexplicably intimidating to minor Evils.



**Jason Rivers** - Everyone in town calls him "Old Man River", but out of respect, never to his face. In person, he is always "Jason" or "Mr. Rivers". He was easily middle-aged even back in 1982, and he is in 70's or 80's now, no one is really sure, not even the Brotherhood. He came down out of the hills right about the time the troubles started, was apparently involved somehow in the final confrontation, and was in the effect when the Elder Seal fired off, but little more than that is known.

Jason Rivers is what would be known in some parts as a "Grandpa Witch" or witch doctor, one in a long line of rural sorcerors who tend to avoid civilization and pass their knowledge down only within their own family. He is extremely powerful at what he does, his lineage carefully managed by selective marriages within the witch doctor families for countless generations. The various Grandpa and Grandma Witches almost never join the Brotherhood (or the Tangent), but they are probably more sympathetic to the Tangent in terms of core beliefs.



*"I wouldn't touch that if I were you..."*

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

**Notable skills:**

Firearms: +1d  
 Sorcery(8): +0d  
 Automobile: +1d  
 Homesteading: +1d  
 Mechanic: +1d  
 Carpentry: +1d  
 Herblore: +2d  
 Area knowledge: +1d  
 Scrounging: +1d

**Notable Traits:**

Extremely elderly  
 Aloof(3 levels)  
 Luddite(3 levels)

Jason had been sorcerously casting out his awareness when the seal on the ancient spaceship was opened. Repelled by the aura he felt, he retreated to his physical body, packed a travelling bag, and headed towards Brecken Ridge. Once there, he saw some of what was going on, and knew that he was clearly outmatched.

So he just stayed in the shadows, and did what he could to save potential sacrifices, try to break people out of their thralldom, and divine exactly what the hell was going on. When the final assault happened, he was out there in the shadows, assisting the Blind troops and assault teams without their knowledge, directly attacking the Evils he was capable of defeating, and pushing his body and sanity to the edge. He passed out when the Elder Seal was activated, and woke up a few hours later, very shaken, and somehow compelled to stay.

He lived in various abandoned parts of town until a place that met his needs was vacated, at which point he simply moved in, and he's been there ever since. He is proud and stubborn, and refuses to accept Brotherhood "charity". He has not equipped his home with any sort of electrical gadgets, even battery operated ones. The things that he cannot make himself, he trades labor for, things like tool or home repair. Plus, he makes a mean moonshine, which is as good as currency for most of Brecken Ridge. His home is small and austere, but with a number of personal touches. All the door and window frames are painted a peculiar shade of blue, as is his well and drainpipes, and if you look close, each is incised with detailed carvings of an arcane nature. With similar intent, the entire perimeter of the yard is a blue picket fence with arcane carvings on every fencepost. Those who can sense sorcerous energies will feel menacing amounts of power ready to arc between those posts and across those portals. Once or twice, other residents have seen him repairing what looked like lightning damage to the fence or house, but when queried on the matter, the only reply was a non-committal grunt before he went back to making his repairs.

Jason is gruff, and will not let anyone into his emotional space, nor teach anyone his brand of sorcery, but if he likes you, he will give you a grudging respect. Over the years, he has come to give this respect to most if not all the permanent residents of Brecken Ridge. He has a special fondness for the doggedness of Sarah Baker, in a grandfather to granddaughter kind of way. She usually passes his house on her daily rounds, and while he never waves, he is always good for a friendly tip of the straw hat as she passes by.

Jason Rivers is armed with a short, double-barreled shotgun of barely legal length, but he is more likely to use sorcery as his first option. He knows how to make triggered spells that can activate without him being there, using twists of thread or yarn or paper that shrivel into ash when they activate. He has an Experience with this sort of thing, and can have two triggered spells ready to go with no penalties on his actions, though he suffers the normal penalties when the spells are active. He is not nearly as active as he used to be, though he is still pretty wiry. He spends a lot of his time doing mystically what Bill Trammel does with his instruments, monitoring the energies of the Red Zone and keeping a finger on the pulse of the area's wildlife, plants, weather and so on. He has a pickup truck that is not quite as old as he is. He seldom drives in order to conserve fuel, but keeps it garaged and in flawless running order. The various scars on the vehicle each have a tale associated with them from the past two decades, but those in town know how they happened, and he doesn't much feel like talking about it to outsiders.

Jason knows something of what happened with Freebird and Luna. Exactly what, he's not sure, and they are as reticent to talk about it as he is about his sorcery. He respects that, but it still worries him. They've never shown any indication of being Evil, but he knows that something isn't quite right about them. He's offered his assistance (in his own oblique, grizzled way), but they've not taken him up on it, and he in turn has never mentioned what he saw to anyone else.

▼ **Note** - Water witches and witch doctors are a real-world part of the southern Appalachian tradition. Within the **Code:Black** universe, this "mountain magic" is also unique to the southern Appalachians, and is derived from ancient sorcery possessed by early Irish and Scots immigrants, mixed with some of the traditions of the Tsalagi Indians. In game terms, it is no different than any other type of sorcery, but it specializes in divinations like dowsing, healing, the sensing of energy and the making of charms. However, the experienced practitioners of the art are taught more powerful spells (e.g. direct damage blasts) upon reaching a particular level of maturity and responsibility, and it says a lot for the tradition that it may take thirty years before a master passes on knowledge of this type to his or her successor. Almost all mountain magic is passed down within a family, and to minimize the chance of losing the knowledge, marriages are almost always to other sorcerer families.

This style of sorcery has a strong reliance on consumed foci and musical chanting. A water diviner might want a forked branch of a particular type of tree, a love charm might require a lock of hair, and so on.

Remember that in the end, this is still sorcery. If good effects seem to come from their sorcery, it is only because the sorcerer is taking the negative side effects on themselves and you just don't see it. And there is also the matter of definition. What is a "love charm" other than a mild form of mental coercion? You can say you are just encouraging something that is already there, but there is still a non-consensual aspect to what is going on. Practitioners of mountain magic can "go bad" as easily as any other sorcerer, hence the teaching only to family (who you can keep an eye on), and restricting the most dangerous teachings to those who have shown decades of restraint and control in the use of their power.

▼ **PLOTS** - Brecken Ridge is a fairly uneventful place. The effect makes it unique, but also keeps people away. Evils for hundreds of kilometers around know of the place and tend to avoid it like the plague. The more powerful the Evil, the more compelled it is to wander to the center of the effect like a moth to a flame. So, the smart ones don't go anywhere near it. Of course, the general lack of hard information about the area means that Evils who have heard of it have also heard all kinds of rumors, some credible, some not. For instance, Brecken Ridge is rumored to be a giant garbage disposal for Evil, created by the Brotherhood to get rid of things they can't conveniently kill, or which tend to keep coming back (like vampire spirits or legions). This is not true, but has elements of the truth to it. There is also a rumor that it is the site of a barely contained Evil that has promised rewards unimaginable to anyone who can help free it, or that the area is infested with Legions who are tied to the area, so the government simply evacuated all possible hosts, or that there is a giant crashed alien spaceship there and the Brotherhood is performing research on the technology found in it.

The result is that once every few years, some Evil or other will get it into their head that they should investigate the town, and will try to take some sort of precautions to keep themselves from being sucked in. This could be through teamwork or timing, careful selection of the people chosen or spells known to be useful. For instance, choosing someone of moderate Fate but very high Will gives the best chance of resisting the effect for a long period. Sorceries to enhance Will can also be used. A vampire might choose to come in from the west, near dawn, knowing that whatever the compulsion, they will have to take shelter from the morning sun, which buys them a little more time. Evils have also independently done what the Brotherhood has at the perimeter of the Red Zone. Evil infiltrators have also been wired with shock belts, to cause immense pain or incapacitation if they move too close to the center. Often, such infiltrators are Evil humans who have been tortured and programmed into a fearful compliance to their master's wishes, the compulsion to go to the center of Brecken Ridge balanced by the abject terror of displeasing their master.

It is from endeavors like this over the past two decades that Evil has learned what little it knows of Brecken Ridge, and this knowledge is split among a number of different Evils, who tend not to share what they know with others. Plus, it is assumed that anything entering the Brecken Ridge discontinuity goes into the Prison, and bits of information from the Prison may have been given to servants of particular Evils on Earth. So, Evil has incomplete information, but it is assumed to have information from both sides of the breach, information the Brotherhood would love to have, but has no way of acquiring (or of verifying if they *did* acquire it).

The fact that Evil does make irregular and sometimes intelligent incursions into Brecken Ridge means the Brotherhood (and everyone else there) is leery of strangers. In addition, the Brotherhood has set up a network of hidden solar-powered sensors on most of the major intersections, routes into town and obvious infiltration routes like the river. All the Brotherhood agents would be alerted by phone of the time and place any such incursion occurs. Sarah Baker also has an uncanny ability to figure these things out as well. She has spotted some of the sensors in her thorough exploration of the town, but knows better than to try and tamper with them, plus she lacks the skill to do so. Instead, she relies on a keen sense of hearing. Bill Trammel drives his Ford Bronco on particular roads at a fairly measured rate when doing his normal Brotherhood work in town. If she hears him rattling over some strategically loosened manhole covers, or his engine echoing off certain buildings, she knows immediately which street he is on, and what part of town that street is the fastest access to. Her family home is on one of the nearby slopes surrounding the valley, so she can pull out a pair of binoculars, get a feel for where to go, and then hop on her dirt bike and be there just about as fast as Bill and any other Brotherhood agents can. The agents really don't like this. Sarah is mostly smart enough to stay out of the way, but jumpy as a startled cat and ready to shoot, punch, stab or otherwise hurt anything that gets close to her. She has at times acted impetuously, sometimes requiring rescue (and a number of stitches), but has sometimes been the one doing the rescuing.

Despite being wide-eyed, literally quivering with excitement and loaded for bear, she will sincerely state that she "just happened" to be in the area. That's not true of course, but she convinces herself that it is and takes great offense if anyone suggests she is lying. Brotherhood agents trying to deal with an already difficult situation just keep her in mind as another chess piece on the field and try to keep out of her way.

▼ **RIVER RESCUE** - The Potomac River is the weak link in the effect that surrounds Brecken Ridge. The river has a mind of its own and it can supercede any thoughts people on the river have on the matter. In 1983CE the Army Corps of Engineers finished a small dam across the Potomac upstream of Brecken Ridge. Little more than a speedbump, the river flows over it with little hindrance, but it does a good job of discouraging small boats, and it is just at the edge of the Brecken Ridge effect, so people like kayakers tend to avoid this part of the river as well.

However, this adventure is precipitated by a bass boat, some poor maintainance and maybe a little alcohol. After a day of fishing, William "Willy Pete" Coachman, and his buddies Paul Phillips and Joe Wilder pulled up anchor only to find the old rope Joe was using snapped, leaving Joe's boat anchorless. Then, the outboard motor failed to start, and they had no oars. Their electric trolling motor was no match for the mid-stream current, and within ten minutes they had reached and gone over the low dam, gouging a serious but not immediately threatening hole in the bottom of their boat. By the time they thought to use a cell phone to call for assistance, they were outside the local coverage area, inside the towerless zone of Brecken Ridge.

And they were feeling the Brecken Ridge effect. Remember that it is not an immediate compulsion, but more of an unconscious pressure that steers you away from the area. But in this case, there was no way to avoid it, which began to gnaw a little at their Blindness, enough to make them jumpy. The Potomac River cuts directly through Brecken Ridge, and about a third the way through, there is a small, unnamed island, a fraction of a hectare with a sandbar and a lot of driftwood piled up against a few scraggly old trees. By now, the boat was low in the water, despite efforts to keep it bailed out, so the fishers grounded it on the island, tied it to a tree and unloaded what they could. Waterlogged, they could not drag it ashore, and it sank to the gunwales in the shallow water on one side of the island. Dejected, they stared across a few dozen yards of fast, swirling dark green water at the empty town, and then turned almost as one to face the center of the island, any thoughts of trying to swim the short distance immediately abandoned.

After building a driftwood fire, Willy Pete thought to try his cell phone again. It didn't work, but the attempt was noted by the monitoring circuits on the Brotherhood repeater, which read the ESN and caller ID of the phone, referenced it back to the owner, and sent an alert to Agent Trammel that someone new was in town. However, the alert could not pin down a location, only an approximate signal strength, which given the varying geography meant little more than the phone wasn't at the repeater station itself. Attempts by Brotherhood agents outside Brecken Ridge to contact William Coachman's home to find out more information (like his fishing trip) bore no fruit.

Now, this would ordinarily be a straightforward rescue mission, involving a powerboat and maybe a few judicious tranquilizer darts. And for two of the stranded fishermen, that's all there is to it. But, this accident was no accident. Rather, it is one of the occasional infiltration attempts by some Evil or other. In this case, Willy Pete has been possessed by a fairly weak but fairly clever legion, which was summoned specifically for this task. Unknown to Willy, he sabotaged his own boat so that it would drift down into Brecken Ridge. The idea is that while Willy Pete is being pushed away from the center of Brecken Ridge, the legion is being drawn towards it, and by carefully manipulating the degree of possession, the legion hopes to get a closer look at things than any other Evil minion has in decades, and is counting on the fact that the Brotherhood will do everything in its power to avoid killing Willy Pete, a restriction they would not have for any other sort of Evil creature.

After the campfire is lit and everyone has warmed up a little bit, Willy Pete (possessed) announces that he is going to go try and get some help. He isn't much of a swimmer, but the legion pushes down Willy's fear and forces his body to go through the motions, even as it is drowning, getting him to shore in one gasping, barely alive piece. After coughing the water out of his lungs, Willy is marched towards the Red Zone. He is spotted on some sensors, but the Legion is smart enough to use Willy's former combat experience to use cover to his best advantage, and he is only an intermittent blip on the map. Of course, heading towards the Red Zone makes it easy to judge the eventual destination...



Adventurers come into the picture as researchers, or escorts for other researchers, or possibly even just as couriers to pick up or drop off some material for Bill Trammel. But, if there is an incursion emergency, Bill is the agent in charge, and adventurers are expected to assist any way they can.

There are a number of possible complications to deal with. Obviously, the Brotherhood wants to figure out what Willy Pete is up to. The legion will make that fairly clear. It wants the Brotherhood to know that Willy Pete is merely a possessed pawn, that way the Brotherhood will avoid killing him unless there is no other option. The legion has to be delicate about its control. If it takes total control, it will succumb to the effect and take Willy Pete into the concertina wire around the Red Zone, and then the legion would abandon his body and be drawn into the singularity. On the other hand, if he lets Willy have too much control back, Willy will try to flee the area, and easily be captured. Other complications are that Willy is armed with a .45 pistol and has no problem with using it on the adventurers. He only has a 2d+2 skill roll, though, and only one spare clip. Willy might also have helped one of his friends across to shore, and will, at a strategic moment, use this person as a hostage or remotely possible body swap in case Willy is incapacitated. Remember that legions can only possess someone whose ties to this world have been weakened somehow. In Willy Pete's case, he was given a false diagnosis of something incurable like Alzheimer's (by a paid-off Devilish doctor), to fill him with doubt and dread, and he was possessed in a moment of weakness. His friends do not have such doubts, and are thus unlikely body-hop candidates.

In any case, the legion's mission is to get close, observe as much as it can, and then get away and report back to the one who summoned it. The first two parts are the easy ones. Getting away is the hard part. If it leaves its host body, it is in immediate proximity to the discontinuity and runs a very real risk of being drawn in like a moth to a flame, and it would be difficult to re-summon for quite some time afterwards. So, it really needs to stay in possession of Willy Pete until it can get his body at least into the Green Zone, at which point it is willing to make a break for it and hope it makes the Will roll. In this case, count it as having a Will of 2d+2 against its Fate of 7. In the Yellow Zone it would be 2d+0 against a 7, and in the Red Zone it would be 1d+1 against a 7. The Brotherhood can figure as much, and if they capture Willy Pete, will probably try to keep him within the Yellow Zone just to decrease the probability the legion will make a break for it. They will keep Willy Pete there until someone can exorcise the Legion (Bill Trammel cannot, but Jason Rivers can).

The plan to get the legion out of Brecken Ridge is rather convoluted, but certainly Evil. A vampire or possibly a few ghul have been hired to do two things: first, abduct a desperate and despondent person off the streets of Washington DC or its environs, preferably a young person, and second, hire a light plane under false pretenses and then force the pilot at gunpoint to make a nighttime low-level pass over Brecken Ridge. The idea is that the pilot's desire to avoid Brecken Ridge will be countered by the fear of the gun to their head. The Legion is supposed to flee Willy Pete at the light plane's closest pass, and with a convenient host close at hand, hopefully avoid being drawn into the discontinuity.

What happens then is a crap shoot. The pilot will want to leave the area. The legion will want to stay, but probably not so much that it will abandon its new host. The ghul or vampire hijacker will want to stay, and might be willing to shoot the pilot if they do not turn the plane around and crash land it in town, the legion might fight the hijacker to prevent this, and of course the Brotherhood might decide the best course of action is to shoot the plane down. If the legion does manage to escape and report to its summoner, it is unknown what this person wants or needs the knowledge for. And, release of the legion to "have fun" is probably part of the bargain for its service, so that is another loose end to be tied up. And regardless of what else happens, there is still the matter of Willy's two friends, who will notice some odd goings on during all this, even if their attention is mainly focused away from Brecken Ridge.



▼ **THE OTHER SIDE** - Brecken Ridge is an oddity, a place where something unknown happened, not in some distant past or far-off solar system or eons in the past, but within living memory, right here in our own cosmic backyard. The incomplete closure of the rift at Brecken Ridge has left a pinhole in the fabric of the universe that draws all but a handful towards it, to be sucked in, never to return.

The Brotherhood assumes this pinhole leads back to the Prison, and that it is one-way, since nothing has ever come back through it. *But what if the reason nothing has ever come back is that they didn't want to come back?*

**The Other Side** is not supposed to be a short adventure. Rather, it is a possible complication to the Brotherhood's work, an extended side journey for experienced adventurers, or an idea of what would happen to the world if Evil truly did escape the Prison. Because the latter is *exactly* what the Other Side is. The Brecken Ridge singularity is a portal to a parallel universe, identical in time and space, but with an alternate history. At the time of the Brecken Ridge event, the Brotherhood in the alternate world managed to fully close the rift, but did not banish the Evils. At almost the same time, the Brotherhood on this side failed to fully close the rift with an Elder Seal, but *did* banish the Evil. The two events, two linked failures of an Elder Seal, connected but in separate universes, somehow linked the two universes through that singularity. Unfortunately for the other side, our Evils were banished into *their* world, where they merged with their other selves and became twice as strong, eventually finding and widening new cracks in the Prison. The Old Gods still remained imprisoned, but Avatars and full entities of nearly that power began to roam free and utterly subverted the Evil within mankind.

Over the next few years, global order broke down. First in small ways, as trade and commerce were affected. Then, as the open, global war against Evil began to falter, "negotiations" began, and nation after nation effectively surrendered to Evil. Within a decade, Evil openly ruled the nations of the world, leaving human authority structures intact merely as a convenience for furthering their own aims.

This alternate world is a place of unimaginable horror masked by the thinnest veneer of normalcy. Superficially similar, people go about their daily lives, going to school, working, marrying, watching television, and so on. But the similarity ends there. Factories belch pollution constantly, and smog at times becomes so bad that those in poor health simply drop dead from it.

Tap water is only some-times drinkable, and food is usually tainted with something or other. There is plenty of law, but very little justice. What law there is, is corrupt and often as not administered by vampire police and devil judges. What human authority figures remain do so because they collaborate fully and toe the party line.

Those who make trouble in any way get sent to "the factories". Imagine something like a hog farm, designed and built to efficiently process some millions of animal carcasses a year. But instead of hogs, the "factories" process *people*. Wringing every speck of emotion and torment from them before death, and then rendering the bodies into processed foodstuffs for millions of Evil beings, ritual sorcery components, and maybe even working towards some grand abomination that will release the greater Evils from the Prison to reconquer the universe.

Those sent to "the factories" do *not* return. The lucky ones are merely killed, slowly and painfully. The unlucky ones are experimented on first. A few of the latter show some particular aptitude for Evil and end up being the slaughterhouse workers and guards. People will do *anything* to avoid being sent to the factories, so much so that virtually the entire human culture has been perverted along the lines of spying and getting leverage on people to be able to turn in "someone worse than you" to grant yourself a reprieve. Brothers and sisters will turn on each other, children will betray their parents, and "friendship" is a word that has little meaning in this world. Everything in this world is twisted to bring out the worst in people, while simultaneously forcing the wheels of civilization to keep turning.

The Evils from our world that have been drawn into the Brecken Ridge singularity reappear through one of the many widened cracks into the alternate world, in some random spot on the globe. The transit through the discontinuity strips these Evils of their accumulated memory of our world, and they appear with the same temporal frame of mind as when they were originally summoned to our world. They find themselves in a world where Evil is winning the fight to escape the Prison completely, and are as happy as Evil can get. If there are temporal or spatial irregularities in their memory, well, everyone knows the lines of communication between the Prison and reality sometimes get tangled...

Anything non-Evil that enters the singularity also reappears at a semi-random spot in the alternate world. And while most non-Evil humans retain their memories, they are a *long* way from home with no real idea of how to get back and no emotional tools for coping with the brutal Evil of their new environment. They quickly fall afoul of the "law" or their fellow man, and end up dead...one way or the other.

**Ideas** - Obviously, all of this is of no use to a **Code:Black** gamemaster unless there some way for someone or something to get back across from the other side to this side. *This gives us some possibilities.*

Brecken Ridge as a spot on the map is the key to both sides. On the other side, the rift has been sealed, and Brecken Ridge is an industrial ruin. The entire area was pulverised with conventional weapons in the fight against the Evil there, and it is nothing but fragments of walls and ziggurat pieces, with thousands of mud-filled craters dotting the landscape. This place is no more significant to Evil in this world than any other place that has been hit with an Elder Seal. If anyone lives there at all, it is the most wretched refugees of humanity. There is little food or shelter here, and certainly no safety. It is merely a place the Work Corps frequents less often when looking for slackers. Unemployment (or unemployability) is a crime. There are no retirement plans and no welfare. You either work, or you go to the factories...

On the other side, the Brotherhood was one of the early casualties of the victory of Evil. Taken out in straightforward combat, or from betrayal by the governments that had supported the Brotherhood. The last bastion of Brotherhood force after two decades is a tiny, fragmented network of those who were lower-level field agents back when things first started going downhill. Virtually everyone of Grey<sub>1</sub> rank or higher died in the first five years after the alternate Brecken Ridge, rounded up, killed in action, or driven to Evil by too much sorcery. In the alternate 21st century, what is left of the Brotherhood simply struggles to survive. Actually being able to prove that someone is part of this "terrorist" group is like a "get out of jail free" card to someone facing a "factory tour". So, the fragmented Brotherhood cells actually do very little except observe and plan and try to accumulate useful tools and knowledge. Once every great while they will pull off a minor operation, which usually brings down severe reprisals that do nothing to foster public sympathy for their cause.

One resource these cells have that Brotherhood groups on our side do not is a much greater proportion of arcane tech and sorcerous items. When it was clear that government power was behind some of the attacks on the Brotherhood, vaults were opened, emptied and disbursed as widely as possible as quickly as possible, to both put power in the hands of field agents, and keep Evil artifacts out of the hands that could use them to worst effect. You can imagine how desperate the situation would have to be for things like Singularity Rods to be given to a White<sub>3</sub> agent to be used "as they see fit".

About the time that the River Rescue scenario is taking place in this world, a Brotherhood cell in the eastern United States on the other side has been accumulating intelligence that the demi-god President and Cabinet are within several weeks of being able to attempt a full-scale breach of the Prison, with general all-around bad consequences for humanity. This breach may only last for a few seconds, or its metaphysical equivalent when dealing with cross-dimensional travel, but it will be enough for one or more of the Old Gods to fully and freely manifest in this reality, and with that amount of power unleashed and that weak a spot in the Prison, the release of the rest of the Old Gods becomes not a matter of if, but *when*.

This small Brotherhood cell is possibly the only one on the other side that retains knowledge of one of the Brotherhood's best kept secrets. *Elder Seals are reversible*. Elder Seals are a Good magic, and so is the ritual to undo one. No Good individual would ever re-open a crack to the Prison and no Evil entity *can* cast the magic, so the existence of this magic was merely an academic curiosity, an embodiment of entropic reversibility. But still, kept secret from all but a few. The Black-ranked agent who knew this is one of a handful of agents of that level who escaped the purges and betrayals, and his experience and paranoia has kept him and his group alive through the intervening decades. He was also at Brecken Ridge at the time of the original event, had access to some of the collected Brecken Ridge data, and the irregularities that occurred at that time. Over the decades, he has come to suspect what is in fact the truth...there is another, different Earth on the other side of that Elder Seal. He knows that if the Grand Abomination is performed and Evil is truly released from the Prison, all is lost in *this* world. So, for the sake of himself and his agents, a few of which are his children, he and his group set forth to Brecken Ridge to try to open the Elder Seal there and flee the sinking ship...to *our* world.

Whatever is here, it cannot possibly be worse than what they are fleeing. He is almost certain that once the Seal is lifted, Evil will still not be able to pass through the singularity from his world to ours. *Almost certain.*

For the most part, the plan works. The Elder Seal was undone, the Brotherhood cell entered the rift and came out in our reality. *The leader of the cell was not one of them.* The stress of opening the rift killed him.

For the gamemaster, this is something that can happen while the adventurers are in Brecken Ridge for some other business. People, *non-Evil people*, come out of the singularity, and the singularity itself widens appreciably, with unknown changes to the Brecken Ridge effect. Naturally, this is going to raise alarms at just about every level. The Brotherhood, the government, the Tangent, the Mulki and eventually various Evils will find out about it and wonder what it means. This event is a "stirring in the force" that will be felt by the sensitive everywhere on Earth.

▼ **Note** - If you want to really throw a monkey wrench into things, have the Dragon be a member of the escaping Brotherhood team. Yes, the Dragon is *really Evil*, but he also does not want to serve his old masters anymore, and if they get loose, he's in lots of trouble for being loose for millennia and not helping them out. So, he has arranged to join forces with a group that just might save his scaly hide. He joins the Brotherhood in the guise of an unaligned human sorcerer, much as he is known on this side as one. He kills the agent undoing the Elder Seal with a poisoned needle, knowing that the caster of the Unsealing might detect him as something other than human when the spell's energy washes over him. Escaping to this side buys him a reprieve. But, he knows that his doppelganger is on this side, and he cannot abide the thought of two of himself. So he also has to make a plan for his doppelganger's demise. Simultaneously, the Dragon on this side feels the widening of the rift at Brecken Ridge, and knows that if it means what he thinks it means, then there is a good chance his double from that side will be coming through (the Dragon thinks a *lot* about possibilities and contingencies). So, the Dragon on this side also has to figure out the best way to deal with himself.

The short form of what happens is that there will be a lot of intense activity at levels way above the adventurer's security clearances for a few weeks, during which the adventurers will probably be very busy with various players ramping up activity or trying to find some advantage they can gain from the altered situation. The agents who came through the rift will of course be whisked off to someplace both secure and safe for an extended debriefing/interrogation, the results of which will be decisive in the plans that are made.

Meanwhile, agents in Brecken Ridge are not permitted to leave, and are expected to help with measuring the new properties of the discontinuity. The biggest change is that it is now two-way. A tethered item can be sent through and pulled back. Atmosphere measurements are made, radio reception analyzed, and so on. The United States goes to a high level of "terror alert" to justify 24/7 air power in the Washington DC airspace, though in reality the fighter planes are a bit further west, ready to launch anything and everything they have at Brecken Ridge (including nuclear weapons) if the worst happens. And any adventurers in Brecken Ridge know that the results of their investigations may have a direct bearing on what those fighters do and where their payloads are headed...

What is decided is that the rift needs to be closed. *Must* be closed. The best guess is that it can only be *truly* closed by a new Elder Seal at each end. This means that someone is going to have to seal themselves on the other side. This is not that big a hurdle. Seeing that an entire world can be saved from Evil, one or more of the agents who came across *from* the other side will be willing to seal the rift permanently from their end, severing the link between alternate universes, hopefully forever.

The other decision is that to whatever extent possible, Evil should not be allowed to succeed in its plans. An all-volunteer multinational force is being assembled to go through the rift on a one-way trip, to set up as much of an underground resistance as possible in the chaos surrounding the third decision.

The third decision uses the fact that the other side has the *exact* same geography as this side. A sizable swarm of nuclear-tipped cruise missiles is going to be fired through the rift, aimed directly at the slaughter factories and the capital of the demi-god usurpers running the country. The missiles will be have stealth technology that was not around in the late 1980's, the tech level at which the other side has stagnated at with a few eldritch exceptions.

These missiles will also be shielded by sorcery and/or artifacts, giving them a fair chance of surviving any untowards effects of the rift and anything looking to shoot them down. It is fervently hoped that the *millions* of lives lost in these attacks will be worth it to save *billions* of lives.

▼ **Note** - As political fallout, those in the Brotherhood and the various world governments that vote in favor of this option will gradually find themselves subtly persecuted for this decision, even though no one on *this side* dies because of it. Some of this will be related to the classified debriefings of the agents from the other side. It seems that a number of the highest ranked human collaborators on the other side also hold high government positions on *this side*. While they are not Evil on *this side*, the notion that their alternate selves cooperated in the subjugation of mankind for personal benefit causes *lots* of friction and shuts down all hope of advancement for a number of promising careers. And they return the favor as much as possible on those who showed them the door. Nothing public, nothing directly traceable, but effective nonetheless. In fact, the trouble these people cause can be the focus of a long-term plot on this side, as they try to corrupt or disgrace the Brotherhood, turning to Evil because in the end, that was their true nature.

The commando teams that go through the rift on a one-way trip will be fully aware of what they are committing to. They will also be equipped with dozens of Elder Seals and not a few backpack nukes. The hope is not that they will prevail and return Evil to its Prison by themselves, but that they can take advantage of the chaos to give humanity a respite, and more importantly, *some hope*. Not everyone who works "for the authorities" is Evil. They may know what they are doing is wrong, but simply see themselves as having no other choice. On the other side, virtually everyone has lost someone they care about and secretly wishes for some righteous payback. Even though the churches have been closed or suborned, many continue to silently pray to the embodiment of Good they still believe in.

Most parents still want a better world for their children, and young adults never really need an excuse to rebel against the authority of their elders. It is hoped that there can be a repeat of the Aeon War, where the people rise up against their own sorcerer-kings and as a whole, shove the Evil genie back into its bottle, at least for a while.

▼ **Note** - If commando teams *are* sent through on a one-way trip, Sarah Baker *is* going to find a way to get through that rift as well. Deep inside, she knows her true love is long gone, but if by some miracle he still lives, he lives on the other side of that discontinuity, somewhere on that alternate Earth. She has lived her entire life in Brecken Ridge, waiting for a chance like this, to either find her true love again, or make whoever killed him pay for the crime. She is smart and resourceful, and she's determined that she *will* go through or die trying.

For the gamemaster, the events that lead up to this can be a facet of an existing campaign, or the start of a new, parallel campaign. Instead of the secret and fairly low-key work of the Brotherhood operatives on this side, the alternate campaign starts on the other side. It is grim, gritty, terrifying and violent on almost a daily basis. Instead of having all the equipment and funding an operation needs, adventurers will have to make every shot count, scrounge weapons and ammo from fallen foes, and learn to live off the land.

Eventually, after a series of defeats and narrow escapes, they link up with the Brotherhood cell that plans to go back through the rift to *our* Earth, and then volunteer to return to the terrible reality they call home and start the fight anew with better weapons and equipment and combat-trained teams at their command. If a normal **Code:Black** campaign isn't dark and violent enough for your players, then this should do the trick. If it doesn't, nothing will...

▼ **FINAL NOTES** - Brecken Ridge is obviously limited in its scope as a place where things are happening. It is not meant to be the focus of an entire **Code:Black** campaign, nor are the featured extras meant to be player-controlled adventurers (though they *could* be). It is an idea mine, showing how past Evils can influence the present, how the Blind interact with large-scale Evils in their midst, how the Brotherhood and the government sometimes do not see eye to eye on matters, and the kinds of low-key ways that Evils might try to influence or affect situations that are under Brotherhood control. Aspects of all of these can translate out into the larger campaign world.



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