

Black and Grey Programs

Casual users of Etherspace, mostly the tab addicted masses who frequent Etherspace's numerous pleasure domains, view it as relatively harmless. After all, even if their avatar is destroyed they are simply ejected from Etherspace. At most this is a mild inconvenience which is soon overcome by jacking back in or taking another tab, assuming one is available. Those more immersed in scope culture and activities know the reality is far different. There are many dangers in the scope that can injure and kill a user via their avatar, some scope demons and agents are known to harm scope users through their avatars. More common still and better known are the infamous grey and black programs.

Early in the construction and use of the great scope domains it became clear that more than system administration and standard etheric security would be needed to protect sensitive scope based information and systems. Without some way of breaking up concerted attacks on domains, even if access to a domain required a specific physical entry point, even the most secure of domains would be overwhelmed as attackers were expelled but rejoined the assault almost immediately as they reentered the scope. While high grade security, the practicalities of travelling to and entering defended domains reduced the likelihood and logistical practicality of such assaults, some information and systems were deemed too valuable for any chances to be taken. World governments and powerful factions alike sought out new ways to defend their domains and the fruits of these researches were the black and grey programs.

In essence black and grey programs use the ability of programs to impose structure upon Etherspace's to alter it so that it is harmful to immersed users. This is achieved by creating sub programs within programming constructs that attack immersed users through the link that exists between their avatars and the scope user. Such sub programs are complex and time consuming to create but their value in Etherspace security cannot be underestimated. The knowledge of creating black and grey programs is closely guarded with few groups or individuals possessing the knowledge to create the full range of programs available. A thriving market exists for trading pre-made black and grey programs and programming code for them is worth a fortune, providing the seller can survive the dangers possessing such knowledge brings!

Since governments and powerful factions are the usual

creators and users of black and grey programs they are keen to stop the proliferation of knowledge regarding their creation and go to extreme lengths to ensure its protection. However, like most knowledge regarding the scope, there have been a determined few who have sought this knowledge out, for good or ill, despite the dangers of such a course. As a result the knowledge and use of such programs is becoming more common and The Scope is resultantly becoming a more dangerous place.

Presented below is information and rules for incorporating black and grey programs in your Etherscope game. Entries for individual programs use the following format

Name: commonly used name for program among scope community.

Description: the purpose of the program.

Special: any information unique to a specific program.

Saving Throw: the type of saving throw needed to resist the programs effect.

Effect: the specific effect of the program in terms of game mechanics.

General Rules

Black and grey programs are created as part of a domains/locations Etherspace security. Adding a black or grey sub program to the security program doubles the time taken to create the main program and increases its complexity to create by +2 for grey programs or +4 for black programs.

Etheric security containing a black or grey sub program adds +5 to the DC on attempts to overcome it. If a character fails to defeat the security then the black or grey security program triggers with two potential effects. Firstly the character must make a Scope Use check DC 30 or be expelled from The Scope as the program disassembles their avatar. If expelled the character must make a DC 15 saving throw, type depends upon specific program or immediately suffer the effects listed in the programs descrip-

tion.

Black Programs

Black programs exist for one simple purpose to discourage intruders by crippling or killing them. They are most commonly used by governments and the military extremely powerful corporations, organisations and rare individuals, it is rumoured for example that several of James Hargreaves (see MO) enemies have met unfortunate ends prying into areas of his domains better left unexplored. The following are the most well known and commonly encountered black programs.

BURN

Description: Sends a blast of pure entropic energy into the prime as the character's avatar disassembles in The Scope.

Saving Throw: Fortitude.

Effect: Inflicts 4d6 energy damage to the character.

HEART STOPPER

Description: Overloads the character's nervous system through the shock of sudden ejection from The Scope causing heart failure.

Saving Throw: Fortitude.

Effect: Character immediately drops to dying status (see CRB p. 172)

LOBOTOMISERS

Description: A group of programs, each version targets one statistic from Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma that disassemble the character's mind along with their avatar.

Special: Damage inflicted also affects the character's avatar should they re-enter the scope.

Saving Throw: Willpower.

Effect: Inflicts 1d6 attribute damage.

RIPPERS

Description: A group of programs, each version targets one statistic from Strength, Dexterity or Constitution inflicting massive motor neurological damage to the character by ripping apart their avatar.

Special: Damage inflicted also affects the character's avatar should they re-enter the scope.

Saving Throw: Fortitude.

Effect: Inflicts 1d6 attribute damage.

SOUL SHREDDER

Description: In many ways the character's avatar is their soul and this program attacks their very being in an attempt to kill.

Saving Throw: Willpower.

Effect: Character immediately drops to dying status (see CRB p. 172)

Grey Programs

A more passive version of black programs designed to make sustained assaults practicable, break up scope raiding groups and generally discourage raiding attempts in the first place. More common than black programs, greys are often utilised by those with information to protect and more humanitarian attitudes, or who cannot access or afford blacks. The research domains of the Eugenics League for example are often guarded by grey security as the information is sensitive but unnecessary taking of life is not the society's way.

DRAINER

Description: Uses the harmony of a tab jammers avatar to draw the character's physical energy from them as their avatar dissembles leaving them barely able to function and unlikely to attempt further activity.

Special: Only affects character immersed using a scope tab.

Saving Throw: Fortitude.

Effect: Character becomes exhausted (see CRB p.170).

FRIGHTENER

Description: Uses the shock of ejection from The Scope to cause uncontrollable panick in the user, preventing re-entry to The Scope.

Saving Throw: Willpower.

Effect: Character becomes panicked for 1d6 minutes (see CRB p.170).

LOCKDOWN

Description: Scrambles the avatars signature as it is disassembled causing static that disrupts a scope jacks function.

Special: Only affects characters immersed using a scope jack.

Saving Throw: Willpower.

Effect: Character is unable to access their upload domain for one hour.

SICKENER

Description: Uses the shock of their avatar being disassembled to cause physical illness to the character

Saving Throw: Fortitude.

Effect: Character becomes nauseated for 1d6 minutes (see CRB p.170).

STUNNER

Description: Creates a feedback spike using the energy generated as their avatar is disassembled that sends the character reeling.

Special: Status inflicted also affects the character's avatar should they re-enter the scope.

Saving Throw: Fortitude.

Effect: Character becomes stunned for 1d6 minutes.

Black and Grey Weapons Programs

In the past few years a new form of delivery has been developed for black and grey programs. This system allows a grey or black sub program to be included within a weapons program. The result is weapons that can damage the character as they damage his avatar. These weapon sub programs are still extremely rare and mainly see use among the military elite although some of The Scopes' more infamous figures have begun to sport these dangerous programs.

Creating a black or grey weapon program takes three times as long as the equivalent weapon program and increases the programs complexity by +3 for a grey weapon and +5 for a black weapon.

Grey Weapon Programs: When the weapon damages the characters avatar they must make a DC 15 saving throw, Willpower if immersed by scope jack or Fortitude if immersed by scope tab. If successful the character suffers no additional effect. If the save is failed the character's physical body takes non lethal damage equal to half the damage inflicted upon their avatar.

Black Weapon Programs: When the weapon damages the characters avatar they must make a DC 15 saving throw, Willpower if immersed by scope jack or Fortitude if immersed by scope tab. If successful the character suffers no additional effect. If the save is failed the character's physical body takes lethal damage equal to one quarter of the damage inflicted upon their avatar.

Credits

Written and Designed by Nigel McClelland

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