



TRINITY: TERRA VERDE

WW9006

TERRA VERDE

PSI ORDER NORÇA & SUDAMÉRICA SOURCEBOOK™



A Sourcebook for Trinity™

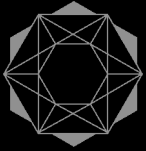


SACRIFICE

HOPE



UNITY



DOWN TO THE BONE

His wounds were deep enough that he could see organs. The sight of his insides was nothing new to him. As a biokinetic, he was intimately familiar with the inner workings of his body and could reshape himself with little effort. But these cuts — they were a violation, for they were not of his own design.

The man who called himself Heironymous Dieda leaned against the hard olive paneling of the station, legs splayed out across the corridor like the roots of a particularly crooked tree. His fiberweave vest had been cut to tatters and he used both arms to clutch his chest. Anyone passing by might have mistaken Dieda for a derelict in the dim light. The only indication otherwise were the nine bodies crumpled to the floor throughout the cramped corridor, linked by pools of commingled blood.

They simply hadn't adjusted fast enough. Dieda had moved too quickly for them to track him with their guns. Five of them were smart enough to draw their swords; the rest died where they stood. Only one was truly able to break from the rigid mold of training and realize what it meant to battle with someone whose entire body was a weapon, but Dieda was the better fighter.

She had seen her death coming. Dieda had been able to tell from the way her body moved. She knew she could not possibly avoid his next blow. She had seen it coming and he had watched her *adapt* — moving forward to let the bone spike pierce her heart so that she could get inside his guard, driving her sword under his ribcage and up through his lung, its tip surfacing near the upper part of his back.

Each jerked away, yanking their weapons from the other, and slumped back against opposite walls. They slid to the deck without pretense, landing roughly, their feet nearly touching.

He had locked eyes with her as they lay dying. He had glanced at the cooling corpses littering the passage, peered down at his wound and then raised his eyes back to her. "Duty. All for duty," he had mumbled, aware that she did not speak his language, but hoped she would understand.

"Giri," she had breathed, head nodding slightly, and died staring at her killer.

Dieda had watched her expire. He knew well the finality of mind and body releasing their hold on life; he'd been trained years before to ignore it. "The physical shell is craven and lies to the soul," his teachers said. "Biokinesis constrains physical cowardice and turns you into a creature of pure will, where mind and body intersect as one."

But his wounds were deep, probably mortal. Even a creature of pure will couldn't deny that.

He didn't even know her name. He squinted in the dark, barely able to make out "M. SAITO" in yellow block print over her left breast. "Heironymous," he mumbled.

Perhaps she was the wiser of the two, he found himself thinking. So simple to just let go, to release the corks of tissue he'd used to plug exposed veins and arteries, to pour his life out onto the floor. Would the last sight he see be the body of his own killer, her eyes locked in the vacant stare of the dead?

You are weak, cousin. Weaker than an infant child in your resolve, and now in strength. You are not Norça.

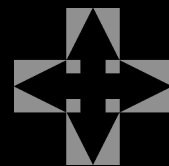
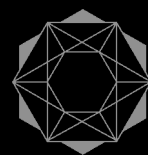
The voice came unbidden, as it always did. He never answered it. He knew it was his own imagination telling him what his cousin would say, and that responding to it would be tantamount to holding a conversation with himself.

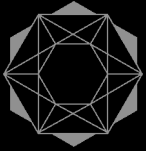
You would release your life upon the decks of this nameless station? Willingly suicide to avoid the weight of responsibility? You are a wretch.

Dieda grimaced. His life would have been much easier if it wasn't for his cousin. Dieda made the mistake of thinking that his cousin would have ever considered the ties of blood stronger than that of Family. Dieda was one of the first, and he stood by his cousin's side when asked to, pledging his life to another man's dreams. He left his own life behind so that his cousin's would have meaning. Dieda gave him a loyalty so strong that it would redefine the word itself.

What did Dieda get for his troubles? Only derision. He was a target, never quick enough or smart enough. He was humiliated before the others on many occasions, but always bit back his shame and forced himself to work even harder. He would make himself over in his cousin's image, if that's what was necessary. Not for acceptance, but for blood. For loyalty.

Not enough, cousin. Never enough. You snapped like brittle bone, shattering within and tearing yourself apart. You ripped into your own insides with your lack of resolve. Now you sit across from someone weaker than you and pretend to admire her absence of drive.





Dieda grew painfully aware of M. Saito's dead stare. "I apologize," Dieda whispered. "He can be abrasive."

You don't speak to voices in your head, yet you talk to corpses, cousin? Strange etiquette you hold with inanimate objects. Interesting how quick you are to forgive one who moments ago wished to tear you from groin to throat.

"Shut up," he whispered.

You hate most to hear the truth. You cloud your mind with eyes closed to what surrounds you. You decide that which you wish to hear is the sound entering your ears. You are not Norça.

"Shut up!" he screamed. The nine dead men and women around him answered only with silence.

Coward.

Dieda shivered with rage. Even now, the imagined voice of his cousin could drive him to such a state of mind. It had always been like this, from the time they were children on the streets of Medellín to their final encounter in La Pluma Esmaralda. Thirteen years, now.

...

Right after the Quantakinetic Purge, he returned from India, triumphant. He had managed a feat of misdirection that would have left Bue Li herself proud. Dieda found his cousin in the study, feeding his birds, and approached with grin stretched wide.

"Have you heard? Have you seen the present that I have for you today?"

"You brought me five." His cousin did not return his smile.

"Yes, five! No one is the wiser. The other orders believe them all killed. Think of it!"

"I expect more of you. I give you a task, and you scrape success from the boot-heel of failure. You have the audacity to gloat that you have brought me five? I expected ten. You grow complacent."

"You can't be—"

"Always whining, and never thanking me for what I've given you. You do me a disservice, cousin."

Dieda stared in disbelief.

"Thanks? You want me to *thank* you? Should I be honored that I've hated every waking moment of the last six years? Should I be thankful that I'm held to a level of expectation that even a god could not match?"

"I expect perfection from my family—"

"And I've given it to you from the beginning. What have you given me?"

"I gave you life," said his cousin.

Dieda spat in his face. "That's my life, Giuseppe. That's what you gave me, every damned minute since I stepped out of your Chamber."

Giuseppe was very still. His expression never wavered, and he didn't make a sound. The birds fluttered about restlessly in their cages.

Dieda was ready for death. He wanted his cousin to lash out and slit him from ear to

ear, if only to force the loss of his legendary control. Dieda wanted him to break. Instead, Giuseppe laughed.

"That's what I wanted from you, cousin. Passion! A willingness to stare death in the face without regret. It's taken you six years to find it, and now your passion is to leave. That is what you wish, to be as far away from me as you can. I can see it written in your soul."

The smile vanished as he leaned close. His eyes burned into Dieda's with a furious intensity.

"Would you give back the life that I provided you? Would you sever the bonds of Blood and Family? Would you excise the portion of my soul that lies within your own?"

Dieda knew how it worked. They stripped you of everything they'd provided, returning you to the state you were in when you entered the Chamber — naked and without possessions. They placed you in the heart of the jungle and left you to find your own way out. If you survived, you could no longer return, and if you tried you would be killed. If you spoke of Blood or Family to those who understood neither, you would be killed.

"Would you give all of this up, Heironymous?" his cousin asked softly.

"Gladly."

And Giuseppe spat in his face.

...

That was the last time he saw his cousin, Norça Proxy Giuseppe del Fuego.

After reaching civilization, he had considered his options. The Æon Society was all too happy to snatch him up and offer work, though they were greatly disappointed when they realized he couldn't reveal much of anything about the Norça. Still, they counted themselves lucky to employ a talented biokinetic, and his work ethic amazed his superiors. He could easily have worked his way up in the organization had he felt any desire to do so.

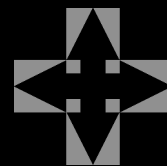
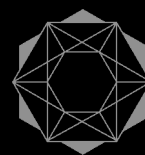
Instead, he found another kind of family in Sam O'Rourke's Proteus team. Eleven years now since they'd first worked together, and Dieda still began every day with a word of thanks for his luck at falling into the company of such loyal, devoted people. They had confronted the kind of hardships that broke most teams, but their tenacity in the face of misfortune seemed boundless. Even the Esperanza debacle couldn't keep them apart.

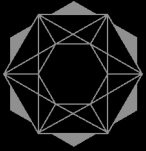
O'Rourke pushed hard for their assignments, and they pushed even harder to see each one through. They fought and bled to make things safe, to drive back the horrors so that people could sleep soundly at night. They did it because it needed doing — because it was the right thing to do. And when they did, Dieda felt as though he were once more part of the Norça.

Hardly, cousin. Were you Norça, you would understand duty. Now you absolve it in favor of personal weakness.

He winced as he recalled the duty he currently forswore.

...





"First, the bad news. Communication is likely to be nil in there. Analysis indicates that they configured the shielding of their fusion reactor to play hell with electronic signals inside the station. We suspect they have an internal network of wall-mounted communication that's wired throughout the station, providing physical links between compartments. Obviously we can't use this for ourselves."

"Sounds like your standard commo clusterfuck," muttered Chantal, the bald woman to Dieda's left. The rest of them chuckled politely and pretended to ignore the look of mock disapproval that O'Rourke shot her way.

"The good news is that they can't either, if we shut it down from the inside. Kaffe and Chantal, it's up to you to disable all their internal comm traffic. My suspicion is that you'll be able to do so on your route to the factory. No communication means they're working blind. Once you get to the factory controls, set them to overload, grab any files you can while doing so and then get the hell out.

"Giorgi and Rachel, you're with me. We're going for the clones and hostages. It's likely to be herd work here, so try to keep them calm and moving at all times.

"Heironymous, it's your job to get to Control and take care of Takeshi. He's going to claim diplomatic immunity and try to distract you until he can call guards or get the drop on you. Don't let him. We'll each rendezvous in the hangar for egress with our packages. We have an eight-minute window here; if you're not in the hangar, we leave you behind and you fend for yourself until the second force moves in.

"Our followup is official and will require some kind of Nihonjin approval before they can board, so you could be in there for quite awhile until the red tape is handled. Just so we're all clear, the hostages, the clones and Takeshi have to get out, in that order. Files are icing, but icing's no good without cake."

"What happens if things get hairy in there?" Dieda asked.

"Officially? We are to call for backup and wait until it arrives before proceeding further," said O'Rourke.

"Unofficially?"

O'Rourke paused before carefully proceeding. "It is possible that one or all of us could become separated from each other in the confusion. Should such a thing happen, it is also possible that every other person but you is compromised. Takeshi *must* be stopped. The factory *must* be destroyed. The hostages and clones *must* be rescued. Anybody or anything gets in your way? Consider them an enemy of humanity and act accordingly."

"But I start out separated from the rest of you," pointed out Dieda. "Does that mean as soon as I split off, I operate under those parameters?"

O'Rourke said "Perhaps," but he nodded slowly. A long look passed between them.

"Understood," said Dieda.

...

Misunderstood, you mean. You enjoy siesta while those you think worthy of the name Norça fight and die, believing you make the same sacrifice as they. Nothing has changed, cousin. You cannot move beyond your own pain when the lives of those you love are at stake. You would allow them to die as well?

Dieda's scream was hollow and ragged.
Get up.

"I can't—"

You're right. You have nothing left. You have exhausted your reserves. Were you Norça, you would know that this is when you reach beyond yourself and succeed regardless. Only by dancing on the razor edge of life can you truly live. Get up.

Dieda sobbed tears of rage. "I can't!"

You are old friends with failure. You invite it to your home, introduce it to your wife and then dare to feign surprise when it cuckolds you, though all along that's exactly what you hoped for. You weave situations in which you fail so you can make excuses for your laziness. You wish to rest? Then die, and slumber forever in the hell where all cowards descend.

He choked out a cry of pain as his hands fumbled for purchase. His fingers found leverage between panels, but his arms were too weak to lift himself.

You think you left because of your own desires? You think I didn't arrange it? I discarded you because you were chaff, nothing more than a worm-ridden apple, willing to let your friends die while you pondered your worthlessness on the floor of some godforsaken station.

Dieda roared and used the power of his anger to surge strength to arms and legs, jackknifing his torso repeatedly against the paneling, wobbling precariously until he stood on quivering legs.

Too slow. You're no good to your friends if you move like a stumbling corpse.

He spat blood on the floor.

Too wasteful. You needed that fluid.

He started down the corridor, but paused and shuffled to close the eyes of M. Saito. "Rest," he whispered, "in the heaven where all warriors ascend."

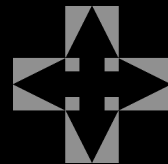
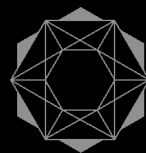
Melodramatic.

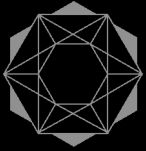
"Respect for a worthy foe. Something you'll never know, cousin."

Stop talking to yourself and walk.

"I'll run," he spat, and limped his way past the scattered bodies.

...





He didn't jog into Control so much as stagger, using exposed piping as railings to pull himself along. Dark greens and blues poured their harsh glow into the darkness. Holographic and flatscreen displays covered nearly all the walls and workstations within the compartment. One holo showed a small green speck slowly dancing away from the large blue blob of the station. A web of nearly imperceptible red lines lazily arced from the blue blob towards the green one. Dieda rested his palm on a nearby console, pushing buttons labeled with incomprehensible symbols until the red lines disappeared.

"You have disabled the defenses and saved your associates," spoke a voice in flawless Spanish. "A pity you shall never see them again. Turn, slowly."

Takeshi looked like any other autocrat Dieda had met: overconfident, visibly smug and surrounded by a palpable aura of self-importance. The man would have been the image of high fashion were it not for the sword belt and empty holster strapped hastily around his paunch. He held the laser pistol in his hand as he would a decanter of wine. It took all of Dieda's effort not to laugh.

"Perhaps you wish to know why I did all this," intoned Takeshi, "before I kill you, of course."

"No speeches," Dieda grunted, and closed all three meters in an instant, punching Takeshi in the stomach. Dieda's hand melted into a sharpened mass of bone that punctured the elegant Kostbaar suit as easily as a hot knife through flesh. He jammed it forward until he could feel Takeshi's spine.

"You — that's my — you have no right!" screamed Takeshi, and shot him four times in the chest. He felt cylinders of his lungs cook, alveoli popping like packing wrap, and reflexively adjusted the surrounding tissue to portion them off from the rest. He reworked his respiratory system in the span of a single gasping breath as he dove for the cover of a bulkhead.

He heard the desperate scrabble of Takeshi's boots on the deck, then a clattering and dull thud. The sound of indignant weeping reached him, along with Nihonjin muttered between wheezes. He chanced a quick peek at Takeshi, who now lay on his back, sword pulled from its scabbard. The gun had fallen to the floor, far out of his reach. Dieda waited, and watched as Takeshi placed the tip of the blade at the yawning hole in his blood-splattered suit.

"You can't defeat the virtuous," shouted Takeshi. "I shall know peace, while you will know only pain."

Dieda shook his head heavily. "Your words are meaningless. You reenact a ritual you know only from the vids, oblivious to meaning or duty. You think you can reach heaven by defiling the memory of your ancestors? You are a hollow man, so transparent that even your god will never see you."

"I am blameless," whimpered the fallen Nihonjin, and drove the blade along the path Dieda had begun.

Dieda fought through agony to stand. "You are dead," he rasped, "and no longer relevant."

He located the communications console and broadcast a message to the ships he knew were waiting just beyond range of the station's weapons. When he spoke, it was with Takeshi's voice.

"Unknown vessel, you are cleared to land. But you are too late! By the time you reach me, you will find my cooling corpse. You cannot imprison a righteous man!"

Dieda slumped to the deck. "Histrionic prick," he muttered, and fell away to blackness.

...

Someone called his name. He struggled to escape the gravity well of exhaustion and sedatives.

"—ymous. Heironymous, can you hear me? It's O'Rourke."

The voice cut through his vast personal darkness. He tried to answer but could not find where his mind connected to his mouth.

"Easy there; don't move. You got the worst of it. Kaffe and Chantal are a little banged up, but recovering. We did it, pal. *You* did it. We shut down the facility. No more clones; no more hostages. You saved a lot of lives—"

He could not feel his own body, but made an effort to smile. Then he once more retreated deep within himself.

...

The room was brighter than he'd expected it to be, all powder-white with muted, pale blue light. O'Rourke snored loudly on an off-white sofa beyond the foot of his bed.

"Sam," he croaked. "Sam, wake up."

Dieda grabbed a small bottle of medication on the table next to him and weakly arced it through the air, beaming his boss on the forehead. O'Rourke's bloodshot eyes flew open and he sat up abruptly.

"Heironymous, Kaffe and Chantal—"

"I heard."

"Okay."

O'Rourke rubbed his eyes and stared at Dieda.

"They say Takeshi killed himself."

"I imagine they do."

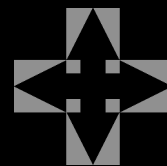
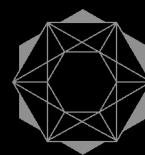
Their eyes locked. One of the lights in the far corner of the room flickered slowly. O'Rourke was the first to turn away. He was also the first to break the silence.

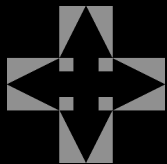
"What happened in there? I don't mean with Takeshi; I'm talking about you. I've seen you go above and beyond before, but this time..."

Dieda frowned and thought hard. "I believe I came to a certain understanding with myself."

"Ah, right. This is where you clamp down on your past and leave me hangi—"

"I am no longer Norça," he said thickly. "But I think I'm no longer trying to be. I think I figured out how to be something else. Something different. I don't know."





O'Rourke nodded slowly, then flashed a quick smile. "Get some rest. You earned it this time."

Dieda shook his head. "I'll rest when I'm dead. Toss me your comp and I'll start on the post-mission forms."

"Now that's just gratuitous. No way I'm going to let you show me up in the arena of needless busywork. You stay right there while I go get something to drink, and I'll prove to you that I'm better at filling out hundreds of meaningless forms than you'll ever be. You goddamn peacock."

Dieda allowed himself a slight smile as O'Rourke left the room. He leaned back and stared at the blank expanse of ceiling.

"I have passion," he whispered. "I have family. I have duty and I have honor. I have loyalty to a cause I believe in. I need nothing else."

This time, the voice did not respond.



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Special Thanks

To Andrew Bates, who (with his crew) gave us a wonderful legacy. If we can pass along as much fun as we've inherited, we'll be doing well.



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<http://www.white-wolf.com>; alt.games.whitewolf and rec.games.frp.storyteller

PRINTED IN USA.



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WELCOME TO THE GREEN CONTINENT

In a world that still remembers the horrors of the Aberrant War, it's refreshing to know that some of the scars have healed. **Terra Verde** reveals a region where the future is now, and it *works*.

Biokinetics

Loyalty to family. Devotion to duty. Style and substance, working hand-in-hand. These keys unlock the biokinetic order, revealing staunch defenders of humanity striving to exist as quiet paragons amidst the chaos of the 22nd century.

The Norça first appeared in Sudamérica in 2106, bearing the name of an organization instrumental to the legitimization of the drug trade decades earlier. To the rest of the world, they were common criminals and a security nightmare. To Sudamérica, they were once more a force for great change.

Today the Norça fight a secret war against those who would restrict humanity's progress. Their enemies include Aberrants, aliens and organizations that stand in the path of progress, be they corporation, secret society or government. They fight for results, not recognition, and they do so under the firm gaze of the *Pai de Norça*, Giuseppe del Fuego. They fight to the death for their extended human family.

Sudamérica

Family is just as important to the countries that comprise Sudamérica. The Aber-

rant War provided a common enemy that crossed social, ethnic and spiritual boundaries. Mutual defense led to mutual support and eventually to community. Such unanimity allowed for advances undreamed of by anyone, least of the Sudamericans.

Sudamerican progress would have been impossible without a unique convergence of old ways and new progress. Sudamerican culture encompasses devout believers in any (or several) of its major religions along with skeptics and unbelievers, just as it has room for staunch traditionalists and radical innovators alike. Native peoples live among the descendants of immigrants and modern refugees, neither lords nor victims. The benefits of this synthesis flow to the world, most particularly in medical and biotechnological advances.

How to Use This Book

Terra Verde is arranged into the following sections:

Chapter One: The Nova Fôrça de Nacionais exposes the secretive Norça. You'll learn the importance of family, loyalty and duty. You'll also understand why they keep such a low profile about their plans and interests.

Chapter Two: Biokinesis and Biotechnology delves into the secrets of this versatile Aptitude, revealing alternate techniques and new uses for the original effects. Following that is an in-depth look at biotechnology, including methods to create your own biotech devices.

Chapter Three: Sudamérica explores the nations that comprise the "green earth" and the cultures that call it home. Discover the hard path that a continent had to travel, and the bright future they found along the way.

Chapter Four: Roleplaying takes a look at just how to play a character who deals daily in subterfuge and intrigue, as well as suggestions on how to run a series based

in Sudamérica. You'll also meet the handful of Aberrants smart and lucky enough to elude the Norça.

Chapter Five: Dramatis Personae divulges major players and people of note in the region. Ascertain the Pai de Norça's long-term plans to ensure humanity's survival. This chapter concludes with seven examples of Norçan and Sudamerican characters ready for play.

Appendix: Historical Data wraps things up with a timeline of the key events that shaped a nation and an order.

A Note from the New Developer

The curtain opens to reveal a bearded man typing away at a computer, surrounded by stacks of manuscripts and books; a cat occasionally jumps up to demand a little petting before going off for another nap. The man notices the audience, and turns to say...

Greetings, Gentle Readers. At long last, we're bringing you new **Trinity** books. All of us involved in the effort hope you like the results.

There are always questions when a line changes hands. Am I going to throw out your favorite part of the

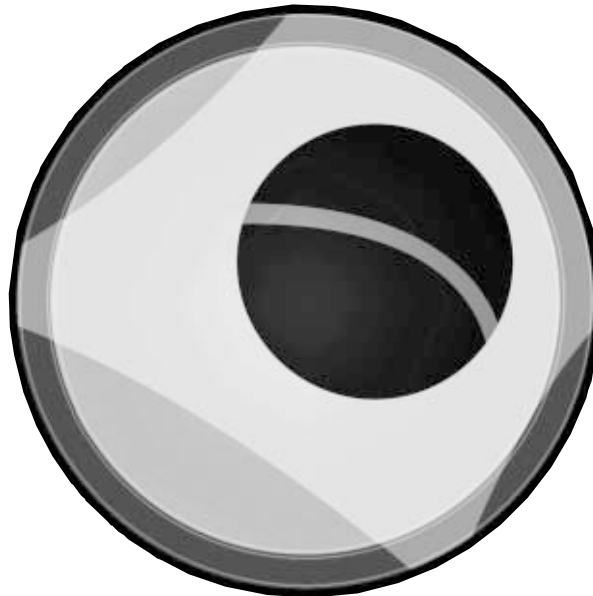
game? Will there be radical changes? Is this all going to turn into something you hate?

I've been involved in Trinity from its early days, and wrote parts of quite a few books under Andrew Bates' supervision. I'm here now because I like **Trinity**. I enjoyed working with Andrew and the rest of the crew, and in future volumes you'll find familiar names back for more. My idea of a good run for the game at this point is, well, more of the same. I chat pretty regularly with Andrew, as we've done over the years, and while no two people ever share precisely the same goals or priorities, I plan no shocking deviations from the course the line's followed so far.

There are surprises ahead, of course, but many of them are surprises we planned long ago and others will (we hope) build on the familiar spirit. The classic trinity — Hope, Sacrifice, Unity — remains in effect.

I hope you'll let us know what you think of this book. We want it to be fun, provocative and useful for as many people as possible.

Regards,
Bruce Baugh



The Nova Força de Nacionais (Norça) Profile

For such a small organization, Psi Order Norça inspires fear in a great many people. The fear of being replaced has haunted people throughout the ages. Human history is filled with tales of doppelgängers and shape-shifters who murder their doubles and assume their place in society. Unsurprisingly, modern stories usually cast a biokinetic as the villain in novels or vid programs. Ever since the Norça revealed themselves to the world in 2106, people at all levels of society have feared that friends, family, neighbors, lovers, bosses, employees, government officials and even religious leaders are not who they seem to be.

The Norça's mere existence has spawned the development of psionic detection measures and countless legislations directed at a redefinition of identity. Rather than allay such fears, Norçans capitalize upon them. Exploiting others' psychological weaknesses along with their own talents, they have brokered lasting connections in intelligence communities and black markets systemwide. They bankroll their order by smuggling leisure pharmaceuticals throughout colonized space. The order is privately and sometimes publicly accused of political assassination, subversion, sedition, espionage, corporate espionage, terrorism, drug trafficking, extortion, murder, racketeering and prostitution.

It is fortunate for an order with so few powerful friends elsewhere, then, that the people of Sudamérica love the biokinetics. The average citizen doesn't doubt for a minute that "*los magicos*" are vitally necessary in the Trinity world. Too many Sudamericans know of somebody who has benefited from the Norça and its work to write the biokinetics off as a nefarious conspiracy. That they work for the people is self-

evident, from their charity and relief organizations to their work in the destruction of Aberrants. Their close connection to the people of Sudamérica allows them to work with limited protection from Sudamerican governments.

Peeling Off the Skin

The cultivated "Norça mystique" allows the biokinetics access to all kinds of data, people and places. The Norça simply don't have the resources to be everywhere at once. They feign a much larger grasp through elaborate inveiglements and careful insinuations. Field teams create decoy operations designed to be leaked, to spread misinformation about Norça capabilities and goals and to provide cover for other missions of genuine importance. At the center of this intricate labyrinth of misdirection is Proxy Giuseppe del Fuego. He directs the tangled skeins of convolution with a steady hand and a vision for the future of humanity.

The order expects resourcefulness and ingenuity, and does not give special recognition to members who are, as far as the order's leaders are concerned, simply doing what they should. Norça who have been around since the beginning remember when the order managed with sub-standard equipment and had the cunning needed to overcome their financial limitations. This attitude carries through to the present: Norça in the field are expected to acquire and bargain for what they need by using the order's vast network of contacts, trading goods for favors to be collected at a later time and milking the local distribution chains. They learn to use what is at hand and to use it effectively, with all external tools complementing and supporting their innate talents rather than substituting for intelligence, persistence or competence.

Some observers compare the order to a cult or a crime family. Although there are definitely some points of similarity, both comparisons miss the point. Pai de Norça's influence does not translate to sheer adoration within his order. He certainly commands respect from his subordinates, but he also severely discourages any sort of fanatical adulation. Norça advance to the highest ranks in part by arguing successfully with him and by pointing out ways to improve upon his plans. Likewise, he refuses to maintain his position through structured fear. He wants nobody in his order to feel as though they are doing what they do

because they can never leave. He would prefer his followers to feel as though they belong to something larger, performing their tasks to benefit their order, their planet and the human race. The precautions he must take to prevent the order's secrets from escaping are certainly harsh, but no Norça joins the order without understanding the consequences.

Secrets of Norça Success

The Norça certainly don't discourage the belief that they are everywhere, but this alone isn't responsible for their broad authority. Their extensive influence throughout the ranks of humanity draws on a few key points:

- **Loyalty, Family, Duty.** All Norça, from neutral dock worker to top-level biokinetic infiltrator of rival governments, feel a near-unswerving loyalty to the order. Though the degree of such obviously varies between each person, the average Norça would die for the family with little question. The family takes care of its own, providing and taking away as necessary. Superiors give the members they supervise broad leeway to accomplish their tasks, but expect admirable performance under all circumstances. Norça who fall short can expect fair but harsh discipline. The family, after all, knows what's best, and what's best is the complete discharge of obligations. According to the Pai, all Norça have the sacrosanct duty to rise above and beyond human frailty, demonstrating by example how humanity can evolve both socially and physically.

- **Public Image.** There's a popular stereotype of the mysterious stranger who draws the attention and love of others, even though the relationships all end in sorrow sooner or later. Norça enjoy playing that part with the world at large. Most people suspect that the biokinetic order's methods are ethically shaky at best, and Joe Hologram is pretty sure that the Norça are "up to something." Even people who identify themselves as fans and supporters admit that the Norça are "sneaky" and presume they use extra-legal means to accomplish their goals. The Norça do nothing to counteract this perception — in fact, they welcome it. The occasional slip-up that reaches the public consciousness meets with wry acceptance rather than shock, and Norça public relations experts make sure to spin the order's mistakes with savvy and charm.

- **Paranoia.** For the Norça, the question isn't *if* humanity will come under attack, but *when* and *by whom*. They operate as though hostile forces will appear at any

given moment and launch a full-scale assault. This sense of urgency fuels the urge to exceed, driving Norça to the greatest possible heights of success in preparation for what they see as the inevitable calamities to come. Planners include myriad contingency and fall-back assumptions, wrapping discrete tasks in layers of options so that no readily imaginable setback can keep agents from their goals. The Norça aim to know precisely what they could salvage under as many sorts of catastrophic conditions as possible.

- **Longevity.** Proxy del Fuego predicts that only Norça and ISRA have a chance of surviving to the dawn of the 23rd millennium, and that Norça will be the sole order to preserve its original purpose. He has taken great pains to ensure that the order remains steadfast in its mission and loyalties, laying down long-term plans for the possibility of his own death and preparing the order to avoid general purges (and survive one if it happens). He worries that his core goals for the order will become distorted over time, and wants to ensure that those goals are not lost sight of, regardless of whatever may happen in the coming years and centuries.

- **Competitive Passion.** The Norça sleep at night knowing that they've done their very best that day, and that they'll strive to do even better tomorrow. The only people they need to please are themselves and the Pai; everyone else's standards are insufficient. The sense of fraternal competition inherent to the order generally keeps most conflicts at least marginally friendly and salves hard feelings. The order values success, but recognizes that the most important thing is to make full use of the opportunities one has — hard, intelligent work earns Norça as much or more status than success through dumb luck or careless, slipshod efforts. The order judges excellence or absence thereof based on what an individual can do, so that a Norça of moderate capacity with great drive may win recognition along with more talented but not necessarily more ambitious or persistent rivals.

Paving the Road to Hell

The Norça spend much of their time in the "field," beyond Sudamérica, acquiring specialized information. They are not, however, an intelligence agency in any usual sense. They don't work to benefit a specific country, though their domestic operations do often strengthen Sudamerican nations. Their fundamental duty, as they see it, is to serve all of humanity. Since most of humanity doesn't understand the issues and wouldn't necessarily agree with the Pai's deci-

sions even if all the secret struggles were made public, Norça serves humanity in part by serving the order's own interests. They aim to keep themselves in a position to help humanity survive and advance.

Del Fuego knows all too clearly how well-meaning organizations can slowly pervert their own focus and evolve into self-perpetuating bureaucracies primarily concerned with expanding their own influence. He designed his order with safeguards to prevent or at least forestall its evolution into something like the Æon Trinity, fallen from noble concerns into pure power-seeking. While he remains at the helm, Norça's primary focus will remain the defense of humanity.

Methods and Practices Training

Being Norça is a matter of one's whole life, not just specific skills. The order may call upon new members to perform whatever task the cause requires, and attitude and community come before details. Before entering the Prometheus tank, new recruits spend time living with various families and working with various syndicates to see where their talents serve best at the moment. However, their instructors make it clear (or should) that what works now may not work in the years to come.

"Learn your family, learn your order, learn your capabilities" is one of the standard mottos for new Norça. A recruit who fails to take the initiative in seeking out new opportunities is by definition unworthy. So is one who starts exploring and then stops as soon as he finds something that seems just right. "Comfort is a trap" is another standard slogan: Norça are expected to keep moving, to challenge their own assumptions.

The peculiar Norça blend of initiative and submission to authority takes most recruits some time to master. (Indeed, many long-time members sometimes have problems with it.) Most families try to keep their new members a little uncertain and off-balance, sometimes handing out long lists of detailed instructions, sometimes watching silently to see what recruits do for themselves. Once the recruit is settled within a family, syndicate affiliation goes more straightforwardly. Syndicates are for work, not for the whole of life, and syndicate instructors tend to be more straightforward in their instructional methods.

Norça have little use for classrooms, and maintain few dedicated schools. Learning happens wherever instructors and students are: at work, while traveling, at parties. Nor do Norça think that instruction is the duty of only a few chosen members, even though it is the *primary* task of relatively few individuals. Almost all Norça think they have something important to tell others, and new recruits make as good an audience as any.

New neutral members of the order slide smoothly from this process of mutual investigation into lasting assignments. They spend a few months on one assignment, a few months at another, until mentors, administrators and bosses agree that the new members are making good use of their respective talents. Family affiliation comes early, with syndicate affiliation following.

Latent psions, of course, undergo the additional step of triggering. This happens on an individual basis, with one mentor and one student, wherever possible. The mentor comes from the new psion's syndicate, and shows the student how to apply the aptitudes to the tasks at hand. This is generally a very informal process. The only sure sign of failure is failure itself; as long as the student is still standing, learning continues.

Family Affair

There are between thirty and fifty families active within Norça at any given time. Each bears the name of one of the biokinetic veterans of the early years. Storytellers and players should work together to create the families that their series requires. Determine the last name of the original Norça in question, such as such as Calado, Torres, or Vargas). Choose a home territory for the family — almost always in Sudamérica and usually in Colombia or a neighboring country. Finally, choose an area of family specialization. This is a combination of geographical area (the districts around the home territory) and field of knowledge and practice (biotech, the drug trade, religion, etc.).

Cumprimentos!

Welcome to Norça. I enjoyed our recent chat. I recognize that you do not yet speak Spanish or Portuguese, and wish to provide you with a description of some terms you will hear more often than others. The following are honorifics:

Pai—Father. You may refer to me as Pai de Norça, if you wish.

Tio—Uncle. We refer to those in the upper echelons of Norça as “Tio.” Tios deserve great respect.

Irmão—Brother. Male Norça who have yet to distinguish themselves are called “Irmão.”

Irmã—Sister. Used similarly to “Irmão”, but with female Norça.

Primo—Cousin. Refer to Norça involved with criminal activities as “primo.”

Traidor—Traitor. Those who betray Norça. The biokinetic order hunts down and kills all traitors.

Liberdade—After you grow more familiar with Norça, you are allowed to leave your mentor’s family and “test your freedom,” so to speak. Your goal is to discover to which family you truly belong, but the road is your own to choose. I forgive much of a Norça’s actions during a liberdade, so long as they do not prove to be traitors.

Nomear—Roughly, your nomination replace your surname with that of your family. A great honor.

Leaving the Norça

Procedures for leaving the Norça are short and to the point. Word of a Norça’s disaffection makes its way up the chain of command to del Fuego. He meets personally with the unhappy individual and tries to work out the difficulties. This is particularly true with psions, whom there are never enough of and who play a central role in all of del Fuego’s plans. Almost anything can come into play in the effort to keep a psion from leaving, and valuable neutrals get almost favored treatment. Transfers, assigned spheres of influence, renewed training periods, time off, financial and other inducements...del Fuego is an expert at finding out what people want and figuring out how to give it to them within the framework of continued allegiance to the order.

If all else fails, then comes the ritual of separation. The departing individual is stripped of every physical object associated with her time in the order, from housing to gifts and tokens of esteem. Her current dwelling is, depending on its location, burned to the ground, torn down or sealed up and left abandoned. The individual herself is taken by her former family members to a random location in the jungle and left there. If she can make her way out, her new life begins. If not, well, the great cause has its costs.

Areas of Focus

Beyond the family structure that takes on such great importance within the biokinetic order, Norça divides its numbers amongst five large groups and a handful of much smaller ones. These groups are collectively known as *sindicatos* or “syndicates.” Full members refer to themselves “syndics,” although the order uses the terms “agents” or “specialists” when speaking to the public.

Whereas the families represent areas of local influence and dynastic identity within the order, the syndicates correspond to a Norça’s professional interests. Few families devote all their members to a specific syndicate; most families try to maintain a roughly even spread amongst them. Switching syndicates is much easier than leaving one family for another. As long as the Norça discharges all obligations to her syndicate, she can join another upon approval by the head of her family. This process usually lasts two weeks to three months, depending on which syndicate the Norça desires to leave.

Although the syndicates maintain a chief of daily operations, Pai de Norça ultimately directs each one. However, he usually limits his involvement to guiding changes in the overall direction that the syndicates take rather than the micromanagement of projects and personnel throughout the order. At the lower levels, the order entrusts each syndic with a great deal of personal responsibility. The syndicates reward personal initiative and hard work, holding those in the lowest ranks to the same level as those in charge.

Guerreros do Berço

Humanity's Defenders

Through a combination of masterful public relations coups, prestigious assignments and the careful manipulation of media resources, the biokinetic order ensures that when Joe Hologram thinks of the Norça, the Guerreros do Berço come to mind. When the Norça revealed themselves as a psi order in 2106, the first biokinetics seen by the world were the Guerreros. Del Fuego pledged that these "Warriors of the Cradle" existed to defend humanity from the terrors that sought to sow fear and destruction. He vowed the Norça would rid Sudamérica of Aberrant infestation within five years. As proof, the order publicly unveiled the bodies of ten Aberrants the Norça had already detected and slain since their formation in 2103. The following weeks saw five more Aberrants killed publicly by Norça operatives, solidifying the identity and purpose of the order and its members in the minds of people world-wide.

Since that time, del Fuego has made few changes to the Guerreros do Berço. They operate under much the same principles, goals and conditions as they did in 2106. Most other Norça think of the Guerreros as the backbone of the biokinetic order, providing a trunk from which the other syndicates branch out. Similarly, most Guerreros consider the other syndicates responsible for their own existence — that without the contributions of the others, they could not accomplish what they do. This mutual respect, though not always as healthy as del Fuego would hope, helps prevent overly unhealthy rivalries between the syndicates. "I refuse to select a 'favorite child,'" he once told two quarrelling shifters, "so do refrain from jockeying for my limited attention."

There's a joke within the Norça that while the rest of the order devotes itself to the defense of humanity's interests, only the Guerreros do Berço do it with style.

One tale circulating amongst the other syndicates involves a Guerrero arriving at a social function with a partner on each arm, a thousand-yuan cigar clenched in her teeth and the eyes of everyone in the room gazing upon her immaculate dress, only to uncover an Aberrant cultist, slit his throat and go to church the next morning, conscience clean. Though certainly there exists a grain of truth in this stereotype, the order can count on Guerreros to get things done and look fantastic while doing so.

The syndicate stresses self-reliance beyond anything else, but discourages social isolation. Each Guerrero must work well with a team, giving and taking direction effectively, yet should also know how to operate if separated from the rest. In contrast to the other syndicates, all Guerreros answer directly to Proxy del Fuego. Within the order, they're known as "a thousand individuals." In del Fuego's absence, Guerreros work with handlers in ARPO, the asset-management syndicate.

With the Pai's approval, Guerreros can form small groups known as "cadres" on a longer-term basis to achieve some specific goal. These cadres generally consist of anywhere between two and six syndics, though larger groups (such as Los Feroces) do exist. By design, cadres rarely contain syndics from a single family.

The Pai does not take cadres lightly. If a single Guerrero is held to high standards by the Pai, a group of them must continually prove their worth through deed and action. If he suspects that the cadre as a whole produces less a benefit than each Guerrero would individually, he doesn't hesitate to disassemble it and reassign the syndics to more appropriate duties. Rarely does this indicate del Fuego's displeasure with the Guerreros. On the contrary, such displays of initiative impress Pai de Norça. However, with such limited numbers, the proxy can't afford to squander resources. The longest-lasting cadres prove their necessity and efficacy to del Fuego beyond any shadow of his doubt.

As a rule of thumb, Guerrero Guerreros do Berço assignments involve acts or deeds that will sooner or later become public knowledge. The responsibilities vary, but almost always consist of "high profile" tasks. These include undercover or infiltration operations in which the ultimate goal is the exposure of nefarious interests to the public at large. The most common targets are Aberrant cults, corporations producing banned weapons of mass destruction, hideously corrupt local officials whom the Norça can't control through other means, research labs

performing illegal experimentation and any group or person the Norça considers an enemy of humanity.

A handful of cadres consist entirely of Aberrant hunters devoted to large regions of planets or colonized space. They move around frequently and work with local governments to uncover Aberrant threats, often attempting capture and containment before killing them. Though certainly dedicated to their task, del Fuego frowns upon syndics who take it to the extreme of fanaticism.

Additionally, the few Norça loaned out to organizations such as the Trinity, the UN World Court, governments friendly to the Norça and other psi orders almost always belong to this syndicate. The reasoning for this is eminently practical. This syndicate specifically trains Guerreros to know what they can and cannot discuss with people outside of the Norça, as well as the face of the order they should present to external organizations. The Guerreros do Berço expect the syndic to provide detailed reports of her experiences, but rarely do they task her with the explicit gathering of intelligence. They leave such duties to Sol do Sangramento, the Norça syndicate that deals heavily with espionage.

Behind the Mask

Fully half of the order's biokinetics belong to the Guerreros, with another 500 neut syndics complementing the ranks. Not all Norça are suited for this syndicate. The Guerreros do Berço only allow into their ranks those who prove themselves capable of handling diverse situations, cooperating with a variety of people and producing outstanding results. The order sends the Guerreros when they want others to know of the order's involvement, whether against governments, corporations, organizations, societies or individual people. They exist to call attention to themselves, distracting others from the order's true interests elsewhere. The greatest implements that the Norça can use for misdirection are the Guerreros do Berço.

Privately, del Fuego maintains that the Guerreros function as the public face of the order. He calls them "warrior diplomats," for they are the syndics most representative of the order. In practice, the proxy's increased scrutiny serves as a double-edged sword. The Pai certainly anticipates outstanding levels of performance, conduct and personal excellence from each Guerrero, but syndics who surpass his grand expectations catch his eye and can advance rapidly within the order. The Pai tolerates failure only once, however and grudgingly at that.

Guerreros who repeatedly overstep bounds soon find themselves removed from the syndicate and placed in much less glamorous positions, where they can cause little harm. Ambition is essential, but so are results.

Patron: Pélé (the 20th century soccer player, not the volcano goddess)

Allegiance: We stand as the first and last line of defense against Aberrants, hostile aliens and the dregs of humanity. Should we fall, everything worth fighting for dies with us. We shall never fall.

Ability Group: Athletics, Intrusion, Melee, Martial Arts, Savvy, Stealth

Valientes Sabuesos do Deus

Disaster Relief

For all of its technological advances and social developments, Sudamérica remains a dangerous place. Forest fires, blizzards, earthquakes, tornadoes and hurricanes are altogether too common. Severe water shortages caused by droughts can dry out entire regions, while floods and mudslides are the bane of the rainy seasons. This only accounts for natural disasters, to say nothing of manmade accidents. Passenger ship crashes, wars, cracked hulls in underwater cities, terrorist attacks, the collapse of shoddily constructed buildings, reactor accidents and massacres by political groups are but a few of the tragedies humanity inflicts upon itself. In the face of all this calamity, Sudamérica looks to the Valiant Hounds of God to make things better.

Originally conceived as a temporary alternative to the then-defunct Red Cross, Norça leadership eventually incorporated Valientes Sabuesos do Deus as a full syndicate. Footage from 2105, prior to the psi order's revelation to the world, distinctly identifies Proxy del Fuego and over a dozen of the first biokinetics helping citizens of the Mayan League recover from a particularly brutal earthquake. Investigations into the incident and interviews with survivors tell of a mysterious group that arrived with abundant supplies and worked tirelessly through the week, assisting in the recovery of those trapped under the rubble, treating the wounded and constructing temporary shelters for the many displaced.

Though cynics believe it a calculated move to solidify the order's reputation, the Norça involved with the relief effort maintain that they were training in the area and brought what resources they could to bear when the destruction became evident. Proxy del Fuego refuses to provide further comment on the incident, but went on record



as saying “it fell to us to bear the weight and we did so without question.”

These words do a fair job of describing the history and modern-day goals of the Sabuesos. They take great pride in the efficacy of their humanitarian efforts and enjoy a well-earned reputation for their acts of valiance and bravery. The Hounds discovered some unique applications of biokinesis, as even basic shifter techniques permit Sabuesos to locate people. Adaptation lets syndics waltz through areas that would prove fatal to other rescue workers. (Sometimes they even waltz literally: the Sabuesos do *whatever* it takes to calm panicked victims and get them cooperating.) Tailored bio-apps coupled with Psychomorphing can turn a shifter into a walking fire extinguisher. Creative uses of Transmogrify can allow Norça to “slip through the cracks,” getting to survivors trapped under rubble.

The significant budget the Sabuesos enjoy provides vast funding for relief operations and can even assist in rebuilding efforts. Often the biokinetic order funds reconstruction in return for percentage cuts of local industries, usually in perpetuity. Larger communities rarely

need the assistance, but smaller towns frequently sign over these rights in return for immediate aid. The Sabuesos take a piece of this percentage and then pour the remainder back into the community to sponsor local developments. Many of these “Norça towns” are sprinkled throughout Sudamérica, and few are unhappy with the changes.

Antonia Siddiqi is functionally in charge of the day-to-day operations of the Hounds. Many Norça know of her vocal tirades about the responsibilities of this syndicate, through either story or personal experience. Antonia is also notorious throughout the biokinetic order for her many toe-to-toe arguments with Proxy del Fuego over adequate distribution of supplies and personnel to the Sabuesos. Many tios joke that the Pai keeps Antonia around to remind him how to take his job so seriously. Del Fuego himself refers to her on many occasions as “Norça’s conscience,” though never unkindly.

Every disaster is unique. Consequently, Norça trains Sabuesos to prepare for a variety of situations. The order provides general overviews of a variety of disaster scenarios, with the syndic typically specializing in deal-

ing with at least three different kinds. Syndics often cross-train as apprentices to other Sabuesos in order to hone their skills. Nearly 200 syndics devote their time to Search & Rescue operations throughout Sudamérica, tracking down people lost in the mountains or rain forests. Most learn how to function near groups hostile to their presence, or to the populace they attempt to assist. In these situations, del Fuego authorizes the Sabuesos to request support from other syndicates, if he deems the situation salvageable. Few knowingly direct attacks against the Hounds, for history shows that people who incur the wrath of the Norça tend to wind up dead or missing in short order.

Behind the Mask

The Valientes Sabuesos do Deus include a full 2,000 syndics, of whom approximately 100 are biokinetics. Because the Sabuesos have very few truly confidential aspects, this syndicate employs a large number of people who may not be deemed eligible for all the order's secrets, including medics, trackers, pilots, psychiatrists, construction workers and general relief workers. Still, with such a limited number of psions and expert support personnel, Siddiqi spreads the Sabuesos thinly to achieve more. Each syndic and his staff counts on volunteers from the local region to assist with relief efforts. Under certain severe circumstances, Sabuesos can temporarily conscript unassigned Norça from other syndicates to aid in accomplishing specific tasks.

On a practical level, assisting the relief or rescue of average people provides a great amount of positive press for the Norça. Building popular support amongst the locals provides excellent inroads for future operations in the area, from obtaining cultural intelligence to acquiring informants and locating safe-houses where fleeing Norça can lie low. Nevertheless, the tenacity of the Sabuesos and the amount of goodwill they provide speaks for itself. Even Sudamerican governments who don't care for the biokinetic order turn blind eyes to Sabueso involvement in times of trouble.

Administrations outside of Sudamérica rarely share this view, for many fear the implications of organized Norça operations within their territories. This does not prevent the Sabuesos from offering assistance where they can, with or without the approval of foreign governments. Such actions can occasionally place Sabuesos in dangerous positions, and often provide cause for syndics in the diplomatic division of ARPO to earn their pay.

Patron: St. Francis of Assisi

Allegiance: The world will always be a violent place, and in the aftermath of violence there will always be pain. We must salve this pain, returning those affected to where they were before the violence. We cannot change the nature of the world, but we can refuse to take misery as the last truth of any situation.

Ability Group: Awareness, Drive or Pilot, Investigation, Medicine, Rapport, Survival

Músicos da Verdade

Soul of the Order

The Músicos da Verdade, or "Musicians of Truth," take responsibility for Norça's technological advancement. They date back to the Norça's existence as a drug cartel in the latter half of the 21st century, when they were a network of ambitious underground labs devoted to pharmaceutical innovation. The infrastructure of loosely organized research groups remained as the years passed, and when del Fuego turned the Norça into a psi order, he simply expanded the scope of the syndicate's development interests.

Most Norça who don't work closely with the Músicos think of this syndicate as akin to a private metacorporation, or a monolithic "Research & Development" arm of the order. This certainly describes certain aspects of the syndicate, but Músicos da Verdade primarily exists as a loose collection of research projects, thought experiments and brain trusts. Together, they develop theories, methods and products in answer to Norça's needs. Músicos facilities run the gamut from full-blown research complexes to informal gatherings of syndics working in someone's home. Only an abiding concern for security unites them all.

Daniel Keos assists del Fuego in providing direction for the Músicos da Verdade. Keos spends a fair amount of time performing his duties as the Director of Operations at BioSystems, but devotes the rest to determining the future of Norça's developing technologies. Del Fuego works well with Keos and their interests complement each other. Nevertheless, Keos' distance from most other Norça leads subordinates to question his abilities. Some syndics whisper that Keos displays the onset of psionic dysfunction, but not within range of the Pai's perfect hearing.

Norça considers most work performed by Músicos to be "field research." Certainly the syndics spend time in labs, production facilities and meeting rooms, but the

syndicate compartmentalizes much of the “grunt work” and hands it off to workers employed by the order. These workers only work with the fragment at hand and remain perpetually unaware of the larger picture. Many consider the syndics “consultants” or “trouble-shooters” brought in to update the direction of projects or to create new ones.

Syndics can assign themselves, or be assigned, to multiple areas of focus. Norça interests span the whole range of 22nd century research subjects such as noetics, advanced biology, computer technologies, xenology, sentience relations and Taint. Fully one third of the syndicate devotes time to biotech research. One quarter maintains the order’s pharmaceutical interests, making drugs stronger, safer and longer lasting. However, the order isn’t averse to funding the occasional high concept, provided there exists a possibility for scientific advances or profit potential. For example, Norça’s study of biological ontology hopes to definitively prove or disprove the existence of the human soul.

Whenever Músicos develop viable products or theories, they pass their findings onto ARPO. Often the Musicians stumble onto discoveries that don’t apply to the order’s needs but prove to be interesting within the broader scope of science. If ARPO determines commercial viability, they send the research to Norça-controlled businesses for use in developing various products. Occasionally the order donates such findings to universities in return for the right of first refusal on new technologies discovered at the various institutions. Profits from these technologies are second only to Norça’s lucrative pharmaceutical trade.

Músicos responsibilities also include the investigation of any Norça technologies that break down in high-pressure situations. These forensic engineers reconstruct failure scenarios and determine whether Norça needs to rework products designed for public or internal use.

Behind the Mask

Músicos da Verdade contains 2500 syndics, of whom a mere 100 are biokinetics. Many Músicos believe that del Fuego overworks the syndicate’s shifters, but their devotion to Norça does not go ignored. They receive ample rewards in the form of amenities, companions, quarters and stock in their own accomplishments should the order ever use their ideas to create publicly traded products.

I Like My Science Mad!

Contrary to the belief of Trinity’s popular media, the Norça don’t house a secret cabal of mad scientists who perform drug-addled experiments on unwilling human subjects. Almost all human experimentation that Norça undertakes conforms to protocol established by worldwide scientific communities. The order may have no qualms about performing all kinds of horrible experiments on Aberrants or hostile aliens, but unauthorized, illegal and unwilling human experimentation certainly isn’t the norm in the biokinetic order.

Though many of the topics that Norça researches fall under the label of “gray” or “black” technologies, the order avoids delving into certain restricted areas such as cloning or aspects of Taint research. Norça doesn’t hesitate to snap up information it finds on such subjects, but does not expand this restricted knowledge through any other means.

Of course, nothing’s stopping a Storyteller from concocting a secret facility located deep in the Andes and staffed entirely by mad Músicos.

Few Músico shifters become the subject of biokinetic experiments themselves. Rather, these syndics use their psionic skills to acquire information outside the reach of a neutral researcher. The syndicate typically requests biokinetic subjects from the ranks of the Guerreros, though all experiments on other Norça must undergo a stringent approval process.

Patron: 20th century physicist Subrahmanyam Chandrasekhar

Allegiance: Nobody should rely on tools to replace human potential, but without them, full potential remains out of reach. We strive to improve our tools and use them to augment our capabilities, not replace them.

Ability Group: Academics, Engineering, Investigation, Medicine, Savvy, Science

Espíritos do Sangramento

Practical Intelligence

Where Guerreros do Berço are flashy, nobody ever knows when the Espíritos do Sangramento are about. Few even realize they’ve ever been around. The “Bleeding Spirits” exist as Norça’s shadowy syndicate devoted to espionage and the gathering of intelligence. They’re said

to be the “spirits that bleed away the truth” from their targets, fading into the night after extracting their pound of flesh.

Del Fuego cultivated a relationship with the Yana Llanthu near the beginning of his tenure as the biokinetic proxy. The possibilities of Norça agents intrigued the Peruvian spies, and they worked out an arrangement: in return for using a portion of resources to further Peruvian interests, the Yana Llanthu would secretly train Norça agents. They did so without the knowledge of their own government, quietly revealing their actions to certain upper levels of government only recently, in 2119. Though initially taken aback, the positive use of Norça assets impressed the officials. Whether or not they try to take a more active role in directing Espíritos remains to be seen.

Geneva Jerde, still recovering from injuries sustained in México, replaced Vincento Perez as the director of the Espíritos after his death late last year. She still grows accustomed to the subtlety of the people she commands, but is learning fast. She faces opposition from hardline syndics used to Perez’ command, but currently only in the form of personal disagreements with her style of leadership. How she handles resources in the upcoming infiltration of the Nihonjin metanational ToshiGinko will either prove her merits or her incompetence to the syndicate.

A large number of Espíritos handle human intelligence, that which is most often identified as “espionage.” They target corporations, officials, governments and metanational organizations where the importance of discretion outweighs the need for immediate results. They receive training in turning people against those they work for, methods of physical and political sabotage, questionable interrogation practices, political destabilization of a region and long-term infiltration techniques. True Norça assassins belong to the Espíritos, though their methods are never flashy or unprofessional.

This syndicate also handles the acquisition of cultural intelligence. Whereas human intelligence focuses on obtaining data specific to a person or group, cultural intelligence deals with broader social knowledge coupled with regions and the cultures within them. Espíritos do Sangramento maintain a “cultural database” that includes general knowledge of human civilization. Any Norça who travels to unfamiliar regions receives these updates on local customs, history, languages and etiquette from this database, if any are available. Some astute Espíritos simply travel throughout known space and record their experiences.

A small number of Espíritos work with ARPO to recruit Norça, usually in two-person teams. ARPO syndics send these syndics out once they identify potential candidates, and the Espíritos serve as the field team responsible for conducting subtle background interviews of the subject’s known associates. These syndics concoct and perform behavioral testing to determine whether the potential candidate would make a good Norça.

Unbeknownst to much of the biokinetic order, and even many of their fellow syndics, a fair number of Espíritos keep tabs on those who leave the order, as well as those Norça deemed security risks. They watch for any signs indicating the disclosure of Norça secrets before moving in. Norça only get one warning. Those who leave the order receive none.

Behind the Mask

Of the 1,000 syndics who call themselves “Espírito,” 250 are psions. Because of the sensitive nature of this syndicate’s goals and methods, only full syndics are allowed within the ranks. Most of Norça’s experts in Transmogrify work among the Espíritos, and by necessity are those Norça most closely watched for signs of disloyalty. A few unfortunate incidents within the last

The Secret War

Norça has fought a secret war for nearly two decades.

Although popular conception involves biokinetics substituting themselves for others in positions of authority, Norça discovered long ago that Aberrants had already beaten them to the punch. Whether physically replacing these people of power, mentally controlling them or even worse, turning them into their willing pawns, Norça found infiltration of Aberrant interests at all levels of human society. Most of the work performed by the Espíritos involves the identification and elimination of these threats.

It’s a dirty, thankless war that often involves the sudden disappearance of contacts, the foul compromise of allowing a lesser evil to remain in order to reach its master and the quiet murder of those Norça deems enemies of humanity. Nobody knows them as heroes, for nothing that they do officially exists. The order’s few telepathic agents do their best to keep these syndics mentally healthy, but working in such a harsh climate can permanently damage the Espírito if care is not taken. Few perform these duties for excessively long periods of time, often switching out to less stressful assignments.

decade have made this an imperative procedure. Rogue spies are bad enough; rogue spies whom Norça trains to assume the identity of political targets are a political nightmare waiting to happen. Pai de Norça remains convinced that such an occurrence might result in an attempted purge of the biokinetics, and has taken rather extreme steps to ensure that this never happens.

Though lengthy, deep undercover jobs are very solitary affairs by design, Espíritos who work standard infiltration assignments often work with a small team of other syndics. It is not uncommon for Espírito administrators to keep syndics who work particularly well with one another together in the long term.

Patron: Herodotus

Allegiance: As an order we are vastly capable, but knowledge defines our capability. Our responsibility is to further our knowledge of the world and the people within it. Only with the appropriate information can we truly do what is best for humanity.

Ability Group: Etiquette, Firearms, Interrogation, Intrusion, Stealth, Subterfuge

Administração, Relações Públicas, e Operações

Asset Management

ARPO, the Portuñol abbreviation of "Administration, Public Relations, and Operations," is the spine of Norça bureaucracy. Their duties include (but are not limited to) internal administration, public relations, asset management, recruiting, liaising with organizations and governments, legal matters, medical care and the specifics of Norça's expansion. If anything requires official procedure, ARPO is rarely far behind.

Victor Trabaj, the "public face of the Norça," serves as Proxy del Fuego's lieutenant in charge of ARPO. Much of his duties involve his meeting with reporters, courting corporate interests, smoothing over any mistakes and speaking of the Norça to the public. His people skills are renowned, and he never forgets a face. Norça frequently consult with Trabaj or his staff when they need to figure out exactly what they can and cannot share with those outside of the order.

Though many Norça belonging to other syndicates are quick to roll their eyes when ARPO gets involved with anything, such sentiment is largely posturing. ARPO does not micro-manage all Norça affairs, preferring to allow syndics their own initiative within certain bounds. ARPO builds on the other syndicates' accomplishments and

cleans up any messes. This hands-off approach leads to the occasional snarl, but generally works well for both ARPO and the other syndicates.

Half of ARPO personnel work in Administration. Most Norça are familiar with Assets, the division which supervises the Byzantine structure of the order. This division keeps tabs on all syndics and provides them with assignments. Commercial manages all financial interests, from the pharmaceutical trade to Norça's corporate interests. Liaison handles all Norça on extended, official retainer to external organizations. The Directive consists of del Fuego, the directors of all Syndicates and certain long-standing members of the order. They determine where Norça is heading and how fast they want to get there. All top-level decisions are approved of or initiated by the Directive.

One quarter of ARPO personnel belong to Public Relations. Marketing spreads the good word of Norça throughout colonized space. Legal handles any lawsuits against or imposed by the order. They are experts in the legal implications of the ability to completely change your body, and provide counsel for those Norça who were perhaps overzealous in their actions. Salvage supervises any necessary spin operations in which they attempt to turn bad press into good. They often work with Guerreros do Berço or Espíritos do Sangramento to twist facts or plant evidence, and their success rate is legendary within the order.

Operations contains the final quarter of all ARPO personnel. Syndics in Investigation provide Norça with the order's own perspective on events, often working closely with Legal in ongoing investigations. Medical is small, but remains on hand to take care of Norça injured both physically and mentally. Diplomatic always has its hands full, cleaning up messes left by insovereign bodies. It also maintains a small corps of syndics who cultivate good relations with groups not currently particularly relevant to Norça operations, but which analysts think might become important in the future.

Behind the Mask

ARPO contains roughly 3,500 syndics. Approximately 50 of these are psions, mostly biokinetics recovering from injuries, misfit Guerreros assigned to punishment duty and psions recruited from other orders. Very few syndics in ARPO deal with menial tasks. Highly advanced computer agents often handle secretarial work and the brunt of research performed by the syndicate.

This frees the syndics from the never-ending drudgery of busywork, allowing them to get personally involved in their projects and avoid bureaucratic snags so common to such large organizations.

Patron: J.P. Morgan

Allegiance: No organization succeeds without knowing exactly where and what it is. We exist as our own oversight, catching errors and correcting our path, moving in the direction that is best for us.

Ability Group: Bureaucracy, Command, Etiquette, Investigation, Style, Subterfuge

The Venezuelan Phenomenon

ISRA's Vision Process 418 has come to pass. Spoken of in hushed whispers, Process 418 was a report circulated amongst upper-level ISRAnS and the Proxies. It seemed to indicate that beyond a point in 2122, no ISRAn, including Proxy Otha Herzog himself, could see earth's future.

At 2251 hours on August 3rd, 2122, a large fluctuation in the quantum and subquantum spectrum emanated

from the Venezuelan quarantine zone. Knowing that the area is home to Aberrants and other refugees from society as well by the plagues of last century, Norça immediately mobilized teams to investigate. Preliminary reports released to other psi orders and world governments were inconclusive, though the biokinetics suspected Aberrant collusion of some kind.

As usual, Norça knows more than it lets on. The "quarantine zone" is a manufactured rumor, allowing the order to house various sensitive research projects throughout the area with little fear of external interference. When Norça realized the origin of the disturbance, they sent multiple teams of syndics to the region to discover its source.

The teams eventually found that something had razed a Músicos da Verdade facility to the ground. The place was a noetic vortex. Psionic abilities functioned haphazardly: either not at all or at levels beyond recorded capability. Psions attempting to use their Attunement immediately fell unconscious. Oddly, teams found the land surrounding the facility covered in two feet of snow.



Strangely, this “noetic ripple” continued to spread throughout the world within the hour. Many psions close to the region reported a strange form of backlash, wherein they felt a brief but intense pain, though immediately afterwards it disappeared with no lasting effects. Some found access to their modes suppressed, others a complete loss of psionic abilities. Still others found their psionic abilities boosted to levels they’d never achieved, or were able to access to modes within their Aptitude that they shouldn’t have. Many gained auxiliary modes overnight. Some experienced odd combinations of all of them.

Stranger yet, a large number of neutrals within the Zone exhibited strong signs of latency. Some neutrals spontaneously developed weak psi abilities — no more than 2 dots of modes, but not necessarily restricted to a single aptitude. Others displayed even stranger expressions that tapped into the subquantum universe, but produced effects unrecorded by noetic science.

Most chilling were the Aberrant eruptions. Norça captured three newly erupted Aberrants in Venezuela alone, killing two more. Strangely, those captured exhibited minimal levels of Taint and much weaker abilities than previously recorded. More alarming, Norça discovered that those killed were filled with levels of Taint unheard of since the Crash. Modern theory projects that these Aberrants would have died from Taint alone. Many afflicted with Taint diseases experienced complete remission or underwent immediate, painful deaths. Most peculiar of all, some of the Aberrants Norça keeps locked in secret facilities throughout Sudamérica lost all signs of Taint affliction.

Something new is loose in the world, and it doesn’t seem to be going away. Just the opposite, in fact: it’s gathering strength beneath the visible surface of the world, in depths only a handful of psions can plumb.

Subject: Tragic news

From: Otha Herzog

To: (recipient list suppressed)

Encryption: SPE

Transmission Type: holofile

Date: 00:00:00 08.04.2122

I pass these words along to all my brothers and sisters in ISRA.

It is with a heavy heart that I contact you, for P. Vaughn Williams was found dead earlier this evening. Upon further investigation, the death will be ruled as a suicide. For those acquainted, I offer my deepest condolences and commiseration. I considered Vaughn both a friend and a testament to the strength of this order. That he felt the need to take his own life is tragic.

Lest the rumors yet grow heads, I shall inform every one of you that yes, his death was unexpected. As many of you have experienced, the future of the earth and those connected to it is now uncertain. Such an occurrence could certainly be troubling to those accustomed to knowing what will or could be.

Don’t think yourself blinded to the future. Think of the past 19 years as a gift: a “head-start,” if you will. The totality gave a glimpse of what could be, and look at all we accomplished! Now that we gain the advantage we can only continue as before until we understand the advantage’s necessity.

We cannot see earth’s future, but in no way does this mean earth has no future. Though the future is now in question, suicide is not the answer.

Humbly,
Otha Herzog

· CONFIDENTIAL ·

Subject: (no subject)

From: Whitley

To: Max

Encryption: RPH/x9

Transmission Type: textfile

Date: 07:02:49 08.04.2122

Looking to be about that time.

· CONFIDENTIAL ·

Subject: Re: (no subject)

From: Max

To: Whitley

Encryption: RPH/x9

Transmission Type: textfile

Date: 07:04:10 08.04.2122

Soon.

Norça and Society

Norça cannot be everywhere they'd like to be; they simply don't have the numbers for it. So they must rely heavily on their interactions with other groups to advance the order's overall agenda and the concerns of groups and individuals within it. This section describes the diverse, often unique, relations Norça maintains with prominent nations, institutions and races around it.

The Æon Trinity

Few Norçans work for the Æon Trinity. With four individual exceptions, Norça work *with* Æon agents as liaisons to Proteus teams or as covert operatives under the Espíritos do Sangramento. They observe Æon from the inside, report on suspicious activities and try to prevent or resolve conflicts with Norça interests. Official liaisons are encouraged to cooperate with Trinity operatives to the best of their abilities, and to watch for potential recruitment opportunities amongst disgruntled Æon employees.

Del Fuego sees the Trinity as little more than toadies who spend more of their energy jockeying for political advantage over the United Nations. He also suspects Aberrant influence at their highest levels, just as he does of the UN, and pays careful attention to their motives and movements.

Psi Orders

The Norça maintain formal and professional relations with the other psi orders, but such associations are lukewarm at best. Proxy del Fuego expects the best from his own order and grows easily disappointed when the others don't approach the bar he feels the Norça set. Nevertheless, it would be foolish to simply ignore the other orders, so del Fuego sets an example of sorrowful tolerance for Norça to follow in dealing with the rest of the psionically active population.

Æsculapians

Shifters and rexes rarely interact. Many biokinetics have a fear — generally groundless, despite a handful of exceptions — that their capabilities will be quietly studied if they let their guards down around vitakinetics. This phobia occasionally leads to wounded Norça refusing Æsculapian treatment, though most *tios* criticize such

excessive caution, which can be damaging. On an organizational level, the two orders are much more cooperative. The Músicos have quietly shunted incidental research to the vitakinetics since 2107, and in return are provided information related to their specific medical interests, such as Taint research, human/biotech interaction, latency studies and alien physiologies.

Zweidler and Proxy del Fuego disagree on certain topics, such as leadership styles and methods of achieving overall results, but share a peculiar respect for each other as professionals. In the aftermath of the Huang-Marr conspiracy, Zweidler has approached the Biokinetic Proxy for advice on ways to become more involved with his own order. Predictably, Pai de Norça wants to nudge Zweidler into a much more active role than the Vitakinetic Proxy is willing to take. Their conversations quickly grow spirited and always end prematurely, but del Fuego is quietly pleased that Zweidler keeps coming back for more.

ISRA

Norça and ISRA don't often have the opportunity to work together, at least not on an official basis. This is not due to dislike or reticence between the orders; on the contrary, most Norça look forward to working with the clears. The problem is mostly one of focus. Relatively few clairsentients concern themselves specifically with terrestrial matters. A few vocal Norça continue to petition ISRA to assign more psions to Earth, though it is currently too early to measure progress.

Del Fuego has always operated under the assumption that Otha Herzog knows most or all of his order's secrets, and so has made no effort to keep his fellow proxy in the dark. Otha is also the only proxy around whom Pai de Norça ever significantly drops his guard. He takes Herzog's advice seriously and believes he has insurance against duplicity on the part of the Clairsentient proxy: if Herzog can see possible futures, then the Old Man knows full well what will happen should clairsentient advice be used to manipulate the Norça.

Legions

The Legion and the Norça often enjoy a friendly sort of competition on the battlefield and off. Tales abound of barfighting shifters and PKs who eventually stagger home arm-in-arm, slurring out raucous chanties about "Nantucket" and "ladies from Venus." Both orders have a high opinion of the other when it comes to putting their lives on the line for the good of humanity — almost as highly



as each group thinks of itself. If the Norça feel the psychokinetics take too simple a strategic or tactical approach to their struggles, they rarely insult the intelligence of their Legionnaire allies by sharing the opinion.

Del Fuego has so healthy a respect for Proxy Larssen that it borders on admiration. Though Pai de Norça still feels he directs his order better than any other proxy, under her direction he finds the Legions growing ever closer to his opinion of how they should be run. He does not deny himself the attraction he feels for Solveig Larssen, but knows such a prospect is ultimately doomed. He does not wish to divert the attention and professional trust of humanity's two greatest defenders, so he settles for pitching loaded remarks her way.

Ministry

Both the Ministry and the Norça identify strongly with the regions they protect. Brazil and China aren't on what any political analyst would deem the best of terms, and unfortunately this attitude tends to bleed through into the orders. Norça constantly monitor known telepaths in Sudamérica, and have little success in infiltrating regions or organizations that fall under Ministry control. Rarely do things descend into outright hostility, but it has been known to happen. After a few isolated incidents in 2108, both orders privately and informally agreed to a non-escalation pact. If individual shifters or telepaths are caught rooting through the others' dirty laundry, there is no official retribution by the orders as a whole, and the matter is handled in accordance with each order's self-disciplining procedures.

The pact has held, but just barely, for neither Rebecca Bue Li nor del Fuego is inclined to take such instances as anything but personal. Bue makes it clear from time to time that she approves of very little of what del Fuego thinks or does. This suits him just fine, for he thinks her manipulative, power-mad and obsessed with control for the sake of control itself, rather than using it towards any meaningful end. When the two are able to set aside their differences they are often able to make great advances, but these occurrences are rare indeed. Rumors in recent months of shakeups and realignment of authority among those closest to Bue have inspired fresh Norçan probes, with del Fuego's tacit approval, which only reinforces the cycle of mistrust.

Del Fuego's suspicions about the mastermind or masterminds behind Bhurano and the Chitra Bhanu (see below) don't make matters any better. Nor does the fact that one of Bue's aides once pierced del Fuego's mental defenses momentarily in a meeting after the *Esperanza* crash and came away with the impression that *Pai* suspects Bue of being Aberrant. There is not likely to be an open sharing of such suspicions and fragmentary data any time soon.

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Progress!

From: Stefan Schulz

To: Giuseppe del Fuego

Encryption: DCS-4c

Transmission Type: holofile

Date: 02:42:05 09.19.2121

Pai de Norça, I have most exciting information to share! Today's session had us testing out our theories on memetic noetic patterning. Tullner altered form and was sedated with Mordecai, our own telepath, inside her mind for observational purposes. Agent Chan inserted an artificial hieratic overlay into Tullner. As per your orders, Mordecai oversaw the suppression of Tullner's personality and shielded Chan from accessing her memories. The procedure went smoothly and Tullner was roused within the constraints of the prepared scenario.

Tullner's "part" was that of an early 21st century English woman who had just expressed Aberrant Syndrome and was recovering from her transformation at a British medical facility. The situation was designed to allow her exploration of her biokinetic abilities, yet to also test her reactions — to see whether or not "Sarah Chase," her provided identity, would take actions and elicit responses that go against the grain of Tullner's own predilections. I observed the noetic field transformations and they were nothing short of phenomenal. Rarely have I seen so much activity, almost to the point of complete inversion!

You must forgive my rambling. We have spent much of the evening celebrating with our Ministry counterparts and I'm brimming with nearly as much alcohol as I am excitement. I shall compose a more technical missive in the morning, but thought it best to share my elation as soon as I had the opportunity. We are still a thousand leagues from authoritatively discovering the existence of the soul, but today we have walked a mile.

Orgotek

Though Alex Cassel and Giuseppe del Fuego approach issues in quite different ways, the two proxies have always respected one another as peers who agree on the really important overall aims. Reactions among the ranks are more complex. Many Norça have a quiet disdain for electrokinetics, whom they see as working more towards an increased profit margin and share prices than humanity's best interests.

Privately, del Fuego fears that the next order to fall will be Orgotek. After the events of Huang-Marr, he authorized a highly secret internal think-tank known only as *Pólen Do Projeto*, which explores scenarios in which Orgotek is forced into a position which would require its purging. "Project Pollen" devises possible ways to deflect most negative press to Orgotek higher-ups and salvage the bulk of the order by folding it into the Norça: lightning buyouts of Orgotek subsidiaries by Norça-controlled corporations, the detainment of as many electrokinetics as can be found prior to a purge and even the preemptive assassination of the Proxy to forestall the decision for a purge. Whether del Fuego keeps things purely speculative or implements any of these plans ultimately lies in Cassel's hands.

For del Fuego, of course, this concern does not interfere with his real pleasure in Cassel's company. One of the criteria for selecting *Pólen Do Projeto* is this ability to remain friendly with those one may have to destroy, without slipping into psychotic detachment.

Upeo wa Macho

Though he never agreed with the reasons behind the assault on the Upeo wa Macho, Proxy Atwan's subsequent seven-year absence still infuriates del Fuego — in a recent proxy council meeting he maintained that Atwan proved her order extraneous with the advent of the jumpships. He feels her abandonment of Earth and its colonies cost humanity valuable time needed to prepare for the inevitable return of Aberrants in large numbers, and he holds her personally responsible for every death caused by the *Esperanza* crash and Aberrant forces on Khantze Lu Ge. For del Fuego, Atwan serves as constant reminder of what happens when an entire order becomes a cult of personality.

Most biokinetics feel the same way, though generally less intensely. The two orders rarely interact due to difference of focus, but Norça who work with Upeo sym-

pathetic to Atwan tend to treat the situation as a particularly distasteful yet necessary business arrangement. However, interaction with jumpers who are beyond Atwan's grip tends to be respectful, if not friendly. Attempts to recruit the Star-Crossed have so far met with no success, but the order has managed to cultivate a working relationship with the Upeo expatriates.

Chitra Bhanu

The Norça enjoyed a productive working relationship with the Chitra Bhanu, and continue to do so in 2122. Ten quantakinetics currently work for the Norça in highly classified research projects, often involving the exploration of differences between what the chibs use and expressions of actual Taint. Most live and work in facilities surrounded by barriers to prevent clairsentient or teleporter intrusion, such as psi dampeners in sequence or biotech with a "loud psi signature." A few of the former Chitra Bhanu grow increasingly disgruntled at the "gilded cage" in which they live, though in most cases the chibs are staunchly loyal to the Norça for what they see as necessary protection.

Rogue Chibs & the Norça

Should Norça encounter quantakinetics in the field, their standing orders are to attempt capture rather than eradication. As far as the average Norça operative knows, they are then shipped to somewhere in Sudamérica for "interrogation and execution," although this only happens should the chib prove to be irredeemable. Otherwise the quantakinetic is offered amnesty in return for work and is held in protective custody.

The exceptions are verified cases of rogue chibs who live up to the nickname of "dark psion." If judged thusly, these quantakinetics become the target of a small team within the Campeones De David, a group within the Guerreros known for hunting down Aberrants. They have a reputation for following their quarry tirelessly and for years at a time, if necessary. They occasionally liaise with the Fourth Legion, though prefer to be the ones who actually make the kill. This has nothing to do with thirst for blood and everything to do with taking the target chib down efficiently and discreetly, something the Fourth Legion isn't generally known for.

Del Fuego realizes the fine line he's walking by authorizing such experiments, but feels that the only way for psions to truly counteract Aberrant power and the secrets of Taint is through the study of quantakinetics. He never trusted Bhurano, and when the Purge occurred he saw the whole event for what it was: a master manipulation, with the bulk of the quantakinetics set up as patsies. Though he's certain that "Bhurano" was under some sort of external control, he's not entirely certain whether the source was alien or terrestrial in nature. He has narrowed it down to Doyen, Aberrant or telepath involvement, and continues to search for clues that will definitively prove to him the true force behind the Quantakinetic Order's destruction. He's reasonably certain that Herzog knows of the Norça chibs, but so far the Clairsentient Proxy has mentioned nothing.

Areas of Infiltration

No matter their relation to governments, Norça are a security nightmare for sovereign nations. They have some interest in every country, or at least they don't assume that any country can be dismissed. Not all targets seem equally important, however; here are some of the targets of primary effort at the moment.

Asia

The Norça remain convinced that Nippon hides something important, but all attempts to place biokinetic agents in the country on a long-term basis have proven fruitless. Espíritos do Sangramento recently inserted a handful of neut syndics, but even best-case scenarios project it will be months before the syndicate gains anything of use. Oddly, the greatest infiltration of Nihonjin interests occurs in Antarctica.

Much of China remains similarly inaccessible. Short-term visits are fine, but Ministry agents invariably find Norça syndics who overstay their welcome — typically a few days to a week before a telepath knocks on the door. Southeast Asia, by contrast, has been very open to the Norça. In particular, the Philippines remain fairly easy to infiltrate. Norça often work with smuggling interests in the area, which doesn't help the order's image with Nippon or China. Extensive networks of contacts now flourish among the warlords and gangsters of Siberia.

Europe

Sagueso efforts in northern Europe have done wonders for the order's reputation throughout the region,

particularly among the destitute lower classes. Músicos combine study of the ongoing environment damage with field-testing of new equipment, particularly weapons and devices specially constructed for use against Aberrants. So far the shattered continent isn't noticeably freer of Aberrant menaces, but even the show of effort makes Norça look better than most governments.

Norça has long-standing connections to the Russian and Italian organized crime scenes. In the last few years, del Fuego has taken part personally in efforts to guide them through the same sort of transformation into legitimacy that Norça underwent last century. Results are at best mixed. The best and brightest minds in the European crime scene agree that anything that interesting to del Fuego must advance his interests in some way, and they don't want to be cogs in his machine.

North America

At Sudamérica's behest, preventing the FSA from continuing its expansion is of primary concern. The Norça foment sedition and fund insurgencies throughout former México, stalling the FSA and forcing the waste of resources. Additionally, stopping the FSA's burgeoning anti-psion measures is of primary concern to the order. FSA paranoia of infiltration requires Norça spies to move very slowly; they've had most success planting misinformation that keeps the FSA wasting its time in pursuit of unreal targets.

Aliens

The Norça are quietly cataloguing what they know about alien races humanity has encountered. Whereas others are concerned with discovering the difference in languages, cultures and origins, Norça studies of alien races are primarily concerned with finding out how they can die, what causes them pain and whether or not they can be controlled through fear or more physical methods. If and when humanity must suffer a true alien invasion, the Norça will be ready.

The order devotes exhaustive resources to the development of chemical and biological weapons that affect alien races but not terrestrial life, though they keep knowledge of such research under extremely tight control. Unless humanity is actively at war with an alien race, such attempts are almost always passive. Syndics rely on observation to fill in knowledge gaps. Currently all Norça are required to report any encounters with an alien to their family heads, who pass them along to Músicos da Verdade for further interpretation.

History

To fully understand Sudamérica's New National Force, one must look to its colorful history. Norça is unique among the psi orders in that it existed long before the proxies made an appearance — it has a legacy entirely independent of the psion era.

Beginnings

After Sudamérica erected the Necessary Wall (see Chapter 3, p. XX), a Colombian colonel named Nathalie Güzman commissioned a unilateral Sudamerican antiterrorist task force. She had a history of applying innovative tactics to small-unit operations against Aberrants and human guerilla movements, and for an honest soldier had surprisingly few enemies in the federal government. She even enjoyed a small measure of international popularity, since six of her Aberrant hunts included pursuit across Colombian borders but inflicted no harm on innocent bystanders. (As the Aberrant War worsened, this kind of restraint had become unfortunately rare.) Given her history, therefore, she was an obvious choice to lead clean-up efforts in the wake of the country's new solitude.

She nearly had her command snatched away before it began, because she spent half a year recruiting her soldiers individually, then training them to work together in non-combat as well as battlefield situations. When they did enter into action against Aberrant cults and anti-government resistance movements, her sponsors' doubts disappeared. The results were everything they'd hoped for. Few observers noticed just how many battles happened to take place in areas controlled by the drug cartels on the edges of legitimacy. The NF "discovered evidence" linking upper-level lieutenants of cartels to Aberrants. Lightning strikes crippled the more powerful cartels; highly dubious evidence justified strikes against legal as well as illegal groups.

Smaller cartels tried to exploit the resulting power vacuum. One of these was Vermelho do Dragon, a transplanted Vor V Zhakone group run by a man named Anton Sbaria. Sbaria thought he noticed a pattern to Güzman's attacks: the NF hit cartels trafficking heavily in more addictive substances, while completely ignoring those focused more on "recreational" drugs. By that time many drug laws had been repealed, but laws against more dangerous substances and those with demonstrably toxic side effects remained in effect.

Sbaria figured the task force was a message to the older cartels that thought they could try to carry on business as usual. He approached smaller Colombian criminal groups with a proposal for truce and a way to make a great deal of money. After tense negotiations and a few false starts, many of those he contacted joined forces into a loose collection of syndicates spread throughout Colombia.

Expansion

The new organization called itself the “New National Force” in butchered Portuguese, originally in a jest intended to show Col. Güzman that they weren’t intimidated by her work. The “Norça” pooled their resources and took advantage of the recent change in intellectual property laws to form partnerships with Native businesses. In that era before Brazil and Argentina pioneered really thorough legal reforms, tribal groups faced an uncertain commercial environment, and Sbaria’s cartel seemed a welcome ally. A tribal manager could make one set of payments to Sbaria, a combination of expense-account allotments and outright bribes, and let Sbaria’s henchmen handle all the rest.

Norça developed a *de facto* monopoly on the biological resources of many of Colombia’s most exploitable undeveloped lands. Through an elaborate network of shell corporations, the alliance developed and sold over-the-counter pharmaceuticals, and took promising spinoffs for their own trade in harder substances. Norça cornered the market on “smart drugs” which would automatically flush themselves from a user’s system or render themselves inert rather than trigger overdoses. Without particularly planning to, Sbaria and his allies left illegal dealings almost entirely behind in favor of the profits that could accrue in fully legal operations.

After a few years of steady success, Col. Güzman spent much of her time evading assassination attempts by the embittered remnants of cartels her force had taken down. Sbaria sensed that his own group might soon become her next target, and decided to forestall it. In a historic exchange of e-mails, he persuaded her that Norça made a better ally than enemy. She studied its activities and resources and agreed. She’d been seeking a wedge into the now very careful remnant of the old cartel order, and decided to make Norça her tool. She even told Sbaria as much; in their first face-to-face meeting he laughed and said that if the price of using her as his tool was letting her think he was hers, he was willing to pay it.

Norça and Güzman’s force made covertly coordinated strikes against the remaining independent cartels. Sbaria’s negotiators approached holdout groups after a little battering and offered them a deal: join Norça, pay a cut to the central committee and avoid any further hassles from the law. Those who resisted were flattened by the military and then shredded from one side by extended prosecution and on the other by Norça black-bag operations.

In a blaze of prepared public-relations movies, Norça sprang to the forefront of public consciousness, selling much better products than anything currently available. Physical addiction levels were well below accepted norms — often less than caffeine and nicotine. Popular demand skyrocketed, and Norça’s line of stimulants and relaxants was much cheaper than the harder stuff. Norça scientists worked with their academic colleagues in developing “hook” drugs, which provided highs similar to cocaine and heroine while unraveling the chemical legacy of addiction to other substances. By the time the Necessary Wall came down, Norça was famous for its excellent drugs and equally excellent cures for drug-related ills.

Norça didn’t just market its chemicals. It changed the way Colombians, and later other Sudamericans, viewed drugs, by showing that benefits really could be detached from liabilities. It demonstrated that a company could get rich entirely within the bounds of existing laws and without creating or exploiting people’s miseries. Güzman herself was skeptical about many of Norça’s claims, and to her dying day she remained a very light user of any drug stronger than tea. (She did give up refined sugar in favor of biotech sweeteners, and in her old age was a prominent advocate of “high-tech natural” eating.) Would-be rivals to Norça adopted similar tactics, as the public became increasingly unwilling to settle for old-time corruption or chemical complications.

When Brazil and Argentina established the first comprehensive entitlements on the part of Native peoples to profit from their biological wealth, Norça was there...or tried to be. Now it faced superior competition, and in circumstances where deals with one nation’s military wouldn’t help. Brazilian and Argentine biotech companies offered better terms to their countries’ Natives and reaped the benefits. Colombian consumers found that they could get even more interesting goodies than Norça ever thought of offering them. Güzman retired five years after the Necessary Wall came down, and Sbaria stepped

down from active leadership a year after that. For several years after that, it looked like the group might prove one of those corporate cults of personality which do not survive the passing of their founders.

Transformation

In 2098, a young man who called himself Cristòfol Estilos joined the now fading organization known as Norça. At that point the group was on the point of dissolving into bankruptcy or struggling independent factions. He soon gained a reputation as “the next Sbaria,” a man with grand ideas and the attention to detail necessary to make them work. While publicly boosting Norça’s involvement in purely legitimate ventures, behind the scenes he oversaw a vast expansion of smuggling operations — wherever local laws kept Norça out, front groups went in and established illegal cartels much like those that had banded together into Norça in the first place. In late 2099, Sbaria’s jealous successors gave sole responsibility for the illegal networks to Estilos, in the hopes that he’d make some mistake that would warrant his removal and (preferably) his execution.

Cristòfol publicly changed his name to Giuseppe del Fuego, “to protect my family should negotiations go poorly,” he told his fellow Norçans. Nobody realized he’d already spent the past year already preparing, communicating worldwide with various groups as this “del Fuego.” The change of identities helped del Fuego keep rivals distracted, as conflicting explanations of just what was going on circulated. Some networks thought that del Fuego had violently overthrown Estilos, while others believed that Estilos had chosen del Fuego as his successor.

In 2102, on a mission to the asteroid belt, del Fuego disappeared. He returned a year later with remarkable new powers and precisely no willingness to talk about where he’d been or what he’d been doing. He saw no reason to even hint at the Proxies to most of his colleagues. Instead, he focused on the knowledge he’d acquired while

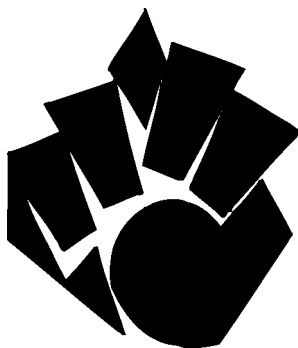
away. Older Norça weren’t particularly interested in biotechnology of the sort he could make, but his peers and younger Norça saw the potential. In 2104 he just barely managed to pull off a managerial coup, driving out the old guard and replacing them with his chosen followers. Less than a year later, profits from biotechnology were sufficient to convince remaining skeptics, and thereafter del Fuego had a free hand to pursue his increasingly complex vision.

The Norça Today

Norça is something substantially more than a business now. Old-timers remember the corporation favorably, and almost everyone in Sudamérica has something good to say about the order’s operations. Business, research, politics and grand mission mingle within the order’s ranks. Even the order’s secretive side appeals to Sudamericans who love to see “our side” stick it to the continent’s traditional enemies.

The syndicates described above are the heart of Norça as it now exists, but not the whole story. Scattered groups continue to find everything psi-related a distraction from Norça’s real mission, whether that mission is Colombian authority, pure profit or something else. Anti-psion groups within Norça like to claim that del Fuego murdered Sbaria (he didn’t), used mind-control powers on Güzman (he didn’t do that, either), and bribes would-be rivals with just enough authority to satisfy them without letting them challenge his own position (he *does* do that).

Norça like to think of themselves as those who do what must be done, which others lack the courage to face. A holo popular as home decoration among many Norça shows humanity marching along countless paths from a bleak past toward glittering futures. There are shadows and points of concealment along each path, and Norçans (often bearing the face of the owner and his immediate friends) wait there, guarding an often-unwitting population. Norçans make the future possible, they say.



The New Flesh

Biokinesis allows psions to fold, spindle and mutilate their own or others' bodies with a thought. This only contributes to the Norça's reclusive reputation in the world beyond Sudamérica's borders, but they wouldn't have it any other way.

At its most basic level, Biokinesis is the psionic ability to manipulate the living human form. Oddly, it doesn't apparently allow the psion to heal himself or others, but it *does* allow him to adapt his form to prevent damage. Ongoing research in Norça labs is gradually breaking down this limit — biokinetics can now shapeshift to close wounds and adapt their immune and metabolic systems in ways that make diseases neutral or even beneficial.

Norça researchers hold a great many conflicting views about what Biokinesis "really" is. Theories drawing on pre-Aberrant Era concepts such as morphogenetic fields and orgone energy mingle with more modern concepts such as the noetic medium and one or more subquantum strata. In the labs dedicated to studying alien life forms and their response to Biokinesis, some noetic scientists argue that Biokinesis is a hybrid of several distinct sub-apertures which might be isolated and/or fused with sub-apertures not now associated with Biokinesis.

Researchers do agree that all things — humans, animals, Aberrants, plants, inanimate objects — have a noetic reflection of their physical form, and that psi can manipulate these forms through their noetic reflections. This is perhaps why Biokinesis and Vitakinesis are not the same aptitude — Vitakinesis focuses on restoring one's noetic template to its proper form and through that restoration healing the body and mind. Biokinesis is the opposite, in that it focuses on *changing* the noetic template and the body. Biokinesis is mostly restricted to the user's form (with a few notable exceptions) but some Norça scientists have proposed that further mastery may enable biokinetics to manipulate other forms — living or not, organic or inorganic.

Norçan individuality being what it is, certain researchers usually focus more on finding new

ways to explain their powers rather than expanding upon the work of others. The result is a wide variety of viewpoints on how and why Biokinesis works as it does, how biokinetic psions can sustain life when shifted into bizarre forms and just *where* the line between Vitakinesis and Biokinesis should be drawn.

The Chib Factor

The participation of Chitra Bhanu refugees in Norça research has accelerated the pace of insights into Biokinesis in the last few years. The Quantakinetic presence also makes it simpler to examine how the various aptitudes manifest in comparison to each other and more accurately define their limitations. As a result, of all the orders, the Norça may have the best understanding of psi in general and how the aptitudes interact with each other.

How Does It Work?

From observation, Æon Trinity and Norça researchers know that biokinetics do not need to understand the cellular or chemical mechanics of their transformations, they need only visualize the results and it happens...if the psion in question is skilled enough to attempt the feat. The psion subconsciously adapts her body to the changes, guaranteeing that she can survive them.

Some changes, like assuming a pancake shape or other forms that are obviously *not* viable for life, imply that the psion's vital signs are somehow supported through some as yet undetermined noetic process. Researchers are puzzled by some occurrences, such as how Autonomic Shunt can maintain life against all odds, even when the psion is brain-dead. Some think that this implies the possibility for recovery over time, though so far there's no experimental support for the idea.

Thermodynamics and the Biokinetic

Biokinesis can apparently violate thermodynamics. To one who understands noetic theory, it does not — the mass is drawn from the subquantum medium. The biokinetic somehow transforms psion particles into mass to add to her body. Unfortunately, how this transformation occurs remains poorly understood.

Teleportation and Quantakinesis are perhaps greater offenders in this regard; in all three cases,

implications of such transformations are wide-ranging and interest scientists a great deal. The ability to apparently create something from nothing, or take something and make it into nothing, is disturbing even with the awareness that it's not really "nothing." Theories abound as to whether the noetic medium is an information or energy state, and it's hard to determine which, even with the basics as established by Zweidler and Bhurano. The most common suggestion is that it's *both*, in much the same way a photon is both a particle and a wave.

Note that the idea is not that noetic particles carry information, the theory is that they *are* information. The difference is perhaps subtle, but very important.

Biokinesis and Vitakinesis

This is a question that leads Norça researchers to ask hard questions — why does the line exist? What keeps biokinetics from healing injuries, and what keeps the vitakinetics from changing shape? Each has some degree of control over the living body, but it's a *different* kind of control. These questions extend from that point outward — why can a vitakinetic heal the mind, but not a telepath? Why can a telepath view the world through another's eyes, but not a clairvoyant? Some are increasingly convinced that the distinctions between the aptitudes are artificial, and they mark an increasing number of blurred boundaries between the various aptitudes and wonder why they exist at all.

Norça researchers like to work with psions who have other aptitudes to try to delineate where one aptitude ends and the next begins, which is one reason why they make use of Aeon Trinity's "horse trading" opportunities to bring in such psions.

Conservation of Mass

Some Biokinesis modes enable the psion to shift bodily mass, either increasing or decreasing it, with no apparent source or destination for the mass in question. In an Einsteinian universe, this is simply not possible. However, **Trinity** is not set in an Einsteinian universe, but rather a *post*-Einsteinian universe. It includes the presence of powers that affect the universe at its most fundamental levels — psi and quantum — and the use of such powers to create mass *ex nihilo* or to travel light years in a matter of minutes or days without conservation of momentum.

If one can accept the premise of the psionic aptitudes in general and their specific effects and conse-

quences, it's a simple matter to accept seemingly impossible results.

Transhuman Sentiments

Biokinesis, more than any other aptitude, allows psions to directly surpass human limitations in a variety of ways. Some biokinetics even propose that they might be able to develop ways to mimic or manifest other aptitudes with sufficient experimentation. Evidence for such a theory is currently slim, but biokinetics are constantly pushing the envelope to see what they can develop.

Some believe that with time, the modifications they instinctively or consciously apply to themselves can be applied to neutrals or other psions, through biotechnology or some other as yet unforeseen way. Some even quietly suggest the possibility of genetic engineering, although this is not a popular view. In any event, these Norça believe that they embody a significant aspect of future human potential and that they may find it necessary to lead the way in the future.

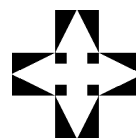
Tricks of the Trade

Norçan psions are heavily encouraged to explore their powers' limits, no matter what aptitude they may have. This results in not only a proliferation of secondary Biokinetic techniques, but also a wide variety of new applications for pre-existing powers. A popular form of experimentation among Norçan Biokinetics is finding new applications that come as close as possible to mimicking other aptitudes.

Other Orders

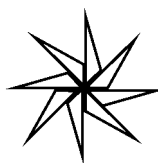
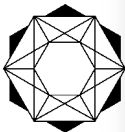
Although Pai de Norça doesn't typically return psions sent to him via Aeon's "horse trading" program, a few defect to other orders, and del Fuego has in fact returned a handful or two for good reasons (or inducements from the other orders). Biokinetics in those orders, beneficiaries of Norça training, often push their abilities as well, although in directions more suited to the orders they're in. Also, Norçan psions often find themselves working with members of other orders and have to adapt to cooperation or competition along such lines.

• **Æsculapians.** Biokinesis allows the user to extend her capabilities or alter them in ways that, under a doctor's examination, make it simpler to understand human bodily functions and limitations. Analysis of Redundancy (**Trinity** core rules, p. 199) demonstrates the biological processes that go into growing new organs on demand, for ex-



ample. The opposite is also true, in that an understanding of medicine or the workings of Vitakinesis can offer limitless possibilities for Biokinesis usage. Biokinetics can also use appropriate Psychomorphing techniques to defend against uses of Algesis, by turning off pain receptors or by simply reinforcing their noetic signatures against harmful Vitakinetic applications.

- **ISRA.** Techniques that allow Biokinetics to alter their noetic signature to conceal or fake biokinetic modifications or even to mimic another person can be extended to conceal them against Clairsentient snooping.



- **The Legions.** Biokinetic Legionnaires develop their aptitude in ways that enhance military operations — not simply to become better living weapons, but also to enhance stealth and disguise for the purposes of reconnaissance and espionage.

- **The Ministry.** When around telepaths, most people try to control their thoughts. Thanks to physiological control through Adaptation and Psychomorphing, a biokinetic *can* control her own thoughts. She can slow down adrenaline production and reduce nervousness, and even generate endorphins when following banal trains of thought simply to throw up an improvised shield against telepathic scans.



- **Orgotek.** Biokinetics can use Redundancy to resist the effects of various Electromanipulation techniques, by creating redundant pathways or rewiring their nervous systems to work more efficiently, for example. Some Biokinetics have managed to create rough approximations of the Technokinesis Interface technique, by using Living Toolkit to shape links that they can hook into a computer or other device.



- **Upeowa Macho.** Biokinetic and Teleporter matchups are only natural — teleporters can *go* anywhere and biokinetics can *survive* anywhere. The possibilities are endless. Harmonize is a popular Adaptation technique among Biokinetics who work with Teleporters, since it makes it easier for the Upeo to transport the Biokinetic, and it allows the Biokinetic to extend environmental adaptations to the Upeo.



Countermeasures

Using Biokinetic techniques as countermeasures against other psionic aptitudes works very simply — if the character has the appropriate power and a good explanation of how he intends the character to use the power for defense or concealment, add half his success total (round down, minimum one) to the difficulty of attempts to use the countered powers on or against him. This isn't necessarily a be-all and end-all solution to every possible problem — not every Biokinetic will have the appropriate mode at the appropriate level to offer up a plausible defense. Reward creativity, but don't give the players a free ride.

Pheromonal Communications

Norça have developed a silent and nearly undetectable means of communication through the manipulation and detection of their own pheromones. The changes are subtle enough that nearby humans won't be affected, but distinct enough for psions who have access to Somatic Awareness (see pg. XX) to receive the message.

Pheromones can only communicate in relatively simple terms: "I need help." "There's danger ahead." "Don't trust this man." "Come over here." Complex concepts, like "I need you to reprogram the CEO's OpNet agent to send us copies of everything he accesses outside popular programming," simply aren't possible. Coupled with the use of more sophisticated language, Pheromonal Communication can lend shades of meaning to Norça interactions.

Pheromonal Communication counts as a language slot under the Linguistics Ability. In addition, the psion must have at least two dots in Psychomorphing to transmit as well as receive.

Alternate Biokinesis Powers

Biokinetic researchers constantly search for new ways to apply their powers to themselves and in some rare cases the world around them. Such experimentation is not restricted to scientists, either. Norçan experimentation is common at all levels of the organization as biokinetics push their powers as far as they do, and then a centimeter beyond that.

Experimentation can lead the biokinetic to improvements (or at least changes) to the human form, or a complete revision into new — more efficient — body types. Some hope to find means to apply their adaptations to neutrals, through biotechnology or some other means. Among the more exploration-minded Norça, “communing with nature” can take on new volumes of literal meaning.

Learning New Techniques

A biokinetic may learn any of the following techniques instead of the standard techniques seen in **Trinity** (see p. 168 for costs at character generation and p. 172 for experience point costs). The only restriction is that the character must know the standard mode at one level before purchasing an alternate mode of the next higher level.

New Basic Technique

Somatic Awareness: Where Biosense focuses on the world, Somatic Awareness focuses on the biokinetic’s own body, attuning her to her body’s functions and limits to a degree that no neutral, no matter how athletic, can ever achieve. A psion using this power is fully in tune with her physical capabilities and limitations and can exceed them for brief periods of time.

Humans typically have pain and pleasure for feedback responses, which can give a general sense of one’s condition. Somatic Awareness gives *precise* feedback, allowing a psion to know the full extent of her condition — how injured she is and where, what she can do without aggravating those injuries. She can, to a limited extent, ignore the debilitating effects of drugs, alcohol, injury or disease.

System: Roll Psi. Success indicates that the biokinetic is aware of her bodily equilibrium and the effects of injuries, drugs, alcohol or the effects of Algesis modes on

Norça Experimentation

Given the propensity for pushing the limits until they scream, Storytellers are encouraged to let players come up with new uses that fit within the powers provided, and to create new secondary techniques as often as necessary. This is not to say that every half-baked or overpowered idea should be allowed, but be flexible. Norça training stresses the fact that Biokinesis (and the other aptitudes) are very versatile tools and one should know their full limits in order to use them properly.

her body. The player subtracts one from the difficulty of any action that would be penalized by such adversity.

Psions can also use Somatic Awareness to briefly push themselves beyond normal limits. Her understanding of her own body enables her to push it without great harm. Roll Psi. The player may boost one of the character’s physical Attributes by one dot for a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled. At the end of the power’s duration, the psion suffers one level of bashing damage. This is akin to the fabled “adrenaline rush” that allows mothers to lift cars to rescue their children and the like, but the psion can’t push herself to the point of injury with this power. Only one physical attribute may be boosted at any given time.

Somatic Awareness also gives psions the ability to comprehend Pheromonal Communications.

Adaptation

• **Chemical Comprehension:** While psions who have mastered the basics of Adaptation are rarely subject to

poisons and drugs unless they wish to be, it's still useful to be able to determine what's in whatever they're taking into their bodies. This power enables psions to taste anything and determine its chemical composition as well as how dangerous or nutritious it is to an unprotected human, as well as other properties — soil fertility, or pH balance, for example.

System: Roll Psi. The number of successes determines the degree and complexity of information gained. One success can determine whether a substance is toxic or not, and five provides a precise rundown of the substance's chemical composition and its effect on a living body (if poisonous, its Toxin Rating, see *Trinity*, p. 229). If used in conjunction with the Science Ability, each success adds an additional die to any appropriate use of Science or Medicine.

•• **Self-Contained Metabolism:** Biokinetics with this power can survive for days without water or weeks without food. This does not mean that they will not starve or dehydrate, but that it takes longer. While this power is active, the psion's body recycles its waste products, deriving every last bit of sustenance possible.

System: Spend two points and roll Psi. Each success adds another day that the psion can survive without water, or a week he can survive without food. During this time, he feels no hunger pangs or thirst. Once the time expires, the psion will require twice as much food and water for a number of days equal to the days or weeks he went without to compensate for the deprivation. If he uses the power repeatedly, the Psi cost increases by one point per use to account for the increased difficulty in recycling the same products over and over again.

If the psion uses this power to subsist on minimum rations of food and water (one meal a day, one-quarter liter of water a day), she can survive indefinitely.

As a side effect, psions with this power age more slowly than normal humans — about half as fast for Psi scores up to five dots, and a fifth as fast for Psi scores above five.

••• **Social Chameleon:** This power is one of the more unusual and esoteric applications of Adaptation, as it applies to interactions with other humans rather than exotic environments. When this mode is active, the psion is hyperaware of body language, pheromones and other telltale signatures of human behavior. The end result is an ability to read another's body language to a degree almost as effective as telepathy. This power isn't as pre-

cise as Pilfer, however. Where a telepath could discern *what* a liar may be trying to hide, a biokinetic with Social Chameleon can determine that the liar is hiding something, and can use that information and the liar's reactions to guide the conversation toward the topic in question. Even so, this power makes the psion into a superhuman lie detector and grants her superior powers of observation that can mimic a degree of empathy.

With this power active, the psion is also aware of and more capable of controlling her own subliminal cues, enabling her to can lie with a straight face to a degree the finest con men would envy. She can also use Social Chameleon to blend into any social circle as if she had been a member all along, by mirroring the reactions and signals given off by others in the group.

System: This power provides two benefits. First, the psion can interpret everything about a person's actions in a kind of gestalt, giving her the ability to discern whether the subject is lying about something, or whether a topic makes him nervous, and so on. Seemingly insignificant cues show up as plain as neon-lit billboards to the biokinetic's enhanced senses. Second, she can interpret the best ways to interact with others to get the results she wants or needs. She can use this input to comfortably slip into social interactions with unknown people or discern the proper stimuli to provoke reactions of lust, rage, sympathy or other emotions from them.

The player rolls Psi at +1 difficulty — each success adds one die that can be used with Awareness, Rapport, or any Social-based roll later that scene. However, the player must spend two Psi points for each scene the power is active.

•••• **Toxic Allergy Inducement:** This mode, like Catabolysis, is rare among Norça and kept hidden. Few know it, and those who do take care to use it in such a way that it will not be traced back to the order.

This power works on others. It causes the victim to suffer allergies to nearly everything, including her own biochemistry. Her immune system shifts into overdrive as it attacks anything and everything it misperceives as dangerous, from food to pollen to neurotransmitters. The result is often debilitating and occasionally fatal.

System: Spend two Psi points and then roll Psi at +1 difficulty. Each success indicates one Health Level of Lethal damage inflicted on a target. The damage doesn't take effect all at once, instead accumulating at the rate of one Health Level per hour. This power can be used on

the same target more than once, and the results are cumulative — a psion who uses it twice, once for three net successes and one for two, inflicts a total of five successes upon the target. The power will run its course over five hours. Each additional roll incurs a further +1 penalty until the effects wear off.

While the victim is subject to the power's effects, she will be unable to hold down any food or drink *except* water. Her body rejects anything that would be nutritious. It also rejects any drugs or chemicals, granting her immunity to any drug or poison as if she had Metabolic Efficiency and Adaptation at a level equal to the net successes rolled, and beneficial drugs simply have no effect. Additionally, since the body's immune system attacks its own biochemistry, any bodily function can be impaired — even conscious thought. Characters subject to this power suffer +2 difficulty to all rolls involving Mental and Physical attributes as they find themselves unable to act at full capacity without triggering an allergic reaction, which leads to dizziness, disorientation, possible hallucinations, muscle spasms, aphasia and other physical and mental dysfunctions.

The latrosis power Cellular Repair can negate the effects of Toxic Allergy. The player must roll Psi at +2 difficulty and gain more net successes than the biokinetic received. If the biokinetic has used Toxic Allergy more than once, the vitakinetic must exceed her best roll.

••••• **Harmonize:** This technique is at the current outer limits of Biokinetic possibility, coming within a hair's breadth of Vitakinesis, although it doesn't have any healing applications. The biokinetic can bring another human's body into synch with her own, by extending her noetic template into the other person. Once this power is active, changes applied to the psion's body also apply to the subject's, allowing the psion to use other Biokinesis techniques to alter the subject as well as offer a few sidereal benefits.

System: This technique costs three Psi points to activate, plus one point per additional person synchronized beyond the first, and requires a Psi roll. Psi costs for powers that work on the linked characters are not affected, as the cost to extend the effect is factored into the Harmonize power.

Any psionic power that one member uses on herself or another harmonized character affects *all* of the harmonized characters, provided it directly affects the body — any Biokinetic aptitude, latrosis, Algesis, and some of the

Teleportation techniques work in this manner. Other powers that may work with this include the Flame and Ice Sheath techniques from **Aurora Australis**.

As a side effect, the linkage also disperses harm among the participants. Add one Bashing and Lethal soak for each participant. In addition, if one participant suffers any Lethal damage, it's spread among the participants. The target of any attack will suffer at least one Health Level if she takes damage at all, but may shift one Health Level to each other participant (who takes it as Bashing damage).

As an additional benefit, each psion beyond the first adds one to the effective Psi score for any member's attempt to use psionic aptitudes.

This technique lasts for one hour per point of Psi, plus one hour per success.

Example: Lydia and Jacob survive a crash find themselves in freezing, arctic weather without any life support gear. Lydia has Biosynch and can use this power to adapt to the cold, but Jacob is a Clairsentient, and has no way to survive on his own. Lydia's player spends two Psi points rolls the character's Psi score in dice and receives: 1, 2, 8, 10 and 6, or two successes. This provides a duration of seven hours (five Psi plus two successes). Lydia's player then rolls six dice (her Psi of five plus Jacob's contribution) and receives: 1, 3, 4, 7, 7, and 9, or three successes. Lydia adds two successes to her Adaptation score of five dots, giving Lydia and Jacob seven hours of relative comfort to find their way to proper shelter. Lydia does not add the full three successes because the degree of success is limited by the Harmonize roll. The two set off to find that shelter. If either Lydia or Jacob come under attack, they increase their normal soak totals by two.

Psychomorphing

• **Conceal Biokinesis:** This mode is a countermeasure to Sense Biokinesis (**Trinity**, pp. 198-199). It would not be necessary were it not for the number of psions outside Norça who have developed Psychomorphing as a secondary mode. This power creates a false biokinetic overlay to either conceal the presence of biokinetic modifications or to create the impression of modifications that the psion never actually had.

System: Roll Psi. Each success blocks others' ability to sense one biokinetic modification. The user may also spend successes to instead create the impression of a

modification that never existed (say she wants to convince others that she's altered her appearance currently or in the past). The latter are always the first impressions others receive when using Sense Biokinesis.

This power also, through as-yet poorly understood means, blocks other psionic attempts to discern such things, such as attempts from clairvoyants, telepaths or vitakinetics.

•• **Sterile Presence:** Psions with this power never sweat. In fact, they also do not shed hairs, leave fingerprints, have odors or do anything else to leave physical evidence of their presence. A biokinetic with this power could walk through a clean room and not cause any problems. This power has applications in pursuits from the scientific to the clandestine, as the psion can avoid any chance of contaminating experimental samples or he could leave no evidence at a crime scene for forensics specialists to find or analyze.

System: Spend one point and roll Psi. For a number of hours equal to successes, the psion has no scent and leaves no biological residue or dander wherever he goes, no matter how few precautions he takes. This power does not negate direct action — a biokinetic who suffers a gunshot wound still bleeds and if someone yanks out his hair by the roots, that will be viable evidence. This power simply prevents such things from happening normally.

••• **False Signature:** A biokinetic can use this power to superficially adopt the biological traces of another human, provided he has been in physical contact with that other person and "read" him. The psion's appearance does not change, but his fingerprints, retinal patterns, voiceprint and even DNA read as the other person's. Any detailed scan will probably pierce the deception, but this power can be used to get past many normal security measures.

Due to the potential backlash Norça could suffer if this power were widely known to the rest of the world, only the most trusted members of the Order are taught how to use it and then they keep its use to a minimum. The prospect of other orders gaining access to this power — either through espionage or defection — worries ranking Norça. Some fear it has already happened.

System: To be able to use this power, the psion must first make physical contact with the intended target and roll Psi at +2 difficulty. If successful, for the next 24 hours, the psion can adopt all of the signatures (except physical appearance) of that person with the expenditure of two

Psi points and a Psi roll. Each success adds one to the difficulty to pierce the disguise. This power is often used in conjunction with Transformation (see **Trinity**, pp. 200-201).

•••• **Control Biotech:** A psion with this power can take control of others' biotech and use it against them (or simply shut it off). This can be disconcerting for another when the proverbial knife turns in her hand. It also allows the biokinetic to operate biotech at a distance, if it normally would not work — activate it, etc.

System: Spend two Psi points and roll Psi. For each success, the biokinetic gains absolute control over the biotech device for one turn. He can shut it off or activate any of its functions at will.

••••• **Anabolysis:** The antithesis of Catabolysis, this mode gives the psion the ability to temporarily improve any of his or someone else's Attribute scores for a time, as he enhances his bodily functions in a healthy fashion. This power has no visible effect until the psion uses the power. The body does temporarily alter itself depending on the boost in question. Appearance, Manipulation or Charisma may be boosted due to enhanced pheromonal function, Perception may see the sensory organs develop more nerve clusters or receptors and a Wits boost may come about due to enhanced production of neurotransmitters.

System: Spend three Psi points and roll Psi. Each success allows the psion to add one dot to any Attribute — not all. He may improve as many attributes as he likes as long as the total does not exceed the number of successes. This boost lasts for ten minutes per point of permanent Psi.

If the psion chooses to use this power to enhance another, the player must spend one Willpower point. Otherwise, it works exactly as above.

Characters may not benefit from more than one use of this power at a time.

Transmogrify

• **Reflexive Shift:** Biokinetics with this power are able to shapeshift in response to changing situations around them — to quickly dodge a sniper's bullet, or to grow patagia to glide if pushed off a rooftop, and so on.

System: A psion with one dot of Adaptation and this power can use any Biokinesis power as a free action, at a Psi cost one higher than normal. She can only react defensively — growing armor to absorb an attack or shift-

ing dots into Dexterity to better dodge, for example. She can even react to surprise situations (such as the aforementioned sniper).

The psion can only use this power to invoke modes she's purchased.

•• **Smother:** This macabre power allows a psion to render her form fully malleable and engulf another creature or object equal to or smaller than he is. He can suffocate the victim, cut off her senses, or try to slowly crush her.

System: The psion spends one Psi point and rolls Psi. Each success adds one die to Brawl or Martial Arts attempts to grapple another. If the psion successfully grapples his victim, he can choose to suffocate her, cut off her senses and even try to crush the life out of her. If he chooses the latter, he inflicts Strength + Stamina Lethal damage on the victim each turn, but suffers one Health Level of Bashing damage from the exertion. The psion can maintain this power for one turn per point of Psi he has.

Additionally, if the Psion can defeat the victim in a Strength + Might contest, he can move the victim's body against her will. For each success the psion achieves over

the target, he may walk the target at a speed of one meter per turn. He can also use the target's body to strike others or use weapons — in such cases, the dice pool is equal to the psion's net successes or appropriate Attribute (whichever is lower) + the appropriate Ability score, and damage is based on the psion's Strength. If the target is willing and puts her strength behind a Brawl or Melee attack, the psion can add her Strength score to the damage dice rolled.

The victim can break free, but must defeat the psion in a Strength contest. She can try every turn. If the victim has Biosynch, she can adapt to the compression damage.

••• **Fluidic Shift:** This power can be a bit disconcerting to see in action. The psion renders her form malleable and fluid in a manner similar to Molding, but can move with much greater speed, allowing him to use this power to avoid attacks or flow through a hazardous area, such as a maze of laser beams. The psion also has much greater control over how she moves, making it easier for her to perform otherwise difficult acts of contortion and acrobatics.

System: Spend two Psi points and roll Psi. For one turn per point of Psi, the psion may add the number of successes to Dodge, Stealth and Athletics rolls. If the psion has Transmogrify ••••, this effect persists for 1 minute per point of Psi. At Transmogrify ••••• the effect persists for 10 minutes per point of Psi.

•••• **Living Toolkit:** With this power, a biokinetic never needs a wrench, a hammer, a screwdriver, or a lockpick ever again. She also never again needs a knife or brass knuckles or any other hand-held weapon, either. She can shape her fingers, hands, arms, feet and legs into utilitarian forms for use as tools or weapons, even increasing the density of her flesh and bone to equal that of high-quality steel, adding mass through the same means that Body Sculpt does.

This power is fairly bizarre, allowing the psion to perform such feats as making her skeleton nearly unbreakable, or reshaping her fingertips into lockpicks while simultaneously "feeling" her way through the tumblers. The biokinetic suffers no loss of sensation in the altered body parts, although she's less likely to suffer much pain due to the increased durability.

System: Spend two Psi points and roll Psi. The number of successes determines how effective the change is. For tools, each success adds one die to uses of that tool

Transmogrify and Body Image

A Biokinetic who masters this mode can adopt the form that most closely matches her own self-image, regardless of height, build, apparent gender, or what-have-you. She can also change her shape so often that she may lose track of who she is, or who she sees herself as. This is not solely a matter for dysfunction — one psion may have a sufficiently strong self-image that frequent shifting won't alter, and another may lose himself in the changes, finding it difficult to hold onto his identity in the long run.

This isn't meant to be a rule, but as a suggestion for roleplay. Identity issues for Biokinetic psions can become quite complex, both for the psion and for her associates. This aspect should not be glossed over, but it also shouldn't rule the series — use as needed.



— Intrusion for lockpicks, Engineering for general tools, etc. For weapons, add +1 die to damage done for each success, and the psion can choose to make it Bashing or Lethal, depending on the type of weapon. For armor, add +1 soak per success. Uses of this power that increase density and add mass add 10 kg per success — most uses that provide weapons or armor fall into this category.

This power literally allows the user to shape her body into any plausible mechanical (not electronic) tool. Creativity should be rewarded, but players shouldn't go overboard.

••••• **Parasitic Rider:** Psions with this power gain the ability to plant biological “bugs” on others. Through an unknown mechanism, the psion transmutes a portion of her brain into noetic energy, which then melds with the target's noetic template, returning to physical form. When the psion reclaims this material, she gains the target's sensory impressions for the time that she carried the material. However, the longer they were carried, the less complete the impressions are.

System: This is a variation of the Homunculus effect. The psion spends three Psi points and one Willpower

point, and rolls Psi against a difficulty equal to the target's Stamina. For each rider the psion sends out, she subtracts one dot from one of her Mental Attributes (player's choice). If the subject dies, or the psion is otherwise unable to regain the Rider, the loss is permanent, but the attribute may be restored to its former score at half normal XP cost.

To reclaim the rider, the psion must be in the target's physical presence for at least a turn. Once the rider returns, the psion makes a Perception + Awareness roll at +1 difficulty (because she's dealing with another's perceptions). If the rider was gone for more than an hour, the roll is at +2 difficulty, for a day, +3, and +1 more for each additional day. If the difficulty exceeds +5, the rider's impressions are vague and useless to the biokinetic. The number of successes determines the clarity of impressions — one success means that the psion knows where the subject was while he carried the rider and what he did in general terms. With five successes, she has near-photographic recall of the subject's activities.

Psions subjected to this power can sense the rider's presence with an Attunement roll. Sense Biokinesis can

identify the rider with a single success (so users often try to conceal it).

Parasitic Rider does not grant access to the subject's thoughts and emotions, only his sensory impressions.

Psionic Dysfunction

While Norça encourages its members to excel in the use of their powers as much as their mundane skills, they try to ingrain the consequences of overspecialization into the order's membership. Even so, some Norça always believe they can deal with or resist the dysfunction and focus on one mode to the exclusion of the other two, often leading to tragic consequences.

With biokinesis, this dysfunction is perhaps more perilous than other aptitudes. Biokinesis deals directly with the psion's body, and thus any imbalance threatens her body and health over time. For a psychokinetic, imbalance can lead to havoc on the outside world, for a biokinetic, that havoc is wrought upon her body.

In game terms, dysfunction happens if a player buys one mode up to five dots, while keeping the other two aptitudes at zero or one dot. This imbalance can affect the psion's physical or mental state — or both in some cases. Fortunately, it's easy to correct this problem — simply increase one of the other two modes to two dots or more.

The following are some possible biokinetic dysfunctions. Storytellers and players should feel free to come up with other possible dysfunctions and inflict them on characters as appropriate.

- **Adaptation Dysfunction:** Psions who exclusively develop Adaptation at the expense of the other modes become obsessed with survival at a conscious and automatic level. The psion's body automatically adapts to changing conditions to maintain optimal healthy performance, but this is the least of the psion's problems. The psion finds it difficult to believe that he won't survive any situation he comes across and finds it difficult to resist any challenge to that belief. As a result, he acts impulsively when an opportunity to do something risky or dangerous comes up. If facing a hail of bullets, the psion will charge headlong into it to get directly to those shooting.

Characters with this dysfunction are brash and tend to bluster. They suffer a +1 difficulty penalty to social actions when patience is necessary, or when dealing with someone who shows a sense of caution or self-preservation.

- **Psychomorphic Dysfunction:** Psions who focus on Psychomorphing lose all sense of modesty or bodily limitations. To her, there are no limits to what she can or should do with her body, and has no sense that any such changes may be wrong. In fact, she considers shocking or unusual transformations desirable.

A psion suffering this dysfunction is likely to use her power without thought as needed. If she sees an interesting piece of biotech, she might use Assimilation to absorb it and see what it does, whether or not it's hers. She shifts her physique as necessary to accomplish tasks whether or not she can easily perform them without the shift — move dots to Dexterity to run, or to Strength to lift something and so on. She's so absorbed in her body and its functions (and how she can improve them) that she suffers a +1 difficulty to Social rolls unless she spends a Willpower point to focus on the rest of the world for a scene.

- **Transmogrify Dysfunction:** This is the most disturbing biokinetic dysfunction. A Psion who suffers from this has no real sense of self-image, and views his body as nothing more than a tool to be adapted to any situation at hand. He changes his form on a regular basis, the more outré the better. Over time, their bodies become bizarre patchwork designs as they adapt body parts to fit each situation as it comes.

The dysfunctional psion will also avoid using any technological or biotech device if he can duplicate the function with Biokinesis. The player can spend a point of Willpower for the character to resist this compulsion for a scene, but even then he suffers +1 difficulty using it.

Psions with this dysfunction often suffer Social penalties due to their bizarre forms — the more bizarre and outrageous the form, the higher the penalty. If the psion gets too far out of hand, he may be mistaken for an Aberrant.

Biotechnology

Life in the service of life: that's the driving principle behind biotechnology. The arrival of the psions pushed ahead human biotechnological research to the extent that nowadays the word is most often identified with bioware. However, human scientists had been advancing biotech on their own without psionic insights, and stumbled into amazing discoveries by dogged determination and fortunate coincidence. Genetics, proteomics, pharmacogenomics, hydroponics, biochemistry and even

terraforming are all applications of biotech that have nothing to do with the living machines the Gifted use. The completion of the Human Genome was a landmark in early 21st century history, paving the way for advanced developments in medicine, only to be lost during the Aberrant War.

Despite the loss of such a precious resource, scientists already possessed knowledge of the genomes of other species. Human genome data allowed the Sudamerican pharmaceutical industry to tailor drugs for specific user groups, boosting their efficiency and minimizing their side effects. After The Crash, laboratories and cartels still possessed the formulae and could extrapolate new products from them, but they can't innovate at the previous pace until the genetic catalog for the human body is recovered.

When psions entered the scene, biotechnology made unprecedented surges ahead. The number of labs and companies dedicated to its research and commercialization increased exponentially. Orgotek and Norça-sponsored BioSystems lead the way in the design and production of bioware, while the Æsculapians and the Co-

lombian labs are pushing the envelope of medical applications. The understanding of psi opened a whole new universe to biotech researchers as it did for physicists, and "psion particles" and "noetic signatures" became household terms in biological research circles, joining "proteins" and "amino acids."

Psions immediately dominated the revitalized biotech field, giving a decisive competitive edge to their employers. As psions spread from the orders to pursue their own careers and visions, they found eager employers in the industry, leveling the playing field a little.

Contact with the Qin was another milestone. Humans witnessed first-hand the incredible possibilities of advanced biotechnology. Earth technology still depended largely on hardtech, and seeing all manner of objects built completely of living matter broke the conceptual barriers around biodesigners' vision. What little the Qin have shared of their technology has been enough to spark the imagination of technicians and scientists.

Ever since, companies and institutes have been making daily progress, churning out new methods, products and even design philosophies.

Applications of Biotech

Any technology humanity develops eventually finds applications in originally unsuspected areas, and biotech is no different. During its infancy, biotechnology was limited to biological uses; it was a self-contained industry, so to speak. Since the cloning of the first sheep in the late 20th century, researchers foresaw biotech's potential in the field of food production and agriculture, but there were still too many variables that made biological sciences risky and unpredictable, and society reacted strongly against it.

Sudamerican drug research did much for the biochemical industry, with somewhat looser legislation and more permissive conditions, extending biotechnology into the entertainment market and, in the second half of the 21st century, into advanced medicine. Early terraforming projects made attempts to engineer microorganisms into transforming agents, but found a complicating factor in mutation. The worst nightmare for both supporters and detractors was that mutation could make a useful bug into a killer disease, and tales of rampant flesh-eating bacteria were all the rage in the media. They still are, every now and then.

Now that biotech has the capacity to build all kinds of tools, it grew to encompass almost every human activ-

The Human Genome

Progress in the recovery of the human genome catalog is slow, too slow for the tastes of many. Trinity-era computer power and bioware assistance would make it possible in just a few years' effort...were it not for social factors. Popular opinion regards the Aberrants as (among other things) the inevitable backlash for human tampering with the stuff of human existence. Even the most benign genetic research receives very hostile scrutiny, and the U.N. emphatically closes down possibly harmful projects.

Scientists and doctors complain that this attitude keeps them from finding cures for Taint diseases and the possible eradication of Aberrant Syndrome. Lobbyists answer by pointing at France, FSA's Taint Zone and Venezuela. The Huang-Marr Project scandal (see the **Darkness Revealed** series) bolstered the anti-genomic movement, showing the extremes scientists could go to.

Nonetheless, rumors speak of a Genomic Underground movement among labs around the world, and conspiracy theorists believe that someone, somewhere, has already completed the Human Genome.

ity: BioSystems builds bioVARGs for the heavy industry, journalists travel with a biocamera sitting on their shoulders, bang divinas' consoles are bioapps that channel their creativity into their art. Even the most unlikely professions, hobbies and markets feel the changes created by newly introduced biotech tools.

Industry

Industrial applications of biotech started more than a century before the psi orders revealed themselves. Agrotech was among the first and most controversial uses of biotechnology, the one that gave rise to the anti-genomic movement and the argument that humanity was poking things best left untouched. Companies used genetics to grow better (and trademarked) brands of vegetables. The potential benefits of foods more resistant to disease and with higher nutritional value were obscured by the debate about the ethics of changing Creation to fit human whims. An example of the common people's fear of biotechnology is an old urban legend about engineered chickens with no extremities and no heads used in fast food restaurants.

The field of eugenics is very specifically focused in the Trinity era. Rather than improving a species in minor ways for commercial gain, its workers adjust Earth life into forms more adaptable to the alien environments of space and extrasolar colonies. Most eugenic firms are situated off-world, and their clients are the mining companies and countries who want to build off-Earth presence.

Terraforming is mostly the domain of governments, though Orgotek and Norça interests have spawned private operations not limited to other planets. Major Sudamerican laboratories maintain terraforming divisions concerned with restoring Earth's ecosystems. Their Sudamerican successes provide a portfolio of recommendations that commands the attention of European negotiators despite European fears of unleashing a new, greater continental disaster in the curse of trying to recover from the last one.

Major suppliers for heavy industries feature bioVARGs as their star products, but maintenance and construction biobots proved their worth Amazonian and Andean projects and enjoy rising popularity. Biotech construction materials haven't met hardtech's costs and ubiquity, but Qin contributions help efforts to show biomaterials well suited for exotic situations like under-sea construction.

Communications and electronics are still dominated by hardtech, as engineers haven't found a way to conduct electricity or optical pulses through bioware. Many would kill for a sample of Chromatic nerve endings for study into building a good biowire. (Rumor has it that some have killed trying to get such samples.) Some designers are bypassing the whole electronic aspect of communication by relying on psi, but psi circuits are still barely in alpha testing phases. Plasmal bioapps might help, but research into applications for them has to follow behind further exploration of biotech principles.

Advanced bioapps, the ones only usable by psions, haven't spread beyond the companies that can afford both the bioware and the psion to operate it. The next frontier in this field, everyone agrees, is low-Tolerance tools for neutral use. Clairsentient measuring devices, electrokinetic repair equipment and vitakinetic first aid kits are some of the many low-level bioapps that any trained person can use. Almost all useful applications of this sort emerge unpredictably and unsystematically in the course of broad-ranging experimentation, and biotech companies would love to uncover useful principles or even reliable rules of thumb to cut down on the quantity of wasted effort.

Warfare

Almost all hardtech weapons, armor and equipment have their biotech equivalents. Beyond laser gauntlets, bioweave armor and hybrid fighters, biotechnology poses its greatest threat as a weapon on the smaller scale. Never mind the tales of cloned super-soldiers — bacteriological warfare still gives nightmares to Venezuelans and anyone who's seen the quarantine zone there. A bioengineered organism can wipe out an entire population with no damage to the infrastructure, and a carefully designed plant can wreak havoc on an ecosystem and destroy a year's worth of crops.

Outlawed by the U.N., microbiological weapons come to life in labs deep in the black market. Most governments have no qualms about deporting biotech criminals to countries where the death penalty is legal. A nation or group that strikes with biological weapons will have to answer to the international community and the psi orders. Venezuela, Brazil, China and Australia are particularly vocal in the denouncement of bacteriological warfare, with the strongest support from the Æsculapians and the Legions. Norça say nothing; they prefer to hunt the culprit down and dispense some real punishment.

· TRITON ARCHIVES ·

Conventional bioweapons are among the most sturdy and durable bioapps. They must withstand battlefield conditions and still perform at peak efficiency. Hardtech components shield particularly delicate or complex systems. Formatting is one of the greatest assets of biotech weaponry, giving psions significantly improved performance as the distance between weapon and user shrinks. This enhanced response and maneuverability give humanity a better chance against Aberrants and any other opponent using hardtech equipment.

The relationship between a formatted bioweapon and its user can get downright weird. The normal attachment a soldier feels for his pistol gets much more intimate when the pistol is technically alive, and noetically a part of him. It's not unusual to see a Legionnaire to talk to his laser gauntlet with quiet, reassuring words...or to notice that he shoots better in the next battle because it feels harmonized with him. Weapons capable of generating their own ammunition must be carefully "fed" between uses, and bioarmors need medical attention for their injuries. Regular maintenance and care can keep a military bioapp working through several tours of duty.

Medicine

Healing is about restoring life to its proper balance. What better tool than life itself? Noetics revolutionized medical research, with insights into patients and their illnesses at unprecedented depth and clarity. As impressive as their advancements are, scientists complain that they could achieve so much more if the restrictions on genetics research were lifted. They'd like to target a patient's ailment with pinpoint accuracy and administer medicaments specifically tailored for her metabolism. Cloning transplants from the recipient's own genome would eliminate rejection complications and eliminate the need for organ banks. Society at large retains its unyielding hostility to the notion, and the Huang-Marr scandal only strengthens popular resistance.

While research into microappliances is frozen, or at least advancing at a very cautious pace, biotech probes already in use can give a psion doctor a mental picture of the patient's insides and navigate by telepathic commands while analyzing their surroundings. Other small bioapps include "artificial" organs: a biotech artificial heart will last a lot longer than a hardtech one and is hundreds of times more reliable. The same goes for prosthetics. The success of the artificial organs provides practical demonstration that biotech can be both useful and safe, and

The Architects of Life

— Introduction to Biotechnology, University of Lima, 11.5.2118

An often forgotten aspect of biotechnology is proteomics, the study of proteins. Proteins are complex molecules composed of amino acids, and the thousands of types science has identified are responsible for the chemical processes inside living organisms. Most living tissue is composed of proteins: enzymes, hormones, even toxins and diseases are themselves proteins.

The genetic code is really a blueprint for the production of these molecules: the DNA for a needed protein is transcribed into a sequence of nucleotides along a segment of RNA. This RNA template is then used to synthesize the protein in question.

Proteins have slots into which other proteins or molecules can fit. The importance of proteomics resides in that, once the function of a protein is identified, it can be targeted precisely for activation thanks to these slots. Protein structures are central to rational drug design, which allows for the chemical triggering of precise effects, avoiding the inefficient trial and error methods of old drug production.

The knowledge we still have of proteins' roles has proven helpful in the reverse-engineering of existing medicaments, and thanks to those three-dimensional blueprints, science is backtracking to find the basis of our knowledge.

Protein structures are also helping us decode the bioware matrices and taking us nearer to fully comprehending the nature of noetic biotechnology.

might someday lead to wider acceptance of research into plasmal and bacterial templates for mainstream bioapps.

Leisure

Give a child a tool and he will make it into a toy. Eventually, bioapps oriented to more frivolous pursuits, or commandeered from more serious original purposes, en-

tered the market. The most popular entertainment bioapps are undoubtedly the mix stations bang divinas use to produce their multisensory performances, but biotechnology has found other niches that are at the same time more modest and more exotic.

Cameras, microphones holoprojectors and other multimedia gear were early targets for biotech development, since biological responsiveness to small changes in the environment makes them better tools than their hardtech counterparts. The fashion industry experiments with biofabrics, still limiting themselves to creations like China's artificial silk (which has a bulletproof version). Designers haven't dared to step further — they fear, with good reason, the public's distaste for wearing material that is alive. The Qin don't understand this aversion.

The counterculture and underground scenes adopt biotech for more radical uses. Tattoos and piercings are tame compared with the self-alterations biotech can provide: cosmetics can give a person anything from new skin, eye or hair pigmentation to tissue grafts. A woman with violet, slit-pupiled eyes and a cute pair of actual horns on her forehead is not an unusual sight at in some neighborhoods. Cosmetic plastic surgery is so advanced, it can change a person's gender almost down to the cellular level (and vitakinetic-related research advances options for transformation from genes up).

Society

Legislation cannot keep pace with biotechnology. The U.N. set some general guidelines, like the ones restricting genetics research, and member nations try to regulate the specifics. Countries with a cultural bent towards ecology and where anima is popular tend to award the biotechnology industry more freedom of action. Every biotech company keeps a legal department which must keep current with updates and developments in international law about their products.

From the total rejection in Nihon to the total acceptance in Brazil, biotech adoption is a matter of culture. A Sudamerican citizen doesn't give a second thought about injecting herself with a drug that will keep her hormonal balance in check, but the same act is frightening to someone in the FSA. Biotech changes human preconceptions about the nature of life, fueling hot debates over its ethical and religious implications.

The more esoteric fringes of anima culture have adopted bioware as new religious icons, and established

religions have debated the issue of psi and bioware for years. Scientists often become more spiritual the further they go into noetic theory and application, while mystics become more rational as they find scientific validation to their beliefs. Biotechnology is a meeting point between the two and, much to Proxy Matthieu Zweidler's displeasure, a marker for the convergence of science and religion.

Animism, the belief that every object and living thing on Earth has a spirit or a soul, is compatible with bioapps. Animistic religions like Andean shamanism give bioware a great measure of respect, treating its appliances like awakened spirits inhabiting an engineered shell. Almost every Tesser navigator is an animist, as are most bioVARG pilots, even if they limit their belief of an inhabiting personality to their "babies."

Biotech and Psi

All of the Aptitudes contribute to biotech research and development, and every government and business concerned with biotech tries to recruit psions for its staff or arrange for the loan of psions for specific projects. In addition, psions make better testers, since they can endure bioapp use far longer than neutrals can. Psions are the primary customers of most cutting-edge developments, until someone manages to produce a particular effect in a way that depends on less tolerance. This quest to transform psion-only tools into ones suitable for the general market is one of the most hotly contested in biotech, constantly immersed in political struggle and espionage.

Pharmacology: Drugs for Every Occasion

Due to the progress in the fields of genetics and proteomics (see "The Architects of Life," above), Trinity-era drug design is increasingly focused and deliberate, less an exercise in guesswork and blind experimentation. Targeted to correct specific problems, Trinity-era drugs, particularly those produced in Sudamérica, have few or (most commonly) no undesirable side effects. Once the genome of a disease is cracked, cure will follow in a couple of months, thanks to the huge library of biotemplates Sudamerican labs have amassed over time.

Likewise, recreation and work-related drugs aim for specific effects, and achieve them without trouble for the user.

The Design Phase

Sudamerican companies dominate the pharmaceutical trade, their closest competitors years or even decades behind. Marquez Laboratories and MedNacionales hold in their records more protein structures than all the clinics in the world put together, and half of them are copyrighted. Templates from the Amazon, Pantanal and other biodiverse zones are licensed to biotech companies, and part of the royalties go to the Native tribe that holds the rights.

The Æsculapian Order licenses yet-undecoded protein structures for a reduced fee, as they possess the technology and savvy to decode the proteins themselves. The order pays full license fees only when and if a template proves suitable on an ongoing basis for some specific application. Private and Æsculapian clinics are the main clients for completed pharmaceutical products, but companies donate large shipments of medicines to hospitals built in hot zones out of a combination of genuine altruism and the desire to let others perform field testing.

There are two approaches to drug design: start from the need, or start from the substance. Marquez Laboratories, with their advanced research facilities in *Orguhlo de Cèu* station, focus on developing new drugs to answer existing needs. They crack diseases and human biochemistry to find the holes for which they'll craft the pegs. Coming from the other side, MedNacionales decodes the structures of substances they acquire from the biotech market. They open the genomes of plants and animal species to find out what their components do, then find applications for the results.

Scientists and technicians from the private and public sectors meet regularly at professional conferences to compare notes. Discussion of how incomplete pieces might fit together often leads to insights that produce complete products by the next gathering.

The Marketing

Sudamérica is a pharmacological haven, with a population accustomed to using drugs and willing to try out new substances as one tries a new brand of shoes. Exports to other continent are limited by the countries' legislations. Medicinal drugs pass through borders easily, although nations like the FSA and Nihon threw up legal obstacles out of lack of trust. Recreational and work substances are much more limited and even outright banned outside their continent of origin.

As the variety of substances increased, they were categorized as if they were media products. First the public, and then the stores labeled drug groups with the term "genre" until it became widespread to classify them that way. Genres are not set in stone, and there are disagreements about where a particular substance belongs. Stores and the labs' marketing departments come up with new labels to help in sales, and the OpNet abounds with discussions about which drug genre is better. Current popular genres are:

- **Common Medicinal.** Drugs designed to cure common symptoms. Painkillers, cold medicine, air/space/sea-sickness remedies, etc.

- **Deep Medicinal.** Heavy-duty medicaments to treat more serious conditions, like hormonal balancers, immune system strengtheners, bloodstream enrichers, and the more common vaccines.

- **Mooders.** Drugs intended to alter the user's mood. Subgenres include several shades of joy, sadness, depression and melancholy; anger, hate and violence; love and friendship; success and accomplishment; self-confidence and enthusiasm, etc.

- **Imagineers.** Substances that stimulate memory and the senses. It's an open and intimate way of entertainment, since the user is witness to stories of her own creation. Scientists are tinkering with ways to code storylines into the substance by triggering specific series of impulses, but so far they haven't gotten consistently reliable results. The most advanced imagineer drugs still stimulate mixes of emotion that every individual interprets differently, rather than thematic experiences.

- **Scramblers.** These chemicals crosswire the brain's sensory input for an exhilarating experience of tasting colors, hearing sights and smelling touch.

- **Metapointers.** Drugs that enhance any or all senses; most (though not all) have the intentional side effect of capping the intensity of input so that the user doesn't collapse from sensory overload.

- **Psychedelics.** Awareness-altering substances that work on the user's consciousness. Most trigger random reactions which simulate religious experience. Law enforcement agencies use variants of these for interrogations.

- **Compensators.** Labor-related drugs designed to be used in adverse conditions. The most popular are the altitude correctors used by workers who suffer from altitude changes in the course of their jobs, like mountain

guides or fast-traveling businessmen. There are drugs that help withstand cold and hot temperatures or enhance decompression for underwater conditions.

- **Boosters.** Drugs that enhance the user's natural attributes. They make a person stronger, faster, smarter or more resistant. They do take a toll on the body, and each use is followed by a period of tiredness.

- **Automatizers.** For dull, repetitive tasks, these drugs lock muscular move sequences into a repeating loop, and allow the mind to wander freely or send it to sleep. They're designed with definite durations, and the most minimal adrenaline rush will break the effect instantly.

- **Ceremonial.** Not available commercially, ceremonial drugs are the trade secrets of animist priests and priestesses. They supposedly open the mind to the subquantum universe, simulating psi sensory Modes. Labs haven't been able to reproduce the effects the shamans claim their herbs possess.

Any substance that impairs any physical or mental function is restricted to army and police use, and to special medical treatments. Potent poisons and harmful toxins are not available for sale except on the black market.

Pharmacopoeia

These are some of the drugs available to characters, examples of the genres currently on sale in the normal and black markets.

Drugs with Addiction Ratings tend to hook their users. Make a Resistance roll with a difficulty equal to the number of doses taken after the first, plus the Addiction Rating. If the roll fails, the character must take another dose or suffer the listed Detox effects for a time equal to a normal dose's duration. This compulsive dose lasts half as long as usual, and the duration halves again with each subsequent use. A successful Resistance roll "resets the clock," allowing the character to stop taking the drug when desired and creating no Detox effects. The Antitoxin technique can flush out accumulated drug contamination, with a Toxin Rating equal to the Addiction Rating + 1. The character still suffers Detox effects, but for only half the normal period (or even less if the Antitoxin roll generates multiple successes).

Using several drugs at once increases the risks of addiction. Resistance rolls suffer a difficulty penalty equal to the sum of all active drugs' Addiction Ratings.

Synchronia

Developed primarily for police and military operations, this drug enables users to react better to each other's actions, by sharpening senses and accelerating

synapses and reflexes. It's only used for flash operations, since its duration is too short for extended combat conditions. A less potent version is sold commercially, and is popular among musicians who like the results for improvisation and harmony work.

Effect: The member of a team with the highest Initiative shares his rating with his companions. Players can take some extra time to make careful plans in the midst of a heated battle, to reflect the degree of coordination users of this drug can achieve. Additionally, users get a +1 bonus to all Wits rolls.

Duration: (10 - Stamina) turns

Addiction Rating: 0

Detox: None

Cost: •• (10 individual doses)

Dream Sequence

The user can tap into his subconscious for clues about a present predicament. The drug fires up all sort of synapses that create random mental images, guided by the user's concentration (if any).

Effect: Roll three additional dice when making Meditation rolls. The more successes rolled, the clearer the character's inspiration. The Storyteller should provide the player with assorted metaphors and clues about the problem the character is trying to think through. This bonus doesn't apply when rolling Meditation to recover Psi.

Duration: 30 minutes

Addiction Rating: 1

Detox: +1 Difficulty on Intelligence rolls.

Cost: ••• (5 doses)

Flashback

This drug stimulates the memory of the user, bringing back stored experiences with vivid clarity.

Effect: All dice pools are doubled on rolls where the character is trying to remember something. Additionally, a telepath can "listen in" on this trip through Memory Lane, using The Babel Effect instead of Pilfer to search through the user's mind. Someone, either the telepath or another person, must direct the user to think about these memories with a successful Rapport or Interrogation roll. If the user tries to resist, she suffers a +1 Difficulty on his opposed rolls, she recalls memories as soon as she thinks about them.

Duration: 1 hour

Addiction Rating: 0

Detox: None

Cost: ••••

Windam

A favorite among mountain rangers and divers, Windam eliminates the discomfiture generated by a change in atmospheric pressure. The drug stimulates the user's metabolism so that the thin air of the mountain or the increasing pressure from ocean depths don't penalize his actions. It doesn't protect against extreme changes — a careless diver will still suffer from explosive decompression if surfacing too fast for his own good.

Effect: Eliminates all penalties to physical rolls in high- or low-pressure environments, except for environments extreme enough to inflict major trauma on skin and other tissues. The user won't hyperventilate and his blood will keep feeding his brain to maintain normal performance.

Duration: 3 hours.

Addiction Rating: 1

Detox: +1 Difficulty to all Stamina rolls.

Cost: • (10 doses)

Babelonic

One of the most popular psychedelic drugs, it creates a tangle in the user's thought processes. Fans of this substance claim that it can cross wire the right and left brain hemispheres to create a "holographic unity of thought." The truth is that users babble randomly, spouting nonsense like "someone set us up the bomb" while playing space combat with their hands.

Effect: Wits and Intelligence are reduced by two points each for the duration of Babelonic's effects, but Perception rises by two. All Awareness rolls receive a +2 bonus, but it takes an opposed Meditation roll after the drug wears off to understand what the insights the user received could mean.

Duration: 30 minutes to 1 hour

Addiction Rating: 2

Detox: The user hears things that are not there, for a +1 Difficulty to Perception rolls.

Cost: ••

Follaje

This lethal disease was extracted and synthesized from one of the Venezuelan plagues. It consists of non-contagious bacteria which eat through muscular and skin tissue, leaving in their wake vegetal-like cells as part of the species' reproduction cycle. The victim loses mobility and muscular response as his body adopts a wooden constitution. The skin is covered by mucous fungi until the bacteria moves to the internal organs. After a long

and exceedingly painful agony, the victim dies, leaving a slimy, lichen-covered carcass behind.

Effect: Follaje has Toxin Rating 5 (Bashing), and the damage it inflicts ignores Resistance-derived soak; Metabolic Efficiency only soaks half the psion's Adaptation rating, and Antitoxin suffers +3 Difficulty when trying to counter this substance. The drug inflicts its damage once every twelve hours until it kills the victim. It's possible to heal the damage until a more permanent cure arrives, but most often this only prolongs the victim's agony.

Duration: Special

Addiction Rating: (Do you really want to be addicted to this?)

Detox: n/a

Cost: unavailable

Bioware

Bioware engineering was a gift to humanity from the "Benefactors" that also gave the proxies the Prometheus Tanks. Understanding how it worked and how it related to known technology was sketchy, derived largely from proxy speculation.

Bioappliances are not assembled in a factory line; they're grown. The first bioapps were usually covered with hardtech, and it was a surprise for many a technician to find glistening, pulsating stuff under a bioship maintenance panel. But as people became used to bioapps, their look changed to better reflect their biological nature. Bone-like structures and chitinous covers replaced hardtech casings, and it became briefly fashionable to implement designs that screamed "look! I'm using a critter!" Contemporary bioapps balance between these extremes, with more stylish lines that show their origin without trying to stand out or to shock viewers.

Bioapps are grown from undifferentiated cell cultures called "matrices." A computer pulls a template from its memory banks and forces the matrix to grow along the lines dictated by the template. All design is done with computer simulations, selecting shapes and functions from stored DNA patterns. This template is then loaded into a prototype incubator, which grows the bioapp for testing. Depending on the template used, a zygote or a seed forms in a vat. The matrix absorbs it and transforms it into the different internal organs that will make the bioapp work. The embryonic bioapp pulsates as it develops its basic structure and all systems required to make it run. Prototypes are "born" within hours of entering the template into the matrix.



The same process applies to microscopic probes designed for medical use and for city-supporting trees. The difference is purely one of scale, with the tree matrices absorbing a great many more raw materials before they're done. This unity of process is the subject of mystical speculation by those who seek a magical or transcendent foundation to biotechnology.

Serial production takes much less time as the matrix is already primed for the template. Growing vat arrays can rival the efficiency of hardtech assembly lines.

Maintenance is equally bizarre. Technicians receive training similar to paramedics', and diagnostics look much like regular health checks. The technicians check for fluid pressure, cell wall integrity, genetic mutation, epidermal strength and other factors. Repairs are done with special equipment, most of it psi-enabled, to heal any damage and wear. Neutral technicians apply special protein injections instead of vitakinetetic tools, and the process is slower but just as effective. Some scar tissue may remain after neutral treatment of a bioapp's wounds.

Sometimes it's necessary to replace one of a bioapp's organs. Some apps have a self-repair enzyme that kills off

the atrophied organ and immediately grows a replacement. However, this addition is expensive, and most appliances must undergo an external regeneration process. They're submerged in a protein bath, and the regenerating enzymes are injected. Surgical replacement is possible if a transplant is available, but it's not advisable except under optimal hygienic conditions.

Templates

A template is a genetic sequence that maps how a bioapp grows and what it can do, much like cellular DNA in human beings. Raw natural sequences provide the components of templates, though bioengineers seldom respect evolution's haphazard boundaries in crafting new syntheses. The Qin can create templates from scratch rather than by cutting and pasting from known genetic sequences, but have not yet managed to explain how they do this to human engineers trying to copy the process.

There are four basic types of templates: faunal, taken from animals; floral, taken from plants; bacterial, taken from bacteria, and plasmal, taken from basic organic fluids. Each serves particularly well for some applications.

BioVARGs, for instance, almost always grow from faunal templates.

Faunal Templates

Bioware designers are most familiar with faunal templates, and humanity has a long history of using animals for labor. Faunal bioapps are flexible and adaptable, and they make for the majority of bioware in existence. Built-in instincts allow biped bioVARGs to keep their balance without sacrificing agility and speed. Faunal bioapps develop close relationships with their users through formatting.

Faunal bioapps generally have familiar shapes. Orgotek, for example, favors insect sequences, because they're very modular and relatively simple to build and maintain. Crustacean traits are frequently used for carapace armor, and assorted species contribute to sensor systems.

The bonuses provided for formatting faunal bioapps are the standard listed in each item's description.

Floral Templates

Floral templates are as well understood as faunal ones, though not used as often. Their major application is in the field of very large structures, like buildings, and they're less popular for smaller-scale. The Brasilia Project created an interest in designing small independent and subsidiary floral bioapps. Companies like BioSystems make use of the vast library of floral templates in the pharmaceutical companies' possession. A new generation of bioware based on plants instead of animals is being released to the public at large.

A great deal of current research focuses on ways to allow neutrals to format simple bioware to themselves, and floral bioapps seem to be an option. Because they draw part of the psi they need to operate from the environment, the Tolerance Rating of a floral bioapp is reduced by one. It's possible to have Tolerance 0 floral bioapps, but in exchange of this advantage, floral bioapps are less responsive to formatting — subtract one die from any bonus formatting would give.

Bacterial and Plasmal Templates

Cell-sized bioapps still arouse a lot of suspicion almost everywhere. The necessarily invasive, dependent nature of bioware grown from plasmal and bacterial templates subjects it to the same hostility that paralyzes genetic research. Work continues in secret, often in violation of international agreements, and a proliferating variety of these sorts of bioware now appear in black markets.

Flowers and Flesh

Psychomorphing 3 (Assimilation) gives biokinetics the power to absorb bioapps into their bodies and keep them functioning. However, floral bioapps are harder to assimilate, since their biology is incompatible with the psion's. Any attempt to Assimilate floral bioware suffers from +1 difficulty, and it doesn't gain the additional reduction in Tolerance this Mode gives to formatted bioapps.

Strictly Code Indigo, bacterial bioapps are like smart diseases, and they can perform directed missions of cellular destruction. Ethical engineers wish to further study these templates in order to give medicine another tool for saving lives. Unicellular bioapps could travel around the patient's body accomplishing different sorts of missions, like tissue repair or glandular stimulation. Formatting a bacterial bioapp is an exercise in weirdness; the psion must roll Willpower upon each activation or spend (5 — Wits) turns fascinated by the awareness of hundreds to thousands of microorganisms.

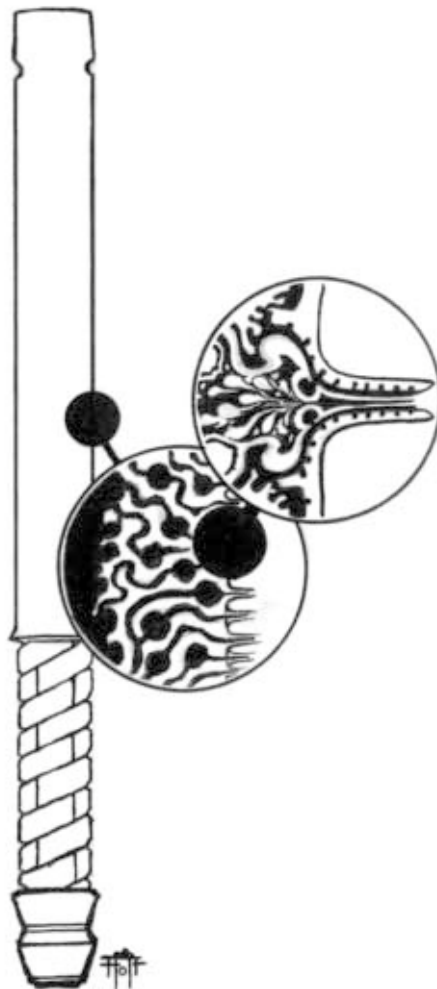
In the biological sciences, plasma is a liquid that transports nutrients, proteins and waste products to and from cells, but does not itself contain cells. Plasmal bioapps can't work except inside a host organism. They are colloidal blobs with cellular walls to isolate them from its environment, and they can carry inside themselves a "cargo" of chemicals to be released as its program dictates. Plasmal bioware could be the key to building a biotech minicomputer, as its primary function is transmitting biochemical cues.

Bioapps

Aris Aguijón

A baton used by Brazilian police, especially in Rio de Janeiro. Made of a hard and flexible resin, it secretes one of two contact toxins at the push of a button, covering small thorns designed to pierce clothing and deliver their payload. The substances are a paralyzer (Toxin Rating 4, Bashing) or a muscle relaxant (Toxin Rating 4, Bashing). For every health level lost to the toxin's effect, the victim gains a +1 difficulty to any physical activity. If the paralyzer is used, the victim's Initiative is reduced by half; the relaxant reduces Strength by 1. The Aguijón is used primarily for crowd control. A black market version secretes deadly poison (Toxin Rating 4, Lethal).

Tech: [BIO], Damage: Strength+4d10B+Toxin, Concealability: J, Mass: 1, Tolerance: n/a, Cost: ••



Qin vs. Human Biotechnology

— Dr. Kieran Baxter, *The Technological Edge* © 2110 Walkabout Press

Three years after contact with the Qin, we're still mystified by their mastery of biotechnology. Their bioapps are clearly more advanced than ours, and what little they've allowed us to see is enough to flood any OpNet server. The most obvious difference is how more *together* the appliances seem. Our technology still can't cover all areas of construction and we resort to hardtech to plug those holes. Qin bioapps are advanced organisms, some of them even capable of reproduction and a life cycle. In comparison, ours are just a collection of cells thrown together with the hope that something will come out.

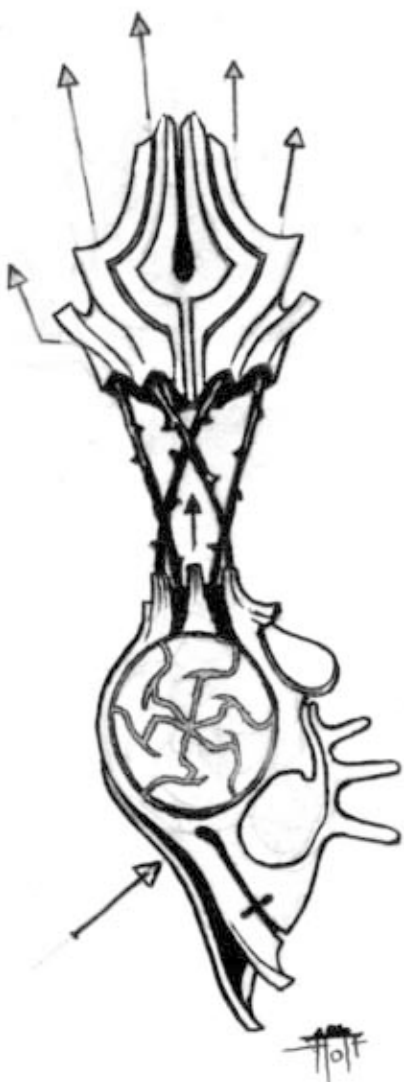
There is very little evidence of Qin relying in anything other than faunal templates; they'll make a factory out of a beast, while our first option for such a macro level application would be a floral template.

Aris Black Rose

This gauntlet is the weapon of choice for infiltration and stealth: it's a flechette thrower that generates its own ammo. It looks like a matte-black laser gauntlet, but slicker and sexier, fitting snugly around the user's arm. Around the middle of the forearm, the carapace grows slender vines that snake around the arm down to the wrist. These conduits transport the toxin generated by the organs at elbow-height to the ammunition organ at the base of the bulky fist section. The gauntlet shoots tranquilizer-coated thorns (Toxin Rating 4, Bashing), to add stopping power to the otherwise weak flechette weapon. Every health

level reduced by the toxin translates imposes -1 penalty to all Dexterity and Perception related rolls, and the victim must roll Resistance or fall unconscious if reduced to Crippled by the toxin's damage. This is a floral bioapp, and as such, it gives only +1 Accuracy when formatted, and adds no bonuses to damage. Formatting enables the psion to control the toxin's strength, from Toxin Rating 1 through 5.

Tech: [BIO], Accuracy: +1, Damage: 2/4/6d10L+Toxin, Range: 35, Maneuvers: Ms Tw, ROF: 3/8/12, Concealability: 0, Mass: 1, Tolerance: •, Cost: •••



Alchemy Sunburst

This floral carbine automatically grabs the user's arm to secure itself, it mimics the effects of **Pyrokinesis 2: Heatburn** by boosting the process of photosynthesis by noetic and optical means. Alchemy designed this carbine for balance and weight. It has no recoil as it shoots superheated air from the muzzle's amberine lens array. This wave ignores any armor except defenses against heat. When formatted, the sunburst provides an additional +1 Accuracy and no damage bonus, as it's a floral bioapp.

Tech: [BIO], Accuracy: +1, Damage: 5d10B Special (see Heatburn, **Trinity** core rules, p. 216), Range: 50, Maneuvers: Sp Tw, ROF: 2, Concealability: 0, Mass: 3, Tolerance: •, Cost: •••

BioSystems Strangler

Packed away, this exoskeleton looks like a mess of rubbery vines that fit in a small camping backpack. When donned, the vines unfurl and fasten around the user's body. This bioapp augments the physical prowess of its user by combining faunal musculature with floral chemical injection. A psion wearing a Strangler looks like she's entangled with thick rope, with chitinous plates asymmetrically covering shoulders, arms and legs, and her chest enmeshed in a network of amorphous chunks of biomatter connected by thinner ropes and fibers.

The Strangler adds +2 to Strength and Dexterity; it complements the user's movements and protects him from any chafing and wear the extra force inflicts on bones and muscles. The interconnecting modules possess glands which produce and inject booster drugs. The Strangler remains inactive until woken, preventing the risk of overdosing on the bioapp's toxins. The bioapp's chemical receptacles have the capacity for one hour of use, after which the Attribute bonus falls by one until the Strangler can recharge. After (Stamina x 2) turns of use, roll Endurance to avoid a +1 difficulty penalty to all physical actions until the psion rests for one hour. (Formatted users need to roll after (Stamina x 3) turns, and get a bonus die for the roll.) This penalty is cumulative for failures on successive Endurance rolls until the Strangler is deactivated. Metabolic Efficiency negates the penalty, but also purges the booster chemicals, reducing the Strangler's benefits to the basic +1 Attribute bonus.

The wearer suffers a +1 difficulty penalty to all Wits and Strength rolls for the hour after turning off the Strangler's enhancement effects. [1/0, 0]

Tech: [BIO], Mass: 5, Tolerance: •••, Cost: •••••

Orgotek Lily

This simple bioapp is one of the few Orgotek examples of floral templates. It's a breather that generates breathable air from the most minuscule amount of oxygen in an atmosphere, similar to the technique Oxygen Absorption. The Lily is a bulbous stub about the size of a child's fist, with four symmetrical leaves sticking out. When worn, the leaves hug the user's face, covering her nose, cheeks and chin. It allows the wearer to breathe underwater or in hazardous atmospheres, and blocks any gas, poison and microorganism that would affect her via her respiratory system, though not by contact with flesh. It gives no benefits when formatted, and is usable by neutrals.

Tech: [BIO], Mass: negligible, Tolerance: 0, Cost: •••



Nursing Blanket

A home version of the survival blanket, the nursing blanket is designed to keep a child's health stable. It interfaces with a hardtech minicomp to keep the child's medical condition monitored, and administers doses of medicaments as needed after consulting with the family doctor via OpNet. Sometimes the parents never even realize their offspring was getting sick. Using a nursing blanket accelerates healing from illnesses and intoxication: treat recovery time as if one wound level lower. This only works for damage that results from poisons, drugs and sickness. It also cures hangovers, but using a baby blanket strikes most Sudamerican men as humiliating.

Tech: [BIO], Mass: negligible, Tolerance: n/a, Cost: •

Apoderado Vigiplant

Apoderado designed the *Vigiplanta* to specifications of the Brazilian government for use in the first Quilombos. Brazil later released the license so that the company could offer it commercially. This bioapp is a sensor array disguised as a creeper plant or bush appropriate for the ecosystem where it's installed. Its leaves are incredibly sensitive to sound and movement, and relay the information to a central unit through a noetic transmitter. The noetic connection makes distance irrelevant to signal strength and clarity, so the Vigiplant is very useful for both military surveillance and scientific monitoring. It's impossible to distinguish a Vigiplant from normal shrubbery, unless somebody makes the stupid mistake of ordering a plant species that is uncommon or nonexistent in the environment where it's installed. Attunement rolls to detect data transmission suffer a +2 Difficulty, as the Vigiplant meshes into the noetic signature of the forestry around it. Clears, teks and telepaths suffer only a +1 Difficulty, but they must be actively searching for the transmission. If the Vigiplant is part of a computer tree (see below), it's completely undetectable. The Vigiplant is also transparent to Biokinesis, registering as a simple plant to Life Sense.

Tech: [BIO], Mass: variable, Tolerance: n/a, Cost: ••••

Apoderado/BioSystems Datavine

The datavine was designed as an alternative to optical fiber for moving data around. Datavines are very resilient, flexible and self-repairing, minimizing maintenance costs, and they can interface with both bio and hardtech devices. Datavines have less bandwidth, but their greater adaptability to rigorous and/or changing environments make them very desirable for outdoor installations. Current models use electroconductive sap, though experimentation with plasmal templates shows promise for future revisions.

Tech: [BIO], Mass: variable, Tolerance: n/a, Cost: • (for every roomful), Armor: 1 [2]

Computer Trees

Computers don't have to be portable, and abandoning mobility allows for biotech approaches competitive with hardtech standards. Early efforts at wholly biological computing attracted Qin interest, and their contributions greatly accelerated the process. A typical computer tree is at least four meters tall, with a trunk up to a meter in diameter, but they can be (and have been) grown as large as a sequoia. The branches of a normal-sized com-

puter tree extend up to six meters away, and every one of them is a potential communications port if pruned and plugged with a special adaptor, growing out at any height along the trunk.

Apoderado designed the user interface with fairy tales in mind. The tree's default agent is a dryad, though the tree can display a holographic keyboard for direct input for more purely pragmatic operators. Up to five psions can be formatted to a tree as sysops; only one receives sysadmin privileges. They have full use of normal computer commands when they are under the shadow of the tree's branches or standing over its roots without the need for the normal user interface. Up to ten neutrals can be formatted as well, but their interaction is limited to simple commands at user level.

Computer trees can connect with each other either through their branches or their roots, both of which can also be configured as Vigilant-like sensor systems. So far computer trees have only flourished on planetary surfaces, since they need the support of complex ecologies. A healthy computer tree strikes most observers as a beautiful thing, radiating a sense of calm purpose.

Tech: [BIO], Mass: 80+, Tolerance: n/a, Cost: ●●●●● (or more)

BioSystems Hormiga

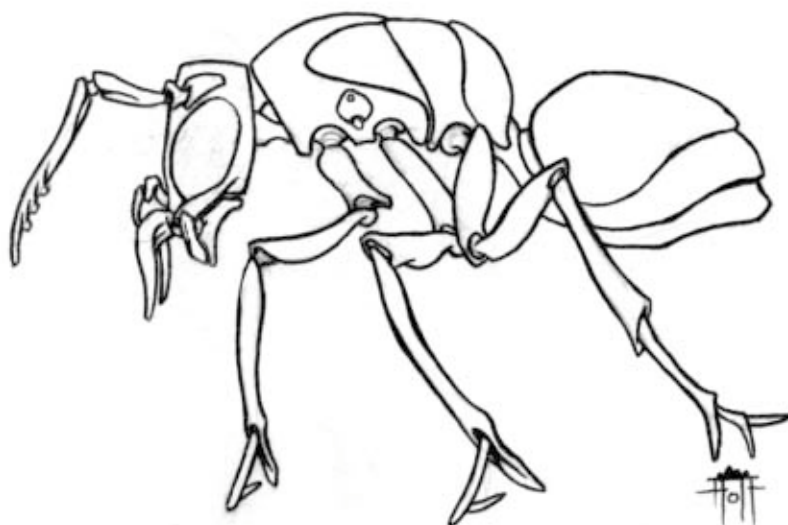
This biorobot made its debut at the site of the Brasilia Project, climbing up girders and walls with insectoid efficiency. The Hormiga resembles a worker ant the size of a small pony, protected by ceramic armor. Its head carries precision tools designed specifically for working on

biotech. The pair of arms growing from its shoulders can carry welders, drills and other heavy equipment. The tail bulge is a storage compartment with a 1.5 cubic meter capacity, meant to carry wiring, electronic components and other small construction materials. This bulge can be replaced by an arachnid component able to spin tensile support cables or biotech wiring. Each of the bot's six legs can rotate 180 degrees to double as manipulator arms. Trained technicians control these biobots through a central computer, with an SI that can coordinate up to five biobots without a hitch. (In an emergency it can handle more, but slowly.) Psions format the control unit, not the bot, and sense the bots as pieces of the whole system. An experienced operator can operate all the bots at once in a coordinated dance, or shift her consciousness to an individual biobot's sensors. BioSystems refuses to build military models, though a Hormiga's warfare applications are evident.

Tech: [BIO], Mass: 0.3 metric tons, Tolerance: ●● (plus 1 for each bot controlled after the first), Cost: ●●●●● (for each unit) Armor: 1 [2]

"FluTech"

FluTech is a restricted bacterial bioapp used to sabotage bioware. It floats in a suspension liquid inside a special insertion needle. The needle is coated with regenerating agents to help the victimized bioapp heal the wound and hide its use. Once injected, the smart bacteria look for the bioapp's main organs and latch onto them, using the bioapp's own cells to reproduce. When they reach a critical mass, the bacteria shut down all of the bioapp's



functions. Darts can carry FluTech in combat situations, but the effect takes two turns for every level of Tolerance the target bioapp has, whether it's formatted or not. Extensive maintenance is needed to rid bioware of this annoying (and thankfully non-contagious) disease. A vitakinetic could destroy FluTech with Antitoxin, treating the bacterial bioapp as a Toxin Rating 3 disease, but the little bug is resistant, and imposes a +1 Difficulty to the roll. A formatted user is immediately aware of the death of the bacteria by this means.

Formatting FluTech allows the psion to wrest control of an infected bioapp from its owner with an effective range of ten meters per point of Psi the formatted psion has. For every success in a Psi roll, the FluTech user can control the infected bioapp for one turn within the capabilities of the bioapp in question. If the infected bioapp is formatted to another psion, the Psi roll to control the appliance is contested by the owner's own Psi roll. After the controlling effect ends, FluTech overloads and dies on its own.

Tech: [BIO], Mass: infinitesimal, Tolerance: •••, Cost: unavailable

Fantasma

First reports of Fantasma confused it with a drug. Unlike other plasmal bioware, Fantasma has no cellular

walls to isolate it from the user's own plasma. Instead, once injected, it begins replacing the normal fluid until all the plasma in the user's body is Fantasma. This bioapp only works when formatted to its user and, by allowing her to have total control of the plasma flowing through her veins, and of the substances traveling through it, emulates the Biokinesis technique Bioshift.

Before insertion, Fantasma can also be programmed to mimic any and all powers in the Adaptation Mode, but Tolerance rises by one for every Mode power it emulates, aside from Bioshift. Norça are actively searching for the creator of this bioapp, and don't hesitate to imprison or kill any user they come across. Biokinetics can identify a Fantasma user only when he displays his faux Mode, since Fantasma doesn't register in Psychomorphing 1 (Sense Biokinesis) when inactive. Kirlian Eye efforts suffer a +2 Difficulty to detect Fantasma, whether it's active or not.

The powers this bioapp emulates work exactly as described in the **Trinity** rulebook. At the end of any day in which the user of Fantasma tapped into his false Biokinesis, he must roll Resistance or suffer one level of Bashing damage, plus one per dot of the rating of the highest Mode emulated on that day.

Tech: [BIO], Mass: infinitesimal, Tolerance: •• (+1 per Mode emulated), Cost: unavailable



History of a Continent

Despite their differences, all Sudamerican countries share so much common ground that their collective history can be summed up in a few key points:

- Most of them were the cradles of rich native cultures, with varying degrees of civilization.
- They were colonized by a European power.
- They fought for their independence and won it through their own efforts.
- In their infancy as free countries, most of them sank into chaos as one faction or another vied for power.

In 1494, the Church of Rome imposed the Treaty of Tordesillas between Spain and Portugal. It redefined the boundaries of the warring maritime powers and awarded the latter the possession of Brazil and Uruguay in an effort to stop two Christian states from spilling each other's blood. With the Pope's blessing, they set out to exploit the rich lands they'd each usurped from their original inhabitants.

Portugal systematically exterminated the Amazonian Indians. The *bandeirante* explorers secured their territory with genocidal violence as they pushed inland in search of riches and slaves. The Spaniards had a little more trouble subduing the Indian population, which ranged from the defiant Mapuche to the highly organized Incas, but resistance fell nonetheless, and the *conquistadors* swarmed to the lands in search of the fabled El Dorado. Would-be empire builders founded viceroyalties in the north and south to help them manage the vast Spanish Empire.

To their credit, the Spaniards recognized the Indians' nature as human beings with a soul of their own, and Catholic missions arrived next to the soldiers in a bid to "save" the natives' souls from the demonic tricksters they called "gods."

The continental struggle for independence ignited in Haiti, which became the first independent Latin American state in 1804. The ideals of the French Revolution and the birth of the United States inspired the Creoles, people of European blood denied a position of power within the Spanish or Portuguese hierarchies due to their being born in the Americas. The Napoleonic Wars provided the ideal opportunity for the South American countries to make their move, and one by one they declared themselves independent



from their European masters. Brazil achieved its autonomy almost bloodlessly when the Prince Regent's son, left behind to rule the colony as his father returned to Portugal after its escape from Napoleon, declared independence; the weakened Crown had no choice but to concede.

In 1810, México and Argentina started their own wars in the opposite poles of the Spanish American domains. The young Venezuelan Simon Bolivar did likewise when he pursued his dream of a unified state and liberated Colombia in 1819, his homeland in 1821 and Ecuador in 1822. Bolivar's lieutenant, Antonio José de Sucre, won Bolivia's freedom in 1824 while Bolivar himself fought in Perú alongside José de San Martín, who was already on his way from liberating Argentina and Chile. Paraguay's independence was as tranquil as Brazil's, since Spain didn't oppose its independence, but Uruguay had a hard time as a buffer between Argentina and Brazil.

When the fires of the Independence Wars died down, the new governments dealt with their new autonomy as best they could. Their efforts proved insufficient. Bolivar's Gran Colombia fragmented after the hero's death in 1830 into its member nations of Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador. Civil wars engulfed the recently freed continent. South America became and remained divided by bloody conflicts fueled by political interests, dominated by totalitarian regimes and with coups and revolutions the preferred modes of succession.

Territorial wars nudged borders a few kilometers back and forth at the cost of people's lives and, unfortunately, their futures as well. Not a single decade went by without some significant war, and dictators rose and fell in the endless quest for power. The history of 19th and 20th century South America is very complex in detail, though its overall outline is simple and tragic enough.

Leaders regarded the era of prosperity promised by early Aberrants with suspicion. Knowing very well how the First World had tricked their nations in the past, the South American ruling class took the new Golden Age with a grain of salt and proceeded with caution, going against the common people's adoration of the new heroes. Colombia politely refused some Aberrant offers to help with its problems with the guerrillas and the adapting drug trade. While Brazil received them with open arms, Argentina and Chile viewed them as potential new dictators, feeling that immense power wielded by a single person is not to be trusted. Their reticence paid off when the U.N. declared war on the Aberrant. They wisely

stepped aside and prayed the rest of the world would ignore them, except for Argentina, which ratified the U.N.'s declaration and made strikes of its own.

This brought South America to the Aberrants' attention. Argentina was mercilessly bombed, Paraguay and Uruguay were caught in the heat of battle, and the mutated beasts crept up the Amazon, tainting whole hectares of tropical rainforest. Venezuela, already on the verge of social collapse, was pushed over the brink by a series of biological strikes that killed half of its citizens. Behind the Andean ranges, Chile, Peru and Bolivia were the stages of Aberrant battles over religious and racial issues. Lacking the advanced military of the First Worlders, South America could only cringe and wait for the nightmare to be over.

And then they were gone, leaving a world to stand back on its feet. South Americans had already hidden behind the Necessary Wall, raised as an initiative of the Brazilian president and agreed upon by the other leaders in the first of many steps the countries would take toward a united continent.

Behind the Necessary Wall

Created in 2054, *El Muro Necesario* was a series of restrictions on travel, investment and commerce from outside the continent, particularly the newly born FSA, but including the rest of the beleaguered First Worlders. Countries cut themselves off from the foreign capitals that had once revitalized their economies, but their infrastructure survived the conflict mostly intact.

Saying that all the foreign citizens were kindly escorted out is a bit of an exaggeration. Every foreign citizen was given a choice: nationalize and keep your property, or leave, and your property will be nationalized. Many entrepreneurs looked hard at their situation, and many decided to become full citizens of the country that hosted their facilities, since they'd be returning to an even more economically hostile home.

Wild experimentation followed. In 2058, Central America united in the Mayan League in response of the FSA's invasion of México, crossing over the Wall with a working *indígena* government. In a leap of legislative innovation, Brazil and Colombia signed the *Acta de Protección a la Biodiversidad Amazónica* (Amazon Biodiversity Protection Act) in 2061, which granted in-

tellectual property of the Amazon's genetic diversity to the natives dwelling there.

The double-edged law worked exactly as planned. Fairly represented, the natives began merging into the rest of society, enjoying a steady income in the way of royalties paid by the pharmaceutical and biochemical industries, which benefited from the rich source of raw material now at their disposal. In the same year, looking at the world's desperate hunt for natural resources, the Sudamericans agreed to ecological protection treaties, employing age-old agriculture techniques implemented with new technology to protect the environment but increase the quality and quantity of harvests each year.

Multinational patrols swept jungles and mountains, rooting out the weakened Aberrants and making the land safe.

Thanks to the example set by the Mayan League, Colombia and Brazil, the Mapuche Indians led Chile to recovery and, in 2081 established the Mapuche Nation.

In 2067, China adopted a platinum-based economy. Colombia adopted it early, given its rich platinum deposits, and jumped ahead of the race for economical supremacy against Brazil. Not to be outdone, the emerald giant began exporting its surplus agricultural production outside of Sudamérica. In response, Perú, Bolivia and Ecuador joined forces into the *Federación Andina de Comercio* (Andean Federation of Commerce), controlling commercial traffic along Sudamérica's spine.

But not everything went as well. Argentina, resentful of its neighbors' greater prosperity, imported mercenaries and settlers from Australia, Europe and even the FSA, and invaded Paraguay and Uruguay in 2070, only to be driven back by a counterstrike from all fronts in the first show of unity among Sudamericans. In a lightning campaign called the Weekend War, Argentina counterstrikes crossed every Argentine border, reclaiming occupied territories and forcing Argentina to agree to punitive trade concessions. Then the alliance dissolved and the other nations went back to their own business.

Out of the Shell

In the first *Cumbre de Cooperación Sudamericana* (Sudamerican Cooperation Summit), the assembled leaders decided they were ready to face the world. In 2073 the Necessary Wall came down.

Sudamerican prosperity caught the world by pleasant surprise. Sudamérica made available much-needed re-

sources, and also demonstrated techniques for production and distribution that wouldn't add to the legacy of environmental damage. Sudamerican trade helped foster recovery elsewhere as well as at home.

A Cultural Mosaic

The Sudamerican culture is a study in contradictions. Observers who formulate social theories based in a particular group will find their conclusions soon refuted, often by taking a second look at the very same subject. Sudamérica is a land of contrasts, but instead of being torn asunder by the numerous clashes, the Sudamericans learned to live with conflict. They spent less time trying to figure a way out of it and instead just saw the best of both sides and accepted and even relished the differences between them.

The intense pride and fierce competition among individuals, groups and even countries of Sudamérica might seem at odds with an ecologically friendly society, where individual sacrifices are made for the good of all, yet perfectly exploitable forests creep into arcologies and mother lodes rest undisturbed in the mountains. On a smaller scale, a tourist who comes upon a visceral street brawl in Rio de Janeiro may run off to find a police officer, only to come back two hours later to find bruised and battered people drinking or taking their favorite recreational drug, calling each other "brother."

An Amalgam of Viewpoints

In the 22nd century, the melding of legacies occurs in every sphere of life, from festivities and superstitions to economy and engineering. After the Aberrant War, the Sudamericans took a long, hard look at themselves, asking each other what had gone wrong and where — and most importantly, how to fix it.

At the beginning, reconciliation was haphazard and unplanned. Old hates and rivalries die hard, and there was much resentment on all sides over historical slights and mistreatments. If the Aberrant War had taught anything to the Sudamericans, however, it was the truth behind the adage "together we stand, divided we fall." Sudamericans could see the suffering created both by the monsters who rejected their humanity and by the would-be champions of humanity who become (by Sudamerican standards) monsters themselves in order to fight back. The conviction that «it must not happen here» spread through all levels of Sudamerican society.

Governments apologized formally to the Native tribes, and reform movements rocked societies as a new age of cooperation dawned on the continent. There were opportunities and concessions from all sides, and in struggling to rebuild their homes, the different races and creeds learned to live together. Life isn't perfect: they stumble, quarrel over the right direction and even fight vigorously. Progress happens sometimes because of everyone's deliberate best efforts, and sometimes despite the zealous but conceptually limited or outright mistaken understanding of the common good.

An Organic Society

During the years of recovery, the easy way out for governments was to just start exploiting the huge natural resources of their lands, burning them as the fuel for reconstruction and progress. As the rest of the world fought over what little was left to them, Sudamerican leaders gradually realized that if they abused their local treasure, they'd soon find themselves no better than the starved countries of North America and Europe. At first, this insight struck only particular individuals and groups about particular resources. The general principle of regarding the whole continent as a single system, best approached and managed with regard for the whole, emerged slowly.

The draconian natural-protection laws that arose during the Necessary Wall weren't easy to uphold. Peasants and farmers interested in developing the lands now designed as protected forests protested, and there were violent border clashes. Agricultural poaching never stopped altogether, despite ruthless policing. The governments were adamant on their policy: nature was the shining jewel of their nations, and as in China's Great Leap Upward, people would starve to preserve it.

As native peoples took more active part in the ongoing social debate and as the economic benefits of conservation became clear, people in the lower strata of society learned to respect nature. From respect grew love, and from that love, Sudamericansociety evolved toward increasingly sophisticated imitations and reinventions of nature. It doesn't matter if a person lives in the highly technological confines of Pearl City, or in the open-air colonial sprawl of Quito, every Sudamerican believes herself to be an integral part of the natural cycle.

This new organic society is not a Luddite's dream of donning a loincloth and discarding technology, but instead putting nature straight into the psyche of the individual

NEPTUNE ARCHIVE

Language in Sudamérica

— Excerpt from the Diplomatic Corps
QuickGuides, ©2120

Language in Sudamérica is not really that hard to understand. On one side, you have one of the biggest countries in the world speaking Portuguese, and then you have the neighbors; half a dozen countries that speak Spanish.

In this case, the evolution of language has followed the logical and expected process of cross-pollenization. During the self-imposed isolation after the Aberrant War, the Sudamerican countries were cut off from foreign influence and many of the barbarisms and neologisms that plagued Portuguese and Spanish began to fall out of favor, replaced by a closer relationship between the two Romance Tongues.

The two main components, Brazil (the *only* component in Portuguese's case) and Colombia show a marked cross-influence in terms and common parlance. So, if you don't understand either language, make sure that your vocoder has them stored. Set it to cross-check both language databases, for you'll find many Spanish words used in Brazil, several Portuguese terms employed from Colombia and Venezuela to Argentina and the Mapuche Nation, and the *patois* of both known effectively as "portuñol."

The local Indian tongues also influence each country. Quechua in Perú and Bolivia flavors the Spanish dialect and intonations, not to mention the Mapuches, whose language is a cultural factor in the former Republic of Chile.

Pay close attention to a speaker's accent and terminology. While the media transnationals have instituted the neutral Spanish and standard Portuguese which is programmed into vocoders, every speaker uses a collection of individual and culture-wide idiomatic influences.

and into the collective unconscious of society. As such, a Sudamericancitizen grows up believing to be as much an individual as she is part of a larger whole, like a leaf being just part of a tree, which is part of a forest. However, you won't see a Sudamerican quietly working, content in the part he plays in the workings of his country. He's not out to be just a leaf, but to be the *best* leaf you'll find in the whole damn orchard.

Being the Best

A Brazilian yuppie takes as much pride in his work as an Argentine *gaucho*, and both strive for recognition as the top in their field. Inside the heart of every Sudamerican lies this yearning to excel beyond his or her limits, to beat everything (and everyone) blocking their way to success. But as an extension of the organic nature of Sudamericanculture, this cult of personal excellence is not based on the proverbial rat race nor is it a dog-eats-dog world. Instead, it's a rather exuberant spirit of progress — as long as a person is doing the best she can at her work, she believes her efforts are helping her community thrive and prosper.

This mentality encourages heroes. Both mass media and popular folklore are rife with tales of men and women giving their all for a cause: sports stars, ace reporters, visionary scientists, inspired artists and dedicated legislators all have their place in the people's hearts. These heroes have achieved the SudamericanDream of attaining excellence and becoming the best to lead the way for their fellows. A Sudamericanhero is not the figurehead of an abstract ideal; she is an example others can follow, a normal human being who fought against all odds and succeeded, like any other person with enough motivation can.

Norça hold their heroic status not because of their psionic talents, but because they've used their skills for the benefit of all and because they've excelled in their various causes and fields. The biokinetic who single-handedly rescues a man from a burning house ranks lower in popular esteem than the team of firefighters who, devoid of any psionic advantage, brave the same house and rescue the man's wife, children and pet iguana. Norça earn glory for using their unique talents to address unique problems, the kind that neutrals simply aren't equipped to face.

As much as they like to think otherwise, Sudamericancountries are not perfect utopias. Pride crosses the line of arrogance too often, and people from other parts of the world consider Sudamericans to be

smug in general. But the smugness is not intentionally mean. After all, part of being the best person is being appropriately modest as well.

Living Fast

Each country has its own idiosyncrasy and every man is an island, but some shared influences resonance through every (or almost every) street, forest and alley. The most important of these is *motion*. Be it the wildly shifting holo-tattoos of Rio de Janeiro's youth or the quiet turning of the seasons in the Peruvian highlands, everything moves and changes. Stability is not a synonym for stagnation and even the most traditionalist elder acknowledges that nothing remains constant, nothing is ever the same.

The urgency of 22nd century Sudamérica is not laced with anxiety. Even if at a snail's pace, change will come, so, for many people, there's no need to rush it. Like driving on a crowded highway, some lanes move faster than others, but unless something is broken, everyone's going forward.

The difference in metaphorical speeds gives birth to many of the contradictions that so baffle foreigners who, walking the civilized corridors of a Colombian arcology, bump into a "primitive" group of dancers performing ancient rituals in the middle of the driveway, protesting the latest government action. It explains why Quito, the capital of Ecuador, is still an open-air city that keeps its original colonial architecture while some kilometers down the mountain slopes, Guayaquil is the epitome of a modern arcology, with two spaceports and a submarine train to the nearest undersea settlement. It also gives an excuse for the sprawling *favelas*, the shantytowns that surround most of Brazil's arcologies, seemingly cut off from the rest of the country's prosperity.

This dynamic and ever-changing way of life rests on solid foundations. Progress didn't replace tradition, it's only building on it, taking the good things and adapting them to the changing reality.

Some nations took the back-to-basics philosophy a little further than others, digging up more from their past than their neighbors. Within each country, there are regions that look as if time did not only stand still, it ran backwards. But even if a little village in the Andes looks quaint and old-fashioned, just because the hyperfusion generator is kept in an adobe shack doesn't mean that it's not working, and that the simple farmers and shepherds don't watch their favorite OpNet *telenovela* every evening they return from their fields.

Keeping the Self Together

Living in a world where the only certainty is change takes some adjustments in attitude. The inherent pride and personal drive of Sudamericans grow from a very strong sense of self. Self-centeredness is not a character flaw in this case, but a necessity of social survival. Without an anchor within, people risk sailing away into the endless possibilities of everyday life, careening into imbalance rather than integrating the pieces of their lives.

Change happens inside people as well as around them. The drug culture prevalent in Sudamérica adds another factor to the constant flux it undergoes daily. Mood-altering pills take up shelf space next to cold medicine, and a tourist can walk into a bar and order a smart drink that triggers almost any imaginable and specific reaction. People sometimes cannot tell if a co-worker is angry because he's stressed or pissed off, or because he wanted to feel angry to confront the boss and took something for that. Mercurial moods and personality swings are the order of the day, but more than a century of drug culture originated its own protection mechanisms, and its considered bad form to be high all the time. Drugs are tools, not crutches, and if someone can't deal with a problem while clean, he'll do no better facing it drugged.

It's considered polite for a person to make known when her mood is actually drug-induced. For spur-of-the-moment doses, a colored ribbon or any other outstanding detail is enough, and mood indicators grew from frivolous junk to social attire when they integrated a blood analyzer, giving rings, bracelets and even tattoos the ability to take on a special hue when a "mooder" was active. These signals are falling out of favor. Modern opinion believes that a person's feelings are true whether she's clean or high, because when she takes a drug, she's consciously deciding to feel that way, she just needs a little help to get there. Deception doesn't change either if it's aided by a chemical or by the liar's own subterfuge, the reactions when the truth is revealed are the same.

The very possibility of consciously choosing your mood for the day has a liberating effect: Sudamericans are very open with their feelings and as a general rule are not afraid of displaying them for all to see. Their natural, unadulterated emotions are a proof of humanity and identity. Drugs are like the masks worn at cel-

Drugs: Present and Trinity Future

This book contains several mentions of drug use as an integral part of the Sudamerican way of life. The drugs discussed have nothing to do with today's illegal traffic. Most of them are in fact beneficial, not just in popular opinion but in fact. Imagine an architect imbibing the boiled extraction of a bean to help him pull an all-nighter, a clerk burning another smashed plant to help her relax at lunch, or the mountain guide who munches on some leaves to compensate for the high altitude he must travel at. Respectively, they are coffee, tobacco and coca leaves. The Trinity-era equivalents leave no legacy of suppressed blood sugar, over-stimulated appetite, weakened immune system or any of the other complications of those drugs: they do their jobs and then wear off.

A cornerstone of **Trinity's** Sudamérica's drug use is responsibility. Someone who operates an industrial VARG would not take a perception-altering drug the same as some medications are prohibited for people operating heavy machinery in the present. A person who abuses recreational drugs stands under the same light as today's couch potatoes: people who neglect their lives for artificial entertainment.

So, when the text mentions drug lords as criminals, it's because they deal with substances outlawed by even the Sudamerican governments. Otherwise, Sudamerican drugs are as harmful as TV, role-playing games and over-the-counter pain relievers.

ebrations: they show a semblance to the world but hide the reality beneath. A person's psychological core is protected this way, and when the effect wears off, the drug's catharsis leaves her with little need to weave another mask around her personality, ready to face the world as nothing more and nothing less than herself.

Work-enhancing substances are fine in most Sudamericans' opinion as long as they only build on the individual's natural talent or compensate for a handicap. Soccer players often take certain drugs to compensate for the different altitudes they must play at from one day to the next. Of course, the team's goalie may not take his, just to prove that he can perform despite the disadvantage.

Tradition: Respect the Old Ways

The past is the cornerstone of the future, and just because there are newer ways to do things doesn't mean that the old ones are wrong. Tradition gives Sudamericans an additional cultural anchor: no matter how much

Kostbaar fashion changes year to year, Christ the Redeemer will always stand vigil over Rio de Janeiro at his post on Monte Corcovado and the Andean shamans will continue to tend their patients. Tradition is important. It gives people a canvas over which they can paint their individual quirks, something they can fall back on when looking for a local, national and continental identity.

Family

One of the most important groups a Sudamerican will ever belong to is her family, the people who welcomed her into the world and taught her how to cope with it and how to enjoy it. They're also a genetic tie to identity. The concept of family is very deeply ingrained everywhere on the continent, and it's the few things Sudamericans take very seriously.

Sudamerican families come in all sizes and flavors. Urban and arcology dwellers go for the small, modular unit of parents and a couple of children, with contact kept with other branches of the genealogy tree. Where there is more open space, family units explode. A single building or complex can house an elderly couple and up to three generations of their children.

Weddings, the grandparents' birthdays, baptisms, Christmas... any of these is an excuse for several relatives to get together and party, dragging their kids with them. In some cases, these parties look like business meetings. If two or more relatives work in related areas, favors are sought and exchanged. Being adopted into a family as a godparent is a great honor, for it's a relation that is chosen and mutually agreed, not just an accident of birth.

People transact much of life's routine business through family, blood being thicker than water and all that. Though help may come grudgingly, it almost certainly comes. Loyalty is implicit among family members, and for most people, only the most dire situations justify refusing aid to relatives.

Religion

The spiritual pervades the Sudamerican mindset, and even self-proclaimed atheists still hold a superstition or two. Religion is integral to most Sudamericans, regardless of the faith and degree of devotion. It provides them with holidays, social movements and popular tales. Norça's early success as *los mágicos* owes much to this aspect of Sudamerican culture, garnering respect and loyalty out of awe for their "magical" prowess, akin to the respect a catholic priest or a Candomblé *pai de santos* receives.

Sudamérica used to be one of the great bastions of Roman Catholicism, but the birth of new religions and the resurgence of old ones have shaken the spiritual makeup of each country. Religious leaders preach and practice undisturbed by the authorities and the lay government expects the same courtesy in return, which engenders some friction with more politically-minded believers. Syncretism is at its strongest when it comes to religion, and not only in relation to Catholicism. The assorted African and Native faiths have also influenced each other, and the degree of exchange during the Necessary Wall only increased every religion's ties to the rest.

Roman Catholicism

For centuries, Sudamérica has been predominantly and staunchly Catholic, even as the unique conditions of the continent gave birth to new religions such as Candomblé and Santería. After the continent opened its doors again, the pious were ready to recover their severed ties to the Vatican, but the first papal emissary was astounded to discover how much terrain the Church of Rome had lost in Sudamérica. Not even the reforms of 2084 were enough to bring the "lost sheep" back into the fold. On the contrary — the reforms splintered a few Orthodox Catholics from the main Church, and pushed several others into religious syntheses as a result of the new similarities in beliefs.

Over the years, Sudamerican governments have politely ignored the Vatican, applying the ages-old Brazilian saying *para inglês ver*: pretend you're listening and keep working as you were. This lack of cooperation led Rome to focus its efforts on individual companies and institutions, which the governments are happy to tolerate. But Pope Benedict XVIII forced authorities' hands when, on 2121 and upon the advice of the Society of Jesus, he excommunicated practitioners of Candomblé and other syncretistic religions.

The different governments responded by throwing their support to their citizens. The papal emissary was warned repeatedly that Sudamerican countries enjoyed freedom of faith, and that any speech by Catholic priests advocating the shunning of the other religions would face the laws against segregation and discrimination. There was general outcry at the states' strained diplomatic ties with the Vatican, but they all agreed that foreign intervention, even the Pope's, was unwelcome. The ripples of the excommunication are still felt as devout Catholics struggle with the Pope's edict and what their parents and

Subject: The masks of gods?

From: Adalberto Menéndez, Associate

To: José Miguel Valdez, Triton DA

Encryption: SPE

Transmission type: textfile

Date: 8.26.32 2.8.2107

This should be an amusing read for the proxies. As you know, Candomblé believes that every person has a patron *Orixá* who defines her personality and outlook, something like Zodiac signs but in this case, the sign is "alive" and can come down and give you grief or fortune. Well, you wouldn't believe what I found in Bahía: one of the local "churches" believes that the proxies are direct messengers from the *Orixas*. They liken psi to axe, the primordial supernatural force. To tell the truth, listening to an *iyalorixa* priest is very much like talking to an ISRAAn, but with more rhythm.

Of course, these are only eight of the score (or more) of deities that exist, but they are the ones these people identify with the first psions:

Ogún: God of war, iron and technology; Ogún-people are both passionate and rational. Incarnated in Proxy Solveig Larssen.

Oyá: Goddess of lightning, wind and storms; her people are brave, brilliant and like to show off. Incarnated in Proxy Alex Cassel.

Eshu: Trickster and messenger, overseer of crossroads and exits; his protégés are intelligent but unreliable, expecting payment for their favors. Incarnated in Proxy Bolade Atwan.

Shangó: God of thunder and justice; his people are resolute and stubborn, born to lead and gluttons for the pleasures of the world; the fairest judges and best of parents. Incarnated in Proxy Giuseppe del Fuego.

Oshalufa: Actually the "old man" aspect of Oshala, god of creation; these people are brilliant, eager to learn and ready to understand. Incarnated in Proxy Otha Herzog.

Nana: Goddess of mud, water and death at the beginning of creation; she's a complex case, being oriented to rebirth. Her children are introverted and calm, strict and dedicated to their work and social ambitions. Incarnated in Proxy S. K. Bhurano.

Omolu: A god linked to harvest, but also controlling sickness and cure. People aspected to him are sullen, inelegant, dislike change but can suppress their ambitions to humility. Incarnated in Proxy Matthieu Zweidler.

Oba: Goddess linked to water and a warrior of little femininity. A person with this *Orixá* is strong-willed, very possessive but also deprived, rarely expressing herself. Incarnated in Proxy Rebecca Bue Li.

I still can't determine why they gave these correspondences, and some of them baffle me, but it bears attention. Ancient wisdom in Sudamérica continues to be more valuable than expected, and we'd be fools to ignore it now.

grandparents taught them, and local priests try to find a way to enforce Benedict's will while trying to entreat their followers from leaving. A balance that had been maintained for centuries came unhinged with just a few words.

In any case, the Church now struggles to win or maintain popular support in the face of all the other faiths encroaching on what used to be uncontested territory.

Candomblé

Candomblé is the name Brazil gives to its flavor of Afro-American religion, which shares many similarities with Caribbean Santería and Houdun. Reduced to its most simple terms, Candomblé is the adoration of several spirits, who possess or "ride" the priest or priestess in order to perform magic.

This faith grew from humble roots into a continent-wide phenomenon, as the religion, born of slaves taken from West Africa, spread across borders. Even Argentina, far more thoroughly European in culture than Brazil, was not immune. Arcologies abound with *terreiros* and their *barracão*, the more private shrines and the public dancing spaces where the ceremonies are held. The *pais* and *mães de santo* perform the sacred rites handed down from centuries before and speak the ritual language that is now untranslatable.

Dance, music and feasts are the staple of Candomblé, with teaches fulfillment happens in this world. Terrestrial pleasures are themselves the proof of the spirits' approval. Anyone can join in the public festivals, and it's quite common to find a devout Protestant paying the *mãe de santo* to cast the 16 shells in the prophetic *jogo de búzios* and predict his fortune, or a Catholic head of a family receiving advice to dispel the curse cast on him and his loved ones by a jealous *brujo*. After the 2121 excommunication, some *pais* and *mães* began to shed the Catholic imagery, but most fear that this will destroy what makes Candomblé such a unique faith. The general agreement is to keep things as they are; after all, the Protestants seceded from Rome centuries before, and they're still going strong.

The differences between the varied "nations" of Candomblé have become indiscernible, as the followers have intermingled over time. It doesn't matter if the original practitioners came from the Bantu or Yoruba cultures in Africa. In the 22nd century, Candomblé is free from racial or social discrimination, a reflection of mainstream Sudamericansociety.

However, every *terreiro* ranks the spirits in its own way. The main branch of Candomblé worships the *Orixas*,

the original deities the African slaves brought with them, but other kinds of spirits are summoned as well. Umbanda split off from Candomblé early in the 20th century in Brazil's industrialized regions, abandoning some of the more African aspects of the cult. It focuses more upon the invocation of *encantados* or "charmed ones", mythical beings who lived long ago, and *caboclos*, the ghosts of the original Native people of Brazil. It's the followers of Umbanda who more actively seek to relate their faith with the new noetic science, working closely with Port-au-Prince Æsculapians and Norça researchers.

As a dynamic religion, Candomblé embraced the arrival of psions, some *terreiros* acknowledge the Gifted as natural *filhos de santos*, closer to the Orixas but still requiring the final initiation. For its practitioners, the order is not something to be pondered, it's something to be lived in and viscerally enjoyed.

Andean Shamanism

Shamanism is not a unified religion, but a collection of similar practices made famous by its practitioners from the Andes. Those who live by its beliefs exist in a world of magic, where sorcerers weave curses, the spirits of plants are the source of their healing properties and the shaman is the link between the unseen and the mundane.

Unlike Candomblé and the rest of the Afro-Brazilian religions, shamanism is much more elitist, but its ceremonies are also much more personal. Only those who hear the call can follow the way, and a shaman chooses his assistants and apprentices carefully. A *curandero* (healer) is a diviner, a doctor and a spiritual warrior, while a *brujo* (sorcerer) makes curses and charms to deal damage, for a price. Their worktables include herbs, weapons and tools arranged in ritual order, and most show an increasing number of bioapps.

The shamans' importance derives more from their social role than from any real or perceived power. Generally intelligent and at the very least crafty, most of them saw the possibilities of progress and became the bridge between the old and the new. Tradition provides them an extensive knowledge of herbalism, which they applied to the emerging drug and pharmaceutical industry. They learned the ways of advanced science and brought them down to earth to the common people, translating technical concepts into simpler, romantic terms. Also, they understand the ways of their people, and are all too happy to share it with any who ask.



· CONFIDENTIAL ·

— Intercepted transmission.

Subject: Re: Your results

From: Dr. Jaime Solórzano, University of Lima

To: Laura Montes de Oca

Encryption: DSE

Transmission type: textfile

Date: 12.05.11 4.15.2119

The results are both disappointing and interesting. Of the three shamans you sent, two proved to be latent, however, the neutral was the most successful *curandera*, according to the interviews with her clients. The other two had less contact with ritual magic than other shamans prior to their initiations. This leads me to believe that, sadly, the practice of shamanism is not conducive to developing psi latency, but the reverse might be true. Latents may show a predisposition to shamanism if brought up in the right cultural milieu. I need more time for tests and field research.

My gratitude to the Pai for convincing the test subjects to cooperate, and for the invaluable information you have provided me. I hope to produce more promising data soon.

Other Religions

While Catholicism is still the religion with the most followers, and Candomblé and shamanism the most distinctive to Sudamérica, they don't monopolize the souls of the people. The steady influx of immigrants was only temporarily stemmed by the Necessary Wall's relatively short period of isolation, and people from around the world continue to bring their beliefs with them.

Not all believers welcome the idea of mingling their faith with others', and the average Sudamericacity has churches and temples from several religions. São Paulo is famous for the beautiful gardens surrounding its Shinto and Buddhist shrines, and Paraguay's Chaco desert is host to growing Mennonite cities. Protestantism continues to attract and hold many followers, compared to the dwindling number of Catholics, and several Christian sects tread the line between orthodoxy and syncretism.

New cults rise from year to year. Some gain fame, like Kostbaarism, and are tolerated (often with some

amusement) by the rest of society. Prophets from many persuasions seek converts to their own ideas of spirituality. As in other parts of the world, many of these sects build communities far apart from mainstream society. During the first years after the Necessary Wall, many tried to migrate to the Amazon, but all the countries with part of the rainforest within their borders refused their applications. After Fray Serena Maddox and her Children of the Verdant Renaissance were arrested and expatriated back to the FSA in 2089, Amazonian patrols petitioned their governments for greater leeway in their actions. As official correspondence of the time put it, the soldiers were used to being insulted and shouted at, but the having cow feces flung at them was just too much.

Aberrant cults flourished during the early 21st century, but Sudamericanpassion turned quickly to hate once the monsters turned on humanity. A popular cliché in action holodramas is the hidden cult in the Amazon, the Andes, Antarctica or other hard-to-reach locale. Authorities have a hard time telling the urban legends from potential reports of Aberrant presence.

Innovation: Embrace the Future Entertainment and Media

Fútbol (soccer, that is; any attempt to pass off the game played with an ovoid ball and body armor as football is met with a derisive guffaw) remains a favorite pastime across the continent, and hasn't suffered from the popularity of extreme and outdoors sports.

Music ranges from the vibrant but pleasant *selva* to the entrancing and intense variations of classical rhythms like *samba*. Singers and bands rise and fall in the Sudamericanmedia circus, and only the truly greatest survive for more than a year or two in the fickle entertainment market. Music is another cultural area where amalgamation floats to the surface; mainstream rhythms combine African and European sounds, with a healthy dose of Indian melodies.

The Brazil-based Novos Medios Sudamericanos network is the biggest media outlet, with strong programming in both informative and recreational shows spanning the continent. It faces very close competition from the Bolivar Group from Colombia, with their hard line in objectiveness and dogged determination in news services, and the CuzCo Media Association, with more varied and

quality-oriented productions and the backing of the Andean Federation of Commerce. These three fight fiercely over the leadership of Sudamerican opinion and time. CuzCo news downloads feed rumors of NMS' Norça bias, and Bolivar sponsors artists who strongly criticize their rival's pro-psion position, while managing not to sound too anti-psion themselves.

The biggest media-fest is the annual Carnaval, celebrated at differing days of February in all Sudamericancities. The most famous is still the Carnaval held in Rio de Janeiro, but it's also the most commercialized. Inland arcologies hold more authentic festivities but prefer to leave Rio in the spotlight. As liberal as people in Sudamérica can be, some cities are not keen on people dancing around the streets wearing only a hologram.

Anima With Attitude

When anima culture arrived in Sudamérica, it suffered the fate of all imported concepts: it was eaten, chewed and spit out to make it more palatable to local tastes. Several of the ideas that characterize the anima subculture were already part of mainstream Sudamericansociety, such as decentralization and organic growth. Anima radicals from other parts of the world sound like loud children stating the obvious.

Sudamericananima encourages heavy drug use. The perception-altering herbs and synthetic products favored by anima followers have a sharper edge and stronger effects than the ones in general use. Rumor says that in the more underground *antros*, people can take a chance with *bruxaria*, a drug which allegedly grants the user clairsentient glimpses into the future and a biokinetic's awareness of life.

Animeros, the name given to followers of anima, like to experiment with any and all advances in biotechnology. Traditional concepts and values like personal identity and rational thought are negotiable demands rather than fixed necessities to dedicated *animeros*. Parents worry that if their children go into an anima party, they will return with anything from pincers instead of hands to an overnight six-month pregnancy.

A particularly alarming fashion, which authorities would like to stamp out but can't, is body-swapping, where two consenting individuals agree to have their bodies transformed into the other's, live as if they were the other person for a time, and then return to their previous identities. Conservatives blame Norça and their legendary shapeshifting powers for giving impressionable youth the

idea. It's rapidly becoming the trendy thing for young fiancées to do shortly before their wedding. The resulting debate surrounding the legal and commercial status of identity thunders in Sudamérica's legislative bodies, the media and the streets.



Gender Roles

— Transcript from open-forum talk show

Marianela, © 2121, Novos Medios

Sudaméricanos

Marianela: And so, you started your OpNet site to protest your being fired?

Ernesto Garrido: That was just the beginning, I took a hard look at our society, and realized that equality among the sexes as it is understood today is not only absurd, but can also be bad for our future.

Dr. Sandra Acosta: That's a load of nonsense. I've read the site and found only half-baked theories that have no fundamentals in real sociological or biological research. You just can't admit that women can make as good a worker as you.

EG: Don't try to slap a 20th-century label on me, lady. I know women are better suited for administration, relations and that sort of jobs. I had no problems with any of my earlier female superiors. It's just that the last one tried to tell me how to design. That's where I drew the line. If anything, I'm accusing *her* of sexism; if she can't admit that a man can be as creative and intuitive as a woman, then it's *her* problem.

Marianela: We have several opinions from our public now. Helen Rivadeneira from Australia says...

Fashion

It goes without saying that Kostbaar continues play a key role in how Sudamericans (and the world) dress, but the influence is mutual. The Dutch designer has taken some cues from Sudamericanattitudes and utilized them in his creations.

Prudish fashion, Sudamericans think, is best left to the FSA. Sudamericans prefer to dress comfortably; low-cut shirts and self-molding skirts and pants are the thing to wear when it's hot, while loose, heat-gathering biogarments are almost a necessity in the freezing Andean reaches. Clothing design has accepted a lot of influence from Africa and Native tradition, and goes in search of fresh inspiration among non-European styles every few years. Sashes and loincloths go over and under loose tunics depicting Incan legends in wool-woven patterns, and colorful variety is accentuated by optical weaves that shift designs to match the users' moods. Everyday wear, while more subdued than the style popularized in fashion shows, is still colorful while remaining comfortable.

Biofabrics have taken a strong hold on the fashion industry. Going a step beyond natural raw materials, these fabrics are the products of bioappliances specifically designed to produce them. Early detractors painted a picture of huge, bloated spiders and gigantic silkworms, spinning tirelessly. Some added lurid stories of humans as food. Clothes made from biofabrics can be genetically customized for several effects, with a range limited only by the imagination of the designer. Self-fitting garments represent just a small fraction of the possible uses of biofabrics, and people found utilitarian applications soon enough. A jacket that shifts its color to match the pants can be pretty, but an Andean explorer will always prefer a heat-preserving coat, and the Amazon patrolman will surely opt for the boots that store universal antitoxins in case of spider bites.

Jewelry takes some cues from ancient craftsmanship and, while gold, silver and gemstones are still popular, amber and other precious resins became very fashionable with the rise of biotechnology. They don't strike the general public as cheap alternatives, but rather as tastefully unassuming accessories. Bolivian ElDorado Designs has made a fortune by commercializing Quechua and Aymara artisans' work.

Self-Alteration

Clothing is not the only element of Sudamerican fashion. Some blouses and jackets are made to extend its designs to removable tattoos or holographic displays on the wearer's skin. These fashions are popular along the coasts, where people like to show a *lot* of skin.

Tattoos are considered normal attire, but only the *animeros* go for the under-skin dye instead of less painful (and not as permanent) self-applied designs sold in

fashion stores everywhere. The most typical patterns are Incan and Mayan glyphs, with Amazonian tribal paint a close second, but designs from India, Africa and even Celtic Europe have trickled into epidermal imagery.

Piercings are still the province of more extreme subcultures, although it's not uncommon to find nose rings and pierced bellybuttons among the young. The studs, rings and needles used also follow Native designs, and many are made of carved bone, ivory or treated wood. Of course, Natives never stopped their own practices.

The arrival of biotechnology opened a whole universe of cosmetic experimentation. Skin-dyes joined hair-dyes as tools to shock one's parents, and grafts go from the fascinating to the grotesque. All cosmetic plastic surgery fell out of favor, replaced by temporary substances that helped people toy with their looks at a fraction of the cost and at no risk.

These alterations were very popular during the early 2110's, but died out as the fads they were. In 2122, the average Sudamerican citizen goes for very subtle alterations, mostly skin patterns, and the more uninhibited like pointed ears, fur-like manes and pigmented eyes. The extremists choose scandalous modifications like a third (nonfunctional) ear, a second opposable thumb or even claws. Sudamericans are so used to these drastic modifications by now that a furred, pointy-eared guy drinking tea at the park doesn't garner a second glance.

Radical alterations are generally frowned upon — horn-ridged brows and scaly skins are almost tell-tale signs of an Aberrant sympathizer, a Norça in the middle of combat or a disguise during Carnival.

All these body alterations are removable unless the user specifically requests them to be installed permanently. Most are temporary, designed to last anywhere from days to months and then naturally detach in some inert form suitable for disposal.

A Puzzle of Many-Colored Pieces Brazil

Covering 8.5 million square kilometers, Brazil comprises half the continent. The Great Escarpment runs along the Pacific coast and divides the country in half. The famed Amazon rainforest blankets the center and

north of the country, extending beyond Brazil's borders to the west and north. The Pantanal wetlands lie to the south. Brazil has the highest immigration and interracial marriage rates. European blood mixes with African, Native and Asian, creating some of the most diverse-looking people on the continent.

Brazil is a Federative Republic, and the autonomy of every state only increased during the Necessary Wall, making the country more a collection of city-states trying to upstage each other than a monolithic nation. Only its shared ideas and common history and language unite the splintered land.

Brazil's history demonstrates the rewards that can come with ambitious, thoughtful risk-taking. The ecological protection legislation of the 21st century was one of the biggest gambles the country ever took. Peasant uprisings and the less violent but no less obstinate refusals on the part of middle- and upper-class landowners made centralization of ownership a difficult, costly undertaking. The Biodiversity Protection Act was also wildly unpopular at first. Tangible returns in the form of widely shared wealth are what settled dissent, and now veterans of the transitional era look back through the lens of nostalgia and insist that only others ever really objected. The now-obvious benefits of ambitious efforts keep popular support for new enterprises high.



From the Outside, Looking In

— Raúl Arizmendi, *Donde Vive la Gente* © 2019
Grupo Bolívar

The *favelas* are not unique to Brazil. While the view of rundown buildings and sprawling developments contrasts more harshly against the gleaming Brazilian arcologies, the shantytowns that house thousands of the workers who helped build them are found across all of Sudamérica. We can't hide the truth from ourselves. Outside our safe walls, the people who break their backs to sustain us dredge a living as best they can, while we enjoy the fruits of their hard labor. Sure, we're nowhere as bad as Europe, nor is the poverty in the heart of our cities like in the FSA, but the mere fact that the *favelas* exist should warn us that we're not working hard enough for our nations' future.

Rio de Janeiro

Only the lights from outlying stand-alone give Rio de Janeiro away to approaching craft, as vegetation has been allowed to engulf the bioglass domes that cover the arcology proper. Made with terraforming techniques and revolutionary civil engineering, the Rio arcology rose at a short remove from the original urban sprawl, which still exists as a series of *favelas* isolated from the riches nearby.

The arcology's interior is an explosion of green. Carefully tended gardens dot every corner down to the innermost levels, and photosynthesis is fed by the solar-powered biodomes and fiber-optic light pipes running throughout the structure. The domes also power air exchange membranes which collect carbon dioxide emissions and release oxygen wherever levels become low; their filters purify the air around the arcology as well as inside.

Rio de Janeiro is Brazil's tourist trap. It hosts leading environmental research centers and other businesses crucial to the national economy, but it's famous for its clubs and decadent lifestyle. Not even recreational areas like the Copacabana and Ipanema beaches, the Floresta do Tijuca National Park or the natural vistas at Pão de Açúcar and Corcovado can approach the popularity of the *carioca* nightlife. The most outrageous parties are thrown here nightly, and people can find any drug imaginable to suit their needs. Sudamerican *anima* has its strongest support base in the green-lined corridors of Rio, and the crime rate is starting to rise, though the police have also increased recruitment and activity to keep the streets and corridors safe.

Bahía

Salvador, capital of Bahía state, is the northernmost and most modest of the Brazilian arcologies. Its key activities are shipment and agrotech exports; it's a point of transfer for submarine settlements and sea-faring commerce with Europe and the UAN. The arcology was built on top of and around the original city, following its unusual geology. Salvador consists of two tiers, the lower (*cidade baixa*) and upper (*cidade alta*) districts. The lower tier is almost on sea level, and commercial and residential areas barely rise above the ports. It connects to the government, commercial and elite residential areas of the upper tier via winding roads, elevators and funiculars. Jumpers operate where they have clear, simple lines of flight, despite ongoing city manager concerns about their safety.

Bahía state has the strongest Candomblé following in Brazil, and Arcology Salvador is home to more practitioners than any other arcology. The more important *terreiros* are built among the arcology's open platforms and the most renowned *pais* and *mães de santos* practice from here, dispensing their teachings. The Papal excommunication provoked general restlessness, and authorities remain watchful for the disturbances they fear must follow sooner or later.

São Paolo

The *Paulistas* believe themselves the cultural backbone of Brazil. The largest arcology in Sudamérica, São Paolo is more traditional in style than its neighbors. It's home to the country's most comprehensive and complete museums, which compete with the nearby Rio de Janeiro for tourists by offering more intellectual entertainment. The most important biodiversity research centers in Sudamérica spring from the local universities, among the best in the continent, and the city's toxin and drug research is second only to Medellín's.

Paulistas are the most diverse of Brazilians. All immigrants are encouraged to retain their beliefs and festivities, but not to isolate themselves from others — only in São Paolo can you celebrate the contemplative Nihonjin Sakura Matsuki a mere month after the rambunctious Carnival, all on the same street. Hard-working and business-minded, the Paulistas have taken upon themselves the burden of being Brazil's business capital, given that Cariocas are too indulgent and the citizens of Brasília are becoming too...weird. The country's raw materials are shipped here for transformation in the extensive matrix of manufacturing industries, and brokers gather from all states in search of the best deals.

Brasília

Brasília was Brazil's most ambitious achievement and greatest mistake of the pre-Aberrant era. Carved out of the jungle in the middle of Goiás state, The capital was planned from scratch by Lucio Costa, who created a beautiful and harmonious urban layout, and Oscar Niemeyer, who designed the buildings to match. Unfortunately, they did not consider the fact that normal people would be living there. The result lacked necessary infrastructure and access, and began to slide into derelict ruins even before it was finished.

In 2113, the government persuaded the United Nations to lift the World Cultural Heritage status Brasília held to embark in a second attempt at building the most progressive human settlement. The Brasília Project officially started on August 2117. Workers will stop constructing new installations in April 2122, but the city itself will continue to grow, literally, as the largest piece of biotechnology in the world.

Project head Clara Sánchez-Alborno enlisted the help of BioSystems, Norça, the Andean Federation of Commerce and even the Qin embassy to bring her design to reality. The eight support towers surrounding the Brazilian sprawl were made from engineered species of trees with wood as hard as orbital steel. Electroconductive vines run the whole height of the tower trees, from eight hundred meters above ground level to nearly two kilometers underground. Bioengineers, construction workers and farmers guided the growth of massive branches, creating canopy layers every hundred meters as the foundation for the arcology's settlement levels. Injected hardtech materials reinforce critical joints and spans, though they're invisible beneath the induced rapid growth of flowering foliage.

Each arcology sector is controlled by massive biotech computers, which extend their sensors to every leaf. City services like water, power and sewage are all handled by organic tubes and conduits, processed and recycled by living machines residing in the underground "root" sectors. The city is designed to grow and evolve as its citizens do, self-repairing and growing new avenues and pathways where instructed. Biobots prowl the innermost service ducts, like giant insects caring for their colony.

The arcology slowly grew around the old city's inhabitants, engulfing the high-rising apartment complexes and embracing the surrounding *favelas*. Brazilians had time to get used to being part of what was, essentially, an artificial forest, and their character has changed from bustling and mildly neurotic to calm and quietly efficient. It's still bizarre enough to creep out unprepared visitors, and other Brazilians have begun to refer to the city's inhabitants as *la gente da floresta*, the forest people.




Inside the Living City

— Tomoko Azpitarte, ISRA and Brasilia
Project engineer, interviewed by Raúl
Arizmendi, *Donde Vive la Gente* © 2121
Grupo Bolívar

It's... overwhelming, and yet unintrusive. I've been on board a Leviathan and it's the same kind of feeling but...different; there's not a latent conscience like in a Tesser, but more of an omnipresent *beingness*. You always have the feeling that you're not alone, but not in a nosy way; Brasilia leaves you alone when you want her to, but she's there when you need her. When I'm off-shift, I like to lie in my balcony and open my noetic perceptions...and she welcomes me, as she does even the most psi-null neutral, she connects every one of us to each other, we are her children... I'm sorry... I'm rambling and you want to know more about the actual building processes...

Other Arcologies

Belo Horizonte is the capital of Minas Gerais state, the foremost power in mineral resources. However, there's more to the state than what the OpNet sells tourists. Minas Gerais means "general mines," and the *Mineiros* have taken to the name with enthusiasm. Given the slight decline in mineral extraction due to the increasing popularity of biotechnology, Minas Gerais "mines" all sort of resources, and not necessarily from its own territory. Biotemplates and genetic samples smuggled from Pantanal and the Amazon are sold *en masse* in the thriving black market. The state's crime lords maintain a cooperative truce and work together to maintain the peace from being disturbed by second-rate criminals — or by the government. Belo Horizonte is the most Catholic of arcologies, and is fully in favor of the Papal excommunication of Candombleists. So far, the federal government has kept the tension between Minas Gerais and Bahía at a minimum, but there's been a massive migration rate between the two states' capitals as followers of each religion relocate to more friendly surroundings.

Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul share the Pantanal floodplains, but only the larger state has a minor arcology. Arcology Cuiabá hosts the businesses and government agencies concerned with biological resource trading throughout southern Brazil. Being close to Bolivia, it's an obligatory stop for material going into and from the Andean Federation of Commerce. Mato Grosso do Sul is experimenting with floating, eco-friendly settlements to better exploit the natural resources in its vicinity.

Natural Riches

Brazil is most famous for the great jungles around the Amazon river, with a bit of the spotlight now shared with Pantanal. The Amazon is still not fully explored. Brazil's government prefers to keep exploration at an easy pace, regulating severely any foreign expedition and always sending a representative to ensure that any riches from the rainforest remain with the Natives.

This revolutionary measure on the part of Brazil (and Colombia) brought many of the tribes closer to the main culture, stepping with care because the rational and careful exploitation of the rich Amazon resources could benefit every party involved. Most explorers and harvesters enter the Amazon through either the city of Belém on Baía do Guajará, or Macapá, following the navigable Amazon River into the inland city of Manaus, which has grown into a rich commercial and scientific research center.

The Amazon rainforest is home to an incredible diversity of flora and fauna. Most of it is not located at ground level, though — the upper canopy is the region of greatest diversity. New construction methods allow the building of canopy enclaves, called "Quilombos" in honor of the communities of escaped slaves that flourished during the colonial era. These enclaves are made from sturdy biotech platforms which meld with tree trunks like parasite vines and provide a stable ground for observation, agricultural, scientific and even military outposts. When the Quilombo serves its purpose, it rots away and frees the host tree. Due to several concessions and secret deals with the government, Norça hold several facilities within the Amazon but, after the whole Averiguas situation, Brazil is a bit nervous about what the biokinetics are doing in its backyard.

Pantanal is not as exotic or radar-protected as the northern rainforest, but it's the source of many of the templates used in worldwide bioapp creation. Pantanal floods in the wet season, leaving extremely fertile soil as

the waters recede. Development has historically been slower here than in the northern forests, though industrial growth is accelerating. The first major city within the floodplains, Lago das Nuvens (literally, "Cloud Lake"), was planned and built around 2098. It incorporates biotech platforms similar to the canopy enclaves, but at ground level, rising and falling with flooding. A Mexican exile once commented that the Brazilians were building México City all over again, and the workers now apply the Aztec term *chinampa* to the floating platforms.

Colombia

This country has the longest, most consistently democratic history of the Sudamericannations. The problem is that it's suffered so many periods of extreme violence that it has earned the nickname of "Locombia" due to the madness within its borders.

By the start of the Aberrant War, Colombia's biochemical industry was thriving, thanks to the legalization of personal drugs early in the 21st century. The drug war no longer threatened Colombian stability. However, the remaining guerrilla groups were still a problem, one that lasted past the raising of the Necessary Wall. It wasn't until the bi-partisan system allowed representatives from the insurgent movements into the political arena that fighting began to die down. Now the presidency of Colombia is contested every four years among at least five parties in the cleanest and most efficient electoral process in settled space.

Mestizos make up most of the population. Now that the Native tribes are no longer under the threat of extinction, they're slowly assimilating themselves into the mainstream Colombian make-up. Old prejudices have been mostly forgotten and forgiven over the course of nearly a century of cooperation.

While Brazil holds the lead in natural riches and social innovation, Colombia cemented the financial foundations for modern progress. When the Æsculapians claimed scientific advances thanks to noetic discoveries, the Colombians could point to a drug developed 20 years before which did the very same thing. The free port of Lisbon sees more business from Colombia than from any other Sudamerican country, and the Sudamerican economy dances to the beat of the Bogotá stock exchange. Brazil provides ideas and resources, but Colombia figures out how to utilize them.

CONFIDENTIAL**Subject:** Recent movements**From:** Lt. Fernanda Callejas, Cali Police Department**To:** Mario Ibañez, Proteus Regional Coordinator**Encryption:** DSE**Transmission type:** textfile [file enclosed]**Date:** 23:45:09 23.08.2121

As you predicted, there's been an unusual amount of movement in the street gang. My contacts tell me that there's a rumor about a new illegal drug hitting the streets soon. I haven't shared this with my colleagues yet, as I'm pretty sure that Norça ears will hear about it too, and I don't want them to know what we are up to about stopping these gangs. While I don't have any leads about their involvement in the illegal trade here in Cali, I want to cover all the exits before shooting first.

I'm enclosing a voice recording one of my snitches made while talking to a known dealer. I don't have enough information to make anything useful out of it, but I expect you do. As we agreed when I became a Trinity associate, I expect to be informed of anything you find regarding this, as I am working for the benefit of my people, not for any agenda you people might have.

>>>audio file enclosed<<<

Medellín

While Bogotá is the political capital of Colombia, the Medellín arcology is the most important pillar of the economy. Cali dominated the drug scene after legalization and in the interests of survival, the bickering Medellín drug lords cut deals with the government to utterly flatten their Cali competitors, who didn't adapt as quickly. Cartels that insist on working outside the law are scattered across the land, establishing new markets and niches under constant persecution from both public and private police forces.

Medellín is an industrial arcology, built as a mining town and later expanding to host factories and laboratories. BioSystems found a perfect home here, as did several branches of Brazilian Apoderado Designs and Aris Armaments. It's also one of the safest places to live, as the government, Norça and the companies' private police make sure nothing disturbs the peace and security it fought so long to achieve. Once a capital for international crime, Medellín is now the paragon of public order.

Paisas, as the inhabitants of the Antioquia department are called, are quite proud of their arcology. Built within the tight confines of the S-shaped Aburrá Valley, Medellín is a series of high-rising pyramids with deep-reaching underground levels, adorned with exterior gardens and parks, each housing hundreds of people. Tram tubes and jumpers connect nearby pyramids with each other. The ground levels exit freely into the old parts of the city, preserved for tourism and working-class housing.

The Drug Industry

Medellín isn't Colombia's only industrial center. Complexes dot cities and countryside, particularly in the departments closer to the Colombian part of the Amazon rainforest, where several trading outposts and research labs push pharmaceutical science at a pace no other country in the world can match. Samples from the rest of Sudamérica continue to pile up, waiting to be studied and used, while known herbs and animal tissue are finding new uses as drugs and bioapp templates.

Drug testing is always conducted with volunteers, and undesirable side effects are quickly corrected cost-free for the user. The infamous "dens of dreams" that are part and parcel of biochemical research labs have been demonized by foreign media, but the truth is that the facilities are clean and safe. The more experimental the drug, the higher the pay for the human subject and the wider the insurance coverage. Research may be frantic, but Colombian law ensures that it's conducted responsibly. This isn't just public relations: the country cannot afford any outward signs of lapsing back into the bad old days, and it's worth a lot to provide reassurance that the past stays in the past.

Norça hold great influence over the development and commercialization of new drugs. The government appreciates Norça help in keeping illegal drug research and distribution in check, but remains skeptical about the order's own intentions.

CONFIDENTIAL

Subject: Re: Recent movements
From: Mario Ibañez, Proteus Regional Coordinator
To: Lt. Fernanda Callejas, Cali Police Department
Encryption: DSE
Transmission type: textfile [file enclosed]
Date: 14:32:54 24.08.2121

After analyzing the audio you sent us, we identified several keywords we've been monitoring regarding the Cali drug trade. We don't have proof of the biokinetic order's involvement either, but we also don't have proof to the contrary, so I advise you to watch where you step.

What we did manage to figure out from the conversation is that, indeed, a large shipment of *Cabra Blanca* is bound to Cali for redistribution across Sudamérica. This drug is fairly new and we possess some samples from the Venezuelan police; it's potent stuff, as you will see from the analysis I'm sending you.

We are aware of your sentiments and we are very grateful for your priceless cooperation. Should you find any clue as to where the processing plant might be, inform us immediately so we can relay the information to the proper authority.

>>>textfile file enclosed<<<

Venezuela

Any benefit the Venezuelan people might have gained from ready access to Colombia and Brazil was utterly wiped out by the Aberrants, who chose to unleash a series of bacteriological agents that killed half the population in a matter of weeks. Winds from the Caribbean saved the coastal settlements from suffering the horrible fate that befell inland settlements, and their authorities were forced to shoot to kill any survivor trying to es-

cape, for fear of any of the lethal plagues spreading to the rest of the country. It's a period that still haunts the dreams of the eldest in Venezuela.

Once the Necessary Wall helped the other countries prosper, help finally came. Colombian medicine could find cures for fewer than half of the Taint diseases; the financial aid did as much good as the medical relief. Now, Venezuela is an entirely different country from what it could have been without Aberrant interference. The country's capital moved to Maracaibo, fleeing refugee-laden Caracas, and Venezuela adopted a system of government much like the Brazilian practice of arcology city-states. Each state elects a president to a six-year term — one-sixth of the states hold elections each year — and the presidents comprise the Senate. They choose a Chairman, who holds office for two years.

Maracaibo

Lake Maracaibo opens to the Caribbean at Venezuela's northwestern tip, and its namesake arcology grew to encompass both shores of the channel to the Gulf of Venezuela. Maracaibo is the country's major seaport, overseeing the oil rigs which drill beneath the lake into Sudamérica's richest oil reserves. The oil-production infrastructure emerged from the plagues and the rest of the Aberrant War relatively unscathed, providing a sturdy foundation for recovery. Oil derivatives generated the income to repay Colombia and others who provided aid, and Maracaibo was the first area in Venezuela to recover from the mid-century traumas. Pearl City and the other underwater enclaves provide new frontiers, and their success reinforces the long process of national healing.

Survival Underwater

Pearl City was the answer for a country running out of space. With a steadily growing population and half the country uninhabitable for decades to come, arcologies like Caracas and Maracaibo were becoming dangerously overcrowded, and illegal incursions into the Quarantine Zone threatened to spread the contained diseases into the remaining healthy land. Months before the Sydney Spaceport raid brought psions into the public spotlight, Norça provided Venezuela with the plans and technology for building Pearl City. Venezuelan officials suspended enough of their doubts regarding their mysterious benefactors to make use of the gift.

Increased oil production and better trade deals with the Nihonjin in particular paid for Pearl City's construc-



tion, opening fresh employment opportunities in the exotic new frontier (see **Hidden Agendas** and **Trinity Field Report: Oceania**). Reaching further and further from shore, other minor cities form an underwater network Venezuela can depend on for new bioresources and foreign investment. The worst is over.

The Quarantine Zone

The lowlands of the former states of Barinas, Guárico, Anzuátegui, Monacas and Bolívar are off limits to anyone without specific authorization. The Venezuelan army patrols the zone borders with help from Norça. This zone is still marked as an extreme biohazard site. Amazonas state fares no better. Though it's not suspected to host lethal plagues, the army fears that the Aberrants who originally released the first diseases may still be hiding there; therefore, it is included in the Quarantine Zone. Venezuela has the rich ocean floor to mine its bioresources from — better to leave the Amazon to those capable of dealing with it.

Only Norça can enter the Zone, and the government granted the order free rein of the territory. The shifters have announced that they can clean the land in a decade or two, releasing it to Venezuela's population as it becomes safe again. While there really are very dangerous bacterial agents in the Tainted areas, they're not as contagious as Norça would have the public believe. The order took advantage of its tight control over the region to set up secret research facilities, disguised as terraforming units dedicated to healing the land. The *tupuis*, the beautiful flat-topped mountains just south of the Quarantine Zone, teem with Norça, and no one else is allowed near them, for the people's own protection, of course.

The Andean Federation of Commerce

The *Federación Andina de Comercio* (FAC) leaders meet only to discuss general policies, and member countries each implement the decisions as they see fit. Ecuador, Bolivia and Perú joined forces when Brazil and Colombia began their astronomical growth, and the Mapuche Nation successfully petitioned for inclusion a few years later. It's not that they distrust their bigger neighbors, but they feel much more secure not depending completely upon the success of others.

Transportation is the heart of the FAC economy. As Colombia and Brazil enlisted the aid of their Native population in the recollection of natural resources, the Andean nations did the same, but for help in finding the best navigation routes across the mountains. The FAC's businesses excel at moving things from one place to another, and the outposts that cling to the mountainsides are as impressive an engineering feat as the Amazonian canopy enclaves. Except for Mapuche, all FAC members also have some of the Amazon rainforest inside their borders, and biotechnology supplements transportation as a source of revenue. The resulting creations move throughout settled space via everything from llama caravans to ultralight gliders to multilegged industrial VARG and innovative spacecraft.

The Federation-sponsored outposts in the Andes and the rest of the lowlands are considered Federal Territory, that is, belonging to all members of the FAC, and they serve as refueling stations, temporary storage, rescue and surveillance launching points, and traffic monitoring stations. The founding staff of these stations took the name of Condor Patrols, and they're an effective multinational police force, always on the watch for the smugglers and illegal drug traffickers who attempt to exploit the Andean passes to move their merchandise.

FAC nations are predominantly Catholic, but their belief and practice is infused with local shamanistic flavor. Not as notorious as Candomblé, the syncretic brand of religion of most FAC nations has not attracted the attention of the Pope. As shamans gain fame by working close to noetic research, this may well change. As a result, FAC clerical leaders are making careful plans for various contingencies — they hope to be able to negotiate a quiet, behind-the-scenes resolution of doctrinal disagreements and are in the process of choosing their next envoys to Rome for this purpose.

The most important ethnic groups are remnants of the ancient Inca empire. Quéchuas, Quíchuas, Aymará and others were once united under the rule of the emperors. The Mapuche were never conquered by the Inca and remain culturally distinct from the rest. The Amazonian tribes generally associate themselves with nations across the FAC's borders, and complex regulations govern cross-national tribal movements.

Ecuador

This country receives its name from its position right along the Earth's equatorial line. As such, they're very attentive to Great Britain's London Bridge Project (see *Shattered Europe*, p. 31). Given the business smarts of the FAC and Ecuador's geographical position; they're toying with the possibility of a Beanstalk project themselves, to expand their influence in the shipping business. After all, building a bridge between the ground and orbit is better done where the two are closer together.

Half of Ecuador's population lives in the «Volcano Avenue» of the Andean highlands. To the east, the *Oriente* of the Amazon basin contains some of the continent's most biologically diverse microclimates. More than three hundred species of mammals provide Ecuadorian biotech firms with a steady supply of new bioapps. The Galapagos Islands were ceded to the FAC's central government and are now a Federal Protected Park, with restricted access to the islands and surrounding waters.

The seat of national government alternates every six years between Andean, conservationist Quito and coastal, liberal Guayaquil, and has ever since a brief violent struggle over presidential succession in 2053. The president must govern from the arcology whose turn it is to be the center of things, influenced by the local lobbyists and Congress, regardless of personal political persuasion. It strikes observers (and some participants) as weird, but it works so far. Quito, a World Cultural Heritage site, is a shock to foreigners. There's no aerial traffic except for commercial and military craft, the air is clean and people cross the streets on foot. The commercial, industrial and habitation districts were moved a bit north, and the surface of the arcology proper was camouflaged as part of the mountainside and dug a couple of dozen meters underground, with carefully disguised vents and access ports to allow light and traffic.

Guayaquil is a bustling seaport and spaceport, much like Rio de Janeiro in composition but not in atmosphere. It blends biotech and hardtech tastefully, with delicate constructions giving it a slender and dynamic look. The designers paid for their creativity when, in the middle of construction in 2108, a great earthquake set back the schedule by five years and took hundreds of lives. FAC calls for help were answered within hours, and the resulting rescue operation was one of the first great shows

of Sudamerican unity. Norça also demonstrated their aptitude for leadership by coordinating the various national efforts, with units in the field before the first Trinity offices even responded. The arcology was finally completed in 2115.

Bolivia

Bolivia sits in the middle of the continent, and includes pieces of most of the continent's major ecosystems. In the wake of the Crash, population spread out from the dense settlements of the Altiplano, across every reasonably feasible environment. The country has the lowest population growth in Sudamérica, and the best resource management policies.

Most of the country's inhabitants are predominantly Native in ancestry, and the European and mestizo minorities continue to dwindle. Spanish is ubiquitous, but as a second language; Quéchua and Aymará are the most common first languages. Despite Roman offers, there hasn't been a Bolivian Cardinal since the Necessary Wall came down, and Bolivian Catholicism is gradually sinking into various Native folk beliefs.

Behind their placid smiles, politicians and executives plot schemes within schemes. Conspiracies of Machiavellian proportions unfold in the halls of Sucre, the legislative capitol, and the surrounding city of La Paz. The rest of the world hasn't decided if this easy-going savvy is the result of Bolivia hosting the administrative capital of the FAC, or if the Andean nations decided to place it there just because of that. With a great view of the Islands of the Sun and the Moon on Lake Titicaca, the Tahuantinsuyo Complex holds the Commerce Ministries and Secretaries of the entire FAC, as well as several other Chambers of Industry. Commercial ambassadors from Colombia and Brazil have their own wings, as do Argentina, Venezuela, Paraguay and Uruguay, plus visitors' suites for other countries. Named as the Incas called their own empire, Tahuantinsuyo links to nearby cities for services and infrastructure, but it's slowly growing into a self-sufficient community. The FAC plans to found the *Colegio Universal de los Andes* there with support from all member states, and hopes to make it the meeting place for the brightest minds in Sudamérica and the world.

Perú

Perú is a land of secrets and layers, a magical and surreal world that often seems disconnected from everyday existence. The physical synthesis of Inca, Spaniard,

Mestizo, Modern and Post-Aberrant architectures reflect the nation's personality: no matter how far a person peels, there's always a new skin beneath. The borders are the least populated areas of the land, with the exception of Lake Titicaca.

Perú has adopted many of the traditional ways practiced by Natives, though the racial mix is far more even than in neighboring Bolivia. Agriculture relies on folk wisdom as well as terraforming, and it's not at all rare for a company to hire a sorcerer in the middle of a takeover maneuver. Superstition lives side by side with pragmatism, and they get along surprisingly well. Peruvian culture regards mystery as something to encourage, and places little value on purely rational resolution of enigmas. The designs on Nazca plains, the majesty of Machu Picchu, the shaman's noetic ties and the astounding quantities of information and intelligence exchanged and broadcast in Cuzco and Lima — these are all phenomena to accept and build upon without worrying too much about «why.»

The tales in Lima about eavesdropping spirits are quite true. *Yana Llanthu* is the Quechua name for Perú's elite espionage corps who work beneath notice and slip between rumors. The folktales give these Black Shadows the power of melting into the mist: they're ghosts that changed their shapes long before del Fuego dunked his first biokinetic.

To deal with the Aberrant menace, Perú opted for covert action, as an overt show of force would only attract the monsters' attention, who were already battering Argentina. Peruvian Intelligence manipulated Aberrants into attacking each other and away from entering the country. They didn't always succeed, and some Aberrants caused serious damage to urban and unsettled areas alike. Nevertheless, the Peruvian spies played a most dangerous game with individuals who could level the Andes with a stare, so they got the best training available, and they continued it during the isolation period and long after the Aberrants left.

As part of indoctrination, every agent trains for a while with a sorcerer, learning about noetics in the light of Andean spirituality. The agency has a philosophical backbone similar to a martial arts school or a monastic order.

The *Yana Llanthu* are closely allied with Norça, and they train many shifters in covert ops, sabotage and intrusion in exchange for Code Indigo biotechnology re-

search. The Peruvian spymasters wage their shadow wars in the FSA, Argentina, Mapuche, Brazil, Averiguas and wherever the interests of Perú, the FAC and Norça are at stake.

Cuzco

Cuzco was the capital of the Incan empire, and then its stone walls became the foundations for Spanish colonial administration buildings. In the middle of the 21st century, it almost became the new capital of the country as the government contemplated abandoning overcrowded Lima. The Urban Schism solved the problem — Lima's population fell by half — and Cuzco remained mostly unmolested. When Perú signed the FAC accords, Cuzco rose in importance, both symbolically for its ancient heritage, and because of its closeness to accessible trade routes and (later on) to the Tahuantinsuyo Complex in Bolivia. The *CuzCo*, *Asociación de Medios* megamed built its main headquarters here, and is one of the major participants in as well as observers of *Inti Raymi*, the Inca Festival of the Sun celebrated every June 24th.

Lima

Before the Aberrant War, Lima earned the nickname *El Pulpo*, «the octopus,» for its role as the national center of information dealing. It retains that nickname and role today. Second to Guayaquil as the most important Pacific seaport, Lima is constantly blanketed from fall to spring by the *garúa*, the coastal fog, giving it a romantic air of mystery which makes a popular backdrop for detective fiction and other novels.

Such stories aren't so far from the truth, either. Lima is the major port closest to the FAC's capital upon Lake Titicaca. Even though it's not as overcrowded as it was before The Crash, information makes the rounds, and anyone listening carefully can hear secrets worth selling. Messengers and couriers are widely considered to be more reliable than cables and secure transmissions, and word-of-mouth can travel faster than an OpNet download.

Mapuche Nation

The Mapuche Nation is a thin strip of land no wider than 200 kilometers, but it's quite long, reaching from the middle of the continent to the bottommost tip. This latitudinal reach gives the former Chile a wide array of climates and terrains: the ever-dry deserts to the north are a source of mineral wealth, while the southern snowy tip of Patagonia walls the biologically diverse part of the

country. The central region contains most of the population and the most important arcologies.

Chile's history is full of foreign immigration, and mestizos have long been the majority of the population. Partly because it had to, thanks to fewer agricultural opportunities than its neighbors, Chile developed manufacturing early and became one of the first urbanized nations on the continent. This worked against the country during the Aberrant War, since the OpNet's destruction hit it harder. At that point, the Mapuche came to the fore.

Longtime defenders of their ancestral lands and traditions, the Mapuche saw the Necessary Wall as a golden opportunity to reclaim what had been taken from them for decades. The formation of the Mayan League, Brazil's social innovations and the birth of the *Federación Andina de Comercio* inspired the Mapuche. The stalwart Natives exploited their advantages carefully, moving confidently in the midst of general uncertainty, and soon they dominated biological industry. The first Mapuche president won the 2070 elections, just after The Weekend War against Argentina. Although they did not attempt to revive the Kingdom of Araucania and Patagonia proclaimed in 1860 (and blithely ignored), early economical success kept the Mapuche in power long enough to establish a solid power base and change Chile's name to the Mapuche Nation in 2081, the same year the FAC accepted their petition for membership.

Problems followed. The Native-controlled government maintained ecological protection measures long after Brazil and Colombia had suspended the harsh enforcement of those laws. The Machi, the influential Mapuche shamans, advised politicians and dismissed the suggestions and advances of non-Mapuches. Old prejudices, which never truly died, flare again, and the 76% majority of mestizos and European-blooded are chafing under the Mapuche rule. After 52 years of *indígena* government, the country might be ready to forget its history and begin repeating it.

Power Bases

Santiago is still Chile's capital, and all wealth and culture converge in the corridors and avenues of the arcology. The Mapocho River, drained during the Necessary Wall, was recovered and its two branches divide the arcology into three distinct districts. Brazilian terraforming techniques turned the surrounding lands into sparse and elegantly simple forests. Inside, the beat of Mapuche's heart is sustained by the thousands of people

· CONFIDENTIAL ·

working in the prosperous industrial sectors, and the *indígena* government observes all from the relocated offices on top of the cleared and reclaimed Huelén Hill. There's been talk of moving the capital to Temuco, located in the Mapuche tribe's ancestral lands of Araucania, but mestizo factions still wield enough influences to block the idea.

A bit north, Valparaiso, or Valpo, tries hard to rise in importance to challenge Santiago's dominance. Mapuche's main port is also the home of the National Congress and the navy, providing the FAC with the best merchant ships and military escorts. The cobbled and winding streets are the stage for the largest demonstrations of discontent with Mapuche rule, and government spies watch the Navy for signs of suspected mutiny.

Southernmost Magallanes is very scarcely populated, sporting possibly the most inhospitable terrain and weather in the whole of Sudamérica. It matters primarily as a link to Antarctica and Mapuche's small holdings in the icy continent. Norça maintain several facilities with the same secrecy they do in the Brazilian Amazon and the Venezuelan Quarantine Zone, as only those capable to adapt to the harsh conditions of the land can hope to live and work down there. Even so, state-owned factories exist to carefully exploit the natural resources.

Argentina

To speak of the Argentine government is to speak of General Ernesto Santander, strongman and leader, dictator and visionary. Argentina was decades behind its neighbors, pushed down by the Aberrant bombings that destroyed half of Buenos Aires. The civilian regime proved unable to guide the country back to stability, up to President Alfonso Meier's botched attempt to annex Paraguay and Uruguay. He miscalculated the reaction and response time of his targets, who beat back Argentine forces and forced the mercenaries to disperse across the land, setting up new bases of operations and making themselves a danger to national security.

The chaos that ensued ended on 2097, when a charismatic young officer organized the army around him and staged a coup, ousting the civilian government that had allowed Argentina to become a haven for guerrillas, terrorists and illegal drug dealers. Since then, Gen. Santander has pulled every string of every facet of the government. In the early days, those who disobeyed the law were shot. Internecine war against mutinous military took a heavy

Subject: It will only get worse

From: Mark Hopfer, Triton DA, Regional Office

To: Mario Ibañez, Proteus Regional Coordinator

Encryption: DSE

Transmission type: textfile [file enclosed]

Date: 09:30:12 26.03.2122

Your own spooks should tell you that the situation in Mapuche is getting more tense as elections approach. Call me superstitious, but this year marks the end of the 13th Mapuche president's term, and already the keywords "change", "overturn" and "new" are turning up on the media with alarming frequency. I live in Valdivia, and I can see that the Mapuche government is not as popular as it was half a century ago. Some individuals are dredging up forgotten lawsuits against people with European and mixed blood, making claims of government corruption. Conspiracy theories about a shadow cabinet are all the rage in the cafés and cheap novels; they can be classified in three groups:

Ridiculous: The shadow cabinet is made up of a) Chromatics, b) Mind-controlled biotech androids, c) Brazilian Candombleists/Peruvian ghosts waging war with Mapuche Machi.

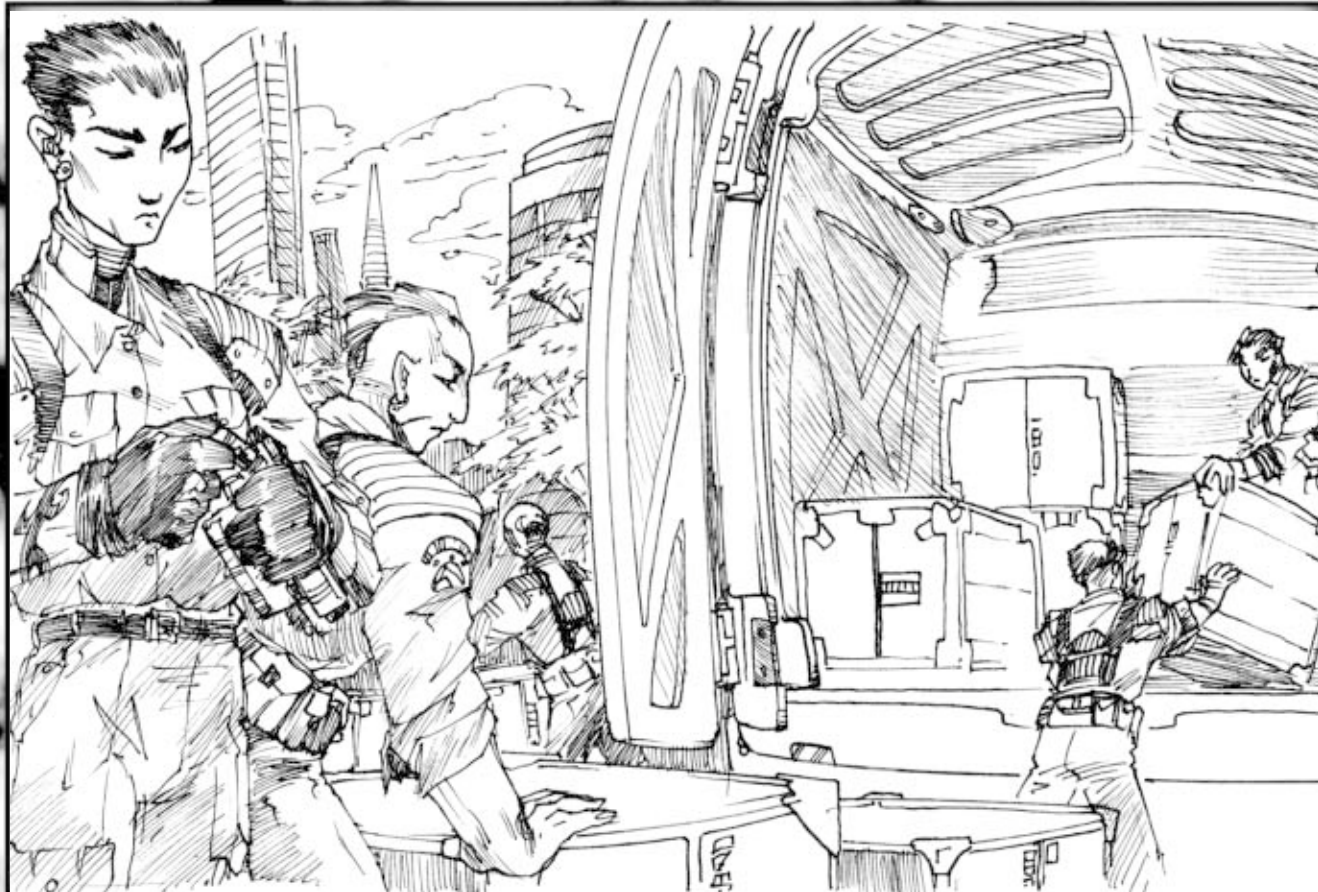
Improbable, yet credible: These range from Aberrants and corrupt psions to Argentina and a "Council of the Proxies".

Probable, and scary: The upper echelons of the Andean Federation of Commerce, the Trinity and Norça are the favorite suspects of people with more common sense.

I tell you, things will get worse before they get any better.

>>>textfile enclosed<<<

toll on the populace, forced to follow martial law until 2110, when Santander declared the countryside pacified.



Life in Argentina is not as cheerful as in elsewhere in Sudamérica. Citizens know that they have exchanged a large amount of freedom for security. Luckily for the dictator, he *has* delivered. His fascist regime has strict laws about who can do what and where, but he advises the police and legislators to be flexible now that the wars are over. Unlike the FSA, the Argentine power base is composed solely of the military. The corporate sector must comply like any other civilian institution. There's also just one kind of citizenship, officially. People with money to bribe authorities are better off than the poor, but at least bribery is frowned upon by the government, and Santander conducts surprise witch hunts to keep the bureaucrats efficient and on their toes, if not honest.

One of Argentina's main exports is mercenaries. Behind the curtains, Santander made a deal with the companies that survived his purges and now the government acts as an agent for them, hiring out both foreigners and nationals for the odd job around the world and settled space. Armaments research and smuggling are big players in Argentine economics, accepting orders from any who can pay.

If an Argentine citizen can be certain of anything, it is that the government knows all there is to know about her life. Foreigners requesting a visa at any of the embassies or consulates undergo a thorough background check, regardless of whether the visa is issued or not. The government likes to know who wants to enter the country — that way, it's easier to find out *why*. The Secret Police is a close contender for Perú's throne in covert operations, and they've clashed more than once, politely ignoring the fact on the surface.

Sources of Wealth

Some would point at the renowned Argentine pride to explain why they didn't simply abandon ruined Buenos Aires. Rebuilding the capital kept the nation's spirit alive; with a morbid optimism, they realized that the Aberrants did them a favor by completely razing the buildings, which made it easy to build their arcology right on top. Later it extended to encompass the whole southwestern shore of Río de la Plata's estuary, surrounded by the *villas miseria*, the Argentine answer to Brazilian *favelas*. Buenos Aires is huge, the largest sea/spaceport in Sudamérica and home to half the country's shipping and hardtech industry. Build-

ings in traditional colonial style were rebuilt with new materials, but with the same layout and look as a gesture of defiance to disaster and modernity. They stand small but proud next to the high-rising arcology constructs.

The capital sucks up resources like a black hole, taxing the countryside and stunting progress outside its district. The few Native people still living in Argentina were alienated and emigrated to the more friendly Mapuche and Bolivia. As a result, the so-called Silver Land was deprived of the sources of wealth the Natives' ancestral knowledge provided to its neighbors. However, constant immigration of the poor from Europe keeps Argentina in agriculture and manufacturing, both of which rely on the cheap labor flooding into the country.

Santander has managed to preserve Argentina's claim to Antarctica. The port of Ushuaia, on Tierra del Fuego Island, has become a key to the icy continent. After retaking the Falklands, Santander built a military outpost to supplement the growing commercial nature of the southernmost arcology in the world, and has grown as ships from almost every country stop there to replenish their supplies and take a last breath before jumping to Earth's last frontier. Argentina is in the enviable position of being the closest to Antarctica, and this has helped the fascist government quell any insurrection attempts (see **Hidden Agendas**, p. 6) and keep all its competitors at bay. Should conflict break out in Antarctica, Argentine forces would arrive there first, as everyone else is well aware.

Santander's Future

Santander knows who his enemies are, and he offers them employment either directly or indirectly. Dissidents never disappear in a dank prison or a forgotten patch of Tainted land. They disappear into the cogwheels of the Argentine bureaucracy, corrupted by the Byzantine system that turns and twists around on itself to ensure that the only person with knowledge of all goings-on is Santander himself.

The funds that fill the Central Bank come from both legal and illicit sources, such as the profits from mercenaries or the weapons contraband, and Santander never squanders the money on himself. Rather, he prefers to maintain a network of spies in the other countries, and as such he's keenly aware of the danger Norça could present to his regime. He invited Orgotek support and capital to supply himself with loyal psion talent eventually, as native Argentines became electrokinetics, just to put obstacles in the way of del Fuego's people.

His immediate plans involve luring Chile away from the FAC, and he's manipulating the anti-Mapuche factions at the same time he advises Admiral Sergio Linares of the Mapuche Navy on how to stage an effective coup. Moving much more carefully than his predecessors, he's also making overtures to Paraguay and Uruguay, in the hopes of uniting his three neighbors in a coalition to rival the FAC and Brazil itself.

Paraguay and Uruguay

These two countries have something in common: they're both buffer states. When Argentina attempted to invade them, they offered up fierce but insufficient resistance, until the rest of Sudamérica intervened. After the Weekend War, both countries agreed to become neutral territory between belligerent Argentina and Brazil. The Paraguayan border is dotted with military bases from the neighboring giant, and the Brazilian navy patrols along the northern shore of Rio de la Plata, stationed at Montevideo. The local governments work discreetly, and have been trouble-free democracies for quite some time now, as they rebuilt their lands from the spillover of the Aberrant attacks to their neighbors. Despite the constant feeling of being looked after or coveted, Paraguay and Uruguay have tried to forge their own futures, but haven't risen to the heights of their "older brothers" yet.

Bolivia imported its easygoing nature from landlocked Paraguay, whose citizens are relaxed and, in the opinion of the vivacious Brazilians, dull. But Paraguayans don't care about comparisons. From the capital of Asunción across the Paraguay river to the Chaco plains, people go about their lives taking things, as they say, *tranquilo*. Chaco is an underexploited and pristine habitat, ecotourism is the norm and the different Native tribes do business in biotemplates only with selected representatives.

Thanks to the isolationist policy during the early years of independence, European colonizers intermingled intensely with the Guaraní Indians. There are no virtually no strongly European or Guaraní inhabitants left; almost everyone is mestizo. Recent European refugees have found a second chance around Filadelfia, an old Mennonite town in the center of Chaco that has grown into a city. This rapidly growing city threatens to overshadow Asunción's importance as more and more refugees are accepted, and might become an arcology if it joins with the other original Mennonite settlements, Loma Plata and Neu-Halbstadt.



Natural Sounds

— Joanna Valderrama, *Festivo!* © 2019 NMS

Yes, people; the Uruguayan group *Chohuí* surprises us again! The creators of *bangazo* have once again defied the limits of acoustic music. You might remember their first gig loaded to the OpNet, covers of *floatparty*'s greatest hits, rearranged and reinterpreted live and with not an electronic component nor a looped sample in sight nor sound. Now Lili Zavatti, the lead singer and composer, reveals that *Chohuí* was ready to go solo. "The covers were an experiment," Lili said when she showed us the Andean tattoo under her left breast. "They were like a test, to see if we could play bang with your good old drums, charanas, flutes and whatnot, oh, and the voices, of course." She laughed in her unique, musical way. "*Bangazo* uses the rhythms and sonics of bang, but everything's played by people." Lili went on to say that the band, whose numbers change from song to song, is a part of songmaking that bang was forgetting. "Having lots of people around you, playing in harmony, improvising and feeding on each other's talents, that's the magic of music, and only if you're a psion can you get that from a bioapp; but, hey, even a cuddly bioapp will never replace the sensual feeling of being surrounded by dancing bodies." Lili continued only after confirming that the band had taken a special drug to get in synch with each other, so that the jibes come out clean. "We never rehearse; we just let the music take us."

And from the sound of it, the music is wise.

Uruguay is altogether different. Its citizens have primed the beaches and the interior to please tourist and set out to create the new Riviera, where the wealthy from all over the world can enjoy exclusive beachfronts and resorts. Uruguay's main source of income is tourism, and it has developed very advanced facilities to cater to visitors of all budgets.

The Montevideo arcology, the only one in the country and the smallest in Sudamérica, is open and airy, with a very large entertainment district where tourists can find any and all manifestations of Uruguay's rich cultural life. At night, Montevideo transforms into a magical city, with bioluminescent lighting along the streets that provide a subtle atmosphere without drowning out the stars, and even the lights from Buenos Aires across the river contribute to the mood.

The countryside is mostly barren and scrub-covered hills, but recent reforestation projects have expanded the few forests the country has. The wilderness has been tamed so that people can visit the natural reserves without worry.

No significant Native population remains in Paraguay. Most inhabitants are European in descent, with small mestizo and African minorities.

Uruguay's shipyards complement its tourism. Montevideo is the most accessible port in the area — many shippers prefer it to heavily regulated Argentine harbors. As the Uruguayans are reluctant to spoil their land with an industrial complex, they built factory ships to handle all the manufacture and transformation activities. Raw materials or components arrive in Montevideo and are transformed and assembled en route.

Culture is another major activity among Uruguayans. Many of the continent's most visionary artists hail from this little wedge of a country. Locals and visitors can treat themselves to the best performing arts in the southern hemisphere.

Central America and the Caribbean

Marginally part of Sudamérica, the nations of the isthmus, coast and islands have barely managed to keep apace of the rushing changes. Their economies are not as strong and they don't have the political clout to propose a cooperation with the larger Sudamerican factions. Most of them have become satellite states of the more powerful countries, depending on their patrons for trade.

The Mayan League

The derisively-called "banana republics" have a long history of conflict and exploitation, of natural disasters and foreign meddling. The Aberrant War offered them the chance to be left to their own devices and, though the death toll was high, they learned. Now the territories

of Nicaragua, Honduras, Belize, Guatemala, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Panamá are joined together as the Mayan League, with a capital in Managua, on the shores of the Nicaragua Lake. Spanish rules in the southern half of the isthmus, but in the north Mayan language dominates as the European and mestizo populations shrink.

The Mayan League's agriculture industry is as strong as its national zeal. Modern Mayan culture has produced brilliant scientists in the biological and physical sciences, and its farmers tend the land with almost religious care. They produce and export exquisite, exotic fruits, both natural and ones engineered to have mild psychoactive properties.

The Mayan government is similar to Venezuela's, with democratically-elected chieftains who in turn select the President. The southern European-descended population adapted well to this system, which is itself an adaptation of ancient Mayan government to the demands of political life in the 22nd century.

México occupies an ambiguous position. Local authorities allow refugees free passage to Colombia and Ecuador, and turn a blind eye to the various paramilitary groups that cross over to make trouble for the FSA. They are lobbying with the Yucatán peninsula states to join the League.

The Caribbean

The island nations of the Antilles took a severe beating when Poseidon sank Florida. Even though the tidal anomalies were directed north, the Caribbean's currents were shot to hell. Cuba was effectively wiped out. Though its land has returned to habitability sooner than Florida's, repopulation is barely underway and monumental recovery challenges remain. The FSA tried to establish a base on Cuba from which to dominate the Gulf of México, but found Brazil and Colombia were already claiming it as a protectorate and backing their claims with regular and very conspicuous navy patrols. The Bahamas fared no better — indeed, almost all the islands are still underwater, inhabited only by maritime nomads and pirates.

Most Cuban terraforming crews are based around the ruins of Guantanamo, working northwest from there. Old Cuba is now a land of promise, and Venezuelans are part of the farming and reforestation task forces, with the long-term plan of settling there for good. The Cuba project is among the few where Brazil, the main sponsor,

openly invites Trinity teams to participate, in part to calm FSA fears about Sudamerican presence so close to their shores. Cuba is also a perfect staging point for Norça and the Peruvian *Yana Llanthu* agents and their incursions into México and North America, and the results of covert as well as overt violence fills portside hospitals and morgues.

Haiti is the center of the insular Caribbean. Mostly protected by Cuba from the killer tides and thoroughly ignored in the Aberrant War, it developed into a politically sound nation. It was the first country in the Americas to gain its independence after the U.S., and the first black republic. After the Aberrant War, it was the first to replace Catholicism with Houdun and Santería and to shed French, making their patois the official language. (Haitians like to complain that Brazil gets the credit for following their lead and then claiming to have invented it all.)

The government offered Proxy Zweidler space to build the Port-au-Prince clinic, giving the Æsculapians a doorway into the Sudamerican pharmacopoeia and Haiti a piece of biotech trade. Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, while still independent, are closely allied with Haiti, and there's been talk of going the way of the Mayan League and the FAC. In practical terms, the Caribbean islands are too far apart for their weak navies to be able to uphold such a coalition of states. As things stand now, they depend on the Brazilian and Colombian presence to fend off the FSA.

The Lesser Antilles, ranging from Puerto Rico (declared independent from the United States when it became the FSA) to Granada and Barbados, are negotiating an alliance with Venezuela. The island nations become protectorates, sharing the responsibilities and the benefits of maintaining the submarine network that brought the plague-ridden country back from the dead.

Closer to the continent, Trinidad y Tobago is a deserted and quarantined island. The small nation didn't manage to stop the refugees from the Venezuelan plagues, and its small population was decimated within weeks. Norça have claimed it as a base for disease control research and Aberrant monitoring station. Guyana was in danger of sharing its neighbor's fate, but the Brazilian army intervened to stop the diseased refugees from advancing further and, in 2065, Guyana, Surinam and the French Guiana became new Brazilian states.

Sudamérica and the World (and Beyond)

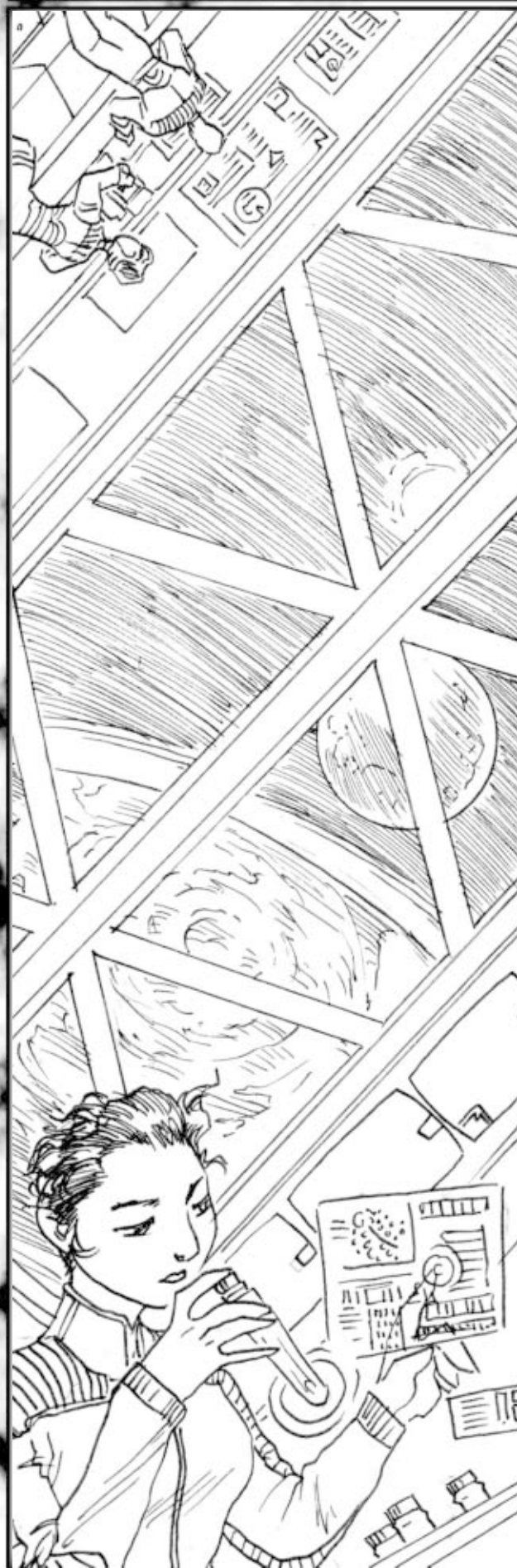
Prosperity leads to expansion, but the Sudamericans have focused their efforts mostly inward, turning their land into a contemporary Garden of Eden. The horn of plenty of Sudamerican production spills over, and citizens, governments and corporations now turn their sights outwards in search of new opportunities.

Brazil leads Sudamerican international efforts, colonizing worlds, building space stations and dominating the agrotech markets. Colombia and the FAC follow, with their strong economic strategies and the products they offer. The rest of the countries must settle with more limited programs, with less advantageous dealings, or with cooperating with each other to reach outward.

Sudamérica's influence is strongest in the fields of culture and society. Sudamerican values seep through music and media to the rest of the world, and its contributions to anima are undeniable. Sudamérica provides social answers to the challenges its biotechnology and noetic science raise. It's an example to the world of how technology need not be at odds with nature and spirituality.

Space Presence

Orguhlo de Cèu was the first of the modern orbital stations and, as the name implies, is the pride of the Brazilian space program. Put together and launched as a show of wealth, the station didn't find its true purpose until the arrival of Norça and the other psi orders. Orbital conditions appealed to the Sudamerican scientific community, who turned the station into a research Mecca. Its strict admission policies provide the resident scientists and technicians with the freedom of movement they require, away not only from disruptive gravitational forces, but also from political, religious and other extraneous interests.



Orguhlo de Cèu is a paragon of Sudamerican science, and almost all visiting researchers leave with some new insight into scientific endeavors. Innovation occurs in the cafés and restaurants as well as the labs — outside the strictly professional routine, interdisciplinary speculation and debate flourishes.

Since Sudamerican industry mines its own bioresources, very few companies have any presence in space. The FAC is the main investor in Sudamerican interests in Luna and Mars and, unlike Brazil, holds a very loose rein and only recently accepted Norça involvement. The FAC's advisors are inviting more biotechnology-minded companies to take advantage of the native Martian microorganisms, to work with the planet instead of against it. Norça are there to supposedly help; like anything the biokinetics do, it's subject to suspicion. The Peruvian *Yana Llanthu* have one of their training facilities built deep inside the Rio de Martio settlement in the Martian canals, and they keep an eye on the UAN and Chinese bases.

Brazil is reconsidering the deal it has with the biokinetic order regarding the outer colonies. Jupiter's moon Europa and Saturn's Titan were Brazil's gift to the order in exchange for Averiguas: Del Fuego would have free use of the gas giant's moons and their secrets so that Brazil could exploit the riches in the extrasolar colony. Now that the colony is in open revolt and Norça are divided on the issue, Brazil is ready to take back some or all of the liberties it granted the psions. Consensus within the Brazilian government is gradually leaning towards a definite show of force in Averiguas, both to cement its dominance as an extrasolar power and to show Del Fuego who's really in charge of Sudamerican space efforts. After the Averiguas situation is resolved, the Amazon could be next.

Nordamérica

The relationship between North and South America was never smooth, and the FSA is a popular villain in Sudamerican holovids. The FSA's invasion of México was an informal declaration of war, as far as many Sudamericans were concerned. The Necessary Wall was a cautious response to the FSA's aggression, and during the years of isolation, the Sudamericans focused more on fixing their own problems. Once they rejoined the world, however, outward actions entered the agenda.



While the FAC and Colombia insinuate their business in Nordamerican arcologies, Brazil is paying mercenaries to help Mexican *guerrilleros* resist and repel the FSA, and the Mayan League gives them free passage. The *Yana Llanthu* and Norça collaborate to slip inside the military-corporate government, with as much emphasis on spreading misinformation as on acquiring secrets.

Europe

The beleaguered European states are the prime clientele for Sudamerican wealth. Foodstuffs and biotemplates go to all European countries, and Colombia moves through Portugal the drugs that don't garner the Æsculapians' seal of approval. Aside from business, offers of aid from Brazil, Colombia and the FAC are sincere. Zweidler's clinics receive monthly donations of medicines from the pharmaceutical laboratories, and Paraguay, Argentina and the São Paulo arcology in Brazil are known for the ease of their immigration policies and the special leases Sudamerican banks give for small entrepreneurs looking to start their own businesses.



Europeans generally find Sudamerican media uninteresting, and the recreational drugs are popular only in the underground, even the ones the Sudamericans con-

sider suitable for mundane, everyday use. The pharmaceutical labs are forced to work with European crime syndicates to distribute their recreational products. Portugal and Spain are more receptive to the Brazilian and Colombian imports, partly because of languages and cultures shared with Sudamérica, give special prices to both Iberic nations, looking for leverage into the rest of the European market.

Bohemia is a special exception when it comes to Sudamerican international affairs. Uruguay's arts are the best ambassadors for Bohemia, and there's been talk of both countries hosting an international art festival celebrating human unity.

Other Powers

The Sudamerican relationship with China, the UAN and Australia is one of generally friendly competition. Brazil and the Caribbean nations are culturally close to Africa, and they compete in scientific developments in a race to better the planet on their own terms.

Asia is more receptive to Sudamerican drugs than Europe, but their access is still restricted, thanks to economic protectionism and national pride. The anima scene receives a healthy dose of Sudamerican influence, and its followers are keeping a very close eye on the Brasilia Project. Australian megameds are the winners in the media market, hands down, but they're not as popular among Sudamericans as NMS, Grupo Bolivar and CuzCo. Correspondingly, the Sudamerican networks don't have the international impact the Australians have, which is something they're working to change.



Storytelling Norça

Being Sneaky with Style

As a general rule of thumb, players hate it when Storytellers lie to them. Your position as Storyteller affords you a significant position of trust amongst the players — what you say is what they see. Particularly amongst casual role-players, misdirection on your part when in the role of Storyteller can lead to hard feelings and session with a distinct lack of fun.

Be careful to keep any deliberate misdirection in character: when an extra lies to the PCs and they eventually discover it, they'll be annoyed with the extra, not you. Intentionally forcing a situation to play out one way by skimping on the description of the scene could lead to players who don't want to come back. Be careful not to manipulate the players.

Espionage

Before you decide to run an espionage-heavy campaign, decide what style of play you want, and the kind of game your players are interested in. Highly cinematic games involve bungee jumping through open rooftop louvers into large office buildings, furious social exchanges over high-stakes games of backgammon and underwater SCUBA battles with spearguns and an omnipresent shark. With cinematic espionage, it is often very easy to figure out the villain's Master Plan — in fact, cinematic espionage differs in that it *has* a villain!

By contrast, real-world espionage is neither glamorous nor immediately rewarding. Real-world spies don't dangle by wires from the ceiling of data vaults, nor cartwheel through rooms to avoid lasers and sensitive floor-plates. They make friends with people in other countries, slowly turn them against what they believe in and then use them to steal information from the land to which they belong. Personal infiltration is rare; after all, why send one of your own agents who

cost millions to train when she could send a local to take the same risks? If the turned contact is captured or killed, it's simply a matter of conscience. Real-world espionage takes a lot of effort, investigation and collation of data to figure out nuances of corporate or governmental involvement. What you *know* often becomes much more important than what you *suspect*.¹

Make sure you discuss the difference with your players before anybody gets in over their heads. For those who wish a more involved game, or perhaps a mix of the two, a suggestion: Storytellers, you can farm out some of the work to your players. Assign each player to provide you and the rest of the party with information on a particular topic, such as the general location of where the next game will take place, a few days before the next game session. When everybody arrives to play, both you and the players will have already read the relevant information and can simply refer to it in session. This can help prevent gameplay-freezing infodumps while everybody in the room passes around a single stack of photocopies to read about where the adventure takes place.

The Venezuelan Phenomenon

The Venezuelan Phenomenon provides you with the opportunity to throw your players a psionic curveball. Even in 2122, the world at large knows very little about the quantum and subquantum universe. The new phenomenon simply underscores this lack of knowledge. Investigations into its properties and limits lead to ongoing upheaval among theorists. Meanwhile, people throughout the world begin exhibiting strange side effects: some beneficial, some detrimental, some lethal and some that are just plain *weird*. (See Chapter 4's Aberrant descriptions for two examples of pattern-breaking transformations.) Most prove to be temporary, but some psions find themselves permanently affected, for good or for ill.

A few recommendations:

- Removing abilities from characters almost always leads to hard feelings among players. Take care in how you handle this, if you decide to do so. Remember that many strange psionic effects prove to be temporary as the weeks go by. The fate of permanent loss should fall only on Storyteller characters and extras.

- Interested in crossing genres? This is a perfect opportunity for that Aberrant campaign you've always wanted to run in the Trinity setting! Some new novas show much less innate Taint than has been the norm in recent decades, and have a much better chance of escaping the fate of monstrous transformation...if they can survive all those, including Norça included to shoot first and ask questions later.

- No psions exhibit proxy-level powers. Additionally, the proxies themselves might be affected, but only temporarily.

- For the time being, the strange happenings only occur on earth, and even then only a small percentage of the population is affected. Storytellers who wish to ignore these effects but still use Process 418 for story hooks can simply state that the player characters are themselves unaffected. Another way to avoid effects in player characters is to keep them beyond earth orbit when the noetic ripple washes over the earth.

- Storytellers who want nothing to do with Process 418 or any of its effects can, as always, ignore it.

Storytelling Sudamérica

Sudamérica can be as alien as Qinshui for some visitors. The carefree attitude, the nonchalance, the apparent internal strife: these traits baffle foreigners who wonder just how the countries manage to stay afloat, much less thrive and run ahead of the international rat race. The southern continent is exotic, exuberant and magical, and it's your job as the Storyteller's job to bring the richness of the culture to life.

Using the People

Arcology Life

The original idea behind arcologies was that people could live closer together, more in harmony with each other and with nature, if cities grew dense and vertical rather than horizontal. Actual arcologies were built as imposing monstrosities that, while they do optimize ur-



ban services, they failed to bring humans closer to each other or to the planet. Sudamérica, a latecomer to arcology building, learned from others' mistakes and experimented with different models.

Daily life in an arcology is not much different than in other urban areas: people wake up, go to work or school, enjoy some free time and return home to go to sleep. The complexity of an arcology's inner workings is greater, though, and that doesn't go for traffic or urban services alone. Society seems to work a little differently in the halls and corridors of an arcology than it does in an urban sprawl.

Parallel to the streets and avenue run service tunnels wide enough for normal traffic, off-limits except for maintenance and emergency vehicles. Aerial traffic is strictly regulated and usually restricted to licensed users along set routes. Depending on the arcology, licensees for aerial traffic include public transport, emergency response, cargo companies and select few private users. Ground traffic works as usual, but most arcologies include an autopilot option, so that the traffic computers can control vehicles until the user overrides this control. When bottlenecks start forming, the computer takes over the driving by law, and only official vehicles have the ability to override this.

People travel from level to level in three ways: elevators, ramps and jumpers. High-capacity elevator trains allow move vehicles and pedestrians from level to level, not unlike a ferry. Ramps are the slow way up and down, but sometimes are the best option if elevator lines are long, and they're usually less patrolled by the police. Jumpers are restricted to vertical avenue shafts, which also carry services like water and power. Many arcologies offer landing zones above ground level for jumpers and other aerial vehicles, to relieve congestion around the regular entrances.

By their sheer size, arcologies impose on their citizens a sense of psychological distance from the outside world. An arcology is a person's universe, and anything outside is given a lesser degree of reality. This insularity is normal in humans, who wear their city's colors against others. The arcology simply translates mental boundaries into physical walls. Arcologies' much higher population densities mean that many more people can belong to the same physical spot, so that "us here" encompasses a very large tribe. Arcology living also feeds an increasingly intuitive awareness of life in three dimensions, to the pleasure of ISRA observers who see this as a key step in social evolution.

Engineers and architects designing arcologies work with psychologists and social planners. They know that as its in-

habitants will shape the arcology's character, the structures themselves will also influence the citizens' psyche. Some engineers employ more esoteric guidelines when designing an arcology, like semiotic proxemics and *feng shui*. Sudamerican arcologies are built with balance in mind: they're airy and open, with large spacious halls that open to the sky and allow Nature to creep in. The Medellín pyramids, the Rio de Janeiro biodomes, the Guayaquil spires and even the Buenos Aires blocks let the citizenry enjoy of the natural wonders of clean air and a blue sky.

"Mi Casa es Tu Casa"

"My house is your house" is a famous Spanish phrase, and with good reason. The average Sudamerican welcomes visitors. In a prosperous economy, this both shows generosity and allows for a bit of self-congratulatory display. Guests receive a smile and a palm on the shoulder almost everywhere, and apologetic explanations at most of the exceptions. Hospitality extends even to arcology dwellers away from tourist zones — while grumbles and hard looks prevail in peak commuting hours, asking for directions generally triggers almost comically eager offers of help. Whether out of a desire to show superior knowledge, arrogance, pity, genuine sympathy or some combination of all of these, answers come for almost all questions like «Where am I?» and «How do I get where I'm going?» The arcology's public spaces are part of home for everyone who lives there.

Building Character

Sudamerican characters are ambassadors of their culture. Working for Æon, one of the psi orders, their government or any other agency makes little difference; they carry the seed of personal excellence in their hearts, and they strive to rise to the occasion.

A character's Origin defines her outlook as well as where points are allocated in the character sheet. Sudamérica offers new variants to old options: a Saint origin could mean the character is a Candomblé *paíor mae de santos*, while an Andean shaman can fit in a Philosopher, a Hermit or even a Scholar. An Affluent entrepreneur in the Sudamerican drug industry is considered a criminal Rebel in other countries, and a Brazilian bandeirante can be either a Pioneer or an Outsider. As far as Nature is concerned, Sudamericans are the same as the rest of humanity. Even though drugs can change a character's Nature for the duration of their effects, these shifts are only temporary and the character shouldn't gain any Willpower for acting out a drug-induced personality. That's what roleplaying Experience Points are for...

As alternative Allegiances, a player can choose for her character to belong to one of the special groups mentioned in this book, regardless of whether she's neutral or psion:

- **Andean shamans:** Those who can count themselves as shamans or apprentices are few, as the sorcerers and healers are not too keen on expanding their membership. As an organization, they are incredibly loose, and their loyalties are more with their family and community than with each other. Their new prominence prompted them to cooperate more and expand, and even if they hate each other's guts, they are aware that the distribution of knowledge is the way of the future.

Ability Group: Academics, Awareness, Medicine, Meditation, Rapport, Science.

- **Bandeirantes:** Not an organization per se, the bandeirantes are explorers, guides, prospectors and adventurers. Holovids have romanticized their lifestyle, painting them as daring heroes, but they can be as greedy as the next guy, and most of them actually are. They are listed as an Allegiance since they tend to look out for each other and any new useful trick one of them learns is soon passed around.

Ability Group: Drive, Engineering, Melee, Savvy, Subterfuge, Survival.

- **Candomblé:** Followers of this Afro-Brazilian religion are growing in numbers, and also growing more organized. Although there are few full-time Candombleists, more people attend the *terreiros* each year and the priests are initiating more new members to act for the group as public relations, legal counsel and even administration and accounting.

Ability Group: Academics, Arts, Endurance, Meditation, Perform, Rapport.

- **FAC Condor Patrols:** The Andean rangers are both police and paramedics, traversing the mountains with constant vigilance. Their loyalty lies with the FAC and with each other. Their task is to ensure the safety of all who travel through the mountains, and protecting the land from any who would abuse it.

Ability Group: Athletics, Endurance, Firearms, Linguistics (Quéchuá, Aymará or Spanish as necessary), Medicine, Survival.

- **Secret Police:** Hiding behind their own legends, the Peruvian spies work under a shroud of secrecy thicker than the Norça's. They infiltrate groups and organizations and vanish without a trace when they accomplish their goals. Their duty is to wage shadow wars against

Perú's and the FAC's enemies, and control the flow of information through Lima. Argentina maintains an elite force almost as good, and other nations do their best.

Ability Group: Academics (focus on Religion as indoctrination), Firearms, Intrusion, Investigation, Rapport, Subterfuge.

Names

Naming practices follow rules from Spain and Portugal, with many names taken from the Bible and Latin sources. Both languages adopted names from each other, so it's not unusual to find Spanish names in the center of Brazil and vice versa. Other foreign languages also contribute, with equivalents that change the spelling but still sound alike. Thanks to immigration, there's also a good percentage of names from Europe and Asia, so it's perfectly possible to find a Japanese-Brazilian Paulista named Tomoko Azpitarte. Native names are popular as well, specially Mayan, Quéchuá and Mapuche. The following is just a small sample of names from Spanish, Portuguese and Native origin. For more actual names to mix and match, the credits of South American films, international Yellow Pages, anthropology books and South American web sites like government directories.

Spanish Names

Male	Female	Surnames
Benito	Carolina	Anaya
Edmundo	Irma	Arteaga
Félix	Isabel	Contreras
Gabriel	Lucía	Ibañez
José	Magdalena	Parra
Rubén	Noemí	Roa
Rogelio	Valeria	Vargas

Portuguese Names

Male	Female	Surnames
Batista	Catarina	Boas
Caetano	Eliana	Junqueira
Estevão	Fátima	Meireles
Etelson	Inês	Pereira
Mateus	Márcia	Rubalcaba
Ronaldo	Neves	Salazar
Simão	Sofía	Taffarel

Native Names

Male: **Hualpa, Rimac, Tupac (Inca); Ake, Moie, Rapau (Amazonian); Hmen, Pacal, Quitze Balam (Maya).**

Female: **Inguill, Marca-Chimbo, Siza-Ocillo (Inca); Boro, Matcha, Tatuie (Amazonian); Chanil, Itzel, Xunan (Maya).**

Native Culture

Playing a character with a Native background can be more challenging than playing a mestizo or an European-descended character. Depending on how thoroughly her family has been immersed in mainstream social currents, she may be very traditional, completely assimilated or anywhere in between. As a general guideline, the Natives' main contributions to Sudamerican culture are the concept of oneness with Nature and the importance of the community over the individual. Each nation's people responds differently to these ideas: the Quéchuas are not as militant as the Mapuche, and many Amazonian tribes couldn't care less about what the whites do.

Animism is widespread, and its advocates have begun quoting the theories of Bhurano, Herzog, Zweidler and Cassel as scientific proof of its validity, replacing words like "spirit", "totem" and "primal energy" with "psi template", "noetic totality" and "implicate order.» The discovery of psi strikes many people, Native and others, as validating traditional beliefs, while anima culture doesn't just accept elements of traditional life but glorifies them and folds them into its vision(s) of cutting-edge psychic health.

Politics

Migration Laws

After the Necessary Wall, Sudamerican countries opened their doors for migration, but set the laws for accepting foreigners into their lands carefully. Tourists find the process smooth and quick; investors and buyers must deal with some additional red tape, but it's nothing cumbersome. Potential new citizens, on the other hand, must prove that they have something to contribute and that they're willing to be productive. Refugees from disaster zones get a trial period during which they are given employment and social security similar to that of the national workers, and earn citizenship if they prove able to live and prosper.

Exterior-relations ministries issue temporary working visas under the employer's responsibility, and, if the temp worker behaves, he gains a star on his records that will facilitate any later petition for nationalization.

Individual countries' polices vary quite a bit within this general framework. The Mayan League asks for

"Soy Alérgico a los Crustáceos"

Language can be a great tool for subtly telling the players that they're not in Kansas anymore, as long as you keep it that way: subtle. It's better to have your Sudamerican NPCs speaking normal English than risk sounding like a bad Cheech Marin sketch. You can achieve a good effect by incorporating a few foreign words, not calling attention to the fact and letting the players get the meaning through the context. It sounds more difficult than it is — just grab a dictionary or use one of the several online translation services and make a list of the terms you want to use. You don't need to memorize the words, either. Keep your list handy and use your chosen Spanish or Portuguese word in the middle of a sentence.

Using a Hispanic accent when you talk for an NPC is also easy. Remember that Spanish and Portuguese are mostly monophonic languages — each letter gets only one sound, regardless of which letters are next to it. Slap the "r", hiss the "s" and pronounce vowels only in their hard versions ("ah" for "a", "ee" for "i", etc.) and you're set.

Another trick for simulating accents is to follow the cadence of South American speech. Every country has a different rhythm to the language, especially Brazil. Tune in to channels with Latin American programming and listen to how people talk (soap operas are ideal for this). It doesn't matter if you don't understand what they're saying, what's important is that you recognize the melody every South American sings when she speaks.

detailed records and gets a thorough background check before awarding anyone entry inside their borders. Argentina is equally stringent, but does accept foreign settlers who will add to the national workforce. Paraguay, Venezuela and Brazil welcome immigrants with open arms, contrasting with the nearly xenophobic attitude of Mapuche customs. The rest of the FAC and Colombia take middle positions between the extremes.

Crime and Punishment

Sudamerican justice had a bad record before the Aberrant War: tales of corruption were standard fare in the media, and each year, in any part of the continent, someone was always involved in a political scandal. The Necessary Wall and its changes helped the governments clean up their own messes. The justice system is now working, still with a few kinks to iron out, but it is no longer bogged down with venality and dishonest proceedings.

Legislation

Sudamerican law is based on Roman Law, an influence from European occupation and later efforts to imitate the legislative systems of the world powers. Burdened with a myriad of corrections, amendments and clarifications, the constitutions became a morass of laws that were easy to abuse or twist. Wall-era reforms created their own complications even as they removed many of the loopholes in earlier systems. Citizens enjoy a series of personal rights that vary in wording, but not in spirit, among the Sudamerican nations. Most of these rights reflect the UN's human rights charter, with additions and modifications that differ from state to state.

Sudamerican Natives follow the same legal code as the countries they live in, but there are some provisions regarding uses and customs that allow Native communities to handle their own affairs, usually handled by a town elder or council of elders. There are still some frictions between federal and local authorities over jurisdiction over petty violations, but major crimes are clearly federal territory. In countries where the Native population is the majority, these provisions don't exist, as the Natives included their own notions of justice into their country's Constitution, and see no need to treat their communities as separate from the other ethnic groups'.

Definitions of criminal behavior generally follow Sudamerican notions of common sense. Property law protects citizens against theft and fraud, civil law regulates the interaction between private individuals, penal law punishes crimes and so on.

There's a special and comprehensive body of legislation about the property of genetic material, awarding Native tribes the intellectual property of biotemplates extracted from their ancestral land. Theft and contraband of biotemplates is a serious crime, with a very long jail term awaiting the smugglers caught with them. Industrial espionage warrants the same punishments when it involves biotechnology. While punishment for these crimes are limited with long terms and high fines, most judges treat biopirates as nothing less than traitors. In the same vein, poachers, tree-fellers and smugglers of exotic species are viewed, off the record, as murderers, terrorists and slave traders.

Drug legislation is also very detailed. The possession and consumption of drugs is perfectly legal as long as the user is not endangering himself or others. Drug use on the job is accepted nearly everywhere; businesses can set their own restrictions, but neither law nor custom expects «pure-body» conditions. Recreational and perception-altering substances are allowed as well, but public-nuisance laws limit users' ability to act out when not in a private home or recreational establishments. Driving, operating machinery or performing delicate tasks under the influence of such a drug is a misdemeanor, landing the culprit in detention for a night or two.

Unless it's proven that a drug was administered against one's will, it makes no legal difference in the case of crimes committed under the influence. The law holds the user responsible for knowing the effects of any substance he takes, and the user is held liable for any acts he commits afterward. The use of drugs is considered a personal choice, and it's illegal to force another to take a drug, with the clear exception of medical applications.

Enforcement

22nd century police and security officers enjoy a vastly better reputation than their 20th century counterparts, and earn it. With good training and good pay, incidents of police corruption are less, but still not unheard of.

In cases of minor crimes or misdemeanors, or if the perpetrator is a first-time offender, police officers tend to be lenient and give a friendly warning. It's not wise to offer bribes to a friendly officer — the chances that he's corrupt are two out of ten. Only when the officer asks for a "compensatory fee" is it safe to haggle for the price of avoiding bureaucratic entanglements. Sudamerican police are not allowed to entrap citizens without just cause

· PROTEUS CONFIDENTIAL ·

Subject: There *is* a difference

From: Commander Manuel Guadarrama,
Medellín Police

To: Mario Ibañez, Proteus Regional Coordinator

Encryption: SPE

Transmission type: textfile

Date: 19.12.47 10.3.2115

I appreciate your concern regarding the activities of Dr. Ramiro Duarte and his pharmaceutical lab here in Medellín; let me assure you that your suspicions are unfounded or, better phrased, misguided.

Dr. Duarte, like many CEOs in the pharmaceutical industry, has acquired several enemies in other countries for the superior quality of his products. While it is true that Fármacos Duarte produces recreational drugs outlawed outside of Sudamérica, its only exports are medical drugs. Any accusations of belonging to an "illegal drug cartel" are to be taken with a grain of salt.

I did review the evidence you sent to my consideration, and found that all of it is true. Dr. Duarte is a "drug lord," but the cartel he belongs to operates well within Colombian law. Dr. Duarte confirmed all your accusations, except the ones about exporting his recreational products.

So, let me enlighten you, so that your tenure as liaison with our law enforcement organizations for the honorable Æon Trinity proceeds smoothly. Illegal drug cartels are different from the legal in two points: the unlawful don't pay taxes, and they disobey sanitation laws established by the Federal Bureau of Public Health. The latter includes producing drugs with harmful side effects.

Illegal drugs fall within two categories: pirate drugs and dangerous substances. The first are imitations of brand drugs produced with lower standards than those from the lawful producer and owner of the brand. The second are the ones we pursue with more vigor, since not only they defy the laws we set to protect the citizens, they violate the peace and order the Colombian people has worked so hard to achieve. They show no respect for a basic aspect of our culture, and have no consideration for the health of the people who consume their garbage.

I advise you to read the full text of the legislation about pharmaceuticals and biochemical products, so that future mistakes can be avoided.

Yours,

Cmmdr. Manuel Guadarrama

and solid evidence, so you can be pretty safe in assuming that a policeman asking for a bribe is really asking for money and not a reason to prolong your stay in jail. This also goes for undercover operations. An officer posing as a prostitute is not hunting for lonely men to arrest, but is in the middle of a more serious mission.

Rural police are more serious about their duties, since more often than not they're acting alone or away from reinforcements, and it's up to them to protect the precious countryside. The Condor Patrols are examples of a strong and dedicated rural police.

Justice

Most Sudamerican countries eventually adopted an expedient and efficient trial system: there's no jury of peers. The attorneys take turns in presenting evidence before an appointed judge and, based on the legal code, the judge reaches a verdict. Defendants can appeal if they believe the law was applied wrongly, or if they believe there were irregularities in the process, which wins them some time to find and present new evidence.



Another cartel falls

– *Este Día* © 2121 Grupo Bolivar

Today, a shipment of the drug *Cabra Blanca* was intercepted in a Cali warehouse. After a lengthy investigation, Cali police tracked the shipment but the number of arrests was minimal. Two hours later Norça representative Wilmar Samper surrendered the owner of the small laboratory that produced the drug. Samper revealed that the psi order had been infiltrating the illegal trafficker's band since last year, and gave Cali police a complete list of names, contacts, shipping routes and distributors. Federal authorities are drawing the net around the remaining members, aided by Norça enforcers in yet another blow to the illegal drug traffic.



A Land of Conflict

The interaction between the political forces that shape Sudamérica is like the meeting of two rivers. It creates eddies and whirlpools in a chaotic display, and then the streams flow together. The turbulence of Sudamerican society generates enough trouble to fill an entire series, and you, as the Storyteller, get to choose and create your own. Almost anything is possible in the green land, including the following but is by no means limited to them.

- **Coup d'Etat.** The Mapuche Nation is nearing its presidential elections, and the political unrest is boiling away a century of democracy. The main opposition's candidate is blamed for a past crime, and now it's up in the air as to whether the charges are true or not. Racial prejudice runs both ways and enemies can come from any side.

- **The Black Market.** A shipment of illegally-exploited biotemplates is making its way to Minas Gerais; many parties want the biotemplates for their engineering and medical potential, and not all will play nice to get them.

- **The Den of Dreams.** There are rumors of illegal drug testing in Medellín, and all the evidence points to a

prestigious pharmaceutical lab. Unethical practices, corporate war and industrial espionage mix in Colombia's most important city.

- **State of Emergency.** The Mayan League is routinely rocked by earthquakes, but the strongest in history has just hit. A person important to a character is among those missing, and the chances of survival grow dimmer every minute.

- **Mercenary Law.** Terrorists are striking Bolivia; some point to Argentine mercenaries, while other point at FSA saboteurs. An excursion to the dangerous Pampas plain to track the attackers can reveal the truth of the matter, and start another Weekend War.

- **Feat of Engineering.** Ecuador has considered the construction of an orbital beanstalk for a while now. Rumors fly about the plans for such a project being stolen. Was it the Nihonjin, the British or another enemy of the FAC?

- **Pandora's Box.** The body of a famous medic is found in the corridors of a submarine settlement off the coast of Puerto Rico. Investigation shows that he was secretly working on a plasmal bioapp that would accelerate

the eradication of the Venezuelan plagues. Did he find something before he died? And if he did, where is it?

- **Accidents Happen.** Days before the inauguration of the Brasilia Project, a computer tree malfunctions and a whole level is shut off by living walls. The problem is fixable, but someone must literally go to the root of the problem, and find if it was a normal failure or sabotage, with all the implications both possibilities raise.

Using Nature

The incredible diversity of Sudamerican ecosystems ensures that you won't lack suitable backdrops for any kind of story you might want to tell. Do you want a paranoia-filled murder mystery? Use the service corridors of Pearl City to give your players a sense of claustrophobia, surrounded by a hostile environment inside a tiny bubble of civilization. Or maybe you want a daring tale of survival and exploration. In that case, strand the characters in the harsh Andean heights where, even if their communications equipment is working, a rescue team will take a while to get there.

Whatever the theme of your series or a particular adventure, you can find the perfect stage somewhere in Sudamérica.

The Amazon

The Sudamerican continent comprises a lot more than just the Amazon, but the great rainforest figures prominently in both geography and culture. Stories set in the Amazon take place in an exotic environment, surrounded by every shade of green and dotted with the exotic colors of flora and fauna. The ground level is dark, hot and humid, and most of the jungle is impossible to navigate except on foot, and even that depends on the terrain.

The Amazon River is the main entry point into the jungle, but its twisting turns only cover the northern part of the vast Amazonian forests. Other rivers allow entry from other parts, including other countries, like the Paraná and the Paraguay in the southern Brazilian border. Considering the bioresources available in the Amazon rainforest, all the countries with part of it within their land build labs, expeditionary outposts and shipping complexes all around, so you can easily invent one of these for your convenience.

Possible stories set in the Amazon include:

- **Search & Rescue.** A talented biochemist holds the key to a Taint disease in a sample of a certain plant; the problem is that he's lost in the jungle. Several parties wish to find him first, and it's up to the characters to beat them all.

- **Terraforming Efforts.** A terraforming expedition can go awry for several reasons: bioapp failure, encounters with poachers, or maybe Nature is not reacting to the process as intended.

- **Gathering Biotemplates.** Genetic harvesting is one of the main activities in the Amazon, and the characters could be involved from both sides of the law. They can find themselves in a race against time to find the antidote for a potent toxin.

- **The Bug Hunt.** Not all Aberrants were rooted out, and those who continuously evade the governments and Norça patrols are enemies to be reckoned with, but that doesn't keep them from bringing in cannon fodder, and Quilombos were attacked savagely. Brazil doesn't trust the Norça and sends its own teams.

- **Native Liaison.** Thanks to the Biodiversity Act, the native tribes enjoy of legal protection against exploiters; the Æon Trinity employs several agents to act as liaisons and legal counselors for the native tribes that bother to have contact with the mainstream civilization, and the characters are assigned to mediate a territorial dispute.

The Andes

As the rainforest is mysterious and exotic, the Andean ranges are majestic and overwhelming. The Andes Mountains are the backbone of the continent. After the Himalayas, the Andes are the highest mountains in the world, with altitudes as high as 6.3 kilometers at the summit of Mount Chimborazo in Ecuador (the furthest point from the planet's core, thanks to the equatorial bulge). The range extends from the southernmost point to Colombia, Venezuela and a little of Panamá, from a few dozen to more than six hundred kilometers wide.

The Andes are dotted with valleys and passes, but a character is on his own if he strays from the FAC's routes. Nearly as many Venezuelan refugees died of exposure and other complications in the Andes as died of the plagues themselves. However, the beauty of their snowed peaks and green valleys is undeniable, and an aerial trip over the range is nothing short of breathtaking.

The Incas left ruins scattered about the valleys and slopes, with Machu Picchu as the most famous.

The Andes are a perfect backdrop for several kinds of stories:

- **Shipping and Handling.** The FAC controls the most navigable routes across the mountains, but it doesn't have a monopoly. The Condor Patrols travel the width and breadth of the ranges keeping an eye open for smugglers and pirates, protecting caravans and engaged in search and rescue missions. The characters can collaborate with or trying to evade the rugged FAC rangers, for whatever purposes.

- **Survival of the Fittest.** The movie *Alive!* painted a gruesome portrait of Andean hardship, and the situation of stranded travelers gives you an excellent opportunity to be mean to the characters. The Andes give rest to nobody, and getting lost there is a test of endurance for psions and neutrals alike.

- **Enigmas.** As advanced as technology is in the 22nd century, there are places that can't be mapped unless somebody gets there first. Many of the truths about the Incans remain unknown, and the magical atmosphere of the native culture makes it harder to separate fact from fantasy.

Undersea

Venezuela's Pearl City is the major submarine arcology in Sudamérica, and it connects to other minor facilities built around the Caribbean. Oil rigs, scientific bases and military outposts combine in the different models for seaside construction (see **Trinity Field Report: Oceania**). There are several underwater bases in the Pacific as well, the most important off the shore of Ecuador and Perú.

The marine depths are as dangerous as outer space when it comes to traveling and living arrangements. People need special equipment suit to survive the rigors of the environment, and structures must be built to withstand crushing pressure. A hull breach in a submarine can spell death the same way it does in spacecraft. To make things worse, some areas are still tectonically active, and earthquakes are an additional environmental risk. The deeper you go, the darker it gets, and the more pressure your equipment must withstand. The oceanic floor is also a great resource for biotemplates, and all the Sudamerican companies that didn't go to space went to the seas.

You can use the undersea setting for the same kind of stories as deep space.

- **Emergency Response.** An earthquake triggered a severe system failure, and an undersea settlement has a few hours before hull breach. If the characters are inside, they must find a way to escape and save the inhabitants; if they're outside, they must coordinate the rescue efforts.

- **Something's Out There.** Abyssal creatures are the stuff of nightmares, and if they hadn't been documented in pre-Aberrant times, a first encounter could have easily confused them with Aberrants. Deep exploration vessels operate in unknown territory, and the potential discoveries are worth the possible dangers.

- **Threshold of Science.** Oceanologists and marine zoologists received a great incentive when the Qin joined the research of cetacean intelligence. The discovery of a true alien intelligence right here on Earth can change the way humans consider their own world. The dolphins seem to know something and some submariners believe that you shouldn't trust a species that's constantly smiling.

Aberrants in Sudamérica

Norça is ever vigilant against the Aberrant threat and acts to excise it quickly and without remorse wherever they find it. The end result is not a continent without Aberrants, but rather one in which the only remaining Aberrants know how to keep themselves out of harm's way. The Amazon Basin is especially huge. No matter how many Norça patrols go out using Biosense on every square meter of ground they cross just aren't going to cover the entirety of the jungle. Even Norça who dabble in Clairsentience (or those who were dunked in the ISRA tank and have it as their primary aptitude) can't just close their eyes and fling their senses out to find one Aberrant in the midst of so much life.

Despite these limitations, many Norça believe they have cleansed Sudamérica of most Aberrant presence. This assumption remains largely unchallenged until the Venezuelan Phenomenon, after which a few powerful Aberrants safely ensconced in the Amazon lose some control over their powers. The ones who attract attention soon die in battle against Guerreros squads, but it's clear to everyone that more Aberrants must remain hidden.

Aberrants who survive in Sudamérica depend more on cunning, ingenuity and intelligence than on raw power. Even the insane ones aren't necessarily stupid. In this case, it's a matter of Darwinian selection — the Norça are so thorough that those who were foolhardy enough to face the order or incapable of hiding well have already been dealt with.

Aberrant Groups and Individuals of Note

As of 2122, there are no known Sudamerican groups of Aberrants. Whenever individual Aberrants try banding together, the whole group becomes as vulnerable as its weakest or most careless member. Popular rumor describes growing families and even cities of Aberrants anywhere from México to Argentina, of course, and since it's never possible to prove *entirely* for sure that no Aberrants remain in an area, neither Norça nor governmental action can lay the rumors to rest.

The Arboreal

The Aberrant known as the Arboreal has lived in the Amazon jungle since before the Wall came down in the mid-2050s. Numerous stories surround his origins. The most common says that he was a gringo CEO whose corporation was nationalized in the interests of Sudamerican security. The stress of losing everything triggered Aberrant Taint syndrome, turning him into a monstrous plant-symbiote and forcing him to flee into the jungle, where he could thrive.

The Arboreal is real, and exists within the Amazon. He can control plants: meld them into his body, induce growth, kill them, animate them and evolve them into other forms. He's used his power to create a safe haven in the jungle's deepest heart. Driven mad by Taint, he bides his time, waiting for the opportunity to drive humanity out of "his" jungle. He's not an eco-terrorist or any such thing — he believes he is the jungle's conscious mind.

The Arboreal can exert his power over plant-based bioapps to a limited degree. If he tries to do anything more



basic than reshape them or induce growth, they die from the exposure to Taint. He's shaped some into a shell that he uses to shield his own Taint signature from Norça scans.

The Hive

This twisted creature conceals her existence from the Norça by splitting herself into multiple bodies, in a manner very similar to the biokinetic Homunculus power. Her mind, perpetually splintered into a half-dozen or more bodies at any given time, is shattered. The occasional loss of a body to Norça patrols costs her some of her sanity as well. Despite this, her innate cunning that has kept her alive for nearly two decades.

The woman who became the Hive was a Candomblista priestess before a rival's terrible curse triggered her latent Aberrancy. The curse had no literal power, but to one who believes in such things, it carried terrible weight. None of her bodies appear human, and all look different. The only trait they have in common is that they are twisted mockeries of the human form, and stand at most at three feet in height. Their stature should not mislead — The Hive's bodies are all superhumanly strong and quick.

When Norça triggered Process 418, the Hive fell comatose. Each of her bodies lies in the jungle, enveloped in some kind of tough cocoon. What she'll be like when the cocoons open is anybody's guess, but it can't be good.

Himalaia Pereira

Himalaia Pereira was a relatively unremarkable burglar whose nocturnal habits nearly earned her a long sentence in a Brazilian prison. Just as the authorities in Brasília were about to capture her, she manifested a very mild form of Aberrant Taint Syndrome (so mild, in fact, that psi users have a difficult time registering her presence as "Taint"). She hasn't left Brasília since her transformation, although she has used her newfound powers to conceal herself among the general population and continue her criminal career.

In fact, Himalaia has moved up a bit in the criminal world. She works on a for-hire basis taking contracts from people with specific difficult-to-get items in mind. Himalaia doesn't advertise her unique talents, choosing instead to present her incredible skills as the result of natural talent and a lot of practice.

Pereira's activities have not escaped notice, however. While her description is not currently known, the authorities are sparing little expense to find this elusive criminal. They suspect she's a rogue psion, perhaps one of the Norça, but as yet the authorities have few leads.

Himalaia is among the first of a new breed of weak but relatively Taint-free Aberrants triggered by the Venezuelan Phenomenon (see Chapter 1, p. XX).

Nature: Thrillseeker

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 5, Stamina 4

Mental Attributes: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Social Attributes: Appearance 2, Manipulation 3, Charisma 2

Abilities: Academics 1, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Drive 2, Endurance 3, Firearms 4, Intrusion 4, Investigation 3, Legerdemain 2, Linguistics 2, Martial Arts 2, Stealth 4, Style 3 (Disguise specialty), Subterfuge 3, Survival 2

Willpower: 8

Psi: 1 (see below)

Taint: 3 (see below)

Backgrounds: Cipher 4, Contacts 3, Resources 3

Gear: Intrusion tools, firearms appropriate for the situation (she avoids using the same weapon twice in a row, to reduce the chances of tracing her), disguise materials.

Powers:

Ambidexterity: At the cost of one Taint for the scene, Himalaia gains full ambidexterity and the ability to use each hand independently of the other. She can wield a weapon in each hand and fire at separate targets with no penalty (for example).

Heightened Senses: Himalaia's senses are terrifically sharpened when she's dealing with minute details and things on the edge of human perception. She adds two dice to all Perception rolls. When she makes ranged weapon attacks, her weapon's range trait is treated as half normal.

Life Support: Himalaia's body is incredibly resistant to environmental changes — she can survive temperature extremes from -30 degrees to 150 degrees with no ill effects. She can also go without food or water three times longer than a normal human and can hold her breath

five times longer. Her resistance to temperatures does not apply to heat- or cold-based attacks. In addition, she ages very slowly compared to normal humans — at the rate of one year for every 10xStamina years that pass. She's immune to any normal diseases, poisons or drugs.

Psi and Taint: Himalaia's Taint signature is actually so faint as to register as zero for Attunement attempts, making her nearly undetectable to all but the most sensitive clears. In addition, she has an effective Psi score of one dot, just like a normal human — her Aberrancy is so weak that it doesn't override her noetic signature. Unfortunately, she can't use biotech any more than a normally Tainted Aberrant could.

Regeneration: Himalaia can heal from even the most debilitating injuries in a matter of minutes. Spend two points of Taint and roll Stamina + Endurance. Each success is a Health Level of Lethal or two Health Levels of

Bashing recovered. This takes a full minute of concentration to accomplish per Health Level recovered.

Sixth Sense: Himalaia never suffers penalties for surprise. She has a preternatural awareness of her surroundings, allowing her to react to danger even if she does not directly perceive it.

Soak: Pereira uses her full Stamina score to soak Bashing and Lethal damage.

Tactical Thinker: In any attempt to tactically or strategically outthink or outmaneuver others, Himalaia adds her Intelligence score as automatic successes. This applies to everything from planning a heist to spotting and avoiding an ambush.

Undeivable: Count Himalaia's Manipulation score as automatic successes to penetrate attempts to deceive or manipulate her.

· PROTEUS CONFIDENTIAL ·

Subject: Aberrants in the Jungle

From: Juliana Espinoza

To: Daniel Keos

Encryption: DDP-9X

Transmission type: holofile

Date: 16:32:15 16:04:2122

Approximately six hours ago, we came across a problem. You've no doubt heard the report we radioed in, but now that I am out of the heat of battle, I can provide a more thorough report.

My squad, then under Almiro's command, were on security detail at Installation 15, and we were on alert as per notification from HQ. We were not forewarned as to what would happen next.

We experienced a terrible backlash, which knocked half of the squad out of commission for several minutes — several critical minutes. I was fortunate enough to maintain consciousness. Almiro was among those who were knocked out cold.

One of the biotech engineers doubled over screaming, and then *twisted*. I cannot adequately describe what I saw; it was nothing like how we shift shape.

This *thing*, for it was an Aberrant, whose Taint was like a buzzing in my head, screamed horribly and ran for the jungle. Those of us standing tried to stop it, but it had great strength and our bullets merely wounded it without stopping it. The Aberrant killed two people before help arrived.

One of the technicians leapt into action with a dazzling array of capoeira moves that, in combination with our own weapons, knocked the Aberrant unconscious. It was taken into custody and has been properly dealt with.

Manuel Machado — the technician — concerns me. He is not a psion, and I sense no Taint in his presence, yet how could he injure an Aberrant with his feet? He said he used precise nerve strikes, but while we know he practices capoeira, I was unaware he was so accomplished. I was also unaware



The Pai de Norça

Giuseppe del Fuego is the most and the least human being, the man who is everywhere at once and the man who dreams but doesn't sleep. He's a self-made man who must rely on others to stay true to himself. His life is a collection of lies and exaggerations, yet he struggles most to uncover universal truth.

Born to a poor Colombian family as Reynaldo Solomon Constante, del Fuego's early life in Medellín was fraught with difficulty. As a youth, he and his two sisters worked all sorts of odd jobs to help support their parents. His father fell ill with a Taint disease (then rare in Latino lands) and soon withered away, but not before leaving his son with words to live by: work hard and work smart. Young Reynaldo made this his mantra, and tried to figure out the best way to help support his family.

It soon became apparent that the only way he could truly help would be to become involved with some of the shadier groups in Medellín. He took a low-level job as a courier for one of the local cartels that was still involved with less authorized pursuits than the legal pharmaceutical trade. Half the money he made went to his family, and he invested the rest in stocks and bonds. He spent his time learning the intricacies of the local criminal underworld, observing how his superiors dealt with the business and their methods of inspiring loyalty and fear. Once he grew confident of his knowledge and capabilities, he reinvented himself as Cristóbal Estilos and approached Norça. The rest, as they say, is history.

His tenure as biokinetic proxy has exaggerated the person del Fuego used to be. In person, he always seems exactly what people expect him to be, yet so much more. He never loses control and his response can rarely be predicted. Each facial expression is simultaneously calculated and completely sincere. He can be completely ruthless in order to express his compassion, and he



never gets angry. He doles out kind words and verbal punishments equally, always letting others know how they can improve themselves. He truly wants the best for humanity and at times can forget that others don't share his views. He is gracious and apologetic when necessary, but can harden his heart at a moment's notice when he feels circumstances require it. He lives in a state of extremes, showing every facet of humanity magnified and amplified beyond normal human capacity.

Del Fuego is a hard man to impress, for he assesses the breaking point of each person he meets and only forms a favorable impression if they push themselves beyond this point without snapping. Those who win his increased scrutiny often find themselves in a difficult position, for they must repeatedly exceed his expectations of them as a matter of course or he loses interest. He expects much from his blood relations, more from the Norça and the most from his blood relatives amongst the Norça. Though he drove his cousin Heironymous Dieda away from the order, his cousin Carolina still remains with the Sabuesos.

Split Personality

After encountering some initial problems with loyalty among subordinates, del Fuego decided that the only person in the world he could truly trust was himself. Since 2109 he has used his considerable power as the Biokinetic Proxy to split himself into multiple del Fuegos. Each version of himself handles a different aspect of running the Order. Norça who know of this ability belong to the Directive, or are syndics dedicated to the deliberate misdirection of the Pai's whereabouts and history. Five people outside of Norça know for certain, amongst them Zweidler and Herzog.

Through trial and error del Fuego discovered that he can literally create dozens upon dozens of himself, but that more than six reduces his powers significantly. The copies aren't privy to any sort of "telepathic link." They are separate people, and to communicate between one another they must hold a conversation. Memories merge when two or more copies recombine themselves into one body, though del Fuego has found this can be jarring if he hasn't prepared for it.

Most alarming to del Fuego is that one copy went missing in late 2121. The last time anybody saw his duplicate, it was in Argentina looking at the findings of a Músicos team assigned to the analysis of North American data provided by the Esperitos. It took all copies of the data and vanished, and subsequent, cautious interviews with both teams didn't provide the rest of del Fuego with an idea of what caused the copy to do so. The Pai devotes as much effort as he feels he can allocate without creating alarm to determining what happened to himself. As of mid-2122, he regards three scenarios as about equally likely.

- His missing copy is injured. Were his copy physically or mentally incapacitated, it might not be able to return. He doesn't suspect it was "killed," for he remains confident the rest of him would have felt such a thing.

- Somebody captured the copy. This frightens him the most, for he has so many enemies that he couldn't begin to conceive of ways to narrow them down. Nobody has approached the order with demands of ransom, which worries him more.

- The copy went undercover and will return when finished with its operation. If this is the case, he must simply trust it to do what it must before returning to him.

Del Fuego's hands are tied in this matter, for he can't reveal this quandary to anybody. Not even his closest advisors know what has happened. He must look into the matter personally, or carefully enough that nobody can piece it together. To lose one's self, literally, he is finding, is the worst thing that can happen to a person.

Del Fuego's Agenda

Though Pai de Norça is known for his thousands of myriad interlocking policies, he doesn't have a direct agenda based on successive achievements and fallback strategies. Rather, all his plans are intertwined contingencies based around the aspects of humanity Norça can salvage at any one point. Should hostile Aberrants or aliens show up at any one moment, Norça will immediately know what they can save.

Norça

Del Fuego is convinced that Norça are the pinnacle of human achievement. Consequently, their survival is of utmost importance to him. He is not so egotistical to think himself solely responsible for where the order is today. On the contrary, he knows they have attained this position because each Norça pushes beyond the constraint of human limits. Should it ever be necessary to rebuild human society, del Fuego wants Norça to serve as the model.

This landmark has already been met. Plans exist to survive purges, internal coups, Aberrant infiltration, a possible second Ultimatum directed at the psions and even the death of the proxy. Shelters located within inhospitable climates and locations scattered throughout earth, the solar system and beyond exist should the Norça ever need them.

Sudamérica

Norça contingency plans call for the defense of Sudamérica above all other earth-bound regions. Though certainly del Fuego considers the continent to be the most highly advanced and worthy of surviving calamity, his decision is entirely a practical one: the Norça are loved by much of the Sudamerican populace and tolerated by their governments. The order's influence is vast, and they base much of their nerve center in Sudamérica. Should the rest of earth fall under attack, the Norça must pull back and do what they can to ensure the continent's survival.

The biokinetic order's analysts feel they reached this landmark as of May, 2122. They cannot protect the continent itself from overwhelming, direct external assault, such as weapons of mass destruction, but plans are already in place to prevent an incident like the *Esperanza* crash from happening to Sudamérica. This contingency relies on the order's early detection and

deflection of threats, and exists rather precariously until their landmark for earth is reached.

Earth

Humanity is indelibly tied to the "Cradle," as he often refers to earth. Human knowledge and history are intimately tied to the planet. To lose such a precious jewel would be catastrophic for the future of the species, so its defense is of extreme importance to the biokinetic order.

Del Fuego is painfully aware of Otha's Vision Process 418 and the seemingly impending Coalition attack. He does what he can to step up the timetable, but even allowing for the overworking of the Norça, he doesn't expect to reach this landmark before late 2124.

Solar System

The colonization of space is a recent thing, and does not deserve attention until after the future of the earth is secured. According to Norça calculations, those living throughout the solar system are not yet truly self-sufficient, relying too heavily on exports from earth to truly survive on their own. Nevertheless, with approximately a billion men and women living outside of earth's atmosphere, the matter can't be ignored. Norça help when they can, but most of their resources remain devoted to protecting Earth.

Once the Norça earth is secure, del Fuego's plans involve the creation of a syndicate dedicated to Norça expansion throughout the solar system, swelling the order's ranks to include 5000 more neut syndics, the eventual legitimization of most pirate groups, control of most smuggling interests and direct partnership with Seventh Legion in the first true inter-order fusion of per-

sonnel and resources. Current estimations calculate that this landmark can be reached by the mid-2160s.

Extrasolar Colonies

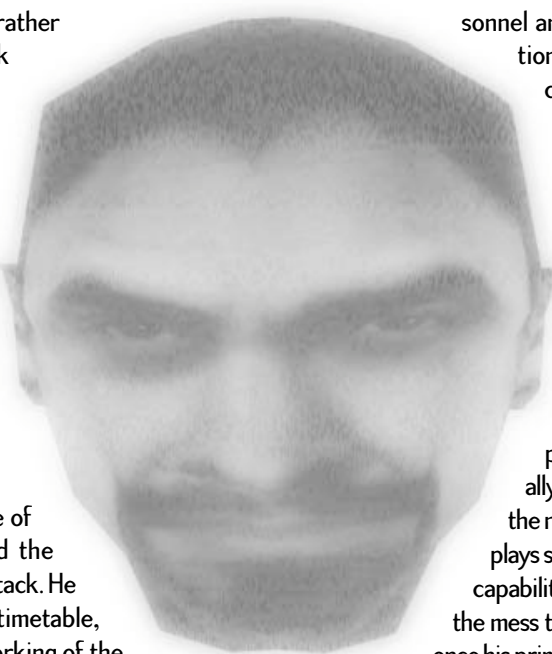
The protection of extrasolar colonies is hardly a concern for Norça, with the one exception is Averiguas. Its strategic uselessness and near-barren surface make it no prize for any invaders. Additionally, experiments have shown that the nearby solar activity of SS3187b plays severe havoc with Aberrant warp capabilities. Del Fuego hopes to clean up the mess that has been made of the world once his primary focus has turned away from earth.

Current projections predict this landmark will be reached within the next two centuries. Del Fuego's long-term plans, coupled with sufficient technologies to do so, involve the transportation of Averiguas prior to SS3819b's supernova, perhaps directly opposite earth's orbit in the Sol system. Until that time, the colony is considered a "fallback world" for Norça should earth suffer permanent and cataclysmic defeat.

"Victory"

Should humanity ever find itself truly free of external, malignant influences, del Fuego will consider the order's purpose met. Pessimistically, he fears Norça or the other psi orders would be in a position to become a malignant influence themselves. Some of his farthest-reaching plans involve the disassembly of all the psi orders, or the escalation of humanity to the same level as psions.

The Pai doesn't expect to reach this landmark within his lifetime. At times he wonders if it will ever truly be reached.



Prominent Norçans

Antonia Siddiqi

Antonia Siddiqi's mother was an outstanding doctor at a hospital in Pakistan, where Antonia was born. Antonia spent much of her free time there as a youth, helping out where she could and waiting for her mother to come off her long shifts. This experience left a strong impression on young Antonia, enough for her to found her own international relief organization at the age of 22. Norça invited her to join in 2109, and she incorporated what she'd learned on her own into her daily routines.

Antonia currently directs the Saguesos, looking out for her syndicate and the injured. She can be even harder than del Fuego when it comes to achieving success, and often bristles at the actions of the other syndicates — she knows what they do, and often disapproves. Her insistence on moving beyond the "criminal aspects" of the order has made her a few enemies with some of the old-guard Norça.

Daniel Keos



For a man in his 60s, Daniel Keos looks hardly a day past 45. He joined a newly-legitimized Norça pharmaceutical firm in the late 2070s and continually surpassed

the expectations of his superiors. By the time del Fuego began transforming the organization into a psi order, Norça considered him their top man when it came to innovation and pharmaceuticals. It was mostly through Keos' support that Norça acceded to del Fuego's ambition, and the biokinetic proxy has not forgotten the man's help.

Keos directs the Músicos da Verdade when he isn't involved in running BioSystems. He prefers the laboratory to meeting rooms, but understands the necessity of his greater responsibility. His peculiarity of manners comes from the side-effects of an experimental bioapp he grafted to his own brain in order to improve his creative thought processes. Legend has it that the Pai berated him in early 2113 for doing so, but Keos said "I wouldn't have done so if I wasn't sure it would work, you wouldn't have let me if I'd asked and I couldn't have designed twelve matrices in a day without it." After reviewing the matrices and their possible applications, the story has it, del Fuego reluctantly agreed with him.

Geneva Jerde

The attractive Geneva Jerde is a Mexican expatriate intimately familiar with insurgency. Norça found her, trained her and placed her back in México to hound the FSA's forces in the region. Her brilliant campaign in México with little support and expenditure of resources exceeded all expectations — even her own, she admits. Injuries sustained in the support of Mexican revolutionaries left her with minor nerve damage and a slight limp, but she refuses to allow Norça vitakinetics to heal the damage.

Jerde currently directs the Espíritos do Sangramento and chafes at being pulled from the field. She grudgingly accepts that del Fuego honors her with such a position. She recognizes the FSA as enough of a blind spot to compartmentalize her feelings on the matter. Some suspect she and del Fuego were former lovers, but such talk is unsubstantiated. Certainly no Norça thinks she attained her position due to favoritism. Her results speak for themselves.

Victor Trabaj

In 2102, Norça pulled the brilliant and charming Victor Trabaj out of college to work in the marketing de-

partment of BioCyte, one of the pharmaceutical companies that would soon become BioSystems. It was there that he met and developed a working relationship with Daniel Keos. When del Fuego began to slowly transform Norça from a legalized cartel to a psi order, the biokinetic proxy tapped Trabaj to help with the shift, all on Keos' recommendation.

The young Norça hasn't disappointed. He became the spokesperson for the Norça order, and now devotes much of his time to directing ARPO. Beyond del Fuego, Trabaj is the Norça most associated with the biokinetic order. In some places Trabaj himself is thought to be the biokinetic proxy. Contrary to popular belief, he has no designs on leading the order — he remains loyal to del Fuego and his vision, happy enough to have a large say.

Desirée



This popular French singer was on tour in Sudamérica when the *Esperanza* crash wiped her homeland clean. She immediately cancelled her tour and found solace in the arms of Dutch fashion designer Kostbaar, on his man-made island off the coast of Rio. She was still recovering from the shock when Kostbaar threw a soirée attended by Trabaj. She spoke with him for hours about the tragedy and how it could have been prevented, growing so impressed with his responses that she pledged to do all she could to prevent such a tragedy from occurring again.

Trabaj was impressed with her vehemence, but thought her words nothing more than unfocused sorrow at the time.

Eight years later, Desirée is a metastar known throughout colonized space and has contributed much of her earnings to rebuilding efforts in Europe. Many of her songs in some way celebrate the ideal of a united humanity, and the raw hope that shines through each song seems just what Joe Hologram was looking for. Trabaj eventually took her up on the offer and quietly made her an "honorary Norça." The biokinetic order does not consider Desirée a true syndic, but her popularity at all levels of society allows her great influence. Her connections with celebrities and government officials worldwide often allow Norça access to people or information they couldn't otherwise retrieve.

Heironymous Dieda

Born Alfredo Constante, Heironymous Dieda left the Norça after the Quantakinetic Purge. He believes he has finally found his niche working for the Trinity. He misses his home and family, but keeps himself busy enough that he doesn't have time to dwell on his past.

Though he no longer belongs to the Norça, Dieda strives to maintain the Norçan ideal in thought, deed and action. His subtle dedication has spread throughout his Proteus team, and he quietly approves of what the team has become.

Notable Sudamericans

General Ernesto Santander

Governing Argentina is not easy, not when there are dozens of mercenary groups running around the country, the neighbors are wary and previous international treaties stifle any serious attempt at economic growth. General Santander understands this, as he did when he orchestrated the coup that placed him in the Argentine presidential seat. His people regard him as a war hero, personal leader of the successful recapture of the Islas Malvinas and the consolidation of Argentina's influence in Antarctica.

Santander is a model benevolent dictator. He rules with an iron fist and shows no sign of weakening his grip in the 25th Anniversary of his ascension to power. A dedicated workaholic, his aides wonder when or if he ever sleeps, and how much drug use he can tolerate so he can keep himself awake. His autocratic regime has brought a semblance of security to the countryside and stabilized the economy. His character has mellowed in recent years and he's more willing to make political compromises, both with Argentina's neighbors and its own internal groups. He plans to retire as soon as he believes his nation to be ready for democratic elections; meanwhile, he enforces a zero-tolerance policy for rogue mercenaries, black marketers, illegal drug dealers, traitors and anyone else who threatens Argentina's return to its rightful place in Sudamérica.

Angélica Saldivar



She's young, she's pretty, and she's as far from being an air-headed media idol as Earth is from Far Nyumba without the Upeo. When she was sixteen, this Colombian girl produced an anti-Norça bang holovid that circulated throughout the Sudamerican underground scene. Made an instant OpNet star by the originality of her work, she continued to produce in her homemade studio, slowly growing as both an artist and a social critic. With bold metaphors and haunting sounds, her music and her vids find audiences beyond Sudamerica as well as at home.,

They're favorites of the FSA's propaganda machine (after editing to remove the personal responsibility angles), which offends her greatly.

Though her original intentions were more artistic than political, she uses her time in the spotlight to air a problem she believes people are too comfortably ignoring: the complacent adoration of the Norça by many Sudamericans. Three years after her initial success and alternating with her sociology college studies, her rants have matured from aimless anger to intelligent critique, but her music and visuals remain strong and moving. She hasn't made it big with the conservative cultural elite because of her choice of medium, and many of her own generation label her as a paranoid reactionary, but she's gotten around bans and censorship, causing controversy wherever she goes. And that's all she really wants, to get people *thinking*. Del Fuego has prohibited any action against her by overzealous Norça (he's specially amused by her latest hit: "A Slice of the Pai"). Ironically, she's been acting as an unofficial moral compass for the order, pointing at what they must avoid becoming.

Kostbaar



The Dutch immigrant has made a name for himself throughout settled space as a trend-setter, as an eccentric and as the spokesman of the new society. His company and "religion" give him enough to keep him entertained.

He became officially a Brazilian citizen shortly after the *Esperanza* crash, even if he claims to be a “citizen of the world.” He’s also published a sizeable autobiography that takes more time to discuss society and history than his own life. Though his designs (and philosophy) are considered very avant-garde in the rest of settled space, Sudamericans view them as normal and ordinary. In truth, Kostbaar fell in love with the Sudamerican tenets of personal excellence and the festive and open demeanor found in the streets, and he sought to capture this in his clothes.

Sudamericans received the Kostbaarism cult with good humor, and even if many of its adherents take it seriously, it’s generally regarded as a good joke. Kostbaar himself is an accepted and esteemed member of Sudamerican society.

Don Jacinto

Don Jacinto never really intended to be famous, much less influential. He’s a simple Quechua farmer in the Andean height. He’s also a shaman, and even then, he’s not the *only* shaman in Perú. The difference between him and other *curanderos* is that he was the first to include bioapps in his worktable, and he’s attended many noetic conferences. Now he holds a doctorate in Physics from the University of Brasilia, which he earned through remote study and intensive courses while tending his fields and though not a researcher himself, he’s given noeticists a fresh new perspective with his insights into the implicate order.

Don Jacinto has left the tending of the fields to his four children while he concentrates on caring for the people that visit him daily for healing, advice and interviews. With an infinite patience, the old shaman speaks with ease to neighbors, misguided fans and noetic scientists. He has fans all across Sudamérica, among aging traditionalists and anima-crazy youth alike.

He became public after a series of interviews were uploaded to various networks. The marriage of new technologies with old ways is widely appealing, and he became the *de facto* representative of the animistic traditions from the Andes. As such, he’s had some talks with the rexes in Port-au-Prince, several clairsentients and although he denies it, rumor has it that he’s Pai de Norça’s personal advisor. He’s refused to take the latency tests,

arguing that he doesn’t need to have his genes messed with to understand the world, and being a psion would somehow take him away from his beloved land and his responsibilities to his people as a healer.

Adelmar Lobato

In a society that embraces personal excellence, a man like Adelmar thrives as he surmounts challenge after challenge. Of Brazilian origin, he retired from soccer after winning his second World Cup — out of restlessness, not exhaustion. He now travels the world in search of tests to his athletic prowess. Rock climbing? He’s done it. Gravball? Piece of cake. Orbital diving? Give him time to learn piloting.

His exploits are well-known to every Sudamerican who logs to the OpNet, as he has a program for the NMS network titled *Risco Total* (Total Risk), in which he braves a new danger every week and comes away unscathed. Or just a little battered. It’s been argued that Adelmar is one of the chief causes in extreme sports-related accidents, as young daredevils attempt to emulate his deeds. There are also rumors that the real Adelmar died in some particularly ambitious stunt and that Norça wanting a change of pace take turns wearing his appearance. Genetic testing and other evidence to the contrary seldom stop a good story, much to Adelmar’s annoyance.

Clara Sánchez Albornó



Born in Uruguay, Clara manifested her vocation very early in her life. She wanted to build things. Her first tree house was a wonder of childhood engineering, as were the fortresses she built with the living room's furniture. A hopeless romantic, she decided that one day, she would rebuild the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. She never thought her childhood dreams would come true until she was commissioned with the Brasilia Project.

An accomplished architect and civil engineer, she worked for V.I. Mhula Associates, a UAN-based architecture firm that revolutionized building design (see **Descent into Darkness**, {get page}) for several years before returning to Sudamérica, where she made a name for herself by applying revolutionary terraforming techniques in the homes of the rich, creating complete artificial ecosystems inside a perfectly integrated living space.

A great fan of the original Arcosanti theories, she spent long hours daydreaming about the perfect arcology, while fancifully playing with Escher-esque designs. When Brazil held an open contest for the Brasilia Arcology Project, her proposal was received with some skepticism, given her relative youth (she's in her early thirties) and prior experience as a "mere" house builder. All critics were forced to shut up and applaud: she stretched known construction techniques and was actually the only contestant to design a mostly biological arcology, instead of a hardtech sprawl with ecological trappings.

Now, with the end of the Project in sight, she's already begun to look forward to her next assignment: she now wants to design a biotech colony starship.

Roberto Perea

Roberto was convinced that he lived in the center of the world, not only because he calls Ecuador home, but also because he's an expert at attracting attention. As an envoy of the Andean Federation of Commerce, he also gets the chance to indulge in his favorite activity: financial warfare... or strategy, as he prefers to call it. There's no greater joy for him than the final handshake after a successful deal and he'd die of boredom if the negotiations went smoothly from the beginning.

His tenacity and tractability made him the right choice to send to the FSA, where he's spent the past six years convincing the Americans that they're losing on some great business opportunities down the equatorial divide. He offers profit, he offers security; what he doesn't offer is a free run of the natural resources.

Seeing negotiations as a chess match, he's enjoyed moving his pieces turn by turn, getting some small victories with individual companies, but still no major victories regarding the Americans' economic policies. In this regard, his main task has been dispelling the corporate-military regime's silly prejudice that drugs are bad and Sudamerican pharmaceutical labs are run by evil, mustachioed drug lords dressed all in white and wearing straw hats.

His position allows him to act as an ambassadorial aide, whenever a Sudamerican representative travels to the FSA (specially a FAC member), he's there to give advice on how to deal better with the *gringos*.



Character Templates

Primo Excelente

Oskarbi Garza grew up in Lisbon, the son of two Basque refugees. Rather than suffer the same indignities that his parents faced as immigrants attempting to eke out a living, he quickly became involved with the local mafia. He ran various kinds of contraband between Portugal and other European countries, serving as a more intelligent kind of muscle. He thrived on danger, taking all kinds of risks, but only the ones that promised significant payoff.

Soon after he salvaged a botched trade operation with a group of Colombians by easing tension on both sides, Norça approached him and offered him a more lucrative position than babysitting minor smuggling operations out of Lisbon. He leapt at the chance and soon found himself a *primo* amongst the Guerreros do Berço, now focusing his talents on a systemwide level.

Since that time he has been to most ports of call throughout settled space, making all kinds of connections in various criminal organizations. He's kept unbelievably busy, but often looks forward to when the plan inevitably goes wrong. He's at his best things seem impossible, for only then can he truly enjoy bucking the odds.

Image: Oskar certainly doesn't dress fashionably, yet still manages to draw attention. He shows signs of impending baldness, and the small scar below his left eye is barely noticeable.

Roleplaying Hints: Everything's a sick joke to you, and usually you're part of the punchline. You can only hope to roll with the punches and get ready for the next thing that wants to knock your ass to the ground. They say you're hovering dangerously close to psionic dysfunction, but better that than wondering where pieces of your body ran off to.

Gear: L-K Avenger 11mm, Bioweave Armor (formatted), harmonica



Master Tracker

Milos Schulman always felt as though he stumbled into most of his life. Born in the Deutsche Degenerative Sozialistische Republik, his parents moved to Lima when he was very young to work for a small but prestigious computer company. Though he did well enough in his schooling to attend any modest university he desired, he lacked scholastic ambition and wished to remain in Lima. His parents were unhappy, but decided they would rather let him discover what he wanted out of life than try to force him into anything. However, they did insist that he get some form of employment.

This suited Milos just fine. He spent the next few years drifting from job to job, working at engine repair shops, construction sites and even briefly as a tour guide. Yet he never felt satisfied, and ended up wandering from one employer to another as he tried to find direction to his life. This changed when he volunteered for the Centrales Andinos Búsqueda y Rescate (CABR), the “Central Andean Search & Rescue.” He found he was skilled at finding those lost in the wilds, whether by accident or design, and his practical approach to searches soon garnered him respect and more importantly, results.

When Norça approached Milos and offered him the chance to do the same with better funding, more support and new equipment, he leapt at the chance and began distinguishing himself within the Valiant Hounds of God by year’s end. He and his team of five move throughout Sudamérica, looking for those who wish to lose themselves or others in the wilds. Though he personally dislikes certain aspects of the order, he has no doubts that what they do is for the good of mankind.

Image: Milo’s innocent face, quick grin and disarming demeanor are what form his good looks. His mocha skin is covered with tattoos, primarily on his chest and back. He keeps his hair dyed blonde as a running joke shared with his team.

Roleplaying Hints: You’re not sure how you got here or why you’re in charge, but you enjoy what you do, so you don’t question your luck. You always have a kind word for people, though you’re not a pushover. You don’t let anybody take advantage of you or those for whom you care.

Gear: Aris Whistler, HUD Contacts (unformatted), rappel kit



Allegiance: Valientes Sabuesos do Deus

Command 2

Backgrounds: Citizenship 1, Contacts 2, Influence 2, Resources 2, Status 1

TERRA VERDE

Biokinetic Missionary

Angelina Citli was a shy, reserved person for the first forty-eight years of her life. Born into a quiet Catholic household in Brasilia, Angelina never married and was resigned to be an old maid early on in her life. She likely would have done so had she not attended a Candomblé feast at the urging of an old friend from school.

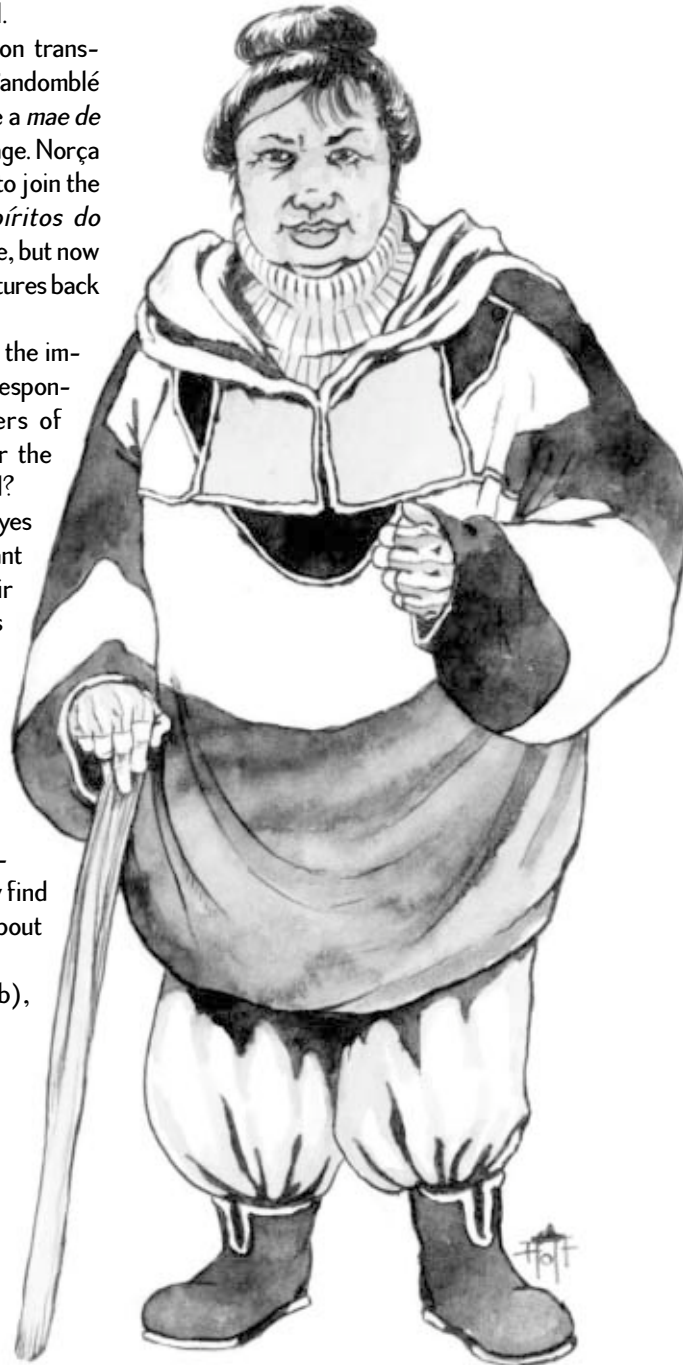
The experience opened her eyes and soon transformed her into an outspoken supporter of Candomblé and its precepts. Within four years she became a *mae de santos*, traveling worldwide to spread the message. Norça became aware of her influence and invited her to join the order, placing her within the ranks of *Espíritos do Sacramento*. She continues her travels as before, but now she reports her findings of local customs and cultures back to the order.

When in a possession trance, she shifts to the image of Shangó, her patron orisha. The effect is responsible for heated debate among practitioners of Candomblé: is such a thing merely an act, or the greatest extension of the orisha into this world?

Image: Round and short, Angelina's green eyes are surrounded by crow's feet from her constant squinting. She often wraps her long brown hair into a tight bun, and likes to wear loose robes and shawls that compliment her dusky skin. When ridden by Shango, she becomes an androgynous muscular figure with very dark skin and African features.

Roleplaying Hints: You certainly must spread the word of Candomblé, but first you must get people to listen. You see your connection with Norça as a beneficial partnership: they find people willing to listen, and you tell them all about those people.

Gear: walking stick (doubles as a club), minicomp, vocoder with 3 languages (pick)



Name: Angelina Citli
Origin: Saint
Nature: Traditionalist
Allegiance: Espíritos do Sacramento

Physical Attributes

Strength 2

Dexterity 1

Stamina 3

Mental Attributes

Perception 3

Intelligence 2

Wits 3

Social Attributes

Appearance 3

Manipulation 3

Charisma 4 [Charming]

Abilities

Brawl 1, Might 2

Resistance 2

Abilities

Linguistics (Spanish, Portuguese, Swahili) 2

Rapport (Discern Motivation) 4

Abilities

Intimidation 3, Style 3

Command (Social Direction) 3, Subterfuge (Gossip) 2

Etiquette (Tact) 3, Savvy 1

Aptitude: [Biokinesis] Adaptation 1, Psychomorphing 2, Transmogrify 4

Willpower: 5

Psi: 5

Backgrounds: Citizenship 1, Followers 2, Influence 3, Resources 1

NAME: ANGELINA CITLI SERIES:		ORIGIN: SAINT NATURE: TRADITIONALIST		APTITUDE: NONE ALLEGIANCE: ESPÍRITOS DO SACRAMENTO		PSI ORDER NORCA	
ATTRIBUTES AND ABILITIES							
PHYSICAL		MENTAL		SOCIAL		PLAYER:	
STRENGTH ●●○○○		PERCEPTION ●●●○○		APPEARANCE ●●●○○		ADVANTAGES	
Brawl ●○○○		Awareness ○○○○		Intimidation ●●●○○		WILLPOWER	
Might ●○○○		Investigation ○○○○		Style ●○○○		●●●●●○○○○○	
DEXTERITY ●○○○○		INTELLIGENCE ●●○○○		MANIPULATION ●●●○○		PSI	
Athletics ○○○○		Academics ○○○○		Command (Social Direction) ●●○○		●●●●●○○○○○	
Drive ○○○○		Bureaucracy ○○○○		Interrogation ○○○○		□□□□□□□□	
Firearms ○○○○		Engineering ○○○○		Subterfuge (Gossip) ●○○○		BIOKINESIS	
Legerdemain ○○○○		Intrusion ○○○○		CHARISMA ●●●○○		Adaption ●○○○	
Martial Arts ○○○○		Linguistics (Spanish, Port, Swahili) ●●○○		[Charming]		Psychomorphing ●○○○	
Melee ○○○○		Medicine ○○○○		Etiquette (Tact) ●○○○		Transmogrify ●○○○	
Pilot ○○○○		Science ○○○○		Perform ○○○○		AUXILIARY MODES	
Stealth ○○○○		Survival ○○○○		Savvy ○○○○		○○○○○	
STAMINA ●●●○○		WITS ●●●○○		HEALTH		BACKGROUNDS	
Endurance ○○○○		Arts ○○○○		Bruised -0 □		Citizenship ●○○○	
Resistance ●○○○		Meditation ○○○○		Hurt -1 □		Followers ●●○○○	
COMBAT		Rapport (Discern Motivation) ●●○○○		Injured -1 □		Influence ●●●○○	
ATTACK ACC DMG R OF FT ARMOR RTG BULK FT		EXPERIENCE		Wounded -2 □		Resources ●○○○○	
○○○○		○○○○		Maimed -3 □		○○○○○	
○○○○		○○○○		Crippled -4 □		○○○○○	
○○○○		○○○○		Incapacitated □		○○○○○	
○○○○		○○○○		Dead □		○○○○○	
INITIATIVE		MOVEMENT		5		WALK RUN SPRIN	
5		5 14 26					

Drug Designer

Life can't get better for Joaquín Cervera, talented biochemist and star drug designer. He's drifted from job to job without a care, trusting his good fortune to put a new vine in front of him when he's let go of the last one. Having an uncanny talent for mixing stuff, he blazed through school like a regular smartass, upsetting many people.

Nevertheless, he landed a job upon graduating from college without a hitch, and became the rising star of the drug industry of his native Colombia. However, he's always had a difficult personality and much too high an opinion of himself. He's never been fired; he's always the one to resign, and his business savvy shields him from breach-of-contract suits. He receives royalties for the drugs he's designed for the half-dozen companies he's worked for, and his employers agreed to his terms because they trusted his drugs would be a hit in the market. And they haven't been wrong.

So, Joaquín is filthy rich and bored. Looking for the next thrill, he accepted an invitation to Æon's Triton Division, where he has a whole new playground. He not only designs drugs for Sudamerican Trinity employees, but also for Proteus Strike Teams and space personnel. The new challenge in his life is keeping pace with Norça research, a hard thing since nobody knows what the research actually is. Nonetheless, Joaquín is having fun, following any hare-brained line of research with his supervisor's blessing, and sometimes taking hints from Proteus' few findings.

But being the egotist bastard he is, he's kept some of his results for himself. After making sure one of his compounds didn't have ugly side effects and wasn't addictive, he started dosing himself, with it, showing up for work in a happy high. To his co-workers' worry, he's started spouting poetry during lunch, and some of his more inspired verses have actually come true. He knows he's being watched now, and he's tinkering with his new discovery just to see what else he can come up with.

Image: A man of European descent in his early thirties, he dresses as his mood dictates. He can wear the most elegant and coordinated outfit one day and the next look like a bum. His only constant trait is his mischievous smirk and his eccentric behavior.

Roleplaying Hints: There's no doubt about it; you're God's gift to pharmaceuticals, and you relish in the fact that there's no one better than you at cracking the mo-

lecular composition of any substance and making it into whatever you want. Your research hit upon something very important to somebody, and you enjoy teasing the day-lights out of whoever that is.

Gear: Expensive or cheap clothing, depending on the mood. A pack of personally tuned recreational drugs and a few generic samples to hand out.



Spy In Training

Old legends fascinated Lilián since she was a child: tales of Incan sorcerers living in the Andes, scary stories about the Eye-Eaters and her favorite, the ghosts that roamed the misty streets of Lima. She grew up as a lover of mysteries and enigmas, surprising her parents by choosing to vacation in Nazca instead of the sea paradise of Pearl City, and becoming the typical bookworm all children love to tease at school. None of her peers could compete with her in telling scary stories around campfires, which earned her a reputation for creepiness that helped her survive high school relatively unmolested.

She followed every major news download from CuzCo, Grupo Bolivar and NMS, and worked on her school's news site as an expert info tracker. She relished her infamy among her peers. Tales circulated down the corridors that she had a way to find any dirty secret about anyone, and that one day she'd melt into the mist, becoming one of the ghosts that roamed the streets with no other purpose than to spy on the living.

And she did. A day before her graduation, she disappeared without a trace. Neither family, teachers or few friends had any idea about what could've happened to her, and her vanishing only fed the legends of the Yana Llanthu.

At first she moved aimlessly through secret byways, but Lilián soon learned that her prodding curiosity had brought her to the attention of the elite Peruvian spies, who welcomed her into the legend. After eight years of excruciating training, she has reentered society with a new face and identity, and serves her country and her continent. She keeps tapping on the flux of information around her and making sense out of it, but she knows she's capable of more. She haunts the streets of Lima as a Black Shadow, but she's ready to slip away into the world.

Image: A young and nondescript mestizo woman in her mid-twenties, Lilián dresses like a shy office clerk, keeping a mousy appearance that has nothing to do with her real self. Featureless and baggy clothing hide her lithe body, and her honed senses help her eavesdrop on whatever is said around her without arousing suspicion. However, she's a ghost: if she wished, she could look like anything.

Roleplaying Hints: You're the mist, you're the omnipresent eye of the Yana Llanthu, taking a perverse pleasure in the shiver that your name evokes. You don't miss

your boring old life, but you can't remain an immobile spying bioapp forever; you yearn to roam the world, to pluck its secrets with your cold, sorcerous touch.

Gear: Mundane and boring clothes, bioweave armor, impressive array of spy gadgets hidden about her person, Banji Cyclone pistol.



Name: Lilián Sarabia
Origin: Outsider
Nature: Explorer
Allegiance: The Yana Llanthu

Physical Attributes

Strength 2
 Dexterity 2
 Stamina 3

Mental Attributes

Perception 3
 Intelligence 2
 Wits 2

Social Attributes

Appearance 3
 Manipulation 3
 Charisma 3

Abilities

Firearm 2, Martial Arts 2, Stealth 3

Abilities

Awareness 3, Investigation 2
 Intrusion 3, Linguistics 1 (Native Spanish, Portuguese)

Abilities

Intimidation 2, Style 3 (Disguise)
 Interrogation 1, Subterfuge 3
 Perform 3, Savvy 3

Willpower: 4

Psi: 1

Backgrounds: Cipher 3, Contacts 3, Device 1, Resources 1

NAME: LILIÁN SARABIA SERIES:		ORIGIN: OUTSIDER NATURE: EXPLORER		APTITUDE: NONE ALLEGIANE: THE YANA LLANTHU		PSI ORDER NORC A	
ATTRIBUTES AND ABILITIES							
PHYSICAL		MENTAL		SOCIAL		PLAYER:	
STRENGTH ●●○○○		PERCEPTION ●●●○○		APPEARANCE ●●●○○		ADVANTAGES	
Brawl ○○○○		Awareness ●●○○○		Intimidation ●●○○○		WILLPOWER	
Might ○○○○		Investigation ●●○○○		Style (Disguise) ●●○○○		●●●●●○○○○○	
DEXTERITY ●●○○○		INTELLIGENCE ●●○○○		MANIPULATION ●●○○○		PSI	
Athletics ○○○○		Academics ○○○○		Command ○○○○		●●○○○○○○○○○	
Drive ○○○○		Bureaucracy ○○○○		Interrogation ●○○○○		□□□□□□□□□	
Firearms ●●○○○		Engineering ○○○○		Subterfuge ○○○○		BIOKINESIS	
Legerdemain ○○○○		Intrusion ●●○○○		CHARISMA ●●○○○		Adaption ○○○○○	
Martial Arts ●●○○○		Linguistics (Native Spanish, Portuguese) ●○○○○		Etiquette ○○○○		Psychomorphing ○○○○○	
Melee ○○○○		Medicine ○○○○		Perform ●●○○○		Transmogrify ○○○○○	
Pilot ○○○○		Science ○○○○		Savvy ○○○○		AUXILIARY MODES	
Stealth ●●○○○		Survival ○○○○		HEALTH		○	
STAMINA ●●○○○		WITS ●●○○○		Bruised -0 □		BACKGROUNDS	
Endurance ○○○○		Arts ○○○○		Hurt -1 □		Cipher ●●●○○	
Resistance ○○○○		Meditation ○○○○		Injured -1 □		Contacts ●●●○○	
COMBAT		Rapport ○○○○		Wounded -2 □		Device ●○○○○	
ATTACK ACC DMG RDT FT ARMOR RTG BULK FT		EXPERIENCE		Maimed -3 □		Resources ●○○○○	
○ □ □ □ □		○ □ □ □ □		Crippled -4 □		○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
○ □ □ □ □		○ □ □ □ □		Incapacitated □		○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
○ □ □ □ □		○ □ □ □ □		Dead □		○ ○ ○ ○ ○	
○ □ □ □ □		○ □ □ □ □		INITIATIVE		MOVEMENT	
○ □ □ □ □		○ □ □ □ □		5		WALK RUN SPRINT	
○ □ □ □ □		○ □ □ □ □		5		5 14 26	

Indian Guide

Ispaca Gómez has nowhere near his father's and grandfather's experience in traversing the Andes, but he makes up in resourcefulness what he lacks in actual experience. In the fiercely competitive market of Andean trailblazers, Ispaca found his edge in diversification.

He grew up in the Bolivian side of the Andes, absorbing the knowledge of generations as his father took him along his trips, transporting goods and people from the highlands to the plains. But young Ispaca was restless. He learned the ancient routes and the new ones, figured out how to cross the mountains on foot, wheel, hover and flight, but he wasn't satisfied with the small patch of land where he would spend his life.

Whereas his forebears focused in the specific region they were born in, he studied the whole map, including the roads that crossed the plains and entered the Amazonian jungle. He entered all his ancestors' knowledge into a database, customized his own search agent and now constantly adds to it. As the ways of the land were passed on to him orally, so he will pass them to his heirs electronically, leaving the most complete map of side routes and backroads to the children he's yet to conceive, for them to expand and enrich.

He's currently employed by the Condor Patrols of the Andean Federation of Commerce, where he enjoys taking construction workers, traders and rescue teams through unheard-of passes to their destinations. His stint as a Condor Patrolman doesn't prevent him from getting the odd freelancing job, and he's worked with Trinity and the Norça on several occasions.

Image: A quiet man of marked Quechua ancestry, the dark coppery skin of his face is wrinkled from breaking into smiles very often, for no other reason than for the joy of looking at new landscapes. He's always wearing a poncho woven from llama fur on top of tough fabrics.

Roleplaying Hints: You know you can't ever hope to map the whole of the Andes and the surrounding lands, not even by cheating and using a powerful satellite, but you take to your task one kilometer at a time; for there are roads that can only be discovered by walking them.

Gear: Machete when traveling through the jungle, walking stick when in the Andes. Refurbished Wazukana minicomp with custom (and cartoony) "Llama" agent, geographic and navigation software; survival and exploration gear. Hairy llama.



TERRA VERDE

Confused Bandeirante

Ignacio “Nacho” Ribeiro is in quite a mess. Son of farmers, he always dreamed of exploring the Amazonian depths, forging his own fortune. He grew to know the jungle around his home in Manaus, but he wanted to go deeper, feeling more at home among the green than in the city.

Orphaned by an accident at the age of 16, Nacho learned quickly the trade of the bandeirante; explorer, guide, trader and prospector. His only contact with people was when he returned to Manaus to cash in on his discoveries and to look for the next job. His dreams of a house in the middle of the rainforest were postponed when on his 21st birthday he met Fabiola, a girl from Rio de Janeiro and a future botanist. They hit it off wonderfully and, after a month of seeing each other, they felt they were ready to marry.

Unbeknownst to her family, they underwent the body-swapping operation under the excuse of a vacation. They spent a week teaching each other what they felt necessary to live each other's life for a month, basking in the thrill of their semi-illegal show of mutual devotion. The operation was a success, and after their “vacation” they went back to the other's life.

But something interrupted their romantic plans. Fabiola, wearing Nacho's body, drowned in the Amazon. Nacho had been living as his fiancée for three weeks, and found that he was enjoying it; he had a family, lots of friends and a promising career ahead of him... or rather, her. He knows nobody would miss alienated Nacho, but Fabiola's disappearance would hurt many. After a very tormenting week when he mourned “her” dead “boy-friend,” he decided to honor his love's memory in the best way he knew: by fully becoming her. He's saving money to undergo the operation to become a full-blown female, and he'll take advantage of his future degree in Botany to take a new chance as a bandeirante and fulfill his original dream, but under his second dream's identity.

Image: Nacho, or rather Fabiola, is an attractive Brazilian girl of light tan skin, deep green eyes and thick black hair. She dresses pragmatically, favoring male-like clothes. She has an odd mannerism or two when Nacho forgets to act the part, but that's becoming less frequent as he immerses himself... in herself.

Roleplaying Hints: You're honest and hard-working, and except for the deception of your identity, you always mean what you say. You're between being male and fe-

male, which is kind of confusing, but you know your life will slowly come into focus as you get used to it. Once you become fully female and graduate, you'll set out to forge both your and Fabiola's futures.

Gear: Resistant clothing, Wazukana DX70 Personal Computer loaded with botanic databases and geographical information, hunting knife.



Name: Ignacio "Nacho" Ribeiro / Fabiola Silva

Origin: Hermit

Nature: Survivor

Allegiance: None

Physical Attributes

Strength 3

Dexterity 3

Stamina 3

Mental Attributes

Perception 2

Intelligence 2

Wits 2

Social Attributes

Appearance 3

Manipulation 3

Charisma 2

Abilities

Might 1

Athletics 3, Pilot 1, Stealth 2

Endurance 1

Abilities

Awareness 1, Investigation 1

Academics 1, Linguistics 2 (Native Portuguese, Spanish, English),
Science 2 (Botany), Survival 3 (Forage)

Rapport 2

Abilities

Style 1

Subterfuge 3

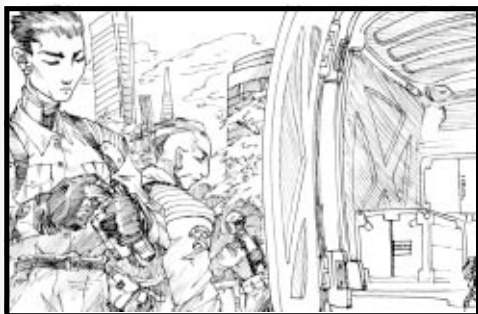
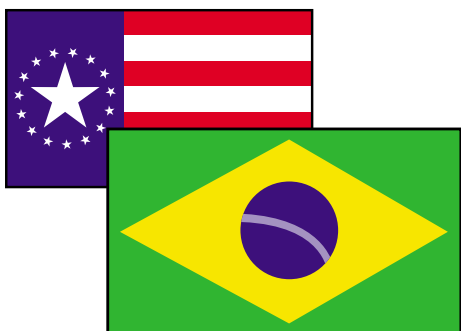
Perform 3

Willpower: 6

Psi: 1

Backgrounds: Cipher 1, Citizenship 2 (Native Brazilian, Colombia, FAC), Resources 3

NAME: RIBEIRO/SILVA SERIES:		ORIGIN: HERMIT NATURE: SURVIVOR		APTITUDE: NONE ALLEGIANE: NONE		PSI ORDER NORC A	
ATTRIBUTES AND ABILITIES							
PHYSICAL		MENTAL		SOCIAL		PLAYER:	
STRENGTH ●●●○○		PERCEPTION ●●○○○		APPEARANCE ●●●○○		ADVANTAGES	
Brawl ○○○○○		Awareness ●○○○○		Intimidation ○○○○○		WILLPOWER	
Might ●○○○○		Investigation ●○○○○		Style ●○○○○		●●●●●●○○○○	
DEXTERITY ●●●○○		INTELLIGENCE ●●○○○		MANIPULATION ●●●○○		PSI	
Athletics ●●●○○		Academics ●○○○○		Command ○○○○○		●○○○○○○○○○○	
Drive ○○○○○		Bureaucracy ○○○○○		Interrogation ○○○○○		□□□□□□□□	
Firearms ○○○○○		Engineering ○○○○○		Subterfuge ○○○○○		BIOKINESIS	
Legerdemain ○○○○○		Intrusion ○○○○○		CHARISMA ●●○○○		Adaption ○○○○○	
Martial Arts ○○○○○		Linguistics (Nat. Port., Spanish, English) ●●○○○		Etiquette ○○○○○		Psychomorphing ○○○○○	
Melee ○○○○○		Medicine ●○○○○		Perform ●●○○○		Transmogrify ○○○○○	
Pilot ●○○○○		Science (Botany) ●○○○○		Savvy ○○○○○		AUXILIARY MODES	
Stealth ●○○○○		Survival (Forage) ●●○○○		WITS ●●○○○		○○○○○	
STAMINA ●●●○○		Arts ○○○○○		ATTACK		HEALTH	
Endurance ●○○○○		Meditation ○○○○○		ACC DMG RDF FT		Bruised -0 □	
Resistance ○○○○○		Rapport ○○○○○		ARMOR		Hurt -1 □	
COMBAT		RTG BULK FT		Injured -1 □		Wounded -2 □	
EXPERIENCE		B L		Maimed -3 □		Crippled -4 □	
Initiative 5		Movement		Incapacitated □		Dead □	
WALK RUN SPRIN		5 14 26		BACKGROUND		Cipher (Native Brazilian, Colombia, FAC) ●○○○○	
				Citizenship 2 ●○○○○		Resources 3 ●●●○○	
				○○○○○		○○○○○	
				○○○○○		○○○○○	
				○○○○○		○○○○○	
				○○○○○		○○○○○	



1977-2003 - Colombia legalizes drug trade and production, adding to its economy an industry that's already powerful.

2043 - México City destroyed by earthquake, initiating the country's plunge from its rising leadership in Latin American affairs. Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua get shaken as well.

2054 - The Wycoff explosion in the U.S.A. Sudamérica raises the Necessary Wall for fear of deprivations from the First World nations. The National Force emerges in Colombia.

2057 - The newly created FSA invades Canada and México; Puerto Rico separates from the FSA, claiming it joined the American democracy, not the Nordamerican dictatorship. It leads the rest of the Caribbean nations inside the Necessary Wall and confirms Sudamericans' anti-USA opinions.

2058 - The Aberrant Poseidon sinks Florida; the tidal waves wipe out Cuba and Bahamas completely.

The Central American nations (Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) unite in the Mayan League and join the Necessary Wall agreements.

2061-70 - The Venezuelan plagues are unleashed, Aberrants systematically bomb Argentina and Taint areas of the Amazon rainforest as they move North.

OpNet destroyed, The Crash and the end of the Aberrant War. The countryside sees its population boosted, but there are not enough arable lands, which complicates the agrarian industry. There are several minor peasant uprisings in Brazil, Colombia, Perú, Bolivia and Argentina, but they're quickly and brutally stamped out.

2061 - Brazil and Colombia sign the *Acta de Protección a la Biodiversidad Amazónica* (Amazon Biodiversity Protection Act), which triggers continent-wide social innovations.

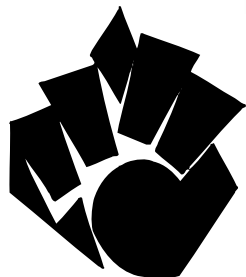
2067 - World economy changes to yuan/platinum base.

2068 - Consolidation of the *Federación Andina de Comercio* (FAC; Andean Federation of Commerce).

2070 - Argentina invades Paraguay and Uruguay, but a coalition of armies drives it back in the Weekend War. The FAC and Brazil impose trade restrictions with Argentina.

The first Mapuche president assumes power in Chile

2073 - End of the Necessary Wall; Sudamérica initiates aggressive international commerce practices.



2081 – Chile becomes the Mapuche Nation and joins the FAC

2097 – General Ernesto Santander stages a coup in Argentina; he replaces the stagnant civilian government with a fascist regime and starts a purge war to rid the country of mercenaries.

2097 – The man later known as Giuseppe del Fuego joins Norça.

2099 – Brazil launches *Orguhlo de Cèu*, the first space station of the contemporary Orbital Triad.

2102 – Del Fuego disappears for more than a year, and returns as the Biokinetic Proxy.

2105 – *Ciudad de la Perla* (Pearl City) is established, signaling the revival of Venezuela. The yet-unrevealed Norça help in acquiring the Nihonjin plans.

2108 – A devastating earthquake hits Ecuador, collapsing half of the in-progress Guayaquil arcology. The Norça join with the rest of the countries' relief missions in the first great show of Sudamerican solidarity.

2110 – Construction of Tahuantinsuyo is completed and the administration of the FAC moves in.

2115 – Argentina retakes the *Islas Malvinas* (Falkland Islands), Great Britain is in no position to counterattack.

2117 – With the Norça's help, Brazil refurbishes *Orguhlo de Cèu* station into a center of advanced scientific research.

2121 – Pope Benedict XVIII excommunicates practitioners of Candomblé. A huge schism and uprising was expected, but nothing beyond harsh words are exchanged.

2122 – The Brasilia Project finishes, signaling the birth of the first biological arcology in human settled space.

NAME:
SERIES:

ORIGIN:
NATURE:

APTITUDE:
ALLEGIANCE:

ATTRIBUTES AND ABILITIES

PHYSICAL

STRENGTH ●○○○○

Brawl ○○○○○
Might ○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

DEXTERITY ●○○○○

Athletics ○○○○○
Drive ○○○○○
Firearms ○○○○○
Legerdemain ○○○○○
Martial Arts ○○○○○
Melee ○○○○○
Pilot ○○○○○
Stealth ○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

STAMINA ●○○○○

Endurance ○○○○○
Resistance ○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

MENTAL

PERCEPTION ●○○○○

Awareness ○○○○○
Investigation ○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

INTELLIGENCE ●○○○○

Academics ○○○○○
Bureaucracy ○○○○○
Engineering ○○○○○
Intrusion ○○○○○
Linguistics ○○○○○
Medicine ○○○○○
Science ○○○○○
Survival ○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

WITS ●○○○○

Arts ○○○○○
Meditation ○○○○○
Rapport ○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

SOCIAL

APPEARANCE ●○○○○

Intimidation ○○○○○
Style ○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

MANIPULATION ●○○○○

Command ○○○○○
Interrogation ○○○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

CHARISMA ●○○○○

Etiquette ○○○○○
Perform ○○○○○
Savvy ○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

PSI ORDER
NORÇ A™

PLAYER:

WILLPOWER

○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

PSI

○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

POSSESSIONS

CASH

GEAR (CARRIED)

HEALTH

Bruised -0
Hurt -1
Injured -1
Wounded -2
Maimed -3
Crippled -4
Incapacitated
Dead

COMBAT

ATTACK ACC DMG R OF FT ARMOR RTG BULK FT

○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

EXPERIENCE

INITIATIVE

MOVEMENT

WALK RUN SPRINT

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APTITUDE
BIOKINESIS

BASIC TECHNIQUES

ADAPTION ○○○○○

PSYCHOMORPHING ○○○○○

TRANSMOGRIFY ○○○○○

AUXILIARY MODES

○

○

○

○

BACKGROUND INFORMATION
ALLIES FOLLOWERS

CIPHER

CITIZENSHIP

CONTACTS

DEVICES

MERITS TYPE COST

FLAWS TYPE BONUS

APPEARANCE

Age _____

Hair _____ Eyes _____

Ht. _____ Wt. _____

Race _____ Gender _____

Nationality _____

Native Language _____

INFLUENCE

MENTOR

RESOURCES

STATUS
